

which Laufer believes must have taken place not earlier than the 4th or 5th century A. D. The earliest historical facts we possess about Tibetan tribes, which are known to us from the Chinese annals, have nothing to do with the country which we now call Tibet.

Therefore such an old story as that about the gold-digging ants cannot be transferred to »Old Tibet». Herodotus heard it in the fifth century B. C., when the ethnological situation was very different from that of our days, and when there could be no talk at all of human gold-diggers. And therefore, when Herodotus speaks of the gold-digging ants he does not allude to Tibetan nomads making use of antelope horns as instruments for scratching the soil.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Laufer points to the possibility of the legend originating from very far away, perhaps even from Altai, one of the oldest gold-producing regions of Asia. The resemblance between the two Mongol words *shiraighol* (Yellow River) and *shirgholji* (ant) may, as Laufer bravely suggests, show the way to the right solution of a problem, the popularity of which has been carried through thousands of years by the great name of Herodotus. It should be remembered, in this connection, that the Rev. A. H. FRANCKE heard the same story told at Kalatse, only a few years ago, and that some specimens of the »gold-digging ants» were even shown to him by natives.<sup>2</sup>

CTESIAS OF CNIDUS who lived 17 years at the coast of Persia must have had ample opportunity to acquire information about the geography of western and southern Asia. He returned to Greece in 398 B. C. Still his geographical knowledge of India seems to have been very limited, if at all in advance of that of Herodotus. Probably he knew nothing more of the countries east of the Indus than his great predecessor, and he does not mention the Ganges. He enormously exaggerates the width of the Indus.<sup>3</sup>

From the days of Herodotus to those of ARISTOTLE very little progress had been made in any definite knowledge of the geography of Asia.

Aristotle points out that almost all great rivers find their source in great mountain ranges, and adds: »It is thus that in Asia most of the rivers and those of largest size descend from the mountain which is called Parnasos; and this is generally considered to be the largest of all the mountains that are situated towards the winter sunrise . . . The Indus also takes its rise in the same chain, which has the largest stream of all rivers.» The Parnasos is probably the same as the Paropamisus or Paropanisus of the Greeks in later times.<sup>4</sup>

Through the Persian wars the Greeks received their first knowledge of Asia beyond what Homer had been able to relate. Then came the great geographers

<sup>1</sup> HOLDICH: *Tibet, The Mysterious*. London 1904, p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> *A History of Western Tibet*. London 1907, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> BUNBURY, *op. cit.* p. 338.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 399.