

# DUAN CHENGSHI AND XIN TANGSHU

## 1. DUAN CHENGSHI

The country of Bobali is in the southwestern sea. (The people) do not eat any of the five grains but eat only meat. They often stick a needle into the veins of cattle and draw blood which they drink raw, mixed with milk. They wear no clothes except that they cover (the parts) below their loins with sheep-skins. Their women are clean and of proper behaviour. The inhabitants themselves kidnap them, and if they sell them to foreign merchants, they fetch several times their price. The country produces only ivory and ambergris, a substance used for perfume. If Persian merchants wish to go into the country, they collect around them several thousand men and present them with strips of cloth. All, whether old or young draw blood and swear an oath, and then only do they trade their products. From olden times on they were not subject to any foreign country. In fighting they use elephants' tusks and ribs and the horns of wild buffaloes as lances and they wear armor and bows and arrows. They have twenty myriads of foot soldiers. The Arabs make frequent raids upon them.

## 2. XIN TANGSHU

South-west from Fulin [Egypt], after one traverses the desert for two thousand miles is a country called Malin. Its people are black and their nature is fierce. The land is pestilentious and has no herbs, no trees, and no cereals. They feed the horses on dried fish; the people eat *Humang*; the *Humang* is the Persian date. They are not ashamed of debauching the wives of their fathers or chiefs, they are (in this respect) the worst of the barbarians. They call this: to seek out the proper master and subject. In the seventh moon they rest completely [i.e. Ramadan]. They (then) do not send out nor receive (any merchandise) in trade and they sit drinking all night long. . . .

Madagascar is a large island in the sea. There are regularly great birds. When they fly they obscure the sun for a short time. There are wild camels, and if the birds meet them, they swallow them up. If one finds a feather of the great bird, by cutting the quill, one can make a water-jar of it.

The products of the country are big elephants' tusks and rhinoceros' horns.

There are many savages. Their bodies are black as lacquer and they have frizzled hair. They are enticed by (offers of) food and then captured and sold as slaves to the Arabic countries, where they fetch a very high price. They are employed as gate-keepers, and it is said that they have no longing for their kinsfolk.