

called Dardæ by PLINY, »in regione septemtrionalium Indorum». The name Dards is still in use.¹

It is curious that not an echo from the immense Himalaya has reached Herodotus, although he has heard the strange story of the gold-digging ants. This story has been told over and over again and discussed by many learned men. Disregarding the literature dealing with the old legend, I will only quote the last and most important contribution to a solution, namely the article by Dr. LAUFER, so much the more, as he therein also touches upon Tibetan antiquity.² Like Herodotus the *Mahābhārata* mentions the ant-gold, but from where does this expression originate? Greeks, Indians, Mongols and Tibetans, — all use the expression ant-gold. The nucleus of the problem would therefore be to find out from where the term comes. In a tale of Geser Khan, Laufer finds this passage: »There is gold in lumps, which the king of the ants has collected in his activity.» In the official history of the Tibetan royal dynasty written in 1327 mention is twice made about sand of ant-gold. The Indians have borrowed the story of the gold-digging ants from Central Asia. The ants are not Tibetan gold-diggers, nor marmots, as many scholars have supposed. Only ants are meant and Herodotus has given the tale correctly. Amongst the Mongols the story may have been very old, much older than Herodotus. When SCHIERN speaks of human gold-diggers of the Tibetan antiquity, Laufer reminds us of the fact that the antiquity of Tibet remains unknown to us. He says that one cannot speak of a Tibet at all from the time of Herodotus and the *Mahābhārata*. We do not even know at all whether the highlands of central Tibet were inhabited in those early days, and Laufer feels very much inclined to believe that no inhabitants then existed in the country. A state of Tibet, as a political and national unity, cannot be spoken of before the beginning of the seventh century A. D., and of an old culture within the boundaries of Tibet proper nothing is known to us. Before that time we have to imagine the existence of numerous tribes, who may have contributed to the formation of the later Tibetan nation, but who were not aborigines of Tibet, as they must have come from western China at a very early period. Laufer tells us that the traditions of the historical Tibetans, the Indo-Chinese linguistic and the history of the migrations of the Indo-Chinese tribes, in this respect agree with each other, namely, that the expansion of the Tibetans has taken place from east to west, and that the present Tibet has been the limit of these wanderings. Tibetan tradition has nothing to tell of fights with aboriginal inhabitants; therefore we are allowed to suppose that the country was uninhabited when the first Tibetan tribes came in from the east. Only the Himalayan tribes were pressed southwards by the new immigrants, an incident

¹ A History of Ancient Geography by E. H. BUNBURY. Sec. Ed. Vol. I. London 1883, p. 229.

² Die Sage von den goldgrabenden Amais, von BERTHOLD LAUFER. T'oung pao. Série II. Vol. IX. Leide 1908, p. 429 et seq.