

without art or science, they had, like the *Huns*, both warriors and law-givers in their own country some centuries before the birth of CHRIST.

If learning was ever anciently cultivated in the regions to the north of *India*, the seats of it. I have reason to suspect, must have been *Elghur*, *Cassagar*, *Khatà*, *Chên*, *Tancùt*, and other countries of *Chinese Tartary*, which lie between the thirty-fifth and forty-fifth degrees of northern latitude; but I shall, in another discourse, produce my reasons for supposing that those very countries were peopled by a race allied to the *Hindus*, or enlightened at least by their vicinity to *India* and *China*; yet in *Tancùt*, which by some is annexed to *Tibet*, and even among its old inhabitants, the *Seres*, we have no certain accounts of uncommon talents or great improvements: they were famed, indeed, for the faithful discharge of moral duties, for a pacifick disposition, and for that longevity, which is often the reward of patient virtues and a calm temper; but they are said to have been wholly indifferent, in former ages to the elegant arts and even to commerce; though FADLU'LLAH had been informed, that, near the close of the *thirteenth* century, many branches of natural philosophy were cultivated in *Cam-cheu*, then the metropolis of *Serica*.

We may readily believe those who assure us, that some tribes of wandering *Tartars* had real skill in applying herbs and minerals to the purposes of medicine, and pretended to skill in magick; but the general character of their nation seems to have been this: they were professed hunters or fishers, dwelling on that account in forests or near great rivers, under huts or rude tents. or in waggons drawn by their cattle from station to station; they were dextrous archers, excellent horsemen, bold combatants, appearing often to flee in disorder for the sake of renewing their attack with advantage; drinking the milk of mares, and eating the flesh of colts; and thus in many respects resembling the old *Arabs*, but in nothing more than in their love of intoxicating liquors, and in nothing less than in a taste for poetry and the improvement of their language.

Thus has it been proved, and, in my humble opinion, beyond controversy, that the far greater part of *Asia* has been peopled and immemorially possessed by three considerable nations, whom, for want of better names, we may call *Hindus*, *Arabs*, and *Tartars*; each of them divided and subdivided into an infinite number of branches, and all of them so different in form and features, language, manners, and religion, that if they sprang originally from a common root, they must have been separated for ages: whether more than three primitive stocks can be found, or, in other words, whether the *Chinese*, *Japanese*, and *Persians*, are entirely distinct from them, or formed by their intermixture, I shall hereafter, if your indulgence to me continue, diligently inquire. To what conclusions these inquiries will lead, I cannot yet clearly discern; but, if they lead to truth, we shall not regret our journey through this dark region of ancient history, in which, while we proceed step by step, and follow every glimmering of certain light, that presents itself, we must beware of those false rays and luminous vapours, which mislead *Asiatic* travellers by an appearance of water, but are found on a near approach to be deserts of sand.