X. *On the Ancient Geography of Central and Eastern Asia, with Illustrations derived from Recent Discoveries in the North of India.* By HUGH MURRAY, ESQ. F. R. S. EDIN.

(Read April 29. 1816.)

THE descriptions which historians and geographers have transmitted to us of the ancient world, are not generally deficient either in copiousness or accuracy. The theatre of those great events, which still interest mankind, may be commonly ascertained with sufficient precision. The distinct knowledge of the ancients, however, was limited to a certain sphere ; after passing which, clouds always begin to envelope it. The almost total change of names, the uncertainty as to their itinerary measures, and the defects of their mathematical geography, leave no perfectly fixed point on which we can rest. Hence, even where copious and interesting details are given, it is often difficult to determine to what region, or to what nation, these descriptions refer. The question may appear sometimes to be one of curiosity only ; yet the curiosity seems natural and liberal, and it is often connected with interesting questions relative to the history of the human species. It illustrates the extent to which commercial enterprise and activity had reached in ancient times ; and often, by enabling us to compare the modern with the ancient aspect of the same region,

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gion, it qualifies us to ascertain the progress which mankind have made, during so long a succession of ages.

There are perhaps no regions with regard to which this question possesses equal interest, as those which formed the eastern extremity of the ancient world. The faint and decaying light of science there shone, not upon inhospitable deserts, not upon the abodes of rude and pastoral tribes, but upon civilized, populous, and commercial regions, which, in all the arts and improvements of life, were not perhaps much inferior to the Roman empire during its most flourishing era. Yet the question, what regions these were, is involved in as deep obscurity as any which has occupied the inquiries of the learned. Many interesting points are still totally unfixed, and afford room for the most discordant opinions. Having been induced to study this subject with peculiar attention, it has appeared to me, that some light might still be thrown upon it, by a careful analysis of the ancient statements, as well as by attentively comparing them with some discoveries which have recently been made in that quarter of the world.

The two nations whose territory formed, to the ancients, the eastern extremity of the known world, were the *Seres* and the *Sinæ*, of whom the former were approached by land, and the latter by sea. Of these the *Seres* were the most celebrated and interesting people, and will form the main object of the present inquiry ; but it may be convenient to begin with fixing the position of the *Sinæ*. The approach to their coast is thus described by *PTOLEMY*. After passing the mouth of the *Ganges*, and a long extent of coast beyond, navigators rounded a large peninsula, called the *Golden Chersonese*. Then passing a great bay (*Magnus Sinus*) they came to a coast, which was that of the *Sinæ*, which extended from north to south, with an ocean on the west. The early modern opinion was, that the
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Sinæ were, either in whole or in part, the inhabitants of Modern China. But D'ANVILLE, who largely reduced the world of the ancients, fixed the Magnus Sinus in the Gulf of Siam, and allowed only a limited navigation along the coast of Cambodia. M. GOSSELIN, with bolder scepticism, fixes the Sinæ on the coast of Siam, and never allows the ancients to have passed the Straits of Malacca.

In comparing these three statements, there cannot, I apprehend, be the smallest hesitation in preferring the one last mentioned. There positively is, beyond India, no coast, besides that of Siam, which has an ocean on the west. PTOLEMY mentions no island of a magnitude which could at all correspond to that of Sumatra. Even the Golden Chersonese, though it may suggest at first sight the peninsula of Malacca, will, when its details are examined, be found better to correspond to that of Ava and Pegu. This solution having been acceded to by Mr PINKERTON, by Dr VINCENT, and by all the eminent geographers of the present age, its correctness may probably be considered as a point finally decided.

We proceed, then, to the question respecting the Seres, a people who, by their mysterious remoteness, their wealth and civilization, and the peculiarities of their national character, excited an extraordinary interest in the ancient world. The information of the Greeks and Romans respecting their territory, as well as a long series of intervening regions, was chiefly derived from a great mercantile caravan, which, setting out from the Bosphorus, traversed Asia from west to east, till it arrived on the frontier of Serica. This communication does not appear to have been formed, till about the first century, during the most extended period of Roman power. Its object was to supply that empire with the luxury of silk, the use of which, from being a rare appendage of greatness, had become common to almost

almost every class of society. The reports of the caravan merchants were collected and committed to writing by MARINUS of Tyre, whose compositions have perished; but the corrected substance of them is found in the great geographical work of PTOLEMY. The statements of PTOLEMY, therefore, combined with some supplementary information from PLINY and AMMIANUS, must form the authority on which this question is to be decided.

The earliest modern opinion which I find stated upon this subject, is, that *Serica* was *Cambalu*, or the kingdom of the Great Khan, that is, the original dominion of Zingis. China, then, was the *Sinarum Regio*. Before the time of D'ANVILLE, however, the prevalent sentiment came to be, that the northern part of China was the seat of the *Seres*, the southern that of the *Sinæ*. VOSSIUS goes farther, and declares that he who doubts if the ancient *Seres* be the modern Chinese, may doubt as reasonably if the sun that shone then be the sun that shines now. As that learned and acute writer, however, has not explained the ground on which so peremptory an opinion was formed, it has not met with the attention which perhaps it merited. D'ANVILLE was the first who applied to this question that careful and systematic analysis which forms the only true mode of solution. Having brought the *Sinæ* to *Cambodia*, he carried westward also the position of the *Seres*. He assigned to them an extensive region of eastern Tartary, reaching from the territory of the *Eygurs*, or *Igours*, to the north-western frontier of China, of which it included only the projecting corner of the province of *Chensi*. Mr PINKERTON goes still farther, and places *Serica* in *Little Bucharica*. But M. GOSSELIN, with his usual boldness, has struck out an entirely new path. He finds *Serica* in the north of India, in the district of *Serinagur*, including a portion of *Thibet*.

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The writers now mentioned, however widely discordant as to other particulars, seem to agree in one point, that of treating with contempt, and almost with ridicule, the ancient idea which extends *Serica* to China. Dr VINCENT alone, who thinks always for himself, has declared his adherence to the latter opinion. His subject, however, has led him to rest almost entirely on the maritime testimonies, which do not, I confess, appear to me so decisive as to the learned writer. They are contained in the narratives of ARRIAN and COSMAS INDICOPLEUSTES, persons who never passed Indostan, and collected only vague and inaccurate reports of the regions beyond. The testimony of such writers, it would appear, can never be put in competition with that collected from a company of merchants, who, if they did not enter *Serica*, at least habitually trafficked on its frontier. I certainly concur, therefore, with D'ANVILLE and the other geographers, in considering PTOLEMY as the main authority by whom the question must be decided. But, in adopting their premises, I have been led pretty confidently to a conclusion the opposite of theirs. The works of PTOLEMY and his cotemporaries appear to me to contain a series of statements which fix down, in a very decided manner, *Serica* as China. As results quite opposite have been drawn from every analysis yet made of these statements, and as they appear to me to involve a view of the entire geography of central Asia, widely different from any at present received, these circumstances, I hope, may plead my excuse for the unexpected length to which the discussion has extended.

Considering the decidedly opposite opinion which has been held by the most eminent geographers of the present age, I should perhaps have hesitated in laying before the Society the result of my inquiries, had they not been so strongly supported
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by recent discoveries in the north and north-west of India. These appear to have not only furnished new materials for the solution of the question, but to have laid open radical errors, which have hitherto darkened the view of modern inquirers. When these are removed, I am persuaded that the reports of the ancient writers will be found clear, consistent, and satisfactory, to a degree beyond what has yet been suspected.

The principle hitherto proceeded upon, by all modern geographers, is, that provided their system appears to be supported by a few names and particulars found in PTOLEMY, they are at perfect liberty to impute to him any errors, however enormous, which may be necessary to fill up their hypothesis. M. GOSSELIN broadly lays down the maxim, that all precise knowledge, on the part of the ancients, terminated with the range of the Beloor ; and D'ANVILLE repeatedly warns his readers against expecting more than a very vague and general coincidence between the actual features of the country and PTOLEMY's description of them. This last, he observes, must be corrected by the more copious and accurate information of modern times. My own researches, on the contrary, have led to a pretty decided conviction, that the ancients knew more respecting these regions, than has been, or is still known, to the moderns ; that they knew more consequently than those very eminent geographers who have treated their authority so lightly. I believe, if the statements of PTOLEMY be taken simply as they stand, and be carefully collected and arranged, they will be found to exhibit correctly all the grand outlines of Central and Eastern Asia.

Considering the subject in this view, it may be advantageous, before entering upon the proposed analysis, to notice some preliminary facts, which may throw light on the general degree of knowledge possessed by the ancient writers respecting this
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part of the world. These are furnished by the very laudable efforts already alluded to, made by our countrymen in the East, to improve the geography of India, and the neighbouring regions, particularly by the recent mission to Caubul. A number of leading points have thus been satisfactorily settled; and the means are afforded of forming a comparative estimate between PTOLEMY'S information and that hitherto possessed by modern geographers.

One of the leading questions in Indian geography, has always been that relating to the course of the five great rivers that water the Punjab. It was ascertained by the gentlemen attached to the Caubul mission, that these, after forming two great branches, at length united into one, and poured their waters into the Indus by that common channel. They had uniformly been represented before as falling by two separate and somewhat distant channels. This is justly noticed by a learned writer in the Edinburgh Review, as one of the most important recent geographical discoveries. It certainly was such to the moderns: but it merely restored the delineation which had been given, nearly two thousand years before, by PTOLEMY. His map exhibits the five rivers, which, after forming two great branches, unite and fall into the Indus, precisely in the manner described by Mr ELPHINSTONE. PLINY'S testimony is to the same effect; he describes the Hydaspes falling into the Indus, *quatuor alios amnes afferentem*.

In endeavouring to prove the imperfection of PTOLEMY'S knowledge relative to the north of India, M. GOSSELIN pointedly refers to his placing the source of the Ganges in the Imaus (Himalaya) instead of deriving it from Thibet. Here also, however, PTOLEMY happens to be in the right. In 1808, the Supreme Government of Bengal, at the instance of the late Colonel COLEBROOKE, sent a mission to explore the origin of

this celebrated stream. The party followed its course till it became little more than a rivulet. Their further progress was arrested by precipices, and by the snows, under which its infant course was buried. But they made such observations, and collected such intelligence, as left no room whatever to doubt that it descends *from* the Himalaya, and that the long course which our maps assign to it along the table land of Thibet, has no existence in fact. They found also, that, contrary to general opinion, the sources of the Jumna, and of the Sarayu, the head of the Gogra, were in the same chain, and at a small distance from that of the Ganges; as they had been placed by PTOLEMY, who has not, indeed, been so happy as the moderns, or, indeed, as PLINY has been, in delineating some parts of their subsequent course.

The gentlemen employed in the Caubul mission, extending their researches to the north-west of India, have brought to light some other important features. One of the most prominent is the river Kaumah or Kama, which rising on the opposite side of the same range which gives origin to the Oxus, pursues a northerly course of nearly four hundred miles, till it falls into the Indus, of which it forms the largest western tributary. Near its junction it receives the river of Suaut, so called from a beautiful and fertile valley through which it winds. Of these streams, previous to the mission, no trace appeared in our modern maps; but in turning to PTOLEMY, we shall find them both delineated, under the appellations of the Coe and the Suastes, with some variation as to magnitude, but correctly as to relative position and mode of junction; while the river of Caubul is noted as a branch from Parapomisis. It thus appears, that PTOLEMY's knowledge of the northern boundary of India, though not perfect, was, on the whole, decidedly superior to that of the best informed modern geographers; and

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we find him delineating with success, grand geographical features, hid as it were in the most secret recesses of Asia, which had remained to them entirely unknown. Surely, then, it cannot be denied, that some regard is due to his authority, and that his delineations may possibly prove correct, even where they do not exactly coincide with those of our modern maps.

It is now time to proceed to the main object, of exhibiting PTOLEMY's delineation of Eastern and Central Asia, and comparing it with the actual features of that Continent. In this analysis, it will be convenient to follow the movements of the great caravan, from which he derived his information. Setting out from Byzantium, it proceeded through Assyria, Parthia, and other regions of Asia, to Bactria, a country still known under the appellation of Balk or Bulkh. It seems early to have been the *depot* for the caravan-trade of Central Asia, and had thus acquired a degree of wealth and splendour unknown to the barbarous regions that surrounded it. Thence the travellers proceeded into Sogdiana, which appears in Mr ELPHINSTONE's map under the modern appellation of Shoghnaun.. The route, which had hitherto been easy and level, assumed now an entirely different aspect. Before ascending, however, into that vast mountain world, which Asia incloses in her bosom, it may be necessary to pause, and to take a brief view of its general structure.

It is well known that Indostan is bordered on the south by a table land of extraordinary elevation, called Great and Little Thibet. Two parallel chains, running from east to west, prop this mighty bulwark of Asia. The southern barrier is formed by that immense chain known under the names of Hindoo Coosh, and Hemalleh or Himalaya, which forms the northern limit of India. The whole extent of it is covered, to a great depth, with perpetual snow, and every measurement yet made,

from Peshawer to Nepaul, has made it exceed 20,000 feet above the level of the plain, being higher than the highest peaks of the Andes. The whole is recognised by PTOLEMY under the name of Imaus. The northern range, known by the uncouth appellations of Mooz Taugh or Karrakorrum, is, I apprehend, described by him under that of *Mons Ascataneas*. Though its absolute elevation appears to exceed the Himalaya, yet, from the high level of its base, it does not present so formidable an aspect. At the western extremity of these two chains, we find another, running at right angles to both, connecting them, and shutting in the western side of the table land. This is called the Beloor Taugh, (or Beloor, as *taugh* is merely the generic name of mountain.) It forms the eastern limit of Shoghnaun, the ancient Sogdiana, and thus coincides with the *Montes Comedorum*, the first ascent which the caravan is represented as having had to encounter. M. GOSSE-LIN, the most sceptical of modern inquirers, recognises the coincidence, so that, up to this point, there is no controversy.

Mr ELPHINSTONE'S map exhibits a route up the valley of the Oxus, and then ascending the Beloor, which has every appearance of being the route followed by the merchants upon this occasion. Having surmounted this laborious ascent, they descended into a plain, not arable or fertile, but affording abundant pasturage to the nomadic tribes by whom it was traversed. Then ascending a valley, by a route which I suspect to be that traced by Mr ELPHINSTONE, up the valley of the Laidank, they came, first, to the Stone Tower, a singular appellation which is never explained, and then to another station, where a grand rendezvous took place of all the caravans that were proceeding to the great emporium of the East. This union was formed, with the view of overcoming an obstacle more formidable than any they had yet encountered,—the mighty

ty range of Imaus, which, after running for a great space from east to west, turned suddenly to the north, and stretching far into Scythia, separated that vast region into two portions, *Scythia within*, and *Scythia without, Imaus*. This chain forms thus the key to PTOLEMY's geography of Central Asia; and as my views respecting it differ very much from those hitherto entertained, it may be necessary to enter into a short discussion.

All modern geographers, so far as I know, have conceived that the Imaus must, in some shape or other, be identified with the Beloor. D'ANVILLE, RENNELL, GOSSELIN, PINKERTON, however they may differ in other respects, seem to consider this as a point placed beyond all dispute. Even Major RENNELL, while he clearly points out, that PTOLEMY's statements place the Imaus in a very different quarter, does not allow himself to suppose that those statements could be correct. Now I think it will appear on a very slight consideration, that every system which identifies the Imaus with the Beloor, is an entire subversion of all the descriptions and statements of PTOLEMY. Between these two ranges he places a great nation, or rather class of nations, under the appellation of the Sacæ. To their territory he assigns fifteen degrees of longitude; which, upon that parallel, and making every allowance for the defects of his graduation, cannot be less than from five to six hundred miles in direct length from east to west. This immense region, which equals half the breadth of Indostan, is reduced by the present system to what M. GOSSELIN calls one of the Gorges of the Beloor, a mere valley or glen between two of its branches. Thus, too, the Sacæ are entirely severed from India, of which however both PTOLEMY and STRABO describe them as forming the northern boundary.

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The delineation of the country of the Sacæ, will be found to correspond, in every respect, with that given by Mr ELPHINSTONE of the Plain of Pamere and Little Thibet. It was bounded on the south by Indostan, from which it was separated by the ridge of Imaus. On the north it was bounded by the next parallel chain, *Mons Ascataneas*, which cannot possibly be any other than the Mooz Taugh, to whose name, indeed, it bears a rude resemblance. It extended eastward from the Montes Comedorum (the Beloor) to somewhat beyond the head of the Ganges; precisely the dimensions of Little Thibet. Again, it appears from PTOLEMY, that the merchants, after ascending the Beloor, proceeded for several hundred miles to the south-east, which is precisely the direction of the table land. The mere aspect of PTOLEMY's map, and that of Mr ELPHINSTONE, present a striking similarity of form and geographical features. It seems plain, then, that geographers, in placing the Sacæ among the defiles of the Beloor, or extending them towards Cashgar, have disregarded the whole tenor of PTOLEMY's statements. It is true, EDRISI has given us a region called Sakita, which seems merely to occupy the summit of the Beloor. But we must observe, that *Sacæ*, in PLINY and PTOLEMY, was a generic name for a number of nomadic and pastoral tribes. It is well known that such names, among the civilized nations of antiquity, were usually formed by extending that of the nearest tribe to a long range of territory behind. It was natural, therefore, that the Sacæ, the first people who occurred, on ascending the mountains, should give name to a succession of similar districts, till another grand barrier of nature interposed. We are not, however, left here to mere inference or conjecture. PLINY, after mentioning the Scythian tribes east of Bactria, expressly says: "*Persæ omnes illos Sacas appellavere, a proxima gente.*" The district of Sakita, therefore,

therefore, admitting it to be the country of the Sacæ proper, in no degree expresses the extent of that which, by PLINY and PTOLEMY, was called the Sacarum Regio.

There is one, and I think one only, important discrepancy. Neither the Ladauk, the Indus, nor, indeed, any river whatever, is to be found in PTOLEMY. This defect, though serious, cannot, I think, be placed against the perfect agreement of every other feature. My impression is, that PTOLEMY omitted these rivers from not knowing whither to lead them, for he, in common with the rest of the ancients, never suspected that the Indus or any river, penetrated across the snowy chain; and the last lesson which geographers ever learned, was that of confessing their own ignorance. The omission seems supplied by PLINY, who was not fettered by any such complete or mathematical delineation, and who expressly states, that several rivers, and, among others, *two* of great magnitude, traversed the country of the Sacæ.

But what is this mighty range of Imaus, or what other chain is there, besides the Beloor, which traverses Asia in such a direction? Whatever we may think as to where it really exists, there can be no doubt, as Major RENNELL indeed admits, where PTOLEMY meant to place it; for besides all the other indications, he states it as running northwards from Palibothra, and somewhat to the east of the sources of the Ganges. It ought then to be a chain dividing Great from Little Thibet, parallel to the Beloor, though at a great distance, and shutting in the eastern side of the table land. Such a chain seems scarcely recognised by modern geography; and yet there cannot, I apprehend, be the smallest doubt as to its existence, because it is now ascertained by the combined reports of Major TURNER, and of the Caubul mission, that in this quarter must lie the yet unexplored sources of the two greatest rivers of India,

dia, which here separate, and flow in opposite directions ; on one side, the Indus, with its tributary the Ladauk ; on the other, the Sanpoo, or Barrumpooter, both of which, at the highest point to which they have been traced, are already large streams, that have evidently flowed from a great distance. It is well known to those who are accustomed to such researches, that the point at which great rivers thus rise and separate, is always the most elevated of any region. The proof from analogy is therefore so strong, as to render perhaps any other argument superfluous. But if we collect the slender notices that exist, this feature will not be found wholly destitute, even of modern testimony. The little we know relative to Great Thibet, is chiefly derived from DUHALDE's report of the mission of two Lamas from the court of China. Their object was, to make a map of that region, and to ascertain the sources of the Ganges. On their return they stated, that there *was* a great chain of mountains separating Great from Little Thibet ; that from one side of this chain descended the Barrumpooter, and from the other, which they did not visit, the Ganges, with the Ladauk falling into it. It is now certain, that they were mistaken as to the Ganges ; but I think it probable, that what they supposed to be that river, was really the Indus ; because Mr ELPHINSTONE's map exhibits the Indus holding the same course along the table land of Thibet, and receiving the Ladauk in the very same manner that they understood the Ganges to do. We have therefore the testimony of these persons, that there exists a great chain of mountains in the very quarter, and running in the very direction, indicated by PTOLEMY.

In 1725, the missionaries DESIDERI and FREYRE made the journey from Cashmire to Ladauk *. They describe it to be

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* Lettres Edifiantes, vol. xi.

a succession of hardships, perils, and hair-breadth escapes, such as never mortals before encountered. Whether the worthy missionaries might somewhat exaggerate perils through which they themselves passed, I shall not inquire; but we have also the report of an Indian traveller to Mr ELPHINSTONE, that a little beyond the Cashmirian frontier, there began an uninterrupted, and, in some places, a very steep ascent, of thirteen days, to Ladauk. That place itself is described by the missionaries, as the abode of almost perpetual winter, and all the hills around covered with snow. Yet the river being already of considerable magnitude, this can only be a lower stage of the great eminence from which it descends. Ladauk, too, being the established line of communication between Great and Little Thibet, must be the most level one, and the mountains must present, at every other point, a still loftier barrier.

There appears, thus, no reason to doubt, that the Ridge of Imaus exists, and in the very region where it is placed by PROLEMY. Up to this point, therefore, his description of Central Asia, taken in its simple and obvious sense, proves to be consistent with itself, and with the ascertained features of the region which it professes to delineate.

Having passed this formidable barrier, we arrive at the extensive region of *Scythia extra Imaum*. Upon the data now stated, this can only be Great Thibet, with an extent of Tartary stretching indefinitely northwards. After Scythia comes the famous Serica, the ultimate object of inquiry, the remotest country known to the ancients. If *Scythia extra Imaum* be Great Thibet, the next great country must be *China*. But as this is a point so curious and so much contested, it may be necessary to examine, whether the inference derived from the general line of PROLEMY's course through Asia is supported by

his view of the situation and geographic relations of Serica itself.

The first proof to which we shall attend is that derived from his longitudes. These are universally allowed to carry Serica very far beyond Thibet or Eastern Tartary. M. GOSSELIN, however, insists, that as they carry it beyond China also, and into the very heart of the Pacific, no regard whatever can be paid to them. That eminent writer, however, has here remarkably overlooked his own important illustrations of the mathematical geography of PTOLEMY. He has shewn, that the errors of that ancient writer, whether they reside in the value of the itinerary stadium, or, as I rather suspect, in the measurement of the great circle of the earth, are not random errors; that they proceed in a regular train, and that there exist data by which they may be calculated. It appears, that by reducing his longitudes in the relation of seven to five, they will all approximate pretty nearly to the truth. Now the remotest longitude given in Serica is 180 degrees east from the supposed meridian of the Fortunate Islands, which was fixed $2\frac{1}{2}$ degrees to the west of Cape St Vincent. 180° , reduced in the above ratio, will give $128^{\circ} 30'$, or 117° from the meridian of London, which is three or four within the eastern frontier of China. It thus falls short of the ocean, which will account for the only circumstance ascribed to Serica which does not agree with China, that of its being bounded on the east by unknown lands. The truth is, a bounding *terra incognita* was quite a theory of the school of MARINUS, which they everywhere made to succeed to the original theory of a circumambient ocean. If the narrow peninsula of Malacca was considered as stretching into an unknown extent of continent, much more might this be supposed of an empire so vast as China, and of which the interior was so little explored. But MELA, PLINY, and
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in general, all writers not of this school, who treat of Serica, attest the general belief of antiquity, that it was bounded by an ocean on the east. PLINY even calls it the Seric Ocean.

The extent of Serica, estimated according to the graduation of PTOLEMY, will be found to be about fourteen hundred miles from north to south, and eleven hundred from east to west ; which comes wonderfully near to the actual dimensions of modern China.

PTOLEMY represents Serica as traversed by two great rivers. It is impossible, with our slender information, to bring home the details of these rivers. But the fact is, that there are just two great rivers in China. These, too, for a considerable time after entering the empire, flow north-west, like the rivers of Serica ; and it deserves notice, that there are no great rivers in this part of Asia, except these two, which flow in such a direction.

Let us now examine the geographical relations of Serica to the neighbouring countries. This is of course to be done on the principle which seems fully established by M. GOSSELIN, that the country of the Sinæ is Siam ; in consequence of which, India beyond the Ganges is limited chiefly to the Birman empire. PTOLEMY states, that all the natives of India whom he met with in the ports of Egypt, assured him that the Seres were beyond the Sinæ. This description will apply to no country of Asia except China. He states, that India beyond the Ganges is bounded on the north, partly by Scythia, and partly by Serica. Ava, accordingly, is bounded, on that side, partly by Thibet, and partly by the Chinese province of Yunnan. Again, the Sinæ are bounded on the north by Serica alone. Siam, accordingly, is so bounded by China ; for the small intervening kingdom of Laos would of course be included in one or the other. Again, *Scythia extra Imaum*, is bounded

on the south by India beyond the Ganges *alone*, not at any point by India within the Ganges. *Scythia extra Imaum*, then, is entirely east of Indostan, while Serica is east of *Scythia extra Imaum*. It is needless to say to what country such a description would apply, and how inconsistent it is with the idea which makes Serica border upon, or make part of Indostan.

To these very precise statements of PTOLEMY, it may be proper to add those, though much looser and more vague, of PLINY and AMMIANUS. PLINY states, that the last country distinctly known, (*ubi gentes plane constant*,) was the chain of mountains called the Emodus. The moderns seem always to imagine, that Imaus and Emodus are merely different names for the same chain. But though instances may be found of their being so used, these never occur in the writings of the more accurate geographers. With them Emodus is east of Imaus, or rather, perhaps, it is the same chain after passing the head of the Ganges. This distinction is made by PTOLEMY in the most precise manner. With him Imaus separates India from the Sacæ, Emodus from *Scythia extra Imaum*. PLINY also repeatedly enumerates Imaus, Emodus, Caucasus, Parapomisisus, as at least separate parts of the great chain which traverses Asia. After enumerating the nations between the Indus and the Ganges, he enumerates those between the Ganges and the Emodus. His Emodus, then, like that of PTOLEMY, is evidently a chain east of the Ganges. The great region, then, which lies east of the Emodus, cannot well be any other than China. It appears to me that PLINY confounded under the name of Seres all the nations who dwelt beyond India, as the author of the *Periplus* confounds them all under the name of Sinæ. I know not whether Lanos can be pronounced to be Laos; but the *Chryse Promontorum* can scarcely be any thing else than the

the Golden Chersonese. This will account for the assertion, that the people of Taprobane were placed at a small distance from, and carried on traffic with Serica.

We have thus found, that the leading astronomical and geographical features ascribed to Serica, agree exactly with China, and can apply to no other country. The moral features are, if possible, still more decisive. These do not enter into the plan of PTOLEMY, but they are noticed by PLINY, and detailed at some length by AMMIANUS. The Seres are represented as a people frugal, quiet, sedate, and tranquil beyond all others; as, of all nations the most unwarlike, and the most averse to the use of arms; as shunning, with the most studious care, the society and intercourse of other nations, and scarcely ever allowing them to enter their territory; as carrying on trade at a fixed frontier station only, and under the strictest precautions; as selling their own commodities, without receiving the commodities of other nations in return*.

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* It may be proper here to notice a report which militates against our view of the subject. Some authors describe the Seres as a people remarkable for their honesty. Thus MELA says, "*gens plenum justitiæ, ex commercio, quod rebus in solitudine relictis absens peragit, notissimum.*" I think it evident, that this character is solely founded upon the rumour so often repeated, that they and their neighbours carried on trade without meeting, but by merely laying down the goods in each others absence. It is remarkable, that rumours of a trade so conducted have been transmitted in all ages, from the remote extremities of the known world, without having been confirmed in any instance by the testimony of a credible eye-witness. This inclines me to believe that it is a mere poetical fable, taking refuge, like other fables, at the dim boundaries of knowledge. While such descriptions were afloat, the quiet and cautious habits of the Seres would very naturally cause the application to be made to them. If such a trade did exist, it must have been a political precaution; and, in that case, public authority would enforce that fair-dealing, without which it could not subsist. We may finally remark, that

This is exactly the picture of the modern Chinese ; and it is one totally inapplicable to any other nation of any age. If there are any from whose description it is most peculiarly remote, these certainly are the rude tribes who inhabit Tartary, Thibet, and the mountainous districts to the north of India. It is a very remarkable phenomenon in the history of man, and one which Southern Asia alone can present, that a description written nearly two thousand years ago, should paint this celebrated people with as much precision, as if it had been composed by a writer of the present day.

If, then, *Serica* be considered as China, and the divisions of Central Asia be regulated accordingly, then these divisions, in all their grand outlines of extent, geographical features, relative position as to themselves, and to the kingdoms of Southern Asia, will correspond exactly to the delineation of *PTOLEMY*. Even in the moral and political features of the remotest of these countries, there is found the most surprising correspondence. Nothing, therefore, remains to complete the proof, but to consider some details, which appear, at first sight, to militate against this supposition.

D'ANVILLE remarks, that the general aspect of *Serica*, as exhibited by *PTOLEMY*, is that of a country similar to *Scythia*. The truth of this observation cannot be denied. There is nothing in his description of the interior of *Serica*, which suggests the idea of modern China. On the contrary, there is the broad
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that this character is ascribed to the *Seres* only by secondary writers, and that *PLINY* and *AMMIANUS*, our best and most copious authorities, make no mention of such a feature. *AMMIANUS*, indeed, mentions the mode of trade above alluded to ; but he omits entirely to draw from it the inference which is made by *MELA*.

fact, that it is represented as traversed by chains of mountains, a feature which the latter region does not present. This is a very important difficulty, and will require some consideration.

It is not easy for us to ascertain the degree of correctness with which *PTOLEMY* has described Great Thibet, from our being ourselves almost totally ignorant of that region. We can only form a favourable presumption, from the accuracy with which he has delineated those conterminous regions, with which we are better acquainted *. But it is certain, that on approaching the confines of *Serica*, that twilight of knowledge must have begun, which always precedes its total extinction. A peculiar source of obscurity there arose. It was the decided policy of that country, as it has always been of modern China, to shut the empire, with the most jealous care, against the entrance of foreigners. Commerce was permitted only at one single point, and it was carried on with the least possible communication ; nay, according to an often repeated assertion, without the parties even seeing each other. It was impossible, therefore, that the ancient writers could possess authentic details relative to the interior of *Serica*. But an infirmity beset *PTOLEMY*, which continued always to prevail among geographers, till the great reform effected by *D'ANVILLE*. It was conceived discreditable, that any district within the limits of
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* I shall mention, however, the following names, in which the resemblance is somewhat rude ; but allowance must be made for the passage through Grecian organs ; and the positions correspond very precisely. *Chauranci* (juxta *Emodos Montes*), Mount Chumularee. *Achassa*,—*Lassa*. *Chata* (*Khatai*, Gr.) *Khata*, on the Upper *Barrainpooter*. (See *M. VANSITTART'S Account of Assam*. *Asiatic Research*. vol. vii. *Damna*,—*Daum*. *Ottorocoras*,—*Uttarcul* or *Ootrecole*. This last must be understood in connection with the observations which follow in the text.

the known world, should appear on the map as an entire blank. As they were far, however, from being all perfectly known, it became often necessary, in acting upon this principle, to have recourse to somewhat arbitrary measures. One of the most common was, by extension or repetition, to fill up the unknown parts out of the known, a process of which many instances must have occurred, to those who are versant in such researches. The combined celebrity and obscurity of the present object, might seem to authorise more than the usual licence. Accordingly, it appears to me, that PTOLEMY has entirely protracted, into Serica, the geographical lines of Eastern Scythia. Of this operation there appear, in the very description, to be pretty evident traces. We have Issedon Scythica, Issedon Serica; while, of the Casian, Auzacian, and Emodian mountains and regions, the western part is in Scythia, and the eastern in Serica. It is, I think, quite unexampled, that any great country, much less so immense a country as Serica, and one separated by such powerful barriers from the rest of the world, should consist almost entirely of districts protracted out of another region, with which it has no natural or political connexion. We may observe, that PTOLEMY stands alone in representing Serica to be a country of mountains. AMMIANUS, as a historian, has given, at some length, a description of its general aspect. His representation decidedly is, that of a plain of vast extent and luxuriant fertility, and which was only surrounded by a circuit of mountains. I think it even appears, that the same idea was in PTOLEMY's mind; for he begins by saying, "Mountains *surround* the Seres;" though in the delineation he certainly never reaches beyond these mountains.

From the whole of what has now been said, it may be inferred, that all the details given respecting Serica are to be sought, and may perhaps be hereafter found, with some degree of precision,

cision, in the eastern extremity of Great Thibet. But the geographical outline, the broad line of distinction always drawn between Serica and Scythia, the general aspect of the former, and every thing that is said respecting its inhabitants, leave no room to doubt, that the Serica of the ancients, the country of silk, the abode of this peculiar and singular people, could be no other than the modern China. Even the short notices which are given respecting it, seem sufficient clearly to evince, that in arts and civilization, and in its whole moral and political aspect, this celebrated region was then as nearly as possible the same that it exists at the present day.

I have thus exhibited at some length that interpretation of the system of PROLEMY and his cotemporaries, which appears to me alone consistent with their statements, and with the real aspect of those vast regions to which they refer. As, however, opinions so opposite are entertained by the most eminent geographers of the past and present age, it may be necessary, before concluding, to inquire, whether their statements exhibit the same correspondence with the ancient descriptions. D'ANVILLE here claims the precedence. He, as formerly noticed, places Serica in Eastern Tartary, north of the Great Desert, and extends it from the country of the Eygurs to the north-west extremity of China. In this system, Major RENNELL has declared his almost unqualified acquiescence; so that it is supported by very high authority indeed. Yet I think it will appear, on a careful inspection, that it breaks up completely all the relations established by PROLEMY between Central and Southern Asia. It separates the Sacæ from Indostan, the Extra-Scythians from India beyond the Ganges, and the Seres from Siam, by an immeasurable distance. Besides, it is admitted on all hands, that the ascent of the Montes Comedorum (the Beloor) must be considerably south of Cashgar, to reach which, the caravans must have proceeded almost directly

north. On the contrary, PTOLEMY mentions very expressly, that, after ascending the Beloor, they turned to the south-east, and continued for more than two hundred miles in that direction. Unless, therefore, they had mistaken north for south, it was impossible they could ever arrive at Cashgar. It is only on a superficial view that this system can appear to be favoured by the graduation of PTOLEMY. From the influence of the same causes which we have noticed as acting upon the longitudes, all his latitudes in Central Asia are greatly too high. M. GOSSELIN, however, has proved, that the errors of PTOLEMY's graduation become great only by accumulating along an extensive line, and that it expresses, with tolerable correctness, the relation between two places at a moderate distance from each other. The source of the Ganges, and, with slight variations, all the points along the northern boundary line of India, are placed by PTOLEMY in latitude 37° , (about 6° too high). Now, one point in the caravan-route through the *Sacarum Regio*, is only 39° , and the highest is 43° ; being six of PTOLEMY's degrees, less than five of ours, north from the source of the Ganges. LADAUK is six; so that in fact this statement combines with the other indications, in fixing down the country of the Sacæ to Little Thibet.

In corroboration of these proofs, it may be added, that silk is not the product of this region, and that we should look there in vain for the vast and fruitful plains described by AMMIANUS. Much less is it probable that the Seres, a mild, timid, unwarlike people, should ever have inhabited the country of the Huns and the Moguls, whose hordes have in all ages spread desolation over the eastern world.

The only ground, so far as I can discover, upon which this system has rested, is *one name*, the influence of which upon the
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the geography of Central Asia, has been so remarkable, that it may require a little consideration. It has, I think, been considered unquestionable by all modern geographers, that the Casia Regio of PTOLEMY can be no other than the modern Cashgar. Not only has this been the sole prop of D'ANVILLE's hypothesis, but it has perhaps been the main source of the pertinacity, with which the Beloor has been always identified with the Imaus. I must here premise, that no proof has been used in a more irregular and licentious manner, than the one in question. The ever rolling tide of war and revolution, has swept from almost every region the names borne by it during the age of which we are treating. If we make an exception of great natural objects, mountains and rivers, there is not perhaps one name in twenty which bears any resemblance; and it is quite as likely, that this one should be the result of accident as of real identity. I would therefore lay down a principle which will scarcely perhaps be dissented from by any who have had the least experience in such researches: Where the descriptions correspond, a similar name may be considered as fixing the spot with greater certainty and precision: Where there is no such correspondence, a mere name can never be set against those grand features of nature which, remaining the same from age to age, form our only sure guide in such an investigation.

The Casia Regio is a territory of Scythia extra Imaum, bordering upon, and even, according to PTOLEMY, extending into Serica. Cashgar is at an immense distance from China or Great Thibet; it is situated close to the Beloor. It would be a mere repetition of every thing that has been said, to prove that the identifying of the two breaks up the whole scheme of PTOLEMY's geography of Central Asia; and that, according to him, Cashgar ought to form part of *Scythia intra Imaum*. There is a still more decided and tangible discrepancy. Cash-

gar is situated very near to the head of the Jaxartes ; the Casia Regio is immensely distant from any part of that river. Now I submit to the learned, whether the imperfect resemblance of a single name can be sufficient to overthrow, not only the whole general description of Asia, but the particular description of the very country to which it is applied. It happens very accidentally, however, that we stand here on much stronger ground ; for it is surprising, that geographers should have overlooked that PTOLEMY has in another place given precisely both the name and situation of Cashgar. It is in a people of *Scythia intra Imaum*, the *Cachagæ* Scythæ, whose situation is not precisely laid down, but it is mentioned, that they lie near to the Jaxartæ, the nation who inhabit the banks of the Jaxartes. I conceive, therefore, that every argument founded upon this name must fall to the ground ; after which there will not remain a single prop on which this system can rest.

Mr PINKERTON's hypothesis, which places Serica in Little Bucharïa, seems liable to all the objections already urged against that of D'ANVILLE, to a somewhat greater extent, and with the addition, that he disregards entirely the dimensions assigned by PTOLEMY to those regions.

M. GOSSELIN has formed a very different system. He conceives the north of India, with the contiguous portion of Thibet, to be the real Serica of the ancients. To reconcile this with the statements of PTOLEMY, he supposes this geographer to have committed an error, when, in extending the caravan route beyond the *Purgos Lithinos*, he gave it an eastern direction. It ought, he conceives, to have been southern, which, instead of carrying the travellers towards China, would have brought them directly to the north of India. Now, I am fully aware, that the ancients erred often very materially in what the French call *orienting* their lines ; that is, in giving them a proper

per direction as to the points of the compass. But I think there is scarcely an example, that so extensive a line, reaching across nearly half a continent, should be so entirely changed. I believe also that the error occurs chiefly in vague boundary lines, or in coasts, where the vessel, according to ancient practice, followed all the windings of the shore, and was acted upon by various tides and currents. It might then be difficult to ascertain the general line of their course, and an erroneous idea, once formed, might not readily be corrected. But a land-route is in a much more direct line ; and as travellers have an obvious interest to know the direction in which they are moving, so the most superficial observation of the celestial phenomena will enable them to avoid any error of great magnitude. PTOLEMY, we may observe, enumerates very particularly all the changes of direction made by the great caravan in its course through Asia. From the passage of the Euphrates to Hecatompylos, the capital of Parthia, he makes it east ; which that line very nearly is. Thence to the capital of Hyrcania, north ; that is, north-east, as east is always understood to be the general direction. Then to the capital of Margiana, by a circuitous route through Aria, first south, and then north ; to Bactra, east ; to the ascent of the Montes Comedorum, north-east ; which agrees with Mr ELPHINSTONE's map ; then south-east, being the direction of the plain of Little Thibet ; then again north-east, which is the direction of the valley of the Ladauk, the established line of communication with Great Thibet. Thus, along the whole of this immense line, the minutest variations are clearly recognised ; and the improbability is greatly increased, that, in the next stage, so extraordinary an error should be committed.

The merchants farther informed MARINUS, that, lengthened as the march now described had been, it formed scarcely half of the peregrination to Sera ; that from the *Purgos Lithinos*, commenced

menced a laborious journey to that capital, which could not be performed in less than seven months. Admitting, with PTOLEMY, that a large allowance is to be made for the delays and difficulties of the journey, and perhaps for some degree of wanton and boastful exaggeration, there will remain enough to carry them nearly to the extremity of Asia; and it will remain quite unaccountable, how any period approaching to the above, could be spent in travelling to a place which could not be farther distant than five or six hundred miles.

If the distance and direction correspond thus ill, the description is, if possible, still more discordant. So far was PTOLEMY from the remotest idea of Sera being in India, or near the Ganges, that he fixes it about forty degrees, nearly half the length of Asia, east from that river. The most profound ignorance of this quarter of India would be necessary to account for so unheard of an error. On the contrary, we have found this region, which gives rise to the Ganges and its tributaries, to be one of those in which PTOLEMY has displayed the most decided superiority to modern information. In representing the heads of the Ganges by the rivers of Serica, PTOLEMY would have committed a very extraordinary error indeed; for these run south-west, while the others are made to run north-east; a change of direction quite unheard of. With regard to the geographical relations of Serica, it is needless to mention them, as it is evident that all these, by the present system, must be entirely thrown up.

This system, like the other, rests solely, I apprehend, upon *nominal* arguments. Some writers mention Serinda, or India Serica, a country in the north of Indostan, which actually produced silk, the staple of Serica. What is more, there are two, Stephen of Byzantium, and the anonymous geographer of Ravenna, who appear to consider this as *the* Serica, and the Seres

as Indians. In order to estimate these authorities, however, we must consider their dates. It is not till two or three centuries after PLINY and PTOLEMY, that the name of *Serindi* occurs; nor is it till the sixth and eighth centuries, that these come to be confounded with the Seres. The decline of the Roman empire, and the irruption of the Turcoman hordes, broke off this grand line of commerce across Asia; silk, then, which had become the luxury of all ranks, was again sold for its weight in gold. The consequence was, that the geography of this part of the world, more than shared the general eclipse in which all branches of science were involved. Of this, the statements of the Ravenna geographer afford the clearest evidence. He evidently knew nothing of the coast of India beyond the Ganges; and the appellation of *India Serica* comprehends, with him, not only the whole interior of Indostan, but the whole of Central and Eastern Asia, to Bactriana inclusive. It is clear, therefore, that he viewed those regions in the manner natural to ignorance, as a dim and indistinct mass, the features of which were all blended together. In regard to other parts of the world, that were at all remote, he displays errors that belong only to the infancy of science. He makes the Caspian a gulf of the Northern Ocean; he extends Britain entirely from east to west, making one extremity border on Norway, and the other on Spain. His age seems therefore to be characterised by the almost total extinction, as to all remote regions, of those geographical lights which had shone upon the age of PLINY and PTOLEMY; and in preferring his authority to theirs, M. GOSSELIN prefers, if not darkness, at least deep twilight, to the light of day.

With regard to the origin of the name *Serinda*, it does not appear very difficult to trace. *Serica* was known to the ancients as the country of silk; that substance itself was called
sericum.

sericum. When, in consequence of interrupted commerce, the empire laboured under the want of this luxury, intelligence was brought, that it was produced in a region to the north of India, from whence, in fact, the silk-worms were transported to Europe. That region might then be very naturally called India Serica or Serinda, changed by the Mahommedan conquerors to the Arabic term of *Sirhind*. But M. GOSSELIN himself remarks, that the very names of Serinda and India Serica imply that there is another Serica, and other Seres. These he finds on the other side of the Ganges, in Serinagur, a place which certainly presents a somewhat curious coincidence of name. *Nagur* being a common appendage to Indian names of places, and signifying chief city, *Serinagur* represents almost exactly the Sera Metropolis of PTOLEMY. I must confess, that I have nothing to oppose to any one who should conceive the coincidence of a single name sufficient to invalidate all the arguments on the other side which have now been stated. I shall only add, that M. GOSSELIN's ideas of the territory of Serinagur, are entirely derived from those erroneous views which have been dissipated by the expedition to the source of the Ganges; the result of which, though known in this country, does not seem to have reached him previous to the publication of his last volumes. He mentions Serinagur as situated among the frontier mountains, and even stretching into Thibet. He is evidently not aware, that it is entirely enclosed within the great mountain wall of India. Captain RAPER and Mr WEBB notice, that on ascending a hill in its vicinity, they found themselves indeed raised to a great height above the plain of India; but on turning northward, they beheld with amazement, and almost with terror, a long succession of ranges rising over each other, while high above all, towered the eternal snows of Himalaya. That commerce should take its course across this
barrier

barrier of ice and desolation, when an easy and level route existed to the coast, then crowded by western navigators, is surely not very probable.

In 1802, Serinagur was visited by Captain HARDWICKE, who has given a description of it, which is confirmed by Captain RAPER and Mr WEBB. They represent it situated in a valley, extending about a mile and a half in every direction; the city itself three quarters of a mile in length, and about half that breadth; the houses poor, and the streets so narrow, that two persons could scarcely walk abreast. There was scarcely a mansion fit for the residence of a provincial Rajah; no splendid ruins, no monuments of antiquity; nothing which could recal the splendor of that mighty metropolis, whose fame was so widely diffused over the ancient world.

From the whole of what has been said, it seems to follow, that the interpretation now proposed, is that which naturally arises out of the statements of PTOLEMY. If it be admitted as true, his delineation will still, indeed, present imperfections and errors of detail; but, in all its leading features, it will be found correct, consistent with itself, and with the actual features of the region delineated. Upon the other suppositions now prevalent, it forms confessedly a mass of the most enormous errors that ever were committed by any geographer. Between these two alternatives, there could scarcely, in any case, be room for hesitation. It can be added, however, that PTOLEMY is not only a writer generally of good authority, but that he has shewn himself to possess, in respect to a long series of conterminous regions, better information than had, till very recently, been attained by the moderns. I submit, then, to the learned, whether credit should be refused to his delineation of those ulterior regions, with regard to which also he probably had access to better materials than have yet fallen to the lot of modern inquirers.

POSTSCRIPT.

Since the above was printed, I had an opportunity of submitting it to Dr FRANCIS BUCHANAN, whose extensive researches into the history and geography of India are already well known to the public, and will, we are happy to learn, appear in future publications. A long residence in Nepaul afforded him peculiar opportunities of collecting information respecting the countries bordering on the northern frontier of India. I was gratified to find, that he entirely concurred in the general views contained in this essay, and even attached less importance than I myself had done, to some of the objections which may be made to them. He was so obliging as to communicate the following additional and corrective information on several important topics.

I have stated my suspicion, that the river reported to the Chinese Lamas as the Ganges, was in reality the Indus. From Dr BUCHANAN's information, however, I cannot doubt that it is the Sutledge, or, more properly, Satadru (Zaradrus of PROLEMY,) which rising from the lake Manas Saroer, crosses the Snowy Chain, and rolls through the Punjaub into the Indus. Dr BUCHANAN is also of opinion, though it is otherwise represented by Mr ARROWSMITH, that the Gogra rises from a lake near the Manas Saroer, and crosses the Himalaya.

Dr BUCHANAN is convinced, from positive information, of the existence of the Chain of Mountains separating Great from Little Thibet, which I have supposed to be the Northern Imaus of PROLEMY. It appears in the most recent map of Mr ARROWSMITH, under the name of Mount *Caillas*, at precisely the same distance east from the source of the Ganges, that PROLEMY has placed his bend of the Imaus; and contains on its opposite sides the sources of the Barrumpooter (properly Bramapoutra,)

Bramapoutra,) the Satadru, and the Ladauk, which is evidently the largest branch of the Indus. Mr ARROWSMITH has extended it along the western bank of the Ladauk ; but Dr BUCHANAN has every reason to believe, that it stretches along the opposite side, and unites itself to the Mooz Taugh, forming a complete barrier between Great and Little Thibet. Whether or how far it extends northward, in the direction indicated by PTOLEMY, modern geography does not afford the means of ascertaining. Dr BUCHANAN is disposed to view it as a prolongation of the Mooz Taugh, turning southwards, and uniting with the Himalaya. This is evidently little more than a nominal distinction from the opposite view of PTOLEMY, in making it a continuation of the Imaus northward.

Under Dr BUCHANAN's direction, I have ventured to lay down the chain of mountains in question according to his idea of their course ; also the sources of the Bramapoutra, Ladauk, Satadru and Gogra.

Dr BUCHANAN is of opinion, that the representation of China as a country of mountains would not be so wholly incorrect as I have supposed. He conceives, that the lofty chain separating Canton from the northern provinces, and which was crossed by Sir GEORGE STAUNTON, is a prolongation of the Himalaya. This would make PTOLEMY correct, in extending that chain, under the name of *Ottorocoras*, to the extremity of the known world. The western provinces of the empire are also in general mountainous.

Dr BUCHANAN attaches no importance to the name of Serinagur, (properly Sreenagur, *the Holy City*,) as he knows its foundation to be entirely modern, and not to reach back above two or three centuries.

The ancient Map is copied from those usually appended to PTOLEMY's Geography, unless in a few instances, where these appeared to differ from the text, which is universally allowed to be of higher authority.