

Comparing the news he got from his friends the Tatars in Siberia with the writings of the classics, Strahlenberg sometimes arrived at rather adventurous conclusions, the audacity of which we gladly forgive, remembering that he travelled and wrote exactly 200 years ago, when hardly anything was known of Tibet. He says that already in Alexander's time the name Cathai was used by the Scythians, for the Sophitic kingdom mentioned by Curtius is the same as Strabo's Cathæa. »The Sophitic kingdom, however, is nothing else than Thibeth and the country of the Tanguts where the wise and high Priest Dalai Lama lives with his would-be holy Lamas or Priests. For with the appellation of Sophists the Greeks have indicated those, who give themselves up to wisdom . . . And as the Mungals and Calmucks state, their Dalai Lama or so called Priester John has already since some thousand years had his residency in the country of the Tanguhts, he must have resided there already at and before the time of Alexander. And that the Greeks have had some reason to call these Lamas or Priests in the country of Thibeth or Matschin Sophists, is confirmed by the manners and customs these Lamæ still have in their religion, namely the important part that is played in it by sorceries, prophezyings and chiro-mancy.»¹

He compares the meridional Imaus with that of Mercator, and both with actual things, and agrees that there is really a meridional range which goes out northwards from the southern Imaus or »as it now is called Imus-tag».

The very greatest part of Strahlenberg's work is devoted to the description of the Russian empire, its name, its situation, boundaries and climate, its provinces, its dynasties, more especially the Romanow dynasty, the government of Tsar Peter, the titles Tsar and Grand Duke, religions, income, army, the aristocracy, the greatest cities, etc., and finally he has a list of minerals, plants, curiosities, antiquities, manufactures, fabrics, »und dergleichen Dingen».

In this list he occasionally mentions things or questions touching upon Central Asia and Tibet. Under the word »cotton» he tells us that the Mohammedans living in Siberia never use stuffs manufactured by heathens, but only such which are manufactured in cities with a Mohammedan population, as Turphan, Chamill, Jerken, Kutzai, Axu, Caschkar, etc. The word Belgian which is found on some maps of the time is, according to Strahlenberg, derived from »bill» or »bell» meaning mountain,² while the name Imaus is pronounced Imus-tag, or Imussahr by the Tatars, for »mus» or »maus» means ice, and »tag» mountain; thus the meaning of Imaus is ice- or snow-mountain, and Imaus is a corruption of the native word. Caucasus he derives from the Persian Cuho or Coho (Kuh), mountain.

The musk of Tibet he found to be three times as strong in smell as the Siberian, the price of which was only one fourth of the Tibetan. Regarding the latter he quotes Martini.

¹ Op. cit. p. 40.

² Bel means indeed »pass» in Jagatai-turki.