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Hellenes and Romans in Ancient China (240 BC – 1398 AD)

by Lucas Christopoulos

Kobe, Japan



Λουκάς Χριστόπουλος

καθ' ὅλου δέ φησιν ἐκεῖνος τῆς συμπάσης Ἀριανῆς πρόσχημα εἶναι τὴν Βακτριανὴν καὶ δὴ καὶ μέχρι Σηρῶν καὶ Φρυγῶν ἐξέτεινον τὴν ἀρχήν.

In short, Apollodoros says that Bactriana is the ornament of Ariana as a whole; and, more than that, they extended their empire even as far as the Seres and the Phryni.

總之，阿潑羅多柔斯說大夏包含阿立阿那。（他們）同時伸展王國把尼泊爾和中國戰勝。

— Στράβων (Strabo, *Geography* 11, XI, 1)

Introduction

Following the death of Alexander the Great, a large number of his soldiers were forced to remain in the Asian fortified cities of Bactria and northwest India in order to control the occupied territories. These new colonies of the East appealed to migrants, many of them artists or mercenaries from Greece, during the reign of Alexander's successor, Seleucos. Many of the children that issued from the mixed marriages of Greeks and locals belonged to a Hellenized aristocracy that came to rule Bactria and northwest India for, in some places, the next three hundred years. Soon after Seleucos had made an alliance with Chandragupta Maurya, the king of India, the Kshatriya, the warrior caste of India, had come to consider the Greeks as entirely members of their own clan. After the reign of Chandragupta's grandson Ashoka, the first Buddhist king of India, this alliance was reflected in Gandhara with the development of a Greco-Buddhist culture. The independent kingdom of Bactria claimed by Diodotes gave rise to a distinctive culture that mixed Persian, Indian and Greek elements, and its later expansion eastward eventually had a great impact on the Chinese world. The Greco-Bactrians and their Hellenized Scythian troops reached China through the Tarim Basin and established colonies in its southern portion, along the northern range of the Himalayas. The eastern part of the Roman Empire then took the relay, thronged with travelers, embassies and traders reaching China through Sri Lanka, the Kushana Empire and India, following the Spice Road from Roman Egypt. After the advent of Christianity, Byzantium developed close relations with Tang dynasty China in its turn, mostly with Syrian monks acting as intermediaries between the two empires.

In this article I have assembled elements from historical texts, archaeological discoveries and research from other scholars in order to establish the links between these civilizations. Few archaeological discoveries have been made in China, and the lack of information on that side makes this research difficult. The ancient Roman and Greek historical sources are also insignificant concerning this particular cultural exchange in East Asia. Modern Western scholars do not have many tools to investigate the subject seriously, and they are very cautious when it comes to Chinese national history. The subject can hurt national sensibilities, because it is situated at the crossroads of major ancient civilisations, and some might regard investigating the

interactions in that area as taboo. But if we can pass over this psychological barrier, disregarding particular ethnicities and considering mankind’s history as global, then it is possible to make fascinating deductions concerning what happened along the Silk Road in Xinjiang. I found only a few pieces of this particular historical puzzle; other needed pieces are still missing or may themselves raise further questions. I do not intend to try to draw definitive conclusions to these unresolved problems, but I do suggest that we need to assemble all the pieces that we have in order to have a clearer view. That is the premise of this essay. I hope that future archaeological discoveries and exchanges with other scholars will help to clarify this signal part of human history, one that links two ancient and greatly influential civilizations — Greece and China.

1. Black horses, Greeks and Lixuan

The Greeks and their troops who lived in Bactria, Sogdiana and Ferghana came to be known as the Lixuan (黎軒), Lixuan (驪軒), or Lijian (犁鞞) people by the Chinese soon after the opening of the Silk Road to Central Asia by the Emperor Han Wudi (漢武帝 156–87 BC).¹ According to Paul Pelliot, the word Lijian was derived from a phonetic translation of Alexandria in Egypt.² However, the name Lijian appeared before the Chinese knew about the Spice Road along the seacoast to the city of Alexandria on the Nile, so it is unlikely Lixuan is linked with it. The

¹ The roads between Central Asia and the Mediterranean Sea through Persia were already widely used by the Persians during the Achaemenid Empire. See Pierre Briant, *Highways, Byways, and Road Systems in the Pre-Modern World*, first edition, edited by Susan E. Alcock, John Bodel, and Richard J. A. Talbert (John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2012). (**Map III, 1**)

² Paul Pelliot thought that Ljian would have been Alexandria of Egypt: « Note sur les anciens itinéraires Chinois dans l’orient Romain, » *Journal Asiatique* 17, (1921). Friedrich Hirth thought earlier that Lijian was the transcription of the word *Rekhem*, meaning the city of Petra after the Chinese travelers met the Parthians; Hirth, Friedrich, *China and the Roman Orient*, (1875), pp. 159 and 170. I do not take this explanation to be correct because the Greeks were living in Central Asia before the rule of the Parthians. Leslie and Gardiner took Lijian (or Ligan) for the whole Seleucid Empire; “Chinese knowledge of Western Asia,” *T’ong Pao* 168 (1982) pp. 290–297. Homer Hasenpflug Dubs also thought that Lijian was related to Alexander in: *A Roman City in Ancient China*, London, The China Society (1957), 2. See also Edouard Chavannes; «Les pays d’occident d’après le Heou Han Chou,» *T’ong Pao* 8, (1907).

wealthy city of Alexandria Margiana situated at Mary in Turkmenistan, and founded by Alexander the Great (Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ Μέγας 356–323 BC) in 328 or 327 BC, is mentioned by Pliny the Elder (*Natural History*, Book 6, XVIII, 46–47) as having a wonderful climate and producing grapes and wine. The city was renamed Antiochia by Antiochos, so the Lixuan–Antiochia association by the Han is perhaps doubtful. The “Alexandria” closest to China was “Alexandria the Farthest” or Alexandria Eskhata, and the city was founded by Alexander in 329 BC after his marriage with Roxane (Ρωξάνη 345–310 BC), the Sogdian princess. Situated in southwestern Ferghana, in the Sogdian lands, its actual location is Khudjend in Tadjikistan (formerly Leninabad). Alexandria Eskhata is a more plausible explanation for the association with Lixuan as proposed by Pelliot. In the “Traditions of Ferghana” of the *Shiji* (史記), Lixuan is situated at the northern borders of Parthia, making Alexandria Eskhata the potential location for Lixuan–Alexandria. In the *Hanshu* (chap. 96), Lixuan (犁軒) is situated, together with Tiaozhi (條支), at the western borders of Wuyishanli (烏弋山離, Ariana–Arachosia, or the city of Alexandria Arachosia), and limited by the Western Seas (*Xihai* 西海). Yan Shigu (顏師古) explains that Li (犁) can be written Li (驪) and that Xuan (軒) had the former pronunciation of *Julian* (鉅連) or *Juyan* (鉅言). According to the *Shiji* (*Zhengyi* 正義), Li (黎) was pronounced *Lixi* (力奚), and then the original pronunciation of Lixuan would have been *Lixijulian* or *Lixijuyan*, both very close to Alexandria.

As the Greco-Bactrian or the Indo-Greek kings were the main socio-cultural and military power in Bactria, Sogdiana and northwest India at the time of the Qin Emperor (Qin *shihuangdi* 秦始皇帝 259–210 BC), we naturally need to ask if there was any contact between them. The distance between Ferghana, where the Greco-Bactrians were settled, and the Empire of Qin *shihuangdi*, was about three thousand kilometers.

The term Lixuan is used for the first time by the Chinese historian Sima Qian in the “Traditions of Ferghana” (*Dayuan zhuan* 大宛傳) of the *Shiji* (史記).

The prefecture of Jiuquan (酒泉 or “wine source”) is situated through the northwest countries to facilitate the communication with Anxi, Yancai, Lixuan

(黎軒) Tiaozhi, and Shendu (India). The son of Heaven is pleased by the horses of Ferghana and the ambassadors always wanted to meet them.³

Before we even hear mention of Lixuan people, we learn of various nomadic tribes of Scythian origin moving into this vast area of Xinjiang, Gansu and Ningxia steppes and oases at the time of the early Qin kingdom (秦國 778–207 BC). During the early Han dynasty, one famous tribe who lived in Gansu were known as the Rouzhi/Yueshi (月氏) or Yuezhi (月支); they eventually moved to the Western Lands.⁴ The Qin kingdom was constantly at war with the “Western armies” (*Xirong* 西戎), with one in particular known as the *Lirong* (驪戎), the “black horse armies.” As *Li* (驪) means “black horse,” it was a general denomination for the nomadic steppe tribes riding the tall black horses from Central Asia.⁵

The earliest mention of a place named the “Black Horse Mountain” (Lishan 驪山) is during the Zhou dynasty, when the prince Xiangong (獻公, 886–855 BC) had to fight against the “Western armies.” Mt. Lishan was situated near Xi’an, and it was the place where the “armies of the black horse” (*Lirong* 驪戎) were settled:

The armies of Li are a particular branch of the Western armies. Their Warlord has the name of *Ji* (姬). The Qin called them the *Liyi* (驪邑); Han Gaodi called them

³ *Shiji* (史記) (Historical records of the Great Historian), chap. 123, “Traditions of Ferghana” (大宛傳 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1959–1999), p. 2404 “初置酒泉郡以通西北國。因益發使抵安息，奄蔡，黎軒，條枝，身毒國。而天子好宛馬，使者相望於道。”

⁴ According to Kazuo Enoki, the name “Yuezhi” derived from “Yushi” (禺氏), the region of Khotan that engaged in trade with the Chinese from the end of the Warring States period. See “The So-called Sino-Kharoshthi Coins,” *Studia Asiatica: The Collected Papers in Western Languages of the Late Dr. Kazuo Enoki* (Tokyo: Kyu-Shoin, 1998), p. 424.

⁵ Alexander the Great rode “Bull-headed” (Βουκέφαλος), a black horse as well (Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander*, Book 5, XIX, 4–6), and Plutarch (*Life of Alexander*, 6, 1–8).

the *Liyi* (豐邑), then it was changed to *Xinli* (新豐). They are located in Jingzhao (京兆; near Chang’an).⁶

The Zhou dynasty’s King Yong (幽王 781–771 BC) died in Lishan, killed by the “black horse armies.” According to the “Transmissions from Zuo” (*Zuozhuan* 左傳),⁷ during the thirty-eighth year of Prince Zhuang Gong’s reign (665 BC), the “black horse” steppe horsemen were already known as a distinct group among the Western armies.⁸

Starting in the sixth century BC, the Di (狄) northern steppe cavalryman had sometimes joined the Chinese armies as mercenaries. The character used to write the ethnonym “Di” is composed of elements meaning “dog” and “fire,” and it was a general denomination for the various tribes of horseman archers living in the northern borders of China. The various Di tribes coming from the northwestern steppes of China were known as the “White Di” (*Baidi* 白狄) by the Qin kingdom, while the ones coming from the northeastern part were more aggressive and known as the “Red Di” (*Chidi* 赤狄). The other “barbarians” (i.e., non-Chinese) who lived in the southern part of the Tarim Basin along the Himalayas from Xinjiang to Sichuan were known as the Qiang (羌). Numerous gods bearing the family name of Qiang traditionally opposed “the Yellow Emperor” Huangdi (黃帝), who represented the main Han Chinese ancestry. Several important figures in Chinese mythology — such as Chiyu (蚩尤), the god of weaponry and wrestling; Shennong (神農), the god of agriculture; Gonggong (共工); or Yu (禹) the Great — were all linked with the Qiang. Qiang has the character “goat” (*Yang* 羊) in it, and it symbolized the nomadic shepherd from Tibet or the bearded “Western Qiang” (*Xiqiang* 西羌) from the

⁶*Guoyu* (國語) (Accounts of the states), chap. 7, “Jinyu” (晉語) (Shanghai: Shanghai Gujichubanshe 上海古籍出版社, 1978), p. 253 “驪戎，西戎之別在驪山者也。其君男爵姬姓。秦曰驪邑，漢高帝徙豐邑於驪邑更曰新豐，在京兆也。”

⁷*Zuo Zhuan* (左傳) (Transmissions from Zuo: on countries), “Twentieth year of Zhuangong” (莊公二十年), also in *Shiji* (史記) (Historical records of the Great Historian), chap. 4, “Zhoubenji” (周本記) (Beijing, 1959), p. 179, “幽王舉烽火徵兵，兵莫至。遂殺幽王驪山下，虜褒姒，盡取周賂而去。” The *Shujing* (水經注) explains that “he died near *Xishui* (戲水) at the Northern side of *Lishan* (驪山).”

⁸*Shiji* (史記) (Historical records of the Great Historian), chap. 4, “Zhoubenji” (周本記) (Beijing, 1959), p. 179.

southwestern part of the Tarim Basin bordering the Himalayas. Another later denomination for the strong Western Lands and northwestern “barbarians” by the Chinese was *Hu* (胡), the original meaning of which apparently signified a protuberance beneath the throat. Before the Qin dynasty (221–206 BC), the character *gu* (古, ancient, old) was written *hou* (喉, throat), and *yue* (月, moon) was written *rou* (肉, meat). For example, the character meaning “to have” (*you* 有) symbolized a hand taking the meat in ancient times. Thus the “fat-throated people” mainly denominated the Xiongnu (匈奴) of Mongolia or the “strong-necked” Western Lands warriors.⁹ However, all these denominations were mostly pejorative and did not represent the exact ethnicity of the non-Chinese tribes living at their borders. As the Greeks used the term “barbarian” (*Barbaro*, βάρβαρο; those who speak *var-var* “savage languages”) to distinguish the non-Greeks, the Chinese also used the names of beasts to refer to the different non-Chinese speaking tribes.

The adoption of horseback cavalry in the Chinese armies started officially for the first time in 307 BC with the king Wu Ling of Zhao (趙武靈王 325–299 BC), after he successfully convinced his conservative ministers to adopt a “barbaric” form of warfare.

However, the first contact between the Chinese and the Greeks of Central Asia took place during the time of the independent Greco-Bactrian kingdom, through Xinjiang and Gansu. The northern Silk Road through the Tarim starts in Ferghana and connects Central Asia to China through the cities of Aksu (Gumo 姑墨), Kucha (Qiuci 龜茲) and Turfan (Jushi 車師). The southern Silk Road, passing south of the Tarim Basin, links either Sogdiana or Bactria to China through the Himalayas. It crosses the high snow peaks of the Khunjerab pass, and it is the direct gate to China from Bactria and northwest India. Soon after it crossed the Himalayas and reached the Tarim Basin, then the cities of Kashgar (Shule 疏勒),¹⁰ Yarkand (Suoche 莎車), Khotan (Yutian 于闐), Niya (Jingjue 精絕), Charchan (Qiemo 且末), Charkhlik (Ruoqiang 若羌), Miran

⁹ Source: *Han dynasty Shuowen jiezi* (說文解字), Xu Shen (許慎), chap. 4 (下) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1963), p. 89.

¹⁰ The former name for the region of Kashgar during the Ming dynasty (and perhaps already during the Han dynasty with Shule) was *Chalis* or *Cialis* (Chalishi 察力矢). In Greek, “Chalis” (χάλις) means “sheer wine.” At the time of Han Wudi, Kashgar had an army of 3,049 cavalymen. The king had four foreign affairs officials (*Yizhang* 譯長), two cavalry generals (*Qidufu* 騎都尉) and one superintendent for Xiye’s armies (備西夜君 *Beixiyejun*).

(Shanshan 鄯善), and Lob Nor (Loulan 樓蘭), the southern Silk Road lead to the Gansu corridor and the “Jade Gate Pass,” or Yumen guan (玉門關). (Map II, 2)

Diodotes and Euthydemus, who ruled Bactria, Sogdiana, Ferghana and Northern India at the time of the Qin Emperor, may have been sending troops through the Tarim Basin. China, known by the Greeks as “Seres,” is described by Strabo as having been conquered in some parts by the Greco-Bactrians together with Nepal (*Phryni*):

The Greeks who caused Bactria to revolt grew so powerful on account of the fertility of the country that they became masters, not only of Ariana, but also of India, as Apollodoros of Artemita says, and more tribes were subdued by them than by Alexander, by Menandros in particular, for some were subdued by him personally and others by Demetrios, the son of Euthydemus, the king of the Bactrians; and they took possession, not only of Patalena, but also, on the rest of the coast, of what is called the kingdom of Saraostus and Sigerdis. In short, Apollodoros says that Bactriana is the ornament of Ariana as a whole; and, more than that, they extended their empire even as far as the Seres and the Phryni.¹¹

The satrap Diodotes I, “The Savior” (Διόδωτος Α' ὁ Σωτήρ ~285–238 BC), had separated Bactria from the Seleucid Empire, forming an independent kingdom and proclaiming himself king (**Map I, 1**). He was followed by his son Diodotes II (~238 to ~236 BC) who wanted to make an alliance with the Parthians, probably fearing an attack by Bactria after they had seized Margiana. He was killed in a coup organized in 236 BC by his former general, Euthydemus, (Εὐθύδημος Α' ~236–200 BC), perhaps satrap of Sogdiana and Ferghana at that time. Euthydemus proclaimed himself king of the Greek kingdom of Bactria and ruled Bactria, Sogdiana and Ferghana. Euthydemus's son, Demetrios (~222–179 BC)¹² launched a campaign in India. He

¹¹ Strabo (*Geography* 11, XI, 1), Loeb Classical Library; H. L. Jones, *Strabo V* (Harvard, 1944–2006), pp. 280–81.

¹² According to Polybius in his *Histories*, Antiochos III had attacked Euthydemus on the Arius with a large troop of ten thousand men (Book 10, 49). Euthydemus retreated into the city of Bactra and resisted a three-year siege. Unable to take the city, Antiochos III accepted the kingship of Euthydemus and met Demetrios when he was still a teenager, in 206 BC. Impressed by his elegant and noble appearance, he offered him one of his daughters in marriage (Book

invaded a huge territory around 190–180 BC, including the Paropamisades (south of Pamir Mountains), Taxila (Takshasila), Arachosia, Patala, Surastra, Avanti, Barygaza, Ujain, Vidisa, Vasta, Pataliputra and Nepal (**Map I, 2–3**). Represented on his coins with the scalp of an elephant on his head instead of that of a lion, he was the first real Greek ruler of India. His co-regent kings in Bactria, Sogdiana and Ferghana were Euthydemes II and Pantaleon.



Plate 1. Athena *Alkidemos*, the city-goddess of Pella. Left: clay seal found in Niya, Xinjiang province, by Aurel Stein in 1906. Middle: coin of Alexander the Great (reverse side). Right: coin of Menander (reverse side), Taxila, India, ~150 BC.

2. The mausoleum of the Qin Emperor and the twelve chryselephantine statues

The Qin Emperor had his mausoleum built (by seven hundred thousand slaves) near the palace of “E” (阿)¹³ (Echenggong 阿城宮 or Epanggong 阿房宮) on the “Black Horse Mountain” (Lishan 驪山), fifteen *li* (6 km) from the capital Xianyang (咸陽) (**Map II, 1**).¹⁴ The Qin Emperor had passed through Lishan to reach Ganquan (甘泉),¹⁵ where the palace of Linguang (林光) or

11, 34).

¹³ According to the Han dynasty’s *Etymology of Characters* (說文解字), Xu Shen (許慎) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1963), p. 204, the character “E” (阿) has the meaning of “tumulus,” or “big hill” (daling 大陵).

¹⁴ *Shiji* (史記) (Historical records of the Great Historian), chap. 4, “Zhoubenji” (周本記) (Beijing, 1959), p. 356: “隱宮徒刑者七十餘萬人，乃分作阿房宮，或作驪山。” With the explanation that *Li* (驪) means “deep black.”

¹⁵ *Shiji* (史記) (Historical records of the Great Historian), chap. 4, “Zhoubenji” (周本記) (Beijing, 1959), p. 241 “二十七年...自極廟道通 驪山 甘泉前殿。”

"Forest Light" was eventually erected by his son Hu Hai (胡亥) in 209 BC and became very famous for its wrestling displays.¹⁶

According to the *Shiji* (史記; Historical records of the Great Historian), recalling the biography of the Qin Emperor,¹⁷ in 220 BC the Emperor established the western border of his empire at Gansu's Lintao (臨洮) city,¹⁸ formerly the territory of the Qiang barbarians (羌). The Qin Emperor ordered the weapons of the enemy troops to be melted down in order to erect twelve gigantic bronze statues. Each statue weighed 240,000 *jin* (60,720 kg) and measured about ten meters high. The Qin brought them back to Xianyang to erect them in front of the Emperor's mausoleum. Later, during the Han dynasty, the twelve statues would be moved to the front door of Changlegong palace (長樂宮門前), eventually to be destroyed by the Wei (魏) in order to be melted down into small pieces of money.

The story is recorded in the "Song and Yuan compiled records of geographical books":

The Historical Records mentions that during the 26th year of the Qin Emperor, there were big men of five *zhang* tall (~10 m), twelve of them in total, with their shoes the length of six *chi* (~1.5 m). They all had the Di barbarian's clothes. There were twelve chryselephantine statues in Lintao (臨洮). This happened during the early years when the Qin Emperor started to conquer the Six Countries (the Warring States). They melted down those (enemy) soldiers' weapons in order to ensure peace and prosperity under heaven. The ancient *Sanfu* (三輔; Three feudatories) says: The chryselephantine Di barbaric statues were to be erected in

¹⁶ *Shiji* (史記) (Records of the Great Historian), chap. 87, "Li Si" (李斯) (Beijing, 1959), p. 179. "是時二世在甘泉，方作穀角抵優俳之觀。李斯不得見，因上書言趙高之。"

¹⁷ Reference in the *Shiji*, "Records of the Qin Emperor." The story can also be found in the "Suoyin" of the *Shiji* (史記-索隱) and in the "Wuxing zhi" of the Han dynasty annals (漢書-五行志). The book of Chen Zhi (陳直), the "Sanfu huangtu Jiaozheng" (三輔黃圖校証), speaks about the twelve statues as well.

¹⁸ Tao (洮) was a Chinese phonetic translation from the Qiang name "Tugao" (吐高), according to the explanation of the *Shiji*.

front of the Mausoleum Palace of Epang. (Yan) Shigu call them *Wengzhong* (翁仲)¹⁹ or the “Tomb Guardians.”²⁰

The text records that the Qin melted down the enemy’s weapons to make those statues in Lintao and then brought them back to Xianyang. Why would the Qin have to represent twelve Di barbarians as protecting the mausoleum? Why did they not melt down the weapons in Xianyang? Twelve is not normally a significant number in Chinese philosophy. When it is written that the Qin found twelve gigantic statues, I cannot help but think of the twelve Olympian gods venerated by the Greeks of Bactria. It is nearby in Gansu province that a Hellenistic golden plate has been unearthed representing the twelve gods together with Dionysos (or Alexander–Dionysos) sitting on a panther surrounded by grapes (**Plate 2**) and having a Bactrian inscription on the back (*uasapo’k*, *uasapo*, or *uapobso*). A similar story of melting down weapons to make statues is recounted by Herodotus (Book 9, 80–81). In order to remember the victory of Plataea against the Persians in 479 BC, the Greeks had melted down the Persians’ weapons to build the famous “Serpent Column” (Τρικάρηνος Ὀφίς) at Delphi and other such chryselephantine statues of gods as a Poseidon four meters high for Isthmia and a five-meter-tall Zeus for Olympia.

Fu Lao (父老) explains in the *Shiji* that the statues often had prominent hair bands (*Wengzhong touji changchu* 翁仲頭髻常出), perhaps indicating that they had sophisticated hairstyles. The statues of the twelve tall Di barbarians (*Changdi shi'er* 長狄十二) were also known as the “Golden Di” (*Jindi* 金狄), indicating that they were twelve chryselephantine statues representing foreigners. According to the *Shiji*, they all had an inscription on their chests dedicated to the “grandeur” of the Qin Emperor. Li Si (李斯 280–208 BC), the Emperor’s prime minister, also engraved an ode to the beauty of the twelve statues on the face of a mountain rock.

¹⁹ Notice that the term *Wengzhong* for “tomb guardian” appears for the first time in Chinese history on this occasion. Later, it would designate tall bronze statues to be erected in front of emperors’ tombs, following the example of Qin *Shihuangdi*. The etymology of the character *Weng* (翁) is “grandfather” or “ancestor,” and *Zhong* (仲) means the “second generation.”

²⁰ *Songyuan difangzhi congshu* (宋元地方志叢書) (Song and Yuan compiled records of geographical books), bronze men (銅人), Qin (秦), p. 283. “史记秦始皇二十六年有大人長五丈足履六尺皆夷狄服凡十二人見於臨洮是歲始皇初始並六國反喜以爲瑞銷天下兵之三輔舊事曰鑄金狄立阿房殿前師古即翁仲。”



Plate 2. Hellenistic representation of Dionysos (or Alexander–Dionysos) holding the *thyrsos* and sitting on a panther’s back, with motifs of grape and the twelve Olympian gods all around him. Golden plate of 31 cm in diameter, 4.9 cm high, weighing 3.19 kg, discovered in Beitán, Jingyuan, Gansu province; Gansu Provincial Museum.

The city of Lintao in Gansu–Ningxia is in the territory of the Western Qiang barbarians (Xiqiang 西羌), although neither the nomadic Qiang nor the Di seems to have had the custom of casting gigantic statues in 220 BC. However, if it is unlikely that the Qiang from the Tarim Basin or the Qin cast the twelve chryselephantine statues of barbarians holding weapons to guard the mausoleum of Qin *Shihuangdi*, then who could have made them? If we suppose that earlier than 220 BC, the Greco-Bactrians had sent an expedition to Lintao, they would have had to cover around 2,500 km, whether from Ferghana or from Khotan. Could the Greeks have built some colonies in Western China? Could Greek sculptors have been present at the Qin borders? As Strabo seems to claim, the Greco-Bactrians had conquered as far as China (*Seres*), but how far? Were those statues a testimony of their presence in the region, erected by them in honor of their gods at the extreme eastern borders of their empire? If we examine the itinerary of Demetrios’s conquest of northwestern India, covering about three thousand kilometers with his army (**Map I, 2**), an expedition as far as Gansu-Ningxia is not impossible. To sculpt and erect twelve statues of ten meters in height representing “Di barbarians” in bronze and gold requires an art and a

technique that could not have been simply transported by Hellenized Scythians on horses. I do not see another alternative at that time than that of Greek sculptors casting the twelve "barbaric" chryselephantine statues.

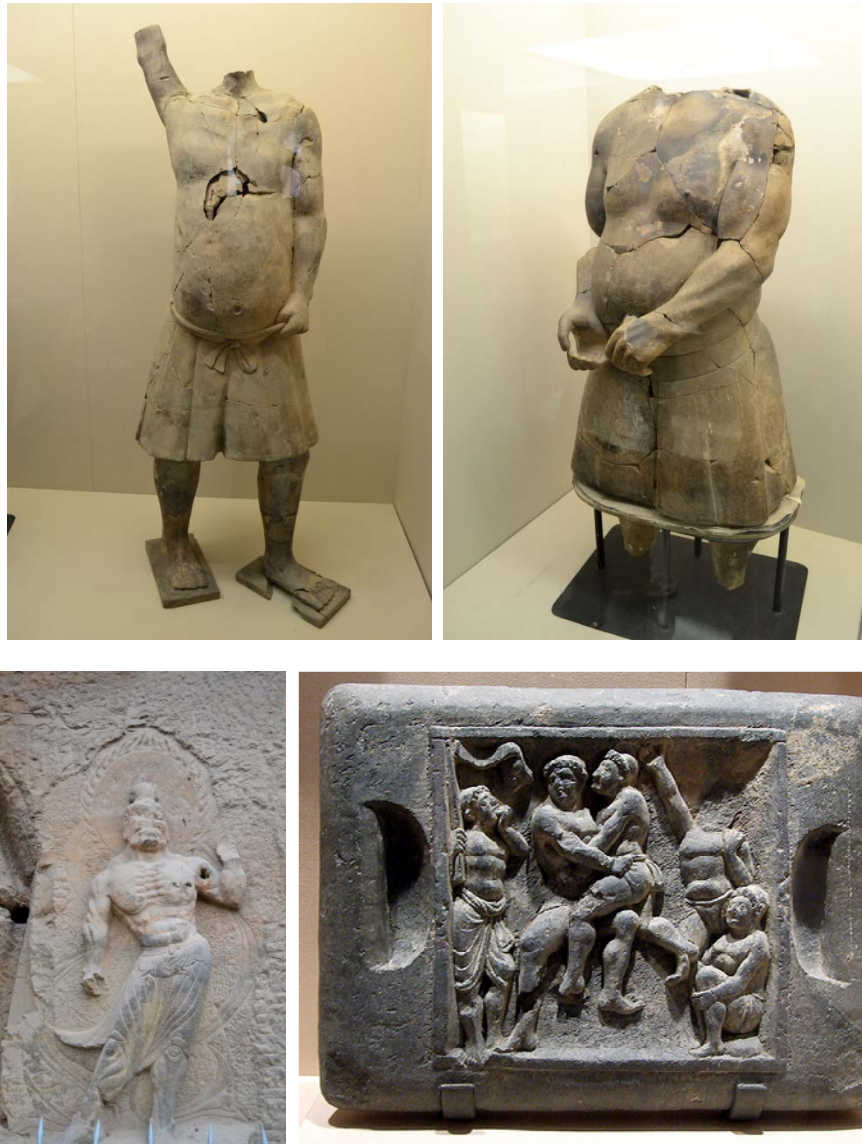


Plate 3. Top: Two Qin dynasty statues of wrestlers found near the mausoleum of the Qin Emperor in 1999. Lower left: Sculpture of the Buddhist god Jingang (金剛)—Vajrapani in China as initiated by Heracles's athletic representation in Gandhara. Lower right: Weight representing Heracles–Vajrapani as a wrestling referee holding the *rhabdops* (whip-stick) in Gandhara, late Kushana period.

The “Traditions of the Western Lands” (*Xiyuzhuan* 西域傳) of the *Hanshu* indicates that Qin *Shihuangdi* stopped the attacks of the Di barbarians by constructing the Great Wall, isolating China (*ji Qinshihuangdi ranque Rong-Di, zhu Changcheng, jie Zhongguo* 及秦始皇帝攘卻戎狄, 築長城, 界中國), and that he did not go farther west than Lintao (*ran xi buguo Lintao* 然西不過臨洮). It was certainly armies of Scythian horsemen (Di) following a Greco-Bactrian king that endangered China precisely at the time of the First Emperor of the Qin (see section 3).

Archaeological evidence found around the mausoleum of the Qin Emperor shows that the theory of a Greco-Bactrian and Qin contact is coherent. Lukas Nickel has written a very convincing article on the similarities of Epanggong and the Mausoleum of Halicarnassos (Ἀλικαρνασσός), including the horses and other sculptures.²¹ Human-sized statues of wrestlers and acrobats have been found in 1999 near the mausoleum, and they have a typical “realistic” Hellenistic style (**Plate 3**). Although there was no evidence of a prior culture depicting naked human forms in sculpture at the Qin court, these statues show strong individuals like wrestlers or acrobats wearing only loincloths. The details in the body lines and the “heroic” representation of some of them remind us of Hellenistic influences, but with a Chinese conception of strength, e.g., large, strong men with big bellies.²² That kind of statuary would appear again in China only much later, during the Wei dynasty (**Plate 3**), due to the influence of Greco-Buddhist fine art from the Kushana Empire (first to third centuries AD) (**Map I, 5**). I have published an earlier

²¹ Lukas Nickel, “Tonkrieger auf der Seidenstrasse? Die Plastiken des ersten Kaisers Von China und die Hellenistische Skulptur Zentralasiens,” *Zurich Studies in the History of Arts*, vol. 13/14, 2009.

²² During the Qin dynasty, there were no individualistic portrayals in sculptural art, only the worship of the son of Heaven, the Qin Emperor, placed above all mankind. Although competitions of strength or wrestling games appeared under Qin *Shihuangdi*, those games were strictly devoted to the Emperor’s armies’ glory rather than to claim a personal victory. With the arrival of visitors from the Western Lands versed in athletic professionalism during the Han dynasty after the opening of China by Han Wudi, the “divine” or “magical” aspects of those professional athletes appeared in arts. Stone carvings with individuals in action, named *Huaxiangshi* (畫像石) by the Chinese, were produced at the end of the Western Han (206 BC–24 AD) and became fashionable during the middle and at the end of the Eastern Han (25–220 AD) period. The funerary stone of Tongshan (Xuzhou) represents “heroic” individuals sculpted during the Western Han dynasty in a style inspired by a Greek-style pediment stone fresco (**Plate 6**).

article on the influence of Greek gymnastics, combat sports and acrobatics from the Greco-Bactrian kingdom and Rome during the late Warring States and the Qin-Han period.²³ Alexander Barnhart wrote a convincing article on the influence of Greek architecture on the Chinese Qin dynasty as well.²⁴ Evidence of this influence can be seen today in the Japanese ancient capital Nara, with the columns of Horyu ji (法隆寺) temple dating from the seventh century and having swelling center pillars, or the Doric column “entasis” (from the word *enteinein/εντείνειν*, to stretch tightly) architecture of the Greeks.

3. The Indo-Greek colony of Khotan

A tapestry perhaps representing a Greco-Scythian king with his spear and the centaur Chiron playing the trumpet, wearing the *causia* (large Greco-Macedonian hat) and covered with a lion skin, was discovered at the Sampul cemetery situated near Khotan (Yutian 于闐) (**Plate 4**). Because the two symbols of Achilles (Chiron) and Heracles (Nemean lion skin) are combined, the tapestry might also be a representation of Alexander the Great — he referred to these as his two ancestors and was often represented with large eyes.²⁵ Interesting indications regarding

²³ Lucas Christopoulos, “Early Combat Sports Rituals in China and the Rise of Professionalism (475 BC–220 AD),” *Nikephoros: Zeitschrift für Sport und Kultur im Altertum*, Number 23, December 2010.

²⁴ Richard M. Barnhart, “Alexander in China? Question for Chinese Archaeology; New Perspective on China’s Past,” *Chinese Archaeology in the Twentieth Century*. Vol. 1: *Culture and Civilization Reconsidered*, ed. Xiaoneng Yang (New Haven and London: Yale University Press; Kansas City: Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 2004), pp. 329–343.

²⁵ Descended from the Argead kings of Argos, Alexander claimed Heracles as his ancestor; thus he was considered to belong to the first generation in the lineage of this royal family that started with Heracles’s legendary son, Temenos. Alexander believed himself to be a relative of Achilles through his mother as well. Although the blue-eyed king represented on the Sampul tapestry does not really look like Alexander, the association with Chiron and Heracles should indicate a certain degree of ethnic connection, if not a lineage. The band on his head is characteristic of the Antiochid, the Indo-Greek or the Greco-Bactrian kings, and it does certainly show as well that the Khotan king had a link with a Hellenistic royal tradition. The names of the first kings of Khotan in the Chinese texts are translated as Yulin (兪林 25–55 AD), Rongwan (戎亡 50–51 AD), Weishi (位侍 50–51 AD), Dumo (都末 60 AD; he was not crowned), Xiumoba (休莫霸 60 AD), Guangde (廣德 60–86 AD), Fangqian (放前 129–132 AD), Jian (建 151–152 AD), Anguo (安國 125–175 AD), and Shanxi (山習 220–226 AD).

Khotan and this mysterious tapestry can be found in the “New Annals of the Tang dynasty.”²⁶ The records say that when Han Wudi opened the Silk Road to Yutian during the first century BC, the Han met the local people, who had the custom of frequently dancing and singing. They were also very good at textile and tapestry work, and they called their kingdom “Qusadanna” (瞿薩旦那).²⁷ They said that they had tried to obtain silkworms in the past, but that the eastern neighboring country did not want to give them to them. So the king of Qusadanna had concluded a marriage and a military peace agreement with the king on its eastern border, and he had asked in exchange that the new princess would bring some silkworms and grains of mulberry trees with her. She was also asked not to kill the silkworms, but to let them free in the gardens so that they could reproduce. From that time, the people of Qusadanna were able to produce silk. The tapestry found in Khotan depicts a Greco-Scythian or an Indo-Greek king, and if we make the connection with this story, perhaps dating about a hundred years before Han Wudi, at the time of the Qin Emperor and the “marriage agreements” commonly arranged by the Greco-Bactrian kings, we have an indication that our theory may be correct.

In the city of Niya (Jingjue 精絕),²⁸ Aurel Stein discovered in 1906 a series of clay seals with impressions of Pallas-Athena with aegis and thunderbolt (Athena *Alkidemos* “Defender of

²⁶ *Xin Tangshu* (新唐書) (New Tang dynasty annals), chap. 221 (top), vol. 20, Yutian (于闐) (Beijing, 1975–1997), p. 6235.

²⁷ Stein found documents mentioning the original name of Qusadanna as *Khotana*, *Khotamna* or sometimes *Kustana*, meaning “breast of the earth”; Aurel Stein, *On Ancient Central-Asian Tracks: Brief Narrative of Three Expeditions in Innermost Asia and Northwestern China*, edited by Jeanette Mirsky (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963), p. 82. Before the expedition of Han Wudi, Khotan was perhaps known by the Chinese (the Qin) at the end of the Warring States period as a gem-producing region having the name of *Yushi* (禺氏) as recorded in some parts of *Guanzi* (管子). In Greek (Cretan dialect), *kottana* (κοττάνα) is equal to *parthenos* (παρθένος), and it means “virgin” or “maiden.” *Parthenos* is also another denomination for the goddess Athena. The other possibility is that *Khotana* comes from the Persian word *Khwatan* (also *khwama*, *takhwa*, *aukhwa*) meaning “self” or “silence.” The two Chinese characters for Yutian put together would mean “plenty” or “vast” although that would only be a phonetic transcription of *Khotana*. In Sanskrit, *kota* (*am*) means “summit of a mountain,” but as there are many “summits” in the Himalayas, I do not see the particular utility for this terminology here.

²⁸ The former name for the Niya region was Nina. In Greek, *nimma* (νίμμα) means “pure water” (for washing). The

the people”), together with others representing Eros, Heracles, or a different Athena. Athena *Alkidemos* was the city-goddess of Pella, and she was represented almost identically on the coins of both Alexander the Great and Menander in Taxila (**Plate 1**). Stein notices the close similarity of those pieces with Hellenistic art of the first century of our era, but the resemblance seems to date earlier if we consider the representation of Athena *Alkidemos* as directly linked with the Greco-Bactrian and the Indo-Greek kings.²⁹ He found as well a carved armchair with a seat that represented standing lions and armrests composed of monsters of a Hellenistic type.³⁰ Several documents in Kharoshthi may indicate the presence of Greco-Scythian kings in the region in the past.³¹ Stein links the presence of those documents with the immigration from Taxila at the end of the third century BC.

Chinese characters used for *Jingjue* mean “pure” or “clean.”

²⁹ Aurel Stein, *On Ancient Central-Asian Tracks: Brief Narrative of Three Expeditions in Innermost Asia and Northwestern China*, edited by Jeanette Mirsky (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963), p. 79.

³⁰ Aurel Stein, *On Ancient Central-Asian Tracks*, p. 75.

³¹ *Paremboly* (Παρεμβολή), the Greek term for “camp,” has been used in documents excavated in Niya, according to F. W. Thomas (Παρεμβολή, *Acta Orientalia*, vol. XIV (1936), pp. 109–11. Stein found writings in Kharoshthi (Bactrian) script of an early form of Indian speech almost equivalent to those inscribed on the coins of the Greco-Bactrian kings: “His Highness the Maharaja orders in writing” (*mahanuava maharaya lihati*) (Aurel Stein, *On Ancient Central-Asian Tracks*, pp. 70–71). Stein found others mentioning the “son of the gods” (*Maharaja devaputra*) (p. 81). Some coins with both Kharoshthi and Chinese inscriptions have been found in Khotan. They are very similar to the coins of the Greco-Bactrian kings from Euthydemus, Demetrius and the Qin (秦) coins of the end of the Warring states period; the *Huanqian* (圓錢). Kazuo Enoki is “convinced” of a similar and unified monetary system between the three at the time of the end of the Warring States period. This would confirm the connection as proposed in his article: E. Kazuo, “The So-called Sino-Kharoshthi Coins,” *Studia Asiatica: The Collected Papers in Western Languages of the Late Dr. Kazuo Enoki* (Tokyo: Kyu-Shoin, 1998), p. 422. Coins of Hermaios (*Ermayasa*) have been found in the region of Khotan, perhaps indicating a continuous relation between the Greco-Bactrian kings and Khotan kingdom from the time of Euthydemus until Hermaios, passing by Eucratides. Unlike the unclear coins of the British Museum, at least one of those found in Khotan is clearly attributed to Hermaios: *Mission Scientifique dans la Haute Asie, 1890–1895, III. Histoire, linguistique, archéologie, géographie*, F. Genard, Appendices scientifiques (Paris, 1898), pp. 129–33. The presence of Hermaios coins in Khotan is accepted by most scholars (Forsyth, Gardner, Cunningham, Specht and others).

Their discovery in this region seems curiously bound up with the local tradition, recorded by Xuan Zang and also in old Tibetan texts, that the territory of Khotan was conquered and colonized about two centuries before our era by Indian immigrants from Takshasila, the Taxila of the Greeks, in the extreme northwestern corner of the Punjab.³²

What Stein calls "Indian immigrants" were in fact the people who lived in the Greco-Bactrian kingdom as it was situated during the early second century before our era. If the chronology is correct, it would correspond to the time of King Diodotes's rule in India or Euthydemus's and Demetrios's expansion through the East. It was not only Indian immigrants who came into Khotan, but perhaps an ethnically mixed army of mercenaries from Taxila led by a Greco-Sacae (see footnote 46) or an Indo-Greek king building walled cities and using the administrative and social organisation of the Greco-Bactrians (as shown by the Niya-Khotan documents, the various archaeological evidences and the Sino-Kharoshthi coins). Concerning the Sino-Kharoshthi coins found in Khotan, Enoki clearly explains that they "both in form and inscription are close to the Bactrian kingdom, and there is no need to look for Saka influence in them."

The *Hanshu* (chap. 96) section on Yutian indicates that the name of the capital was *Xicheng* (西城), "western city" or "xi" city, and that the region had exported a great deal of jade (*duo yushi* 多玉石) to China at the time of Han Wudi. Xi city extended east-west (*dongxi cheng chang* 東西城長) and had an army composed of 2,400 horsemen at the time of Han Wudi. As soon as the Indo-Greek kingdom of Khotan was established, the commercial and cultural road between China, Khotan, northwest India and Bactria was open, probably starting the trade of silk with India, Bactria and Ptolemaic Egypt as well.³³

³² Aurel Stein, *On Ancient Central-Asian Tracks*, p. 81.

³³ The country of the Seres was famous for silk and textile works as well in the Roman Empire (Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, Book 6, XX, 54). Production of silk was known in the Greek island of Kos as initiated by Pamphile, the daughter of Plates, even before the time of Aristotle, as he mentions in his *Historia Animalium* (Book 5, XIX, 551b. 11–18). The earliest real trade of fine silk works in great quantities to the West came certainly from Xinjiang

The region of Khotan was a vast uninhabited land before the coming of the colonizers from Taxila during the early second century BC, according to Xuanzang (玄奘 602–664 AD). He recounts the history of the foundation of Qusadanna,³⁴ and he explains how they colonized the region, as he had been taught it by the locals in Khotan. In Taxila, there was a prince who wanted to become king on his own. The king Wuyou (無憂), learning that his son had usurped the throne, became furious. He condemned him and his followers to exile. Banished from Taxila, they lived like nomads in the wild, crossing the valleys between the snowy mountains with their horses before reaching the region of Khotan. There the prince became king, created a colony and built a fortified city with his troops.

If we follow the archaeological evidence that shows the relations between the Qin and the Greco-Bactrians at the end of the Warring States, around 240–230 BC, then Wuyou must be considered to have been Diodotes (*Diodotou*), because he was ruling Bactria and perhaps Taxila at that time. If his son, based earlier in Taxila, then became the king of Khotan, he would naturally be an ally of the following Greco-Bactrian king, Euthydemus, as is shown by the monetary system and the Hellenistic discoveries in this region.

Ceramics excavated near ancient Khotan (second-fifth century AD) show ornamental motifs originating in Greece, as well as some from Egyptian (Ptolemaic) origins that had been

at first, passing through Central Asia and then carried by ships to Ptolemaic Egypt. Xi city could possibly have been linked with *seres*, the Greek translation of the Chinese word for silk (*si* 絲) as it was the first “Chinese” city to export silk to the West. The association of the Greek word for silk “ser” (σῆρ) or China *Seres* (Σήρες) with (*si* 絲) may date to around the time of Qin *Shihuangdi*’s early conquests and his alliance with Khotan, at the end of the Warring States period. The later direct route to China as used by some Roman warships may have been less important because it was too far and travel time could be shortened by buying silk in Sri Lanka, India or in the Kushana Empire. Pausanias describes the region of Olympia as cultivating silkworms, and states that the worms were originally raised in China. He explains that the Greeks called silk “ser” though the *Seres* themselves used another name. The geographical origin of the *Seres* given by Pausanias is unclear, with various hypotheses going from the Ethiopians of the Red Sea to a mixture of Scythians and Indians passing by inhabitants of a mysterious river called Seres. Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, Elis II, XXVI, 6–10.

³⁴ *Datang xiyuji* (大唐西域記), chap. 12. Concerning the same story in Tibetan ancient texts, see: F. W. Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan*, 3. *The Annals of the Li Country* and R. E. Emmerick, *Tibetan Texts Concerning Khotan* (1967).

brought there after the conquest of Alexander the Great, according to Susanne G. Valenstein.³⁵ This evidence adds to that for the theory that early Khotan was conquered by Greco-Sacae (eastern Persians) connected with the Greco-Bactrian Empire and India, not with the later Kushana — as they did not use Egyptian art.³⁶

During the Tang dynasty, Khotan became an important Buddhist center, worshipping Vaisravana (*Pishamen* 毗沙門) as its city god. Khotan had been one of the first cities reached by Buddhist travelers crossing the Khunjerab pass on their way to China. However, the period of the early second to the end of third century BC corresponds to the time of the Mauryan king Ashoka (274–232 BC) and his works in spreading Buddhism through the northern territories of India.³⁷ I conjecture that this significant Buddhist influence was progressive, deriving from the time of the Kushana Empire and its strong Buddhist institutions, not necessarily with the first Indo-Greek conquerors who worshipped mainly Greek gods.

Niya was located at the eastern border of Yutian–Qusadanna. It was annexed by Loulan (樓蘭)³⁸ at the time of Han Wudi, and later annexed by Shanshan (鄯善). The powerful army of

³⁵ Suzanne G. Valenstein, *Cultural Convergence in the Northern Qi Period: A Flamboyant Chinese Ceramic Container* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2007): concerning Khotan ceramics, p. 63; notes on the Silk Road, pp. 68–71.

³⁶ If the ceramics had motifs from Egypt, it was because Diodotes probably already traded with Ptolemaic Egypt via the Spice Road, and the Greco-Scythian colonists had transported those motifs to Khotan around 240 BC.

³⁷ As it is possible that Ashoka’s grandmother descended from the Seleucid house, some researchers claim that Ashoka “was” in fact Diodotes. Curiously, he refers on his pillars to edicts of King Antiochos but not to Diodotes himself, who was supposed to be his closest Greek neighbor and an ally at that time. No coins of Ashoka have been found, although coins of Diodotes were found in Taxila.

³⁸ The original name of Loulan during the Han dynasty was “Kroraina.” See Kazuo Enoki, *Studia Asiatica: The Collected Papers in Western Languages of the Late Dr. Kazuo Enoki*, chap. 11: “Yü-ni-ch’êng and the Site of Lou-Lan,” p. 200; chap. 12: “The Location of the Capital of Lou-Lan and the Date of the Kharoshthi Inscriptions,” pp. 211–57 (Tokyo: Kyu-Shoin, 1998). In 664 AD, Xuanzang described the “territory of Loulan” as the country of “Nafupo” (納縛溥). According to H. Matsuda, *Nafupo* was the translation of “*Navapa*,” meaning “new water” in Sogdian. The name *Navapa* probably came later than *Kroraina*, at the time of the Sogdian migration in this region. In Greek, *kroaino* (κροαίνω) means “to stamp,” “to clatter,” or “to strike” (for example with the hoof of a horse).

Loulan–Miran had 2,912 horsemen, armed with bows and arrows. Their fortified capital was trapezoidal in shape and had very thick walls.³⁹ Loulan inhabitants were described by the Han as semi-nomadic herdsmen and hunters. The bodies found by Stein show that they wore caps and hats decorated with large feathers, as seen in some sculpted stones of Caucasian “strong man” representation dating from the Han dynasty.⁴⁰ The name of the capital city of Loulan was Yuni (扞泥).⁴¹ Loulan appeared in literature for the first time in a letter sent in 176 BC by the Xiongnu (匈奴) leader Modu Shanyu (冒頓單于) to the Emperor Han Wendi (漢文帝) that refers to having been conquered by him. Situated in the middle of the two empires, Loulan was sometimes allied with the Han and sometimes with the Xiongnu. In 77 BC, the Han sent the general Fu Jiezi (傅介子) on a military expedition, and he brought back the head of the Loulan king to Chang’an. Weituqi (尉屠耆), brother of the dead king, then took the throne, and Loulan became a protectorate of the Han under the name of Shanshan.

Yarkand (Suoche 莎車) was situated west of Khotan, and its armies became traditional enemies of the Xiongnu. From 73 to 48 BC, the city was under the rule of the Wusun prince Wan Nian (萬年), whose mother was a Han princess named Liu Jieyou (劉解憂). Wang Nian eventually was killed by Hutuzheng (呼屠徵), a brother of the former king, who took the throne

raino (ραίνω) means “to sprinkle” or “besprinkle.” The Greek word *raino* seems close to the description of Loulan and Kroraina, situated near the waters, literally meaning “cracked land with waters.”

³⁹ The ancient city of Loulan (Loulan A) was 319 m in width and 334 m in length.

⁴⁰ The same style of a “turban with a large feather” is depicted on a Caucasian strongman in the middle of **Plate 6**, or in the representation of a bullfight from the eastern Han dynasty found in Nanyang, Henan province.

⁴¹ The ancient capital of Loulan had the pronunciation Ganni (扞泥). In the Kharoshthi texts, the Chinese Ganni is known as Kuhani or Kvani. In Greek, *kuan* (κυαν) means “dark-blue” and *kuani* (κυανί) means “blue steel.” It was used from the heroic ages to adorn works in metal, and especially weapons. The breastplate of Agamemnon had ten large stripes made of *kuani*. The shield of Heracles was also made with blue steel. The Chinese character *lan* (蘭), used for the denomination of Loulan, is a metal structure on which to hang weapons in Guanzi (*Guanzi*, “*Xiaokuang*” 管子-小匡) and in Zhang Heng (張衡). Another meaning for *kuani* in Greek is “lapis lazuli” (Teophr. *Lap.*31). The capital of Loulan could have been an important center for the trade of steel and weapons as *Kroraina* literally means “buildings of iron works” in Chinese. The earliest works of iron metallurgy in China come from Xinjiang (Chawuhugou site) and date from the early first millennium BC.

and raised most of the Tarim Basin kings to fight against the Han. The city became more powerful than the other cities of the region in 32 BC. Kang (康 18 BC to 32 AD), the king of Yarkand, made an alliance with the Han against the Xiongnu and was appointed “Governor of the Western Lands protectorate” (*Xiyu daduwei* 西域大都尉). In 38 AD, his younger brother Xian (賢) was the master of all the eastern part of the Pamirs (Congling 蔥嶺), and he became “general-in-chief of the Western Lands protectorate” (*Xiyu duhu* 西域都護) in 41 AD. He attacked the Pamirs and Ferghana (Dayuan 大宛) around 33 AD, and he changed the local kings. Xian, because appointed by the Chinese, was however able to move freely in the Tarim Basin. Calling himself the *Shanyu* (單于), he ruled almost all the western cities. Xian conquered Yumi (扞彌 or Jumi 拘彌) and Xiye (西夜 modern Karghalik) in 33 AD; Kucha, Loulan and Shanshan in 46 AD; then Khotan in 50 AD. After the death of Xian in a battle in 61–62 AD, his son Bujucheng (不居徵) became king of Yarkand. Bujucheng was then defeated in 86 AD by Guangde (廣德 60–86 AD), the king of Khotan.⁴² During the reign of the Emperor Han Mingdi (漢明帝 57–75 AD), the Xiongnu (匈奴) invaded Khotan with a strong army of thirty thousand horsemen, and Khotan had to pay them a tribute of tapestry and silk every year.

The former king of Turfan (Jushi 車師) ruled the city of Jiaohe (交河) with an army of 2,865 soldiers at the time of Wudi, according to the *Hanshu* (chap. 96). Later, the kingdom of Turfan ruled the valley of Wutu (務塗谷) as well. King Guke (姑可 perhaps the same name as the Gurga dynasty of Yarkand) was ruling Turfan in 96 BC. In 94 BC (*Tianhan er nian* 天漢二

⁴² Kazuo Enoki in his chapter on Sino-Kharoshthi coins explains that Yarkand was perhaps populated by “Sacae refugees.” (“The So-called Sino-Kharoshthi Coins,” *Studia Asiatica: The Collected Papers in Western Languages of the Late Dr. Kazuo Enoki* [Tokyo: Kyu-Shoin, 1998], pp. 396–97). He gives the good relations between Yarkand and the Han as the main reason for the creation of the Sino-Kharoshthi coins, and explains that Yarkand had constant contact with the Pamirs and India as well. Enoki proposes the arrival of the Sacae in Yarkand “after” the attacks of the Yuezhi in Ferghana around 166–160 BC, or possibly earlier, when the Sacae of Yarkand and Khotan came from Taxila, but he is still not sure on the question. The kings of Yarkand had coins showing a horse turned to the right with a Kharoshthi inscription bearing the phrase in Prakrit *maharaja rajatiraja*, thus Enoki considers them most likely associated with the coins of the Greco-Bactrians. The first kings of Yarkand had the family name of Gurga (perhaps coming from the Persian word “wolf”), and as the Vijaya kings of Khotan, they were Greco-Scythians or Hellenized Sacae.

年), Loulan helped the Xiongnu in their attack on Turfan. In 88 BC, Han Wudi sent forty thousand soldiers to attack the Xiongnu north of Turfan. At the time of Han Zhaodi (漢昭帝 86–73 BC), the Xiongnu marched again on Turfan with four thousand men. Finally, Han Xuandi (漢宣帝 73–49 BC) sent a troop headed by five generals to attack the Xiongnu in Turfan, whereupon the city became a protectorate of Han.

The boundaries of the Khotanese kingdom previous to the time of Han Wudi are unknown, but it is clear that they had advanced further east if their king had earlier made an alliance with a princess who had access to silkworms. I propose that it is the kingdom of Loulan that made the silk/marriage/military alliance with Qusadanna. If it was not Loulan, and if it was the case that Loulan was in the same empire as Khotan during the end of the Warring States period, then it could also have been directly with the Qin. According to Xuanzang, after the banished prince of Taxila became king of Khotan, he somehow reached further east. There he met “the illegitimate wandering son of an Eastern Emperor who later became king” (*dongtu dizi mengqian liutu* 東土帝子蒙譴流徒...*you zicheng wang* 又自稱王). They finally clashed in a conflict with foot soldiers and horsemen before the Eastern king vanquished the Western one (the Khotan king). He purchased him in the northern regions and finally captured him and had his head cut off. After the Eastern king won the war, he moved his capital and constructed a new fortified city (*qiandu zhong di, fangjian chengguo* 遷都中地, 方建城郭).⁴³ As the Qin Emperor (Ying Zheng 嬴政) is generally described in Chinese popular literature as an illegitimate emperor, and it is said that he moved his capital to Xianyang, this story could refer to a brief alliance between Khotan and the Qin kingdom that finished in a battle, perhaps in the Gansu area (Lintao?). Xuanzang also recounts that the Eastern king was very preoccupied with the safety of his land, and that there is a mention of a river protecting his town (Wei River?). The chronology is difficult to determine as well, but if we put the text of the New Tang dynasty annals concerning the foundation of Qusadanna together with the story of Xuanzang, we can establish the same Khotan–“Eastern kingdom” connection.⁴⁴

⁴³ *Datang xiyuji* (大唐西域記), chap. 12.

⁴⁴ The later royal family of Khotan had the name *Vijaya*, meaning “victorious” in Sanskrit. This family name is

perhaps recorded for the first time in the Sui dynasty annals (chap. 83) as “Wang” (王). In the Tang dynasty annals (chap. 198, Yutian), the Vijaya kings were known as *Weichishi* (尾遲氏). To explain the Kharoshthi document (n. 661) concerning Khotan and mentioning the Vijaya, Thomas relies on the Tibetan texts to date the rule of the first Vijaya king, (Vijaya Sambhava) to between 215 and 60 BC. (F. W. Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan*, I, pp. 75, 105). If the Sampul cemetery with the representation of the Greco-Sacae/Indian king was related to the Vijaya and was used for the first time in 217 BC, we can suppose that the immigration from Taxila happened earlier than the Thomas proposition of 215 BC. However, the first Vijaya is not necessarily linked with the earlier foundation of Kothan, and Hadani Ryotai holds the opinion that the rule of the Vijaya kings started only around the fifth century of our era. The first hypothetical Indo-Greek king who would have come to Khotan at the time of Diodotes should have been conquering the region at least around 240 BC if we consider his alliance with the late Qin kingdom. The potential “victorious-Vijaya” (*Nikator*) king at the time of Diodotes is Antiochos Nikator (~240–220 BC), a possible son of Diodotes (Jens Jakobsson, *Antiochus Nikator, a third king of Hellenistic Bactria?* Numismatic chronicle, 2010). Either from the Mauryans or the Bactrian Greeks, there was no known independent king who could possibly have moved to Xinjiang from Taxila in 240 BC. The unknown Antiochos Nikator could have been the renegade prince exiled by Diodotes if we relate him to Xuanzang’s story. Diodotes II became the official successor to the Bactrian throne, although Antiochos Nikator is not recorded in history and appears to be different from Antiochos II. Formerly considered as transitive coins of Diodotes before he declared the independence of Bactria, the later commemorative coins of Agathocles show Antiochos Nikator to be different from both Diodotes I and Antiochos II, who nicknamed himself “god” (*theos*). If Nikator was presumably related to the Vijaya of Khotan, then Antiochos Nikator would be the most promising candidate. A later king of Khotan named Vijaya Sangrama gave himself the epithet “the lion” (*Simha*) after he supposedly killed a man-eating lion. A golden coin with the Wheel of the Dharma on one side and a lion with upraised paw on the other has been found in the fourth tomb of Tillya Tepe (Afghanistan), dating from the first century AD. On this coin is written in ancient Indian language, “fearless as a lion,” and it is similar to the coins issued earlier by King Agathocles in Bactra representing a lion. Whatever the exact date of Khotan colonization, the lion–Vijaya–Indo-Greek royal family association seems clear to me. On *Vijaya*, see: N. 661, *Kharoshthi Inscriptions Translated and Edited*, by A. M. Boyer, E. J. Rapson, F. Senart, and P. S. Noble; see also P. Konow, *Acta Orientalia*, ii, pp. 124–27; x, pp. 77–80; xiv, pp. 233–40.



Plate 4. Hellenistic wall tapestry from the Sampul cemetery with the centaur Chiron and a Greco-Scythian king or perhaps Alexander the Great. Excavated at Sampul cemetery, Lop, Xinjiang, 1983. Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Museum. Early first century AD.

However, Hellenistic tapestries have been found in Loulan as well, confirming a "cultural link" between Loulan and Khotan. Aurel Stein found fine Hellenistic tapestries representing Hermes and Pegasus in Loulan during his fourth journey in 1930–1931, and he raises the possibility of a "Hellenized" presence that could have been in the region before the time of Christ.

These relics of Chinese textile art, from the time of Christ and before, claim special interest because they have been preserved for us on the very route of the earliest silk trade. But equally important is it for the student of those early relations between the Far East and the West to note that among the decorated fabrics there are found fragments of exquisitely worked tapestry in wool which display a style unmistakably Hellenistic. Whether they are of local make or imports from Central-Asian territories, farther west, we have in them striking illustration of a cultural influence that the ancient desert route also served for centuries, but in the reverse direction.⁴⁵

We could answer the uncertainty of Aurel Stein on the question of whether those Hellenistic tapestries were local or not, by mentioning the "New Tang dynasty annals," clearly identifying fine works of tapestry as a Yutian speciality. It was certainly locally made in Loulan as well, showing the transmission of an art coming from Yutian, simply because both of those kingdoms were closely allied and their royal families mixed, or because they belonged to the same kingdom. If Yutian was already an ally of Loulan at the time of the Qin Emperor, and they had marriage agreements and cultural links, then we could also have the explanation for the twelve chryselephantine statues found in Gansu's Lintao. Lintao is not very far from the Loulan area, and the Hellenistic golden plate with Dionysos and the twelve gods around him found in Gansu's Jingyuan, or the clay seal of Pallas Athena found in Niya are perhaps other testimonies of that time.

⁴⁵ Aurel Stein, *On Ancient Central-Asian Tracks: Brief Narrative of Three Expeditions in Innermost Asia and Northwestern China*, edited by Jeanette Mirsky (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963), p. 134.

Moreover, the Hellenistic archaeological discoveries in eastern Xinjiang made by Stein came from the kingdom of Loulan, which had a close relationship with the Greco-Scythians (or the Indo-Greeks) of Khotan. Loulan obtained the techniques of silk production from the Qin and acted as a sort of intermediary between the Qin and Khotan (if it was not already a part of the same kingdom). This could explain how the cultural link was made between the Qin and the Hellenistic world of Central Asia. The Sampul cemetery was used from 217 BC to 283 AD, and DNA analysis has shown that the people originated from the Eastern Mediterranean or the Caucasus region.⁴⁶ The date of 217 BC corresponds with the time of the expansion of the Greco-Bactrian kingdom, and if the cemetery was built at this particular time (and its interred had been living earlier, since they are known to have started dying in 217 BC) by warriors originating from the Eastern Mediterranean or the southern part of the Black Sea, then they can have come only from Hellenized Scythian troops who had earlier moved into Bactria and northwestern India, following the reign of Alexander the Great (as the tapestry motifs clearly demonstrate). The direct cultural contact between the Qin and the Greco-Scythian king of Khotan through Gansu seems to have been short, around the time of the Qin Emperor reign (ca. 240–230 BC), but it certainly implies a physical exchange with China. Kazuo Enoki makes the same deduction of a Qin–Western world contact through Khotan.

The State of Qin was located in the basin of the Wei River, and at the time of the Warring States was the closest town to the Tarim Basin and the commercial centre of the western towns. It is even said that one of the reasons which led to the

⁴⁶ The kings (or soldiers) of the Sampul cemetery came from various origins, composing as they did a homogenous army made of Hellenized Persians, western Scythians, or Sacae Iranians from their mother's side, just as were most of the second generation of Greeks colonists living in the Seleucid Empire. Most of the soldiers of Alexander the Great who stayed in Persia, India and central Asia had married local women, thus their leading generals were mostly Greeks from their father's side or had Greco-Macedonian grandfathers. Antiochos had a Persian mother, and all the later Indo-Greeks or Greco-Bactrians were revered in the population as locals, as they used both Greek and Bactrian scripts on their coins and worshipped the local gods. The DNA testing of the Sampul cemetery shows that the occupants had paternal origins in the eastern part of the Mediterranean; see Chengzhi Xie et al., *Progress in Natural Science*, vol. 17 (August 2007) pp. 927–33.

affirmation of Qin (秦) was the possibility it had of entering into contact with Western Civilization⁴⁷ through Central Asia.⁴⁸

Concerning the development of artillery machines in early China, the *Shiji* (chap. 1) describes Chiyou (蚩尤), the mythic half-bull half-human Qiang (羌) monster, as the creator of the *ballistae* (or "big crossbow," *Danu* 大弩), the long halberd (*Ji* 戟), and the broadsword (*Dao* 刀). The *Shiji* also describes Chiyou and his brothers as crossing the desert (eating sand and pebbles), their heads being made of bronze and their foreheads of iron (*tongtou tie'e* 銅頭鉄額). I cannot help but think about the high Greco-Macedonian helmets in this description, and when the historian Ren Fang (任昉 460–508 AD) says that during the Qin and the Han dynasties, Chiyou was described as having horns on his head and hairs on his temples like swords and spears (*Chiyoushi erfa ru jianji, tou you jiao* 蚩尤氏耳髮如劍戟頭有角),⁴⁹ it reminds me of the description of Alexander the Great as well. Chiyou was also the legendary creator of wrestling (*Juedi* 角抵) in China, and nobody could beat him, although wrestling competitions appeared only at the end of the Qin (秦) kingdom, and it was the Qin Emperor himself who institutionalized it for the foot soldier's warfare training (*Jiang wu zhi li, ba wei jue di shi shi* 講武之禮, 罷爲角抵是時).⁵⁰ I think that the story of Chiyou in the *Shiji* has perhaps been added

⁴⁷ I.e., Greek Civilization. As happened in India with the Mauryan kings, the Greeks' art of warfare was very modern for its time in Central Asia, principally because of artillery machines and experienced engineers and architects able to build strong fortified cities. Alexander the Great was considered as a kind of "meteor" of modernity in the East at that time. Although it was short, the Greco-Qin direct contact included at least sculptural arts, warfare and architectural transmissions. The institutionalization of combat sports and games of strength in the Qin armies is also a result of this contact. See my articles in *Nikephoros*, Number 23, December 2010, and in the *New York Classical World Review*, "Greek Combats Sports and Their Transmission to Central and East Asia," n. 106, 2012.

⁴⁸ Kazuo Enoki, "The So-called Sino-Kharoshthi Coins," *Studia Asiatica: The Collected Papers in Western Languages of the Late Dr. Kazuo Enoki* (Tokyo: Kyu-Shoin, 1998), pp. 424–25.

⁴⁹ Hanwei congshu (漢魏叢書) (Collection of Han and Wei dynasties books); *Shengyi jing* (神異經) (Unusual divine scripture), book 2. (卷二) shuyiji (述異記) (Commentary on unusual stories), Ren Fang (任昉) (Southern dynasty of the Liang) (南朝梁) (Shanghai, 1925).

⁵⁰ *Wenxian tongkao* (文獻通考) (Comprehensive examination of literature), Ma Duanlin (馬端臨), chap. 149, *bing*

to an earlier legend, and that it was a description of the Greco-Bactrian invaders coming from the Tarim Basin with their advanced war machines and engaging in wrestling competitions.⁵¹ The Qiang did not use artillery machines in war, and it was the Greco-Macedonians who were famous for those in Asia at that time, using long spears (*Sarissa*) as well, not the Achaemenid Persians nor the Scythians.

During the early Han dynasty, the Xiongnu (匈奴)⁵² attacks in the Tarim Basin may have reduced contacts between Khotan and China until at least the time of Han Wudi and his Western

(兵) 1, *kao* (考). (Beijing: *Zhonghua shuju* 中華書局出版, 1986), p. 1307.

⁵¹ On Greek artillery machines, see Ammianus Marcellinus, Book 13, chap. 4. The first tension catapults used by the Greeks around 350 BC were like very large bows and arrows that could shoot short heavy darts called "bolts." These types of catapult were called *oxybolos*, and a short version was the arbalest named *gastrophetes* (meaning "charged with the belly," similar to the Han dynasty arbalest described on a carved stone excavated in Shandong's Linan. [山東瀝南出土]) that first appeared during the fifth century BC. Around 400 BC, Dionysius the elder, the ruler of Syracuse, hired many engineers to develop artillery machines technology. During the third century BC, the Greeks started to experiment with different types of string to shoot bolts, and they came up with the idea of using tightly strung coils of rope. Engineers called a spring made in this way a "torsion spring," and so catapults powered by coiled ropes were called "torsion catapults." Denys of Syracuse created the *lythobolos* torsion catapult that could fire iron balls and that may possibly have been later perfected by the engineers of Philip II of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great. Alexander used both types of machine during his march to the East: first at the Granikos River, attacking the Persians, and then against the city of Tyr, when it had been refused to worship Heracles in the city temple in 332 BC (Quintus Curtius Rufus, chap. 4). In 306 BC, Athens developed powerful artillery machines following the advice of Demochares, and the engineer Bromios went on to develop a combined torsion machine that could throw stones, iron balls or arrows as well (Diodorus Siculus, 20. 49.4; 83.1). The artillery of Alexander became widely used in the Seleucid Empire and as far as India by Demetrios and Menander when they attacked Pataliputra (*Gargi-Samhita*, *Yuga Purana* .5).

⁵² The Xiongnu (or Hunnu) were a nomadic confederation of Turco-Mongolic origin controlling the northern part of China and Mongolia. The first known leader of the Xiongnu was Toumen (頭曼), who was killed by his son, named Modu (or Maodun 冒頓 209–174 BC). Modu became the first Xiongnu chief (Shanyu 單于), leading a large troop of horsemen steppe fighters. In 200 BC, Han Gaodi went to war against Modu at Taiyuan, and he was attacked by more than three hundred thousand Xiongnu horsemen. These very large hordes of mounted archers would come to inflict great losses upon China, with which they were in constant war for about two hundred years.

expeditions. I assume (it is the most plausible explanation) the presence of a few "Greek" sculptors or engineers at the Qin Emperor's court.⁵³

The predominant population and troops of Khotan were Sacae (eastern Persians), Indo-Greeks or Western Scythians (from the southern part of the Black Sea). The "half-Greeks," or Hellenized Scythian aristocracy, may have lasted until the first century of our era, as happened in Bactria and in northern India. As with Bactria, the progressively mixed culture of Greco-Buddhism in the southern part of the Tarim Basin eventually totally assimilated former Hellenistic elements into a new regional culture. The growing power of the nomadic hordes coming from the northern part of the Tarim Basin and the struggle of the Greco-Scythians with those in Central Asia and Khotan may well have dissolved the Greek presence in Xinjiang.

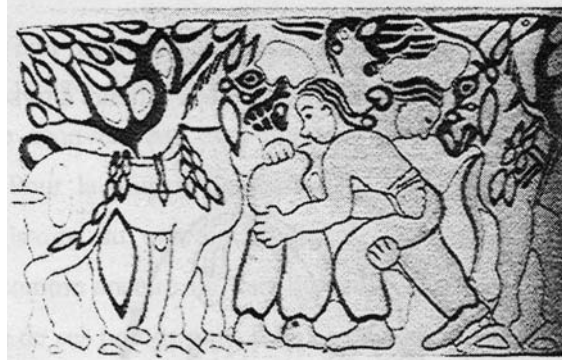


Plate 5. Wrestling scene motifs on a bronze-belt designed on a western Scythian style. Piece found at the Necropolis of Keshengzhuang. End of the Warring States Period.

In conclusion, the contact with the Qin was more likely to have happened through the southern route of the Tarim Basin, along the northern range of the Himalayas, with the colonization of Hellenized Scythians crossing the Khunjerab pass with their Greco-Scythian or

⁵³ As "unrealistic" as the alternative seems, I do not see any rational possibility of transmitting a realistic Hellenized art style into Qin dynasty China other than by explicitly teaching it. The same reasoning applies to the existence of the twelve chryselephantine statues of Lintao. Greek sculptors at the time frequently offered their services to kings as far as Parthia and Bactria. If the Greco-Bactrians were based in Khotan, Loulan or Lintao, then they could have offered their services to the Qin Emperor as well. I am convinced that, going forward, a good deal of archeological evidence that supports this hypothesis will be found in the Qin Emperor's mausoleum.

Indo-Greek king. Although it is probable that the Yuezhi, together with the Turco-Mongolic hordes of Wusun (烏孫)⁵⁴ and Xiongnu moving at the eastern borders of Ferghana, northern Gansu, southern Mongolia and northern Shaanxi around 200 BC, would make their way through Kucha and Aksu for the Greco-Bactrians only with difficulty, we still can find some traces of them there as well. The Dioscuroi wrestling motifs on belts were common for some Hellenized Western Scythians in the central-northern parts of China and Kazakhstan at the end of the Warring States period (**Plate 5**), showing a possible colonization from Ferghana to Shaanxi passing through the steppes of western Mongolia during the time of the Qin Emperor, or between ~240 and 200 BC.⁵⁵ The identity of those Western Scythians is not recorded clearly in the Chinese texts, but I suppose that, since they are depicted as riding the tall black horses from Central Asia, they should be identified as the "black horse" (*Lirong* 驪戎) armies. As they were wearing belts decorated with horses as well, "black horse armies" would be an appropriate nomenclature for the nomadic Scythians who had been riding through the northern steppes of China from as early as the early Qin kingdom.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ The foundation of the Wusun nation started with Nandoumi (難兜靡), father of the first king, named Kunmo (昆莫). According to the *Shiji* (in "Traditions of Ferghana"), Nandoumi had been killed by the Xiongnu, and Kunmo was abandoned alone in the plains. According to tradition, little Kunmo was fed by wild wolves and crows, and thus the name "Wusun" ("son of crows") appeared in the Chinese texts. The warfare habits and customs of the Wusun were very similar to those of the Xiongnu, but they stayed independent of them before migrating westwards. Kunmo came to rule the city of "Xi" (Xicheng 西城), the capital of Khotan. The *Hanshu* (chap. 96) mentions that among the Wusun hordes were found Sacae and Greater Yuezhi people after they had colonized Central Asia.

⁵⁵ Bronze belt found in Keshengzhuang. See my description in: Lucas Christopoulos, "Early Combat Sports Rituals in China and the Rise of Professionalism (475 BC–220 AD)," *Nikephoros: Zeitschrift für Sport und Kultur im Altertum*, Number 23, December 2010.

⁵⁶ Tomb excavations in Shanxi at Keshengzhuang or in Inner Mongolia at Aluchaideng show animal-styled objects similar to those of the "Western Scythians" located around the Black Sea. Near the German town of Stuttgart, Greek bronzes and Chinese silk have been found together in the excavation of the tomb of a buried Scythian prince dating from the sixth century BC. The Dioscuroi wrestling motifs on their belts dating from the end of the Warring States period are also a proof of the continuous contacts between the eastern and the western Scythians. The Scythian confederacy had constant links with the Hellenized southern parts of the Black Sea to the plains of northern China, thus the Scythian steppes had always been a kind of cultural highway. When the Greco-Bactrian kingdom was

4. The Greater Qin and the Han dynasty

After the reign of the Qin, the Han (漢) transferred power back to aristocratic families and moved the capital to Chang'an. Meanwhile, in Central Asia, the warlord-king Eucratides (Ευκρατιδου ~171–145 BC), presumably a cousin of Antiochos IV (Tarn), went on campaign and reconquered Bactria and northwest India from the Euthydemid renegades in 175 BC. The young king Demetrios II (~173–165 BC), a son of Demetrios, launched a war against Eucratides, as he expected to rule Bactria, Sogdiana and Ferghana, but he was defeated in 165 BC. Eucratides had his capital in Bactra, and he became the most powerful and wealthy king of Bactria and Sogdiana, taking all the walled cities and the golden and the silver mines of the Euthydemids. In 145 BC, after about thirty years of supremacy in the region, he was murdered by his own son, Heliocles "the Just" (reigned ~145–125 BC), who ran over his body with his chariot and seized the crown of the Bactrian kingdom. Following this parricide, the sub-king Platon (~139–137 BC), formerly under the rule of Eucratides, took with him a part of the Greco-Bactrian armies and unsuccessfully rebelled against Heliocles. At this point, the Bactrian Greeks and their Sacae troops were at war in the northern territories with the Yuezhi and the Parthians and in the south against the Indo-Greeks.

In northern India, the Euthydemid kings Apollodotes I (~186/185–175 BC) and Antimachos (~175–165 BC) had created the new Indo-Greek coinage system of the drachma and ruled most of the Indian territories from the capital Taxila. They had divided the Indo-Greek kingdom from the Greco-Bactrian one at the time of Eucratides's conquests. The Indo-Greeks were strongly influenced by Indian and especially Buddhist elements, traditionally institutionalized from Ashoka's time and the Seleucid/Mauryan alliance. The Indo-Greeks opposed the Eucratid dynastic family for about a century. Menander (Μενανδρου ~170–130 BC), a nephew, a general of Demetrios I (Tarn), or a son of Apollodotes I (Widemann) extended his reign for many years in India. Menander eventually became the Buddhist king Milinda, an important figure in Buddhist literature, to be worshipped later as a "king of the Dharma wheel"

founded, the Scythians enrolled in the armies of the Greek kings made the contacts with the Scythians situated in the northern plains of China even stronger.

(*çacravartin*). He was probably at war both with the Sunga clan of India and the Greco-Bactrians. In 185 BC in India, the general of the Mauryan forces, Pusyamitra Sunga, assassinated the last Mauryan emperor, Brhadrata, and began the Brahman-ruled Sunga dynasty. The Brahmans were traditionally opposed to the Buddhists and the Greeks of northern India from the time of Alexander. It seems that, like Ashoka in his later years, Menander followed Buddhist precepts of wisdom, since his later coins (perhaps Menander II?) show several Buddhist symbols.

At the same time, east of Ferghana, the Yuezhi, based in Gansu, were pushed into migration by the constant attacks of the Xiongnu; perhaps they also desired to find a wealthier world across the mountains of Ferghana. The inhabitants of Central Asia were known as Sacae (Σάκαι) in the Greek sources,⁵⁷ and they included various Persian tribes of steppe origins dispersed to the extreme northeastern parts of Scythia. According to the Chinese sources, the Yuezhi federation formed two distinct hordes that would eventually conquer Ferghana, Sogdiana and Bactria by attacking both the Greeks and their Sacae allied troops. The "greater Yuezhi" (Da Yuezhi 大月支) and the "lesser Yuezhi" (Xiao Yuezhi 小月支), originally based in the oases of Gansu-Ningxia and Xinjiang, had moved along the northern part of the Tarim Basin.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ At the time of Pliny the Elder (23–79 AD), the Scythians living in Central Asia were known as the Sacae, this name referring collectively to a multitude of different nomadic tribes: the Sacae, Massagetae, Dahae, Essedones, Astacae, Ruminici, Pestici, Homodoti, Histi, Edones, Camae, Camacae, Euchatae, Cotieri, Austhusiani, Psacae, Aimaspi, Antacati, Chroasai and Oetai. More or less Hellenized after the conquest of Alexander the Great, they were included in the Greco-Bactrian armies and lived on an equal footing with the Parthians (Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, Book 6, XVIII, 50–51). The other nomadic tribes from the eastern part of Ferghana were mainly known in the Greek sources as the *Asii* ("Asians"; perhaps the Wusun) and the *Toxarii* ("bowmen"; perhaps the Yuezhi).

⁵⁸ The *Hanshu* (chap. 96) mentions that the Greater Yuezhi (da Yuezhi 大月氏) were attacked by the Xiongnu, so they moved to western Gansu. Zhang Qian wrote that the Greater Yuezhi were originally based in the region of Dunhuang (敦煌). The Wusun attacked them in their turn and pushed them away farther west to Ferghana. The Lesser Yuezhi (Xiao Yuezhi 小月氏) came from the region of Xiping (西平) and Zhangye (張掖), and they followed their king Qiduoluo (奇多羅) to Ferghana while escaping the Xiongnu and the Wusun. After their conquest of Ferghana and Central Asia around 166–160 BC, the Yuezhi established five vassal-protectorates or satrapies (*Xihou* 翕侯), including the Xiumi (休密), the Shuangmi (雙靡), the Guishuang (貴霜), the Xidun (肸頓), and the Dumu (都密). According to Jitzuro Kuwabara (1916), the five *Xihou* included the Yuezhi but were not necessarily all of Yuezhi origin. He was probably right, as the *Hanshu* mentions that the Xiumi protectorate was based in Hemo city

Around 166–160 BC, the Greco-Bactrian cities of Ferghana and Sogdiana composed of Sacae, Sogdian and Greek troops were lost after the constant attacks of the numerous Yuezhi hordes. Around 125 BC, Heliocles was probably killed while defending the ancient Alexandria on the Oxus, which had earlier been re-baptized "Eucratidea" (modern Ai Khanoum in Afghanistan) by his father Eucratides around 139 BC.

In 130 BC, following the Yuezhi's attacks, Bactria was in a chaotic state, while Margiana was under the control of the Parthians. Several fortified cities situated in the Kabul Valley near Peshawar–Islamabad and other walled towns of northwest India were still controlled by some Greco-Bactrian or Indo-Greek kings who were descended either from the Eucratids or the Euthydemids families. The Kabul Valley (Gandhara) would remain under the control of Eucratides's descendants for about a hundred years, with the last Bactrian Greek king being Hermaios (~90–30 BC). Some walled cities situated in the northwestern Indian territories bordering the Himalayas remained in the control of Euthydemus's clan as well, with Apollodotes

(和墨城), the Guishuang protectorate in Huzao city (護藻城), the Xidun protectorate in Baomao city (薄茅城), the Shuangmi protectorate in Shuangmi city (雙靡城) and the Dumī protectorate in Kabul city (Gaofu 高附). Kabul was evidently controlled by Eucratides in 160 BC, thus the Dumī protectorate is perhaps related to his name (Eucratidou), and the three other satrapies (Xiumi, Xidun and Shuangmi) were of either Sacae or Greco-Bactrian origins. The Yuezhi were most certainly wandering, pillaging and fighting, at first in Central Asia, establishing their camps here and there rather than ruling as kings from organized cities. About a hundred years after their invasion of Ferghana, the Kushana warriors (Guishuang 貴霜) attacked the four other protectorates and created the Yuezhi–Kushana Empire with King Kujula Kadphises (Qiujiujue 丘就卻 ~25 BC to 60 AD). The Yuezhi were different from the Sacae–Scythians, as the *Hanshu* (chap. 96) mentions that the Sacae (Sai 塞) tribes of Ferghana moved southwards to Gandhara (Jibin) after the invasion of the Yuezhi. Kujula Kadphises allied later with King Hermaios in Bactra, and he attacked eastern Parthia (An Xi 安西), then he occupied Kabul (Gaofu 高附) and vanquished all his Sacae rivals around 30 AD. After the death of Kujula, his son his son Wima Takto took the throne, followed by Wima Kadphises, who conquered northwest India, probably killing the last Indo-Greek, Straton II, in Sagala around 10 AD. In 90 AD, the Yuezhi (Kushana) sent a large army of seventy thousand cavalrymen through the Khunjerab pass in order to invade the Tarim Basin. Exhausted by crossing the mountain summits, they were unable to capture General Ban Chao (班超), who was protected with his Han armies in Turfan. The last king of the Kushana Empire was Vasuveda, who lost against the Sassanid Persians around 230 AD, after the Yuezhi–Kushana kings had ruled and spread (Greco-) Buddhism for about 260 years in Central Asia and China.

II, Hippostratos and their descendants Straton, Dionysos and Straton II, as king of Sagala until the first century of our era.

Following the numerous attacks of the Xiongnu hordes of horsemen coming from Mongolia, Zhang Qian (張騫; 195–114 BC) was sent on a mission by the Chinese to the western borders of the Han Empire in order to make a military alliance with the Yuezhi. Having been a military officer, Zhang Qian had already some experience in war with the Xiongnu, but he nevertheless was captured and imprisoned by them while on his way.

After ten years of imprisonment, Zhang Qian succeeded in escaping the Xiongnu and continued his expedition through Lob Nor and the Tarim Basin, crossing the "Jade Gate Pass" (*Yumen guan* 玉門關) to the Western Lands. He followed the northern Tarim road to Ferghana (*Dayuan* 大宛), Sogdiana (*Kanju* 康居) and Bactria (*Daxia* 大夏) across the Tianshan Mountains. He finally arrived in Central Asia around 128 BC, soon after the Sogdian kingdom had been invaded by the Yuezhi hordes, and there he wrote that he found just "pitiful kings." Zhang Qian returned to China in 126 BC (*Yuanshuo sannian* 元朔三年), whereupon his information on the Western lands was recorded by the historian Sima Qian (司馬遷).⁵⁹

The first mention of the Lixuan-Daquin (黎軒-大秦) appears in the Chinese sources during the reign of Emperor Han Wudi, a term used consistently until the reign of Emperor Chengzu of the Ming dynasty (明成祖 1402–1424). A common error in the Han sources is related to its references to Greece and Rome, which occurs because Rome in fact succeeded Greece, both in

⁵⁹ Sima Qian (司馬遷 145–85 BC), also named Zichang (子長), is the most important historian of the Western Han dynasty. From the city of Xiayang (夏陽) in the actual district of Hancheng (韓城) in Shanxi province (陝西), he was the son of the chief historian (*taishiling* 太史命) Sima Tan (司馬談), and he started his work as General Secretary (*langzhong* 郎中). In the third year of the *Yuanfeng* era of Emperor Wudi's reign (108 BC), he replaced his father in the function of state historian. In the second year of the *Tianhan* era (99 BC), he was condemned to castration and put in jail for having protected Li Ling (李陵), who had capitulated to the Xiongnu (匈奴). He was released from jail three years later in the first year of the *Taishi* era (96 BC), and he became the "Central Chief of the Books" (*Zhongshuling* 中書命). He reunified many ancient manuscripts to write an historic book later to be called the *Book of the Great Historian* (*Taishigong shu* 太史公書), still later to be known as the *Historical Records of the Great Historian* (*Shiji* 史記). It is the first Chinese book of its kind to be completed; it was divided into four parts: annals, biographies, chronological tables and treatises.

territorial possession and in cultural terms, and also because the Greeks traveling in Asia referred to themselves as “Romans” (Ρωμαίος).⁶⁰

Modern Chinese and Western scholars connect Lijian–Lixuan or Daqin (“Greater Qin”) to the Romans of Rome, or the Roman Orient.⁶¹ The changing borders following the Seleucid

⁶⁰ For example, Sopatros, the Greek mariner, presented himself as a Roman while traveling to Sri Lanka for the Roman Empire during the fifth century AD. “Sieleidiba (Taprobane, Sri Lanka), which is in the middle of the Indian region and possesses the hyacinth, exchanges merchandise with every port of trade and she is herself a large port of trade. One day one of the merchants active there, by the name of Sopatros, who we know died thirty-five years ago, came for the purpose of trading to the island of Taprobane, and a vessel from Persia also docked there. When the merchants from Adulis were disembarking, Sopatros was among them, and also merchants from Persia disembarked. An old Persian man was with them. So, as was normal, the officials and the customs officers greeted them and escorted them before the king. The king, after having received them and accepted their homage, ordered them to be seated and asked ‘How do your countries and things fare?’ They replied, ‘Well.’ Then the king after a while asked ‘which of your two kings is the mightiest, and the most powerful? The Persian subject jumped in and said, ‘Ours is the mightiest, the greatest and the richest. He is king of kings and obtains all that he wishes’. Sopatros for his part remained silent. So the king asked, ‘And you, Romans, why do you say nothing?’ Sopatros replied, ‘What should I say, if this man says such things? If you wish to learn the truth, you have before you both kings, consider them both and you can see who is the most distinguished and powerful.’ The king listened and was baffled. Then he said ‘What do you mean by saying that I have before me both kings?’ Sopatros replied, ‘You have the coins of both, the *nomisma* (the *solidus*) of one, of the other the *drachma*, that is, the *miliarisin*. Consider the image of each one and you can see the truth.’ Having praised and approved the suggestion, the king ordered that both coins be brought before him. The *nomisma* was made of pure gold, shone and was beautiful to look at; since only such selected coins circulate there. The *miliarisin* was, in a word, a piece of silver, and that was enough to prevent its comparison with the gold coin. The king turned over the two coins again and again considering them both, and praising the *nomisma* without reserve, he said, ‘Truly the Romans are splendid, powerful and wise.’ He then ordered Sopatros to be honored with great magnificence and, placing him upon an elephant, had him escorted through the city with great honors, to the beating of drums.” (Frederico De Romanis, “Romanukharattha and Taprobane: Relations between Rome and Sri Lanka in the First Century AD,” in *Crossings: Early Mediterranean Contacts with India*, ed. F. De Romanis and A. Tchernia (New Delhi: Manohar, 1997), pp. 186–87.

⁶¹ For instance, H. Friedrich, *China and the Roman Orient* (Chicago: Ares Publications, 1975). The Japanese researcher Fujita Toyohashi proposed that the word *Daqin* comes from the Persian word *dasina* meaning “right,” and that “right” would mean “occidental” for the Persians (Parthians). Kazuo Enoki also follows this proposition in chap. 13, “Remarks on the Country of the Ta-Ch’in as Known to the Chinese under the Sung,” *Studia Asiatica: The*

Empire, the Bactrian kingdom, Rome, Roman Egypt, and then Byzantium, are reflected in the Chinese sources, with their locations left unclear, although the Chinese sources all linked them historically with the Lijian–Daqin.



Plate 6. Pediment-like funerary stele carving unearthed in Tongshan (Xuzhou province). Western Han (206 BC to 24 AD)

The word “Lixuan” was used in the sources of the Western Han dynasty (206 BC to 24 AD), following which the term “Daqin” was used in the Eastern Han (25–220 AD), the Wei (386–534 AD) and the Jin (265–420 AD) dynasties. Then Rome was named “Fulin” (拂菻) during the Sui (581–618 AD) and the Tang (618–907 AD) periods.

As Aurel Stein discovered, there were many military posts and fortified towers built along the Silk Road in Xinjiang.⁶² The prefecture of Jiuquan (酒泉) was opened in 104 BC (*Taichu yuannian* 太初元年) by Han Wudi in order to facilitate trade with the Western lands after Zhang Qian came back from Central Asia with his new information. When Wudi sent the first envoy to Ferghana with General Li Guangli (李廣利) to 88 BC at the head of twenty thousand foot soldiers and six thousand steppe horsemen, many of these were slaughtered by the local armies. Wudi was furious and sent a messenger to Dunhuang or Yumenguan, where Li Guangli

Collected Papers in Western Languages of the Late Dr. Kazuo Enoki (Tokyo: Kyu-Shoin, 1998), p. 257. I do not take this explanation to be correct, however, since the Parthians were *philhellenes*, and thus they knew how to denominate a Roman or a Greek. If *Daqin* was a Chinese phonetic translation of *dasina*, then the Chinese would certainly have used different characters from those for “Greater Qin” as well.

⁶² Marc Aurel Stein (1862–1943), “History Records of the Tun-Huang Limes,” *Serinda*, vol. 2, chap. 20, p. 738 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921). Also in “Excavations of the Western Limes, Well Preserved Watch Towers,” in *Ruins of Desert Cathay*, pp. 92–94.

had retreated with his troops, ordering him to "slay at once any of the army who should dare to enter." By the time of Li Guangli, the local warriors of Ferghana had pushed the Yuezhi westward, and Guangli undertook a second expedition with sixty thousand men to fight the King of Ferghana, called Wugua (無寡) by the Chinese.

After arriving in Ferghana, Li Guangli cut the water supply of the fortified capital to which Wugua had retreated, hoping that he would surrender. But in that city was a captured "man of Qin" (秦人) who was able to dig wells (see section 8), allowing the city to resist a siege of forty days. The Sogdians came to help Ferghana as well, but as they saw that they were outnumbered by the Chinese, they did not fight.

Wugua was killed before he was replaced by a new king named Meicai (昧蔡), appointed by the Chinese. Ferghana gave three thousand horses to the Han before they went back to China. After they left, the aristocracy of Ferghana declared Meicai a traitor and killed him, replacing him with Chanfeng (蟬封), the young brother of King Wugua. Finally, after the Chinese employed their diplomacy, Chanfeng became in his turn an ally of the Han, and he offered two pureblood horses to the Emperor. Ferghana and its pureblood horses were very valuable to Emperor Wudi, who named the horses of Ferghana the "heavenly horses" (Tianma 天馬)⁶³ and the horses of the Wusun, the "western limit horses" (Xijima 西極馬).

Another question worth examining is: what happened to the Greco-Bactrian kings who were earlier based in Ferghana? Between the invasion of possibly Greek-ruled Ferghana by the Yuezhi in 166–160 BC and the visit of Zhang Qian in 129 BC, followed by the arrival of Li Guangli in 104 BC, only about sixty years had passed. Had the Greek kings all been killed or left, together with their Hellenized Sacae and Greek troops, in Bactria? If the local kings had pushed

⁶³ During the Tang dynasty, Pegasus, the "heavenly horse" (Tianma 天馬), was known as coming from the Western Seas (*Haixi* 海西), meaning the Mediterranean world or Roman Egypt (the former Ptolemaic Empire). The "heavenly horse" is described here as issuing from the Hellenistic world. Zhang Suo, chap. 87, "The Dance of the Horse; Thousands of Autumns, Myriad of Protectorate Festivities" (舞馬千秋萬歲樂府詞三首), Poem n. 3. *All-Tang dynasty poems* (*Quan Tangshi* 全唐詩), "天馬來儀自海西." (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1960), p. 962. Concerning descriptions of Pegasus in Central Asia and in China, see the Nara National Museum publication *Pegasus and the Heavenly Horse: Thundering Hoofs on the Silk Road*; (Tenma 天馬), Nara (2008).

the Yuezhi westward at the time of Li Guangli, then who were the Ferghana kings? They were not Parthians, as the Parthians were allied with the Han in 104 BC. Parthia was situated a thousand *li* west of the Yuezhi, and the Yuezhi were already based west of Ferghana at the time of Li Guangli. That the captured "man of Qin" was located in Ferghana's capital could mean that most of the Daqin people (Greeks) had escaped southward during the invasion by the northeastern steppe warriors. According to Zhang Qian, in the Ferghana (*Dayuan*) section of the *Shiji*, during his visit in 129 BC, the king of Ferghana had died, slain by the Hu (胡) barbarians, so his wife (*furen* 夫人) took the throne. Could the Queen of Ferghana described by the *Shiji* have been the issue of a Greco-Bactrian royal lineage? All the Sacae or the Yuezhi transitional kings of the first century BC seem to have represented themselves with a Greco-Bactrian royal lineage on their coins, never with any other. This question remains unanswered, but as Eucratides and Heliocles were already dead at the time of the kings Wugua and Meicai, we may assume that the rest of the remaining dynasty of Eucratides in Ferghana and Sogdiana were relocated in Bactria. The presence of the *satrapies*, or commandaries (*xihou* 翕侯),⁶⁴ established by the Yuezhi all over northern Central Asia between 160 and 60 BC means that their troops must have had a certain peace agreement with the four other powers (see footnote 58 on the Yuezhi).

However, the Parthians were the most prominent power in Central Asia at that time, and they attracted the interest of Han Wudi for trade and military purposes.

Parthia (Anxi) is situated to the west of the greater Yuezhi (Da Yuezhi), at a distance of a thousand *li* (~400 km). The habit of the natives is to cultivate fields and grapes. Their cities belong to Ferghana (Dayuan) and, big or small, there are hundreds of them. The whole territory is about one thousand *li*, forming a big country. Westward of Parthia there is Tiaozi, at the north there is Yancai and Lixuan. The Tiaozi are situated at the west of Parthia, at thousands of *li*, bordered by the Western Sea. They are invariably ruled by petty chiefs and are

⁶⁴ *Xihou* has been translated as "yabghu," although the term *xihou* is anterior to *yabghu* and not necessarily related to it. According to the *Shiji* (*Zhengyi*-正義), the character *hou* (侯) is translated from the Hu (胡) pronunciation *gou* (溝).

tributary to the Parthians, who regard them as a foreign country. The people of the country are good at illusionism.⁶⁵

Tiaozhi (Characene–Messene) is situated at the western border of Parthia,⁶⁶ and there are “petty rulers” (*xiao junzhang* 小君長) in the cities conquered by the Parthians where “acrobats” or “jugglers” (*shanhuan* 善幻) were living. Those gymnasts and acrobats were mainly Greeks, professional athletes living in the Parthian-conquered cities of Charax Spasinou (Σπασίνου Χάραξ) or Seleucia Tigris (Σελεύκεια). A tribute of gymnasts and acrobats coming from Lixuan (*Lixuan shanhuan* 黎軒善幻) was offered to Han Wudi by the Parthian king Mithradates II in 108 BC.⁶⁷ A representation of the god Eros running after a tiger like an acrobat can be seen in a Han dynasty sculpted stone (**Plate 7**).

The Greeks living in the ancient Asian colonies still had their “jobs” (or were slaves) as bodyguards, athletes, architects, musicians, scientists, sculptors, etc. The champions of athletic competitions in Babylon all had Greek names during the Parthian reign.⁶⁸ The *gymnasiarch* Nikolaos was the “first friend” of a Parthian king in Suza between 100 and 50 BC, and he gave a

⁶⁵ *Shiji* (史記) (Historical records of the Great Historian), chap. 123, “Traditions of Ferghana” (大宛傳) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1959), pp. 2398–2400. “安息在大月氏西可數千里。其俗土著，耕田，田稻麥，蒲陶酒。城邑如大宛。其屬小大數百城，地方數千里，最爲大國。其西則條枝，北有奄蔡，黎軒。條枝在安息西數千里，臨西海...往往有小君長，而安息役屬之，以爲外國。國善眩。”

⁶⁶ As Tiaozhi is situated at the western border of Parthia, it could also be a transcription for Antiochia and the Roman territories in Asia Minor. According to David F. Graf, Tiaozhi is a translation of the Tigris (The Roman East from the Chinese perspective. *Annales archéologiques* 42; 1996, 203). Edwin.G. Pulleybank identifies Tiaozhi with Seleucia Tigris in *The Roman Empire as known in Han China*; 1999. According to the *Hanshu* (chap. 96), in Tiaozhi were located two places called “the weak river” (*Ruoshui* 弱水) and “the Mother-queen of the West” (*Xiwangmu* 西王母).

⁶⁷ *Shiji* (史記) (Historical records of the Great Historian), chap. 123, “Traditions of Ferghana” (大宛傳) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1959–1999), p. 2406 “及加其眩者之工，而覈抵奇戲歲增變，甚盛益興，自此始。”

⁶⁸ Act Sanct Mari (Mar Mari) *Apost*, 19, in *Analecta Bollandiana* 5, 1885.

stadium to the city.⁶⁹ The sculpture of a wrestler named Menander (Minandrasa) on a weight has been found, dating from the time of the Kushana Empire, showing as well that one of the main "jobs" for the Greeks of Asia was athletic professionalism. In 120 AD, a troop of Greek performers arrived in Burma from Egypt by the Spice Road to India. They were offered by Yongyou, the king of Burma, to the Emperor Han Andi (漢安帝 106–125 AD), providing a sensational performance in the Chinese capital.

The first year of *Yongning* (120 AD), the southwestern barbarian king of the kingdom of Chan (Burma), Yongyou, proposed illusionists (jugglers) who could metamorphose themselves and spit out fire; they could dismember themselves and change an ox head into a horse head. They were very skilful in acrobatics and they could do a thousand other things. They said that they were from the "west of the seas" (Haixi–Egypt). The west of the seas is the Daqin (Rome). The Daqin is situated to the south-west of the Chan country. During the following year, Andi organized festivities in his country residence and the acrobats were transferred to the Han capital where they gave a performance to the court, and created a great sensation. They received the honours of the Emperor, with gold and silver, and every one of them received a different gift.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Franz Cumont, *The Excavations of Dura-Europos: Preliminary Reports of the Seventh and Eighth Seasons of Work*, *Crai* (New Haven, 1933), pp. 264–68. See also Bernard Haussoulier, "Inscriptions grecques de Babylone," *Klio* IX (1909).

⁷⁰ Ban Gu (班固), *Houhanshu* (後漢書) (Later Han dynasty annals), chap. 86, "Traditions of the Southern Savages; The South-Western Tribes" (Nanman, *Xinanyi zhuan* 南蠻西南夷列傳). *Liezhuan* 76. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1962–1999), p. 1926. "永初元年，"徼外僬僂種夷陸類等三千餘口舉種內附，獻象牙、水牛、封牛。永寧元年，撣國王雍由調復遣使者詣闕朝賀，獻樂及幻人，能變化吐火，自支解，易牛馬頭。又善跳丸，數乃至千。自言我海西人。海西即大秦也，撣國西南通大秦。明年元會，安帝作變於庭，封雍由調為漢大都尉，賜印綬、金銀、彩繒各有差也。"

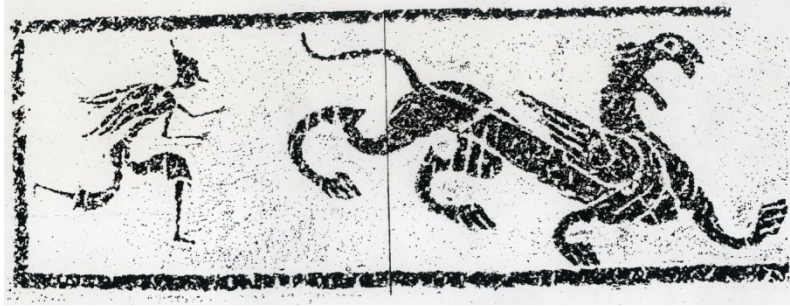


Plate 7. Eros The “feather man” (*yuren* 羽人) running after the “white tiger.”
Han dynasty, Tanghe prefecture (唐河縣).

The historian Ban Gu⁷¹ is talking about Lijian (犁鞬) in the “Traditions of the Western Lands” of the *Later Han dynasty Annals*, conflating Lijian with the Daqin (大秦):

The Kingdom of Daqin is also called Lijian. It is found to the west of the sea and it is also called the Kingdom of Haixi (“West-sea”; i.e., Egypt). Its territory extends for several thousands of *li*. It has more than four hundred walled towns. There are several dozens of smaller dependent kingdoms. The walls of the towns are made of stone. They have postal relays at intervals, which are all plastered and whitewashed. There are pine-trees and cypresses, as well as all kinds of trees and plants. The common people are farmers. They cultivate many grain crops and silkworm-mulberry trees as well. They shave their heads, and their clothes are embroidered. They have screened coaches (for the women) and small white-roofed one-horse carts. When carriages come and go, they beat the drums and flags and standards are raised. The seat of government is more than a hundred *li*

⁷¹ Ban Gu (班固 32–97 AD), also named Mengjian (孟堅), was an historian of the Eastern Han dynasty. He came from Xianyang (咸陽) in modern Shaanxi (陝西). He was the son of the historian Ban Biao (班彪) and followed his father in the redaction of the *Later Transmission of Historical Records* (*Shiji houzhuan* 史記後傳). He was condemned for his writings by the Emperor, who claimed that he had “illegally redacted the dynastic history,” perhaps writing an inconvenient truth about Chinese history. Ban Gu finally was liberated by his brother Ban Chao (班超), general of the Western Lands, who sent a letter to the Emperor praising Ban Gu. Freed, Ban Gu followed the general Dou Xian (竇憲 ? to 92 AD) on his expedition against the Xiongnu, before he became a central government officer. Dou Xian would eventually be executed for insubordination, and Ban Gu, implicated, later was executed as well.

(~42 km) around. In this city are five palaces situated ten *li* (~4 km) from each other. Moreover, in the rooms of the palace the pillars and the tableware are made of crystal. The king goes each day to one of the palaces to deal with business. Within five days, he has visited all of them. A porter with a pouch has the job of following the royal carriage. When somebody wants to discuss something with the king, he throws a note in the pouch. When the king arrives at the palace, he opens the bag, examines the contents, and judges if the plaintiff is right or wrong. There is a government department of archives. Thirty-six generals have been established to meet together to deliberate on affairs of state. Their kings are not permanent. They select and appoint the best man. If there are unexpected calamities in the kingdom, such as storms or floods, the king is unceremoniously rejected and replaced. If he has been dismissed (the king) quietly accepts his demotion, without anger. The people of this country are all tall and honest. They resemble the people of China and that is why this kingdom is called Daqin.⁷²

According to Yan Shigu (顏師古 581–645 AD) in his geographical explanation in the *Dilizhi* (地理志), Lixuan (驪軒) was a province situated next to Zhangye (張掖) in Gansu:

Lixuan (驪軒) means the country of the Daqin. The provinces of Lixuan and Zhangye have been founded to protect the Chinese land; today, the ignorant people call it Liqian (力虔).⁷³

⁷² Ban Gu (班固), *Houhanshu* (後漢書) (Later Han dynasty annals), chap. 88, "Traditions of the Western Lands" (西域傳) n. 78. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1962–1999), pp. 1973–74. "大秦國一名犁鞬，以在海西，亦云海西國。地方數千里，有四百餘城。小國役屬者數十。以石爲城都。列置郵亭。皆堊墍之。有松柏諸木百草。人俗力田作，多種樹蠶桑。皆髡頭而衣文繡乘輜駟白蓋小車，出入擊鼓，建旌旗幡幟。所居城邑，周圍百餘里。城中有五宮，相去各十里。宮室皆水精爲柱，食器亦然。其王日游一宮，聽事五日而後。常使一人持囊隨王車，人有言事者，即以書投囊中，王至宮發省，理其枉直。各有官曹文書。置三十六將，皆會議國事。其王無有常人，皆簡立賢者。國中災異及風雨不時，輒廢而更立，受放者甘黜不怨。其人民皆長大平正，有類中國，故謂之大秦。"

⁷³ *Hanshu* (漢書) (Han dynasty annals), chap. 28 (*Xia*), *Dilizhi*, (Yan Shigu explanations) (地理志, 顏師古注)

Here Lixuan is not mentioned as the country of Greece or Rome, but as a province in the Gansu corridor built on the way to the Western lands to protect the Chinese borders. Yan Shigu is referring to the city of Lixuan presumably built by the Roman (Daqin–Lixuan) prisoners posted there to defend the Gansu corridor (see section 7).

There are several points that have to be taken into consideration in those statements. First of all, the denomination of “Greater Qin” or “Daqin” from the Chinese is more than respectful. Why would a country give the name of its first unified dynasty to another nation and call it “Great”? Was it seen as the “Greater Greece” (*Megalh Ellas*; Sicily) to Greece proper? Had China (Qinguo 秦國) and the kingdom of the “Greater Qin” (Daqin 大秦) been linked somehow? But, then, how could have they been related culturally? No one has ever been successful in answering these questions convincingly, but the issue raises many more questions about the Qin Emperor’s possible contacts with the Indo-Greek colonists in Xinjiang (see section 3).

Much effort is made in the Han books to relate the Chinese (the Qin) with the Daqin; both culturally and ethnically. Ban Gu in the “Later Han dynasty annals” writes that the people of the Daqin are “strong, tall and honest like the Chinese, that is why they are named, the “Greater Qin” (Daqin).”⁷⁴ The “Wei dynasty annals” also made a similar comparison, saying that the Daqin (or Lixuan 黎軒) people are “tall and well built like the Chinese.”⁷⁵ The “Records from the Three Kingdoms” goes even further, claiming that the Daqin people (Lixuan 犁軒) “themselves say that they originated from China,” and that they wanted to send emissaries to China, but they were stopped by the Parthians, who were profiting from the relation (with China). Then they could not achieve their will.”⁷⁶

(Beijing, 1959–1999). “驪軒，即大秦國也。張掖驪軒縣，蓋取國名為縣也。今其土俗人呼力虔。”

⁷⁴ Ban Gu (班固), *Houhanshu* (後漢書) (Later Han dynasty annals), chap. 88, “Traditions of the Western Lands” (西域傳), n.78. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1962–1999), pp. 1974. “其人民皆長大平正，有類中國，故謂之大秦。”

⁷⁵ *Weishu* (魏書) (Wei dynasty annals), Chap. 102, “The Western Lands,” *Liezhuan* 90, (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1974–1999), p. 1540. “其人端正長大，衣服車旗擬儀中國，故外域謂之。”

⁷⁶ *Sanguo zhi* (三國志) (Records from the Three Kingdoms, books of the Wei), chap. 30. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1959–1999), p. 638. “自云本中國一別也，黨欲通使於中國，而安息圖其利，不能得過。”

What is clear in those statements is that the Romans or the Eastern Greeks wanted to trade with the Chinese, but while the Parthians were ruling Central Asia, it was impossible for them to get directly into China. Later, they discovered the way to traverse the Silk Road by sea to avoid the Parthians who blocked the way through India, Burma and Sri Lanka (**Map III, 1**). But why did the Daqin people claim that they had "originated from China"? Was it an allusion to a similarity between Kekrops and Fuxi, or was it just a lie written in the Chinese Records in order to make the Daqin more acceptable? I do not see any necessity by the Chinese to mention a close link with the Daqin on purpose; why not with the Parthians in this case? The Daqin were not the predominant military or major trading power at the Western Chinese borders during the Han dynasty, but they had perhaps more importance during the Qin, if we consider that they were based in Yutian and Loulan at that time.

The name of Lixuan changed around the time the army general in charge of the Western Lands, Ban Chao (班超 32–102 AD), sent Gan Ying (甘英) on a mission to Parthia in 97 AD to assemble information about the Western countries. Gan Ying reached Seleucia Tigris (Tiaozhi province) through long travel, passing by the Silk Road and following the road through the Tarim Basin, the Tianshan Mountains, Sogdiana and Parthia. The "Parthian section" of the *Later Han dynasty Annals* informs us that Gan Ying wanted to board a ship there in order to continue along the Persian Gulf to reach the Daqin, but that he was discouraged by the Parthian mariners who told him horrible stories about this land. This was perhaps done on purpose by the Parthians, who did not want the Chinese to have any contact with their Roman enemies. However, Gan Ying wrote and compiled new information on the Daqin, and he successfully brought them back with him into China. In Tiaozhi, he had either met Greek "expatriates" in Seleucia Tigris, or he had heard about the history of Rome and Greece in the East from the Parthians. If Gan Ying was curious about history and geography, he would have heard about the past conquests of Alexander the Great in the East, the Greco-Bactrians, and the transition of power to the Roman Empire. He also surely would have admired Greek sculptures, theaters and temples during his travel in the Hellenistic cities of Parthia, and he could have made the connection with the Qin Emperor mausoleum sculptures that he probably saw near Xianyang. Seeing those magnificent pieces of art, and comparing them with the Qin ones, he declared them to have been made by the "Greater

Qin" (Daqin) people, thinking that they had a cultural link with the Qin. Gan Ying could also have made the comparison with the twelve gigantic statues of Changlegong palace (see section 2) representing the Di barbarians, still standing during his lifetime. As he discovered that the people who made them were the same as the Lixuan who were located earlier near the Qin, he changed the name of Lixuan for "Greater Qin." The "Greater Qin" or "Big Qin" had been known earlier as the Lixuan, but Gan Ying realized that they should be called Daqin instead because of the link with the Qin.

Ban Gu says that the Daqin raised silkworms, and we know from the Greek sources that silkworms were also raised in Elis, Cyprus, and on the island of Kos. The Daqin's method of ordering their country as described by Ban Gu is that of a democratic system. The "thirty-six generals" (*sanshiliu jiang* 三十六將) are definitely issued from a Hellenistic type of political kingship, indicating a form of *Koinon*, or general-councilors assembly.⁷⁷



Plate 8. Object with fish-men-like design on the top and with Greek script on the inside. Piece of 5.5 cm diameter, found in Kangjiagou, Lingtai, Gansu province. (First century BC).

After the fall of the Ptolemaic Empire, Augustus included Egypt in the Roman Empire, and the Romans naturally continued to travel on the Spice Road to India and the Kushana Empire, avoiding the Parthians.⁷⁸ The Roman Emperors Hadrian (117–138 AD), Antonius Pius (138–161

⁷⁷ During the mid-second century AD, the Lycian *Koinon* was represented by thirty-six generals.

⁷⁸ Ptolemy (Κλαυδιος Πτολεμαιοσ ~90–168 AD) studied the maps of routes to China with Marinus of Tyr (Μαρίνοσ ο Τύριοσ, 80–130 AD), a Phoenician from Syria who traveled to China between 110 and 120 AD. Earlier, Nearchos,

AD), and Marcus Aurelius "The Wise" (161–180 AD), then would have enjoyed uninterrupted commercial exchanges with the Bactrians.

A Roman embassy with presents was sent to China from Myos Hormos (Μυὸς Ὀρμὸς) in Egypt through Sri Lanka on huge warships at the time of Marcus Aurelius in 166 AD.⁷⁹ In 226 AD, a Roman merchant named "Qinlun" (秦論) by the Chinese arrived in Jiaozhi (交趾, present-day Vietnam) from the Daqin. The governor of Jiaozhi gave him an escort to Wuchang (武昌) in order to be received by Sun Quan (孫權 182–252 AD) during the "Three Kingdoms" period. Sun Quan had invited the Roman Qinlun within his court and asked him many questions about the Roman world. Later, Sun Quan moved to his capital Jianye (建業; modern Nanjing 南京) in 229 AD, and he took Qinlun with him. After several years in the Emperor's court, Qinlun took some slaves of small size and went back to the Daqin.⁸⁰ Roman ships arriving in Guangzhou in 281 AD are mentioned in the *Yiwen leiju*,⁸¹ and another is mentioned in 284 AD in the *Jinshu*,⁸² showing

the admiral of Alexander the Great, had discovered the way back by ship from India to Seleucia Tigris (Babylon), following the coasts of Suziana and Carmania. Merchant ships from Ptolemaic Egypt officially opened the Spice Road to India. The Tamil Chera region was trading with the Yavana (Greco-Romans), selling spices, ivory, pearls and gems to the Roman Empire. Situated in southwest India, the capital port was Muziris. According to Pliny the Elder (*Natural History*, Book 6, XXVI, 101–106) the ships left from Egypt at the beginning of summer and needed about a month and a half to reach the port of Muziris. They came back to Myos Hormos in Egypt during the month of December, following the changing streams. Roman legionaries were based there, took care of the trade agreements and protected the warship's treasures against the pirates during its travels. In some Indian Akananuru poems of Sangam literature (n. 149), the Yavana warships coming from Rome to take curry and other spices are described as impressive and rich with gold. They also stopped to trade in the Kushana Empire, which, unlike Parthia, had good relations with Rome, starting at the time of Emperor Hadrian. From Muziris, the ships sometimes continued to Sri Lanka and the eastern seas to reach Burma, Vietnam or China.

⁷⁹ *Liangshu* (梁書) (Liang dynasty annals), chap. 54, "Zhong Tianzhuguo" (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1973–1999), p. 553. "漢桓帝延熹九年，大秦王安敦遣使自日南徼外來獻，漢世唯一通焉。"

⁸⁰ *Liangshu* (梁書) (Liang dynasty annals), chap. 54, "Zhong Tianzhuguo" (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1973–1999), p. 553. "孫權黃武五年，有大秦賈人字秦論來到交趾，交趾太守吳邈遣送詣權。權問方土謠俗，論具以事對。時諸葛恪討丹陽，獲黝、歙短人，論見之曰：'大秦希見此人'。權以男女各十人，差吏會稽劉鹹送論，咸於道物故，論乃徑還本國。"

⁸¹ *Yi Wen leiju* (藝文類聚) (Collection of literature arranged by categories) (Tang dynasty). Ou Yanggou (歐陽詢撰)

the strong interest Rome took in acquiring silk at that time.⁸³ During his archaeological expedition in the city of Niya, Aurel Stein discovered some "Roman Orient style" paintings signed by a certain *Tita* in Kharoshthi letters that he explained as a phonetic transcription of "Titus." According to Stein, Titus was an itinerant painter coming from the Roman Orient by the Silk Road of Central Asia.⁸⁴ During the reign of the emperor Xuanwu (宣武帝 483–515 AD), who was a great believer in Buddhism, people came from as far as the Daqin to live near the Yongming monastery of Luoyang. The "foreign quarters" around the Yongming monastery were an international center to which people came from everywhere. Roman merchants, travelers or Nestorian monks (see section 9) lived there as well, dressing in Chinese clothes.

The Yongming monastery, built by the emperor Xuanwu, is situated at the east of the Dajue temple. At the time when Buddhism was in vogue at Luoyang, foreign monks came from everywhere, holding their canes and the sutras. This is why Xuanwu built this temple; in order to offer them a place to stay. This monastery

(Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1973), p. 1453. "兩晉太康二年, 大秦國使臣自廣州來貢, 衆寶皆麗, 火布尤奇."

⁸² *Jinshu*, (晉書) (Jin dynasty annals), chap. 3, "Wudi" (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1974–1999), p. 49. "太康...五年...十二月庚午, 大赦。林邑、大秦國各遣使來獻。"

⁸³ Those ships brought precious stones and expensive articles like spices, corals or wild animals to China in order to make a profit or exchange them for silk. One of the most extraordinary and precious goods for the Chinese was glass. The price of colored glass (*liuli* 琉璃) brought from Roman Egypt was extremely high, especially "red glass." Glass was mainly transported from Central Asia to China. During the reign of Wudi (武帝 424–462 AD) of the Northern Wei dynasty (Beiwei 北魏), colored glasses of high quality were imported from the Roman Empire. The Emperor ordered that a temporary palace (*Xingdian* 行殿) be built, so people could admire there hundreds of various colored glasses on display. Pieces of glass jewelry made from the first to the third century in the Roman Empire have been found at the eastern end of the Silk Road as well, in Japan, at a site in Nagaoka near Kyoto, in a fifth-century "utsukushi" burial mound. According to Seneca, the alchemical process to color glass was discovered by Democritus (*Quemadmodum decoctus calculus in smaragdum converteretur. Qua hodieque coctura inventi lapides in hoc utiles colorantur*).

⁸⁴ Aurel Stein, *On Ancient Central-Asian Tracks: Brief Narrative of Three Expeditions in Innermost Asia and Northwestern China*, edited by Jeanette Mirsky (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963), p. 111.

has as many as one thousand rooms. The places made for studying are numerous. There, more than three thousand monks coming from many places were living, with some of them even coming from the very far-Western countries such as the Daqin. They lived among the common people and their houses and shops were numerous. For clothing, these foreigners used the Chinese fashion.⁸⁵

5. The bull offered by the Daqin to Han Wudi

According to the "The Dark Cave Inscriptions of Other Countries by Han Wudi," or the *Hanwudi bieguo dongminzhi*, the Daqin offered a bull to the Emperor Han Wudi in 108 BC, in the same year that he had received a gift of acrobats from Mithradates II. If this story is true, it cannot have been an envoy from Rome, because Rome was at war with Jugurtha at that time, and because the Parthians ruling Persia would have made the way impossible to cross by a Roman delegation with a bull. The Parthian warriors had taken the major parts of what was the Seleucid Empire, and the decadent Seleucid ruler in Asia Minor, Antiochos VIII Grypos (the "hook-nosed") was at war with his brother and cousin Antiochos IX Cyzenos, neither having any significant stature. At this time in the Kabul Valley and near Taxila, some Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek rulers were still ruling economic and military affairs. Since a Roman envoy would have been cut off from the Western world by the Parthians, it is possible the envoy might have come from them as well. The other possibility is that the gift was sent together with the delegation of the Lixuan acrobats of Mithradates II. In this case, the bull came from some Greek colony of Parthia, although Guo Xian's *Hanwudi bieguo dongminzhi* is not a very reliable historical source.

The third year of the *Yuanfeng* era (108 BC), the Daqin offered a Bull with a flowery hoof. This Bull had a spotted robe and stood six *chi* (~1.4 m) high. Its tail

⁸⁵ *Luoyang qielanji* (洛陽伽藍記) (Stories about Buddhist Temples in Luoyang), chap. 4 (Beijing, 2006), p. 200. "永明寺，宣武皇帝所立也。在大覺寺東。時佛法經像，盛於洛陽，異國沙門，咸來輻輳，負錫持經，適茲樂土。世宗故立此寺以憩之。房廡連蔓，一千餘間，庭列脩竹，簷拂高松，奇花異草，駢闐疊砌，百國沙門三千餘人，人西域遠者，乃至大秦國，盡天地之西垂，耕耘紡績百姓野居，邑屋相望，農服車馬擬儀中國。"

wrapped around all its body. The extremity of its horns had flesh. Its hooves were like lotus flowers; it was neat in walking and was very strongly built. The Emperor (asked to) have sculpted a bronze statue of the animal to decorate the palace of Wangxian. Its hooves, while walking on the stone, appeared like flowers. The saliva of this Bull gave birth, outside the capital, to a strange stone ten *chi* long (~2.3 m) and three *chi* high (~70 cm). (The stone) was installed in the palace at Wangxian and it received the name of “stone of the bell of the dragon.” At the end of the reign of the emperor Wudi, this stone was under the ground and only its tail was still visible. The local people gave it the name of “the mound of the dragons’ tail.”⁸⁶

6. Hermaios’s alliance with the Han army in Kabul

Hermaios (pronounced *Irmayos* or *Irmayou*) (**Plate 9**) ruled Gandhara around 70–30 BC. He made a military alliance with the Han, according to Tarn.⁸⁷ In a specific passage of the Han books, Tarn explains that Hermaios met with General Wen Zhong (文忠) of the Han. Wen Zhong had raised a military expedition passing through Khotan–Yarkand in Xinjiang in order to conquer the region of Kabul. The Han armies struggled through the snow peaks of the Khunjerab pass via Gilgit and the Hunza valley, and they arrived exhausted. The region named Jibin (罽賓) by the Chinese is known today as the area between the Panjshir Mountains, Kabul, Jalalabad, Peshawar, and Islamabad.⁸⁸ After arriving in Jibin, Wen Zhong wanted to make an alliance with the king of

⁸⁶ *Hanwei congshu* (漢魏叢書) (Collection of Han and Wei dynasties books) (Ming Chengrong (明程榮) (Jilin: Jilin University Publication House, *Jilin daxue chubanshe* 吉林大學出版社, 1992). Guo Xian, who occupied a ministerial post (*guanglu da fu* 光祿大夫), reported the story in his *Han wudi bieguo dongmingji* (漢武帝別國洞冥記). “元封三年。大秦國貢花蹄牛。其色駁高六尺。尾瑒繞其身角端有肉。蹄如連花善步多力。帝使輦銅石以起望仙宮。跡在石上。皆如花形。故陽關之外花牛津。時得異石。張十丈。高三丈。立於望仙宮。因名龍鍾石武帝未。此石自陷入地。唯尾出土上。今人謂龍尾墩也。”

⁸⁷ W. W. Tarn, *The Greeks of Bactria and India* (Chicago: Aris Publishers, third edition, 1984), p. 339.

⁸⁸ Jibin was probably in the Gandhara area, although no definitive explanation has been provided yet for the original transcription, other than Gaofu/Kabul and Kophen/Jibin. Strabo (*Geography* 11, XI, 2) mentions the other

Jibin, Wutoulao (烏頭勞). Probably camping in Gandhara with his exhausted troops looking for food, Wen Zhong and his army were not likely to have been in a sufficient position of force to make any profitable alliance with King Wutoulao. He somehow met a rival king, Yinmofu (陰末赴), and made an alliance with him in order to attack the son of Wutoulao, who had taken the throne of Jibin in his turn. Yinmofu was a “Rongqu prince” (*Rongqu wangzi* 容屈王子), the equivalent of *Yonaka* or “Ionian,” according to Tarn. However, Yinmofu (陰末赴), he explains, would be Hermaios because he was ruling Jibin around this period of time, and Wutoulao (烏頭勞), Spalirises, was the Yuezhi king.

The Emperor Wudi had wished to enter Jibin, but his armies were so exhausted that they could not achieve his will. The king of Jibin, Wutoulao, had well made a plan to kill the Han Emissaries. After the death of Wutoulao, his son took the throne, and he sent emissaries with gifts welcoming the Han. The official responsible for the frontier was Wen Zhong who was sent back to the Embassy knowing that Wutoulao had evil intentions toward the Han. Wen Zhong decided then to make an alliance with a Rongqu prince named Yinmofu, and they (together) attacked Jibin and killed the (king) son of Wutoulao. (Yinmofu) received the seal of the Chinese armies as a virtuous ally of the Han. Then Jibin province came under the administration of (ally) king Yinmofu, but it happened that he was also without any virtue and that he killed in turn more than seventy Han within his own court. He sent later gifts and a letter of allegiance to China,

denomination for the city of Bactra as “Zariaspa,” and Jibin could have been a phonetic transcription as well, although Bactra was known as Lanshi (藍市城) in the *Shiji*. *Ji* (罽) means “woolen works” or motifs on tapestry works, and *bin* (賓) means “guest,” perhaps relating the Gandhara region with tapestry works as in Khotan. In the old Tang dynasty annals (chap. 198), Jibin’s capital Xunxian (循鮮城) was known as Xiuxian (修鮮城), and situated as it was in the southern part of the Pamirs (*Conglingnan* 蔥嶺南), it can hardly be Kabul, on the western side of the Pamirs, but rather Taxila or Sagala. The kingdom of Jibin known by the Han was rather smaller during the Tang dynasty, with an east–west length of 2,200 *li*. For other details concerning the geographical situation in the Chinese texts, see the Jibin (罽賓) section of the *Tong dian*, written during the Tang dynasty: *Tong dian* (通典, 唐), Du You (杜佑) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1984), pp. 1035–36.

but the Emperor Yuandi did not recognize Jibin as being within his own borders, the province being too far away. During the reign of Chengdi, they sent another embassy, but it was refused. The great general of the imperial army, Wang Feng, said: "Earlier, the king of Jibin, Yinmofu, was the ally of the Han, but he and his soldiers acted as traitors, and therefore they were not considered citizens of the Han Empire anymore." He could not be forgiven, and the Han troops were not afraid to go and punish those criminals, but they were too far to raise an expedition. Today, the municipality of Jibin is outside the jurisdiction of the Han authority, and this province is not considered as a Parthian (ally) city by the venerable Minister.⁸⁹

If we follow Tarn's logic, Rongqu would mean Ionians, as the Greeks are called (even now) by the Asians (Indians, Jews, Turkish, Persians, Turkmen, etc.). This denomination derived from the geographical region of Ionia, at which the Greeks came to be known in Asia. The various names for the Ionians in Greek: *Iones*, *Ionon*, *Ionikos*, *Iaones* (Ἴωνες, Ἴωνον, Ἴωνικός, Ἰάωνες) were translated to *Yonaka*, *Yunan* or *Yavana* by the Asians, but these were not necessarily used by the Greeks themselves. The phonetic association *Rongqu*–*Yonaka* is convincing if we consider that Hermaios was an "Ionian" (i.e., a Greek).

⁸⁹ *Hanshu* (漢書) (Han dynasty annals), chap. 96 (Beijing: *Zhonghua Shuju* 中華書局, 1959–1999), pp. 2864–65. "自武帝始通罽賓，自以絕遠，漢兵不能至，其王烏頭勞數剽殺漢使。烏頭勞死，子代立遣使奉獻。漢使關都尉文忠送其使。王復欲害忠，忠覺之，乃與容屈王子陰末赴共合謀，攻罽賓殺其王，立陰末赴為罽賓王，授印綬。後軍侯趙德使罽賓，與陰末赴相，矢陰末赴鎖琅當德，殺副己下七十餘人，遣使者上書謝。孝元帝以絕域不錄，放其使者於縣度，絕而不通。成帝時，復遣使獻，謝罪，漢欲遣使者報追其使，杜欽說大將軍王鳳曰：前罽賓王陰末赴本漢所立，後卒畔逆。夫德莫大於有國子民，非莫大於執殺使所以不報恩不懼誅者，自和絕遠，兵不至也。...今縣度之院，非罽賓所能越也。其卿慕不足以安息城。"



Plate 9. Silver coins of the last Greco-Bactrian king Hermaios (left), and of the Indo-Greek kings Apollodotes II (middle) and Hippostratos (right) around 80–50 BC.

If we consider Tarn's historical assessment as correct, I can propose another scenario for this event. I agree with the claim of Yinmofu's association with Hermaios, as he was a descendant of Eucratides, a "real" Greco-Bactrian prince. The name of "Wutoulao" does not at all accord with "Spalirises," and the Sacae were not enemies of the Greco-Bactrians, but in fact composed part of their armies. According to Bopearachchi,⁹⁰ the ruler of the region before Hermaios was Apollodotes II, (Ἀπολλόδοτος; ~85–70 BC) (**Plate 9**), who came earlier from the region of northwest India.⁹¹ He was a descendant of Menander, shown by his using the term "Soter" (Savior) and inscribing Athena on his coins as Menander did. After the Indo-Greek king Apollodotes II died, his son took the throne of Bactria and northwest India. The last important Indo-Greek king to have ruled Taxila and Bactria after Apollodotes II seems to have been his son Hippostratos (**Plate 9**).⁹² Hippostratos seems to have been half-Indian according to his facial features as portrayed on his coins, and he had earlier regrouped a large military force from

⁹⁰ O. Bopearachchi, *Monnaies Greco-Bactriennes et Indo-Grecques* (Paris 1991).

⁹¹ The Roman historian Justin notes that, during the second century of our era, coins of Apollodotes were found in the city of Barygaza, demonstrating the important influence of this king in the western territories and in the western coastal areas of India, probably trading with Egypt as well.

⁹² The coin of Hippostratos with a mounted rider is extremely well made and refined. The quality of this coin is better than those of the first Sacae king Maues, and it shows that he did not depend on those, but rather that Sacae imitated his coins. It seems that the Indo-Greek kings Apollodotes II and Hippostratos were powerful kings relying on Indian forces while Hermaios became allied with the nomadic Sacae in order to rule Gandhara.

Taxila–Sagala, to control Bactria and the Kabul region. Hermaios wanted to regain his control of the Paropamisades from Apollodotes II, as he was a direct descendant of Eucratides, king of Bactria.

According to the Han dynasty annals (chap. 96), the kingdom of Jibin was a large country of 6,840 *li* (about 3,000 km). The capital of Jibin was Xunxian (循鮮城), and this was perhaps the ancient name in the Chinese texts for Taxila or Sagala. If Taxila was the capital city of Jibin and the length of the kingdom was about 3000 km, then Jibin could not simply have been the Kabul area or Gandhara, but what remained of the Greco-Bactrian and the Indo-Greek kingdom unified under Hippostratos, all the way from Kabul to Taxila, including some parts of the Indus region (**Map I, 4**). The region was inhabited by the same Sacae (塞) who were dispersed in Kashgar (疏勒), Xiuxun (休循) and Juandu (捐毒)⁹³ according to the Han. These were not Yuezhi, as the Sai had moved southward after Ferghana had been invaded. The greater Yuezhi are mentioned as living on the northwestern border of Jibin, not within it. The Sai of the Jibin area were Hellenized Sacae originating from the Greco-Bactrian kingdom created more than two centuries earlier by Alexander the Great. During the two hundred years of Greek domination in Central Asia, the Sacae would have grown up in a Hellenistic environment influenced by Persian and Indian elements, the queen of Alexander herself coming from the region (Sogdiana), and their warlike aristocracy issued from Greco-Persian, Greco-Sogdian or Indo-Greek marriages. Unlike the Yuezhi, the Xiongnu and the Wusun,⁹⁴ who came from the steppes of Mongolia and lived a nomadic life, the troops who formed the armies of the Greco-Scythian and Indo-Greek kings had been established in Hellenistic cities for many generations. This implies as well that they were attached to the Greco-Bactrian dynasties as their own, and that all aspects of Hellenistic warfare, arts, philosophy, religious practices, economic and social organization were entirely part of their everyday life. This is why the Sacae of Central Asia, together with their

⁹³ Juandu was possibly situated near modern Irkeshtam (on the China–Kyrgyzstan border), and Xiuxun in the Alai valley, near modern Karakavak.

⁹⁴ The Wusun probably became more Sinicized than the Xiongnu as they were allied and had earlier marriage exchanges with the Han. The Yuezhi became Hellenized or “Greco-Buddhized” after their settlements in Central Asia, but their adoption of Gandharan culture happened probably within the early first century BC, not earlier.

Greco-Bactrian kings, escaped Ferghana and Sogdiana after the invasion of the nomadic Yuezhi and their attacks on their walled cities. The *Hanshu* also states that the silver and gold coins (*jinyin wei qian* 金銀爲錢) of Jibin had the face of the king engraved on one side (*muwei renmian* 墓爲人面). The first gold coins representing Kushana kings came later with Wima Kadphises and Kanishka. The Sacae did not issue gold coins at the time the Han came to Jibin for the first time, thus the gold coins with the face of the king described in the *Hanshu* must be seen in relation to the Greco-Bactrians and the Indo-Greeks, not to the Kushana or Sacae rulers.⁹⁵

The Indo-Greek Apollodotes II (pronounced *Apollodotos* in Greek or *Apaladatasā* in Kharoshthi) seems closer to the "Wutoulao" of the Han source. The translation of Wutoulao in Chinese as "crow head" (Wutou 烏頭) could also be a reference to his bronze-colored skin (if we presume that he had Indian blood). However, Hermaios, based in a walled city somewhere in Gandhara, would have taken the opportunity to make a military alliance with the Chinese troops, who were exhausted after crossing the Khunjerab Pass. He joined his armies of Sacae and Greco-Scythians with the Han in order to regain control of the region. Hermaios and Wen Zhong perhaps crossed the Paropamisades, entering the Indian territory and successfully killing Hippostratos, who had earlier been based in the capital city, Taxila. Hermaios then retreated north of the Paropamisades with his armies, and he became then the king of Gandhara. Hermaios's coins were found in Khotan as well, showing that he perhaps kept his alliance and trade agreements with the Chinese for a while. The story that followed seems logical, Hermaios later killing the Han delegates at his own court in order to rule independently. Instead of alliance with the Han, he rallied with the larger number of Kushana warriors who became increasingly powerful in Gandhara, and he made an alliance and a peace treaty with them, sealed with a marriage agreement. This "inter-Greek" war between Hermaios and Hippostratos had perhaps the counter result of strengthening the position of the Kushana warriors situated at the northern borders of Jibin as the predominant power in Central Asia.

⁹⁵ Yan Shigu notes that those coins had on one side the face of the king and on the other the king mounted on a horse, just like the coins of Hippostratos.

The control of the Greek-ruled cities of Gandhara returned to the hands of the Kushana warriors who moved southward from Ferghana.

It is unclear how the transmission of power was transferred from Hermaios to the Yuezhi. However, Hermaios (or his Kushana ally), probably aware that he should keep up economic and military relations with China, sent two embassies from Gandhara through the Khunjerab pass in 33 and in 32 BC, with the goal of concluding a peace treaty and a trade proposal, but they were unsuccessful. In the northwestern territories of India, the Indo-Greek descendants of Hippostratos (literally "Military-Horse"), Dionysios, Zoilos II, Apollophanes, and Straton II (literally "Military") went on to rule Taxila-Sagala until the first century of our era. The Kushana continued to imprint the face of Hermaios on their coins after his death, and they inscribed them with Greek letters for several generations. Greco-Buddhism gained increasing importance in the Kushana Empire, joining the worship of Greek, Indian and Persian gods.⁹⁶ An aristocracy of

⁹⁶ Greek wrestling, boxing, *pankration* and other games of strength, as practiced by the Greco-Bactrians and the Indo-Greeks, continued to be patronized by the god Heracles in the Kushana Empire. Competitions of wrestling and other combat sports dedicated to Heracles were an entire ethical part of the Kushana aristocracy as Heracles became the Buddhist god Vajrapani (on numerous sculpted weights found in Kushana–Gandhara). Greek heroic tradition seems to have been important among the Central Asian aristocracy, and especially games of strength and combat sports were paired with the philosophical aspect of Heracles, as he was with the Cynics. The famous Shaolin temple (*Shaolin si* 少林寺), with its fighting monks dedicated to Vajrapani–Jingang (金剛), were the result of a Greco-Buddhist athletic-religious tradition mixed with Chinese elements as well. This particular influence was transmitted to Japan, so that, in Nara, the fierce warrior monks of the Kofukuji temple (興福寺) were practicing warfare arts and exercises of strength under the authority of Jingang (*Kongo* 金剛). Athena, Eros, Heracles, and Zeus were later worshipped by the Kushana as in the former Greco-Bactrian Empire. Boreas, the god of wind, became the god Wardo in the Kushana Empire, and he is still worshipped today in Japan as Fujin (風神), with his most famous representation painted in Kennin-ji (建仁寺) Temple in Kyoto. During their burial ceremonies, the Kushana continued the Greek custom of inserting a coin in the mouth of the dead in order to pay Charon to cross the Styx in the Hades (Tillya-Tepe tombs). The "empty throne" used to worship the Buddha in Gandhara is probably a continuation of the "empty throne," usually placed within the gymnasiums of the Hellenistic cities and used earlier in order to worship the divine Seleucid rulers. The Greek broadsword named *kopis* (κοπίς) *machaira* (μάχαιρα) or *kourikos* (κουρικός), worn by the Greco-Macedonians conquerors, had been used earlier by the heroes of the *Iliad* to slaughter animals for sacrifice. The Gurkhas of Nepal, originally from Rajasthan, continue nowadays to use the Greek broadsword for self-defense and animal sacrifices in Nepal, and it is also used in Burma (the broadsword

mixed blood made of warriors from the steppes of various origins versed in Buddhism eventually arose from this cultural alliance. Philostratus (*Life of Apollonius II*, 29–31) indicates that Greek was still a language to learn for this aristocracy; Apollonios of Tyana met the Indo-Parthian king Phraotes, speaking fluent Greek, around 46 AD. The “yellow-eyed” Yuezhi-Kushana (月支) Buddhist translator Zhi Chen (支讖), living in China (164–168 AD), could also probably speak Greek as he was fluent in six languages (tongliuguoyu 通六國語).⁹⁷ In the “Transmissions of Famous monks” (*Gaoseng zhuang* 高僧傳), of Hui Jiao (慧皎), the Sogdian Buddhist traveller Kang Senghui (康僧會 ?-280 AD) will use a metaphor with Heracles-Jingang smashing with his club while he was talking with Sun Quan (*Jingang zhichu buneng sui* 金剛之杵不能碎). The Khotanese and Yarkand kings went on to have continuous trade and cultural relations with the Kushana Empire as well. The Greeks of Bactria and India inter-mixed with local populations, lived isolated in the mountain valleys, or simply disappeared as “Greek” entities.

Some animistic tribes of Pakistan, Afghanistan and India still claim to this day to have Greco-Macedonian ancestors (Hunzakuts, Afridis, Kallasha, etc.) transmitting this old and forgotten part of Hellenistic history. However, in ethical, moral, and psychological terms, it is probable that no nation homogenous as the Greeks survives.

named *Ghuraka*) and in southern China (broadsword there named *kachadao* 哱刹刀). The “Sutra on Mindfulness Through Breathing Exercises” (*Anpanshouyi jing* 安般守意經) was written by An Shigao (安世高), the Parthian aristocrat, at Luoyang in 144 AD. This text perhaps indicates as well the original Greek denomination for breathing, “*anapneo*,” translated as *ānāpāna* in Indian and *anpan* (安般) in Chinese. Numerous other Central and East Asian traditions could be added as well to a long list of religious customs and arts totally assimilated by the East Asian populations influenced by Greco-Buddhist traditions.

⁹⁷ *Gaoseng zhuang* (高僧傳) (Transmissions of famous monks), Hui Jiao (釋慧皎), Liang dynasty (梁) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1992), p. 15. During Zhi Chen’s lifetime, his country’s Kushana king Huvishka (126–164 AD) used Greek script on his coins and showed Heracles with the lion skin on the reverse side. Kujula Kadphises, the first Kushana king, had already placed Heracles on his coins, following the Indo-Greek fashion.

7. Roman prisoners in Gansu; the city of Lixuan

An interesting record in the Han books concerning Central Asia recounts the possible capture of "Roman" soldiers at the period when Hermaios (or his Sacae ally) and Han Yuandi (漢元帝 48–33 BC) were respectively ruling Gandhara and China in 36 BC. At this time, the Xiongnu Chief Zhizhi *Shanyu* (郅支單于) was based in what is modern Kyrgyzstan, settling in a fortified city situated near the town of Zhambul, on a strategic point of the Talas River.

Earlier, at the time of Han Zhaodi (漢昭帝), in 86 BC (*yuanshi nian* 元始年), the Xiongnu hordes had moved westward and attacked Turfan and the main cities situated in the northern Tarim Basin. At the time of Han Xuandi (漢宣帝), in 71 BC (*benshi ernian* 本始二年), they attacked the Wusun ally of the Chinese and took control of some cities of the western Tarim Basin.

Han Yuandi (漢元帝 48–33 BC) desired to end Zhizhi's domination of this part of the Western Lands. During his time, the two remaining Shanyu still posed a threat to the borders of the Han Empire. Huhanye Shanyu (呼韓邪單于) was located in Mongolia and Zhizhi in the Western Lands. Huhanye had earlier submitted to the Chinese allied forces, while Zhizhi was still an enemy. In 44 BC, Zhizhi Shanyu offered peace with China with the sole condition that his son, Juyilishou, would be returned safely to him. The Chinese emissary Gu Ji (谷吉) was in charge of taking Juyilishou to his father. When they reached Zhambul, Zhizhi indeed received his son, but he then killed Gu Ji and the other Chinese envoy.

Zhizhi subsequently made an alliance with the Sogdians in order to attack the hordes of the Wusun who moved earlier into Ferghana, and they together inflicted great losses on the Wusun for about a decade. Becoming more and more powerful, Zhizhi became very arrogant, treating unequally his Sogdian allies, even killing his Sogdian wife.

In 36 BC, the Han general Chen Tang (陳湯) was in charge of the Western Lands protectorate (*Xiyu duhu* 西域都護) together with Gan Yanshou (甘延壽). Gan Yanshou was the general in chief of the cavalry (*Qidufu* 騎都尉), and very famous for his strength; he could throw a weight of three kilos a distance of more than two hundred steps. However, these generals faked

an imperial edict from Emperor Han Yuandi in order to recruit soldiers from the fifteen tribes of the conquered Western Lands to attack Zhizhi.

They composed a large army numbering forty thousand men including the Wusun. Walking in two columns, they marched westward to attack Zhizhi Shanyu and his Xiongnu soldiers. When the army arrived in Sogdiana, they received the support of the Sogdian nobles, who allied with them against Zhizhi. Gan Yanshou and Chen Tang ordered the army to attack the city wherein was entrenched Shanyu, near the river Dulai (都賴 Talas River). The battle that followed is well described in the *Hanshu*:

The next day they marched on the city of Zhizhi, near the river Dulai. At three *li* (~1250 m) from the city, the army stopped to install the camp. On the city-walls there were multicolored battle flags and a few hundred soldiers in armor. One hundred cavalymen came out and started to gallop in the direction of the ramparts, and one hundred foot soldiers created a battle that looked like fish scales and started to maneuver. The people who were on the walls started to provoke the Han troops by shouting "fight," and the one hundred cavalymen galloped in the direction of the camp. The Han soldiers aimed their arbalests in their direction; and they (the cavalymen) suddenly stopped. It was ordered to the soldiers to fire on the cavalymen and on the foot soldiers, so they fled back into the city. Yanshou and Tang ordered a siege of the city from all directions. They attacked first the doors of the fortress, and big shields were disposed in front of the troops to protect the archers and the spears holders (from the projectiles). They started to fire on the soldiers who were inside the city-walls but they could not get them. Outside the city, a double wooden rampart was erected to protect the archers who claimed many victims from the assailants (the Han allied troops) before they were able to throw flaming faggots to burn it down. At night, the cavalry tried to break the siege again, but the Han archers pushed them away. In the beginning, *Shanyu* tempted to escape when he had learned that the Han army was coming. He had suspected that the Sogdians had become hostile toward him

and would help the Han. He also knew that the Wusun and the other nations were together with the Han army, so he anticipated that he should not fight them. Zhizhi *Shanyu* had left earlier, but then he came back in the city, thinking that it would be better to stay protected, and that the Han soldiers coming from so far away could not sustain a long siege. He wore his personal armor and stayed watching from the city-walls. His concubines who were dozens received as well the order to shoot at the assailants. The Han soldiers managed to hit *Shanyu* on the nose, and most of the concubines were killed (by arrows). *Shanyu* later rode his horse outside the walls to fight. In the middle of the night, the wooden palisade was finally passed, but the (Xiongnu) soldiers withdrew back into the city where they stayed on the city walls. The Sogdian soldiers divided themselves into dozens of units surrounding the city from all parts, and they started to shout. During the night, many assaults were ventured but they remained unsuccessful. In the morning, a fire started to destroy everything in the city, provoking the joy of the assailants who attacked another time with the sounds of the drums. The Sogdian soldiers were advancing and the Han, protected by their shields, entered the city. *Shanyu* followed by one hundred men went to hide in the palace. The Han soldiers blocked the door and set fire on it. *Shanyu* was killed by a spear and beheaded. One thousand five hundred eighteen people including *Shanyu*'s concubines, his child and the princes were beheaded. One hundred forty-five men were taken prisoner and more than one thousand made their submission and were offered to the fifteen tribes' princes."⁹⁸

⁹⁸ *Hanshu* (漢書) (Han dynasty annals), chap. 70, "Transmissions from Chen Tang" (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局 1959–1999), pp. 2263–64. "明日，前至鄯支城都賴水上，離城三里，止營傳陳。望見單于城上立五采幡幟，數百人披甲乘城，又出百餘騎往來馳城下，步兵百餘人夾門魚鱗陳，講習用兵。城上人更招漢軍曰「門來！」百餘騎馳赴營，營皆張弩持滿指之，騎引卻。頗遣吏士射城門騎步兵，騎步兵皆入。延壽、湯令軍聞鼓音皆薄城下，四周圍城，各有所守，穿塹，塞門戶，鹵楯為前，戟弩為後，印射城中樓上人，樓上人下走。土城外有重木城，從木城中射，頗殺傷外人。外人發薪燒木城。夜，數百騎欲出外，迎射殺之。初，單于聞漢兵至，欲去，疑康居怨己，為漢內應，又聞烏孫諸國兵皆發，自以無所之。鄯支已出，復還，

Following these events, the 145 soldiers were brought back into Gansu along the Silk Road. They were assigned to protect China against the intruders on the northwestern borders. At the end of the Western Han period, the military center of Zhangye was created near the newly named district of Lixuan city. Lixuan was created to protect the western borders, and it was probably given this name because the soldiers originated from Lixuan.

The Chinese researcher Feng Chengjun (馮承鈞 1887–1946) proposed in 1944 that this story is related to the Roman soldiers who had been taken prisoner in China by the Han armies.⁹⁹ Professor Homer Hasenpflug Dubs (1892–1969) of Oxford University argued in 1951 that those 145 soldiers with a “fish scale” formation were Romans. He was convinced that this was a description of the Roman legionaries protecting and regrouping themselves with the *scutum* in a compact formation. As Plutarch describes in his *Life of Crassus*, the *testudo* or the “turtle-formation” had been widely used by the Roman legionaries in the battle of Carrhae against the Parthian projectiles while they were surrounded. The rectangle and incurved *scutum* was the Roman version of the Greek *thureos*, a long and flat oval shield used to cover the horsemen’s side. The legionaries’ “walls of shields” was a Roman particularity during the second century BC, when they charged in long lines, protected by their shields.

The double “wooden palisade” around the fortress could have been a Roman strategic defensive system as well. The Greeks had used wooden structures and engines in siege warfare, and they transmitted the art of undermining (Greek *surigx-σπιζ*) fortresses to the Indians, a strategy called *suranga*. Undermining a fortress was known in India after Alexander undermined the city-walls behind which the Mallians and the Brahmans were hiding, near the Hydaspes.¹⁰⁰ In

曰：「不如堅守。漢兵遠來，不能久攻。」單于乃被甲在樓上，諸闕氏夫人數十皆以弓射外人。外人射中單于鼻，諸夫人頗死。單于下騎，傳戰大內。夜過半，木城穿，中人卻入土城，乘城呼。時，康居兵萬餘騎分為十餘處，四面環城，亦與相應和。夜，數奔營，不利，輒卻。平明，四面火起，吏士喜，大呼乘之，鉦鼓聲動地。康居兵引卻。漢兵四面推鹵楯，並入土城中。單于男女百餘人走入大內。漢兵縱火，吏士爭入，單于被創死。軍候假丞杜勳斬單于首，得漢使節二及谷吉等所繼帛書。諸鹵獲以畀得者。凡斬闕氏、太子、名王以下千五百一十八級，生虜百四十五人，降虜千餘人，賦予城郭諸國所發十五王。”

⁹⁹ Xili dongjianji 西力東漸記, 1944.

¹⁰⁰ Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander* Book 6, VII, 4.

China, digging a tunnel under a city to attack from inside was known by the name *Tudi* (突地) or "charging under," and used for the first time by the general Hao Zhao (郝昭, also named Pai Dao 伯道 ?–229 AD) during the Three Kingdoms period.¹⁰¹

However, the strategic concept of a wooden palisade around a fortified city is something natural in siege strategy and widely spread in antiquity. The Indians had protected the city of Sagala against the Greeks with three lines of stockades all around the town, by assembling wooden chariots together.¹⁰² The Parthians used wooden defensive systems around their walled cities as well. Alexander had also surrounded his camp in Persia by a wooden palisade having a length of two *stadia*.¹⁰³ The fortified city of Zhizhi Shanyu was naturally protected by the best defensive methods available, but a compact formation of foot soldiers joining shields together is more curious, because not common to the steppe horsemen's warfare habits.

Where did those 145 soldiers in a "fish scales" formation come from?

Dubs consolidates his theory with the text of Pliny who explains that about eighteen years earlier, the Roman prisoners of Carrhae taken in 53 BC¹⁰⁴ had been brought to Margiana by the Parthian armies of Orodes. According to Pliny, the captives of Carrhae had been deported to Alexandria Margiana, renamed "Antiochia Margiana" by Antiochos following the invasion of the Parthians. The only detail in this theory is that Zhizhi's fortress is situated at about 1,000 km northeast of Alexandria Margiana, and that is quite a long distance for the Roman captives to travel, although it is perfectly possible. Two cave inscriptions in Latin written by Legio (XV) Apollinaris during their eastern campaign of the second-third centuries AD have been found by

¹⁰¹ *Sanguo zhi cidian* (三國志辭典) (Dictionary of the records from the Three Kingdoms), "Chushu," "Transmissions from Zhu Geliang" "Han-Jin Spring and Autumn" (Shandong: Shandong jiaoyuchuban 山東教育出版社, 1992), p. 123. *Tudi* (突地) means "charging under" in the Wei books, "Mingdi annals": "The brilliant system of Tudi is made to jump inside a city. Hao Zhao used it to penetrate inside the city and to destroy it from underneath" "突地" 魏書 明帝記 注引 (魏略) "(諸葛亮) 亮又爲地突欲踴出於城里, 郝昭又與城穿地橫截之."

¹⁰² Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander* Book 5, XXIII, 1–7.

¹⁰³ Quintus Curtius, *History of Alexander* Book 5, 8–9.

¹⁰⁴ In modern Harran, Turkey, the Romans were annihilated by the Parthian soldiers; even though they used the *testudo* formation against the arrows and projectiles, they still lost the battle.

Dr. Uztinova in Uzbekistan in 1990, together with another one with Greek script, showing that this theory is still reasonable.¹⁰⁵

There is the province of Margiana (Μαργιανή), very remarkable with its sunny climate. It is the only region in this area that produces wine, being shut on every side with green and refreshing hills. This district is fifteen hundred *stadia* in circumference, but it is rendered remarkably difficult of access by sandy deserts which extend a distance of one hundred and twenty miles. It lies opposite of Parthia and there Alexander founded the city of Alexandria (Margiana). This place had been destroyed by the barbarians, and Antiochos, the son of Seleucos, rebuilt it on the same site as a Syrian city. It was watered by the Margus which passes through it and then divides into several streams for the irrigation of the district of Zothale, and so he restored it and gave the name of Antiochia. The circumference of this city is seven *stadia*. It was to this place that Orodes conducted such of the Romans as survived the defeat of Crassus.¹⁰⁶

If Dubs was correct and this "fish-scales" formation was effectively the *testudo*, then we can ask ourselves the origin of these Legionaries. If they effectively came from the armies of Crassus, Plutarch wrote that they were mainly Greek mercenaries using Roman warfare equipment, and not Romans from Italy.¹⁰⁷ If not, they could also have been Greek captive foot soldiers coming from some conquered cities of Bactria using a compact formation with shields

¹⁰⁵ Yulia Uztinova, *Naskal'niye Latinskiye i Grecheskaya Napidisi iz Kara-Kamara* (Vestnik Drevnei Istorii, 1990) 4, pp. 145–47.

¹⁰⁶ Pliny the Elder (*Natural History*, Book 6, XVIII, 46–47).

¹⁰⁷ See Plutarch, *Life of Crassus* (XVII, 4). After conquering Syria, Crassus who was more than sixty years old and a Greek culture aficionado (III, 3), formed his army from the local Greeks, who were in the cities' garrisons, gathering a troop of seven thousand men.

looking like a “fish scale,” although the main elite troops of Sacae and Parthian horsemen in Central Asia were composed of *cataphracts* (**Plate 10**).¹⁰⁸

The Australian Professor David Harris followed the “Roman theory” of Dubs in his book *The Black Horse Odyssey*, and he made significant archaeological discoveries in Gansu in the eighties. I have visited this region of Gansu, in Yongchang (永昌) district, where, more than two thousand years after these events, the people of the region still believe that they are descendants of the Romans. The village of Zhelaizhai is situated on the northern side of the Gangshika Mountains (5,254 m), at the lower side of the Great Wall between Zhangye and Wuwei. The ruin of an antique wall dating from the Ming dynasty is there, together with a modern “Roman style” pavilion made of cement erected to remember the past. In the city, there is a little museum with the skeleton of what is supposed to be a tall Caucasian man and arrowheads, but nothing else “Roman” remains — only the legend. Song Guorong (宋國榮), representing these people, is proud of his origins; in quest of the true story, he published a book retracing the history of the region with the title, *Lixuan Assembled Researches* (*Lixuan tancong* 驪軒探叢). The people of

¹⁰⁸ The cavalrymen who wore this ancient style of heavy armor were known by the Greek and Latin writers as *kataphractoî* (κατάφρακτοι) in Greek and *cataphracti* or *catafracti* in Latin. The name came from the Greek verb *κατάφραττειν* (*katafrattein*), which means “to cover with armor.” The *cataphracti* used to fight in close column formation with long spears, and, unlike the simple mounted archers, they were chosen from within the warlike aristocracy of Central Asia and Parthia. The elite of Alexander’s troops fought with long spears from horseback as well, although they were less protected than the Parthian *cataphracts* who used armoured horses as a main striking force. The *cataphracts* progressively appeared in Bactria at the time of the Greco-Bactrians in Ai Khanoum (Eucratidea) around 146 BC. The basic element of the protective armor of the late first century BC Sacae aristocracy was the scale-armor. On Indo-Scythian coins, the heavy armor equipment of the central Asian *cataphracts* was composed of four major elements: (1) breastplate with a high stand-up collar, (2) arm protectors, (3) skirt protecting thighs and (3) a helmet. The popularity of scale-armor worn by the Indo-Scythians can be seen in the Greco-Buddhist art of Gandhara and on the coins of King Nicias. On the cave painting of Dengxian in Henan, *cataphracts* are shown as being widely used in China during the Wei dynasty. One of the earliest instructors of the *cataphract* formation was An Xuan (安玄), the Parthian knight, translator of Buddhist texts, and also general of the cavalry (*Qidufu* 騎都尉) of Luoyang, so designated in 181 AD by the Chinese authorities. On *cataphracts*, see O. Bopearachchi, *An Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythian Coin Hoard from Bara (Pakistan)* (Amir Nawaz Khan [206-261-7642], U.S.A., 2004), pp. 22–24, 28–34.

Zhelaizhai used to go to Lanzhou city once a year, where they participated in a parade dressed as Roman legionaries in order to commemorate the past. They also perform a martial dance with a stick that they claim was transmitted to the city by a Ming dynasty general.¹⁰⁹

However, the name of Lixuan city is perhaps related to the country of the Lixuan–Daqin, which seems to explain Yan Shigu (see section 4). If 145 foreign warriors coming from Lixuan country built the city of Lixuan in China, and that name is related to an Alexandria in the Greco-Bactrian Empire, then it is possible to imagine a fortified town serving as a “relay” to Central Asia and guarded by a community of professional Greek or “Roman” mercenaries. An artifact found in Gansu province dating from the first century BC has some Greek script marked on it, and it perhaps may be linked with the Lixuan as they were living in the region of Gansu near where the object was found (**Plate 8**).

8. The Qin Lushui barbarians

The Qinghai–Gansu “barbarians of Lushui” or “Black Water Hu barbarians” (*Lushuihu* 盧水胡) were located near the “black water streams” (*Lushui xihe* 盧水溪河) east of modern Xining (西寧). They later followed the Gansu (甘肅) corridor and moved into the northern plains of

¹⁰⁹ The dance is effectuated in groups, and it has the basic stances of Chinese martial arts, formerly using spears. The dancers change techniques and positions with a stick to the rhythm of the drums. The nearby Zhelaizhai, the descendants of the Xianbei warriors, the Tuzu (土族, or Monguor), every year hold a harvest celebration called the *Nadun* in Qinghai province, Minghe county, Sanquan-Guanting area, near the ancient cities of Lixuan and Zhangye. They perform masked dances with painted naked bodies, with others performed as martial drills. One of these martial dances is similar to the *Carpaea* mentioned by Xenophon (*Anabasis* 6, 7–8), with the use of a yoke of oxen and two people simulating a fight. The dance is played to a slow martial rhythm of three notes (*do-do-re...*) played on a gong by two masked men. One plays the farmer working with the yoke, and the other a thief turning around the yoke-man. Then they both simulate a fight to the rhythm of a gong. After the fight, either the thief or the farmer leaves with the yoke. Could it be that this dance had been earlier transmitted from Lixuan city by some Greek mercenaries? The similarity is also suggestive because we know that war dances with bare hands in China were mainly initiated by the Xianbei warriors. A bare-handed war dance imitating fighting movements and danced to music is known from 521 AD, when it was introduced by the Xianbei warrior Xi Kangsheng (奚康生). *Weishu* (魏書) (Wei dynasty annals), chap. 73, “Xi Kangsheng” (奚康生).

Shaanxi (陝西). They were mentioned in the Han books as living in the provinces of Wuwei (武威) and Zhangye (張掖), both situated around Lixuan city (驪軒).¹¹⁰ Zhangye was located in the Gansu corridor which links Jiuquan and Yumenguan, the foremost western post opened by the Han to communicate with Central Asia. Zhangye was originally translated from the Hu (胡) name Zhangguobiye (張國臂液), and the city was under the rule of the Xiongnu king Kunxie (昆邪) before Han Wudi took it in 104 BC (*Taichu yuannian* 太初元年). Wuwei was ruled by the Xiongnu king Xiutu (休屠) before Wudi took the city in 101 BC (*Taichu sininan* 太初四年). At the northeastern side of Jiuquan were situated the Heli (合黎) Mountains.¹¹¹

According to the Later Han dynasty annals (chap. 16), the "Black Water barbarians" were under the Xiongnu confederacy when the Xiongnu ruled Gansu, then they got recruited into the Han armies for a while, before they rebelled in 86 AD. In 88 AD, they formed a united force of four thousand horsemen composed of Qiang (羌), Qin (秦) and Hu (胡) barbarians and took control of Gansu.

The "Qin men" (*Qinren* 秦人) mentioned in the Han books have been interpreted as another denomination used for "Chinese," referring to the Qin dynasty (Kazuo Enoki). In this particular case, the Qin can hardly have been Chinese if they had actually rebelled against the Han and fought against them. The Han sources usually mention their Chinese fellows as "Han man" (*Hanren* 漢人). In the "Traditions of Ferghana" (*Dayuan zhuan*) of the *Shiji*, a captive "Qin man" (*Qinren*) was able to dig wells and thus save the city from a Han siege in Ferghana. In the biography of Li Guangli (李廣利) of the *Hanshu*, the same story changes the denomination of this *Qinren* for a *Hanren*. In the "Traditions of the Western Lands" (Wulei 烏壘 section) of the *Hanshu*, the Xiongnu had bound their horses by the front and back legs to offer them to the "men of Qin." In his nostalgic biography, Chen Tang (陳湯) compares his conquest of the Western Lands to those of the Qin at a larger scale, when they fought with the other countries of the Warring States. Chen uses "man of Qin" for the Chinese of the Qin and "Han" for the Chinese of

¹¹⁰ *Houhanshu* (後漢書) (Later Han dynasty annals), chap. 16, "Dengkouliezhuan" (鄧寇列傳).

¹¹¹ *Shangshu* (尚書) (The books of documents), *jinguwenzhuliu*, (今古文注疏), Qing dynasty (清), Sun Xingyan (孫星衍 撰) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1986), pp. 186–88.

his time. In the case of the Lushui Qin barbarians, the Han would more likely have specified that the rebels were Han traitors, not Qin, although the Qin–Chinese association is also possible.¹¹² However, Qin could be as well an abbreviated denomination for the Daqin people in this particular case, as it is unlikely that Chinese would ally with Hu and Qiang people against their fellow Han.

The Lushi barbarians moved later to the plains of northern Shaanxi, where they formed a powerful army during the Wei dynasty. In 445 AD, they were based in “Apricot-trees City” or Xingcheng (杏城), near modern Yan’an, close to the ancient “Wild Goose Gate” (Yanmen 雁門) leading to the steppes of Inner Mongolia.



Plate 10. Left: First century AD *cataphract* from Central Asia (drawing inspired from the fighting scene of the Orlat bone plate, Uzbekistan). Right: Wei dynasty cave color painting of *cataphracts* from Henan province, Dengxian (河南-鄧縣)

9. *Fulin*: Rome (Byzantium)

The word *Fulin* (拂菻) appears for the first time in the fourth century of our era in the *Annals of the Anterior Liang* (*Qianliang* 前凉) at the time of Zhang Gui (張軌 225–314 AD), who was named prefect of Liangzhou (涼州) in 301 AD during the Western Jin dynasty. According to the

¹¹² After the Tang dynasty, the Chinese referred to themselves as “Tang men” (*Tangren* 唐人) even if they were not living within the Tang dynasty. For example, “The street of Tang people” (*Tangrenjie* 唐人街) means simply “Chinese street,” as the “Tang hand” (*Tangshou* 唐手) used for *karate* in Japan or *tangso* (*do*) in Korea does not necessarily mean that it is dated from the Tang dynasty, but simply as coming from the Chinese.

French missionary Claude de Visdelou (1656–1737) who arrived in China in 1687, *Fulin* is a derivation of the word *Hualin* (花林), mentioned on the Nestorian stele (*Daqinjingjiaobei* 大秦景教碑)¹¹³ of Xi’an as “The country of the immortals.” On this stele dating from 781 AD, there is no mention of the “country of the immortals,” but instead a Chinese way of observing the four different corners of the Daqin Empire:

The country of the Daqin is bordered in the south by the seas of corals (*shanhu* 珊瑚), in the north by the mountains of rare treasures (*zhongbao* 眾寶), in the west by the immortal’s region with forests of flowers (*hualin* 花林) and in the east by the long winds and weak waters (*changfeng ruoshui* 長風弱水).¹¹⁴

Here *Hualin* (花林) is associated with the “forests of flowers” situated at the western part of the Daqin Empire, but not with the Daqin–Fulin itself. *Fulin* was naturally related to the Byzantium

¹¹³ In Chinese known as *Jingjiao* (景教), it was the Christian doctrine advanced by Nestorius (in Greek Νεστόριος, 386–451 AD), the Syrian patriarch of Constantinople who was pronounced heretical at the council of Ephesus in 431 AD. He did not consider Mary to be the mother of God (*Theodochos*) but the mother of Jesus. The Christian doctrine of Nestorius later spread eastwards in Seleucia Tigris, Persia, India, Sri Lanka and Tang dynasty China along the Silk Road, mainly carried by Syrian monks. Those monks became the principal intermediaries between the Byzantine Empire and China as well. Syrian literature started in Edessa and spread in all the territories inhabited by the Syrians. The archbishop Baboeus established the “the Persian church,” independent from the Greek one, and he abolished the celibacy of monks during the synod of Ctesiphon, or Seleucia Tigris in 498 AD. The patriarch of the Nestorian Church, named *Katholikos*, stayed in Seleucia Tigris until 762 AD before moving to Baghdad, then to Mossul after the sixteenth century. The Syrians monks carried the earlier texts of Greek sciences, medicine, philosophy, astrology or alchemy in East Asia. Their theological treatises included the oldest manuscripts of the Ancient and the New Testament, including the *Diatessaron* (On the four evangelists) compiled around 180 AD. Many theologians, scientists and poets wrote a great number of treatises, but most of them have been lost. Syrian monks were established permanently in China from the Sui dynasty (581–618 AD) in Xi’an, Henan or Shanxi province. The Nestorian Stele Inscription of 781 AD explains that the name *Jingjiao* “Brilliant teaching” for the Christian doctrine had been given because it was manifest and splendid.

¹¹⁴ *Dazangjing* (大藏經) (The Tripitaka in Chinese), Book 54, “Xinwen li chubangongsi yingyin” (新文豐出版公司影印), No. 2144 (Stele with the ode of the Daqin Jingjiao, introduction), pp. 1289–90. “大秦國景教流行中國碑頌并序“大秦國南統珊瑚之海北極眾寶之山西望仙境花林東接長風弱水。”

city because it was the starting point for travelers between Europe and China at the time of Zhang Gui. The summer “Scythian highway” linking the steppes of Mongolia and the Black Sea (**Map III, 2**) have been used from the earliest times by Scythians. This way may have been safer and faster than both the Spice Road and the Silk Road because less populated.¹¹⁵

The first Byzantine coins of Justin II have been found in a Sui tomb in Dizhangwan, Xianyang, Shanxi province, in 1953. Later, more than forty other Byzantine coins were found and recorded by Pr. Xia Nai between 1959 and 1977.¹¹⁶ The Greeks in Tang dynasty China were known for their love of wine and for their dances, as it remains nowadays.

¹¹⁵ The Japanese researcher Shiratori Kurakishi (*Memoirs of the research department of the Tokyo Bunkyo* 15; Tokyo, The Tokyo Bunkyo 1956) thinks that the word “Fulin” was introduced to China by the Turks (Tujue). He proposed that *Rum*, the Persian denomination for Rome, would have been pronounced *Urum*, *Hurum* or *Burum* by the Turks and then later transcribed as *Fulin* by the Chinese. According to Paul Pelliot, it was the Armenians who pronounced *Rome* as *Hrom*, and, while passing through Sogdiana, *Hrom* became *From*, and *From* became *Fulin*. Henry Yule and the Frenchman Edouard Chavannes claimed that *Fulin* came from *Constantinopoli* (Constantinople), but the city of Emperor Constantine was built later than Zhang Gui’s time, thus this explanation is not correct. My feeling is that *Fulin* was more likely related to the city of Byzantium and later to the Byzantine Empire. Byzantium is pronounced *Fuzandion* or *Vuzantion* in Greek (Byzantine is *Fuzantino* or *Vuzantino*), and as it became the name of the Byzantine Empire in the Chinese texts, the association *Fulin* to Byzantium seems clear. The Chinese did certainly not have to ask the Turks about the description of Constantinople, and, looking at it the other direction, the Greeks and the Romans had traveled to China many times. The Byzantine Empire became known as *Fulin* because the Chinese contacts with the Roman Empire happened through the city of Byzantium, not the city of Rome. According to the Sui dynasty annals (chap. 67) the northern road to reach the Mediterranean Sea (Xihai 西海) and *Fulin* (拂菻) started in Dunhuang (敦煌). From Dunhuang the road passed through Yiwu (伊吾), the Bolei Sea (蒲類海), the Tiele tribal area (鐵勒部), the country of the Tujue (突厥) and the Dubei River (度北流河水). In other words, it went north of the Tianshan Mountains, the northern steppes of Central Asia, the northern part of the Caspian Sea (or crossing through by ship), the Caucasus Mountains and the Black Sea, before finally arriving at Byzantium (*Fulin*) and the Mediterranean.

¹¹⁶ Xia Nai, “*Xianyang Dizhangwan Suimu chutu de Dongluoma jinbi*,” *Kaogu xuebao*, 1959-1, 67–73; “*Xi’an tumencun chutu de Baizhanting jinbi*,” *Kaogu*, 1961-8, 446–47; “*Zanhuang Li Xizong mu chutu de Baizhanting jinbi*,” *Kaogu*, 1977-6, 403–6.

During every harvest, they organize huge wine banquets and they play the guitar with the drums while they are singing and clapping with their hands.¹¹⁷

However, the Nestorians had as well transmitted mythology of ancient Greece to Tang dynasty China, as we in the tomb of the royal consort Wu (Wu Huiyi 武惠妃), which was decorated with a scene of Heracles capturing the Nemean lion in 737 AD (**Plate 11**). It is a mystery why she was so attached to Greek mythology that she ordered the representation of Heracles on her own sarcophagus, but it shows an important interest, or perhaps an ethical connection as well.



Plate 11. Heracles capturing the Nemean lion on the tomb of the consort Wu (737 AD), the spouse of Tang Xuanzong (唐玄宗 685 to 762 AD), seventh Emperor of the Tang dynasty. Shaanxi Historical museum.

The best account of Fulin history can be found in the Tang dynasty annals, in which it was referred to by the Chinese as *Daqin*.

The country of Fulin (拂菻) is also called Daqin and is situated on the west side of the Western Sea (Haixi–Egypt). It is located at forty thousand *li* (~16,000 km); in the north it is bordered by the territories of the Turkish *Kesa* (可薩). At the

¹¹⁷ *Wenxian Tongkao* (文獻通考) (Comprehensive examination of literature), Ma Duanlin (馬端臨). chap. 148, *le* 251. *Fulin* (拂菻) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1986), p. 1295. “其國每歲蒲桃熟時造酒肆筵彈胡琴打偏鼓拍手歌舞以為樂焉。”

western side, near the sea, there is the (capital) city of Constantinople (Chisan 遲散).¹¹⁸ (Fulin) has a common border with Persia in the southeast. Its territory extends more than ten thousand *li* (~5000 km), and its armies recruit hundreds of thousands of soldiers. Every ten *li* (~5 km) there is a pavilion, and every three *li* (1.5 km) there is a military place. There are ten subordinate, little countries, and to go there, the road passes through the countries of *Yisan* (澤散 Armenia; in Armenian *Hayastan*) and Lufen (驢分 the Kievan Rus; Lat. *Ruthenia*). *Yisan* is at its northeastern section and does not obey its orders. Going in the direction of the eastern Guohai Sea, at two thousand *li*, there is the country of Lufen. The capital city (Constantinople) is protected by thick walls eight *li* (~3.2 km) long, and the eastern door is twelve *zhang* high, with hinges made of pure gold. There are three doors in a line on the three king's palaces, and they are all decorated with many kinds of jewels. On the middle door there is a big man made of gold next to a horologe made with twelve golden balls that shows the time. There are huge columns in the palace made of crystal, with the posts made of colored glaze and rafters made of perfumed wood; the floor is made of gold with ivory everywhere.

¹¹⁸ At the end of the third century AD, the name of *Wuchisan* (烏遲散) or *Chisan* (遲散) appeared in the Chinese texts. It is the first city in the *Weilue* (魏略) when one reaches the Daqin, thus it has been interpreted as Alexandria on the Nile. In the Chinese version of the *Milindaphana*, Alexandria is translated as "Alisan" (阿荔散). Another Alexandria probably mentioned in the Han dynasty annals is Wuyishanli (烏弋山離, Ariana-Arachosia or maybe Alexandria Arachosia according to Edwin.G. Pulleybank in: *The Roman Empire as Known to Han China*; 1999). Situated at the southwest of Jibin, Wuyishanli was bordered by Lixuan (犁軒) and Tiaozhi (條支) at its western borders. However, since the first city encountered when one reaches the Daqin either by the Scythian highway or by the Silk Road is Byzantium city, not Alexandria on the Nile, then Chisan should logically be Constantinople (*Constantinoupoli*), as it was the capital of the Byzantine Empire described in the "Traditions of Fulin." Constantinople was founded as the "New Rome" by Emperor Constantine on May 11, 330 AD (the city was eventually re-named Istanbul by the Turks only in 1923), thus the *Weilue* perhaps indicated Alexandria on the Nile at first, but as Constantinople became more important at the time of the Old Tang dynasty annals, Chisan and Wuchisan have perhaps been alternatively used to mention the capital-city of the Fulin-Daqin (On the *Weilue*, see also Chavannes; "Les pays d'occident d'après le Wei lio." *T'ong Pao* 6, 1905; pp. 519–571).

They have twelve administrative regions.¹¹⁹ When the king goes out, there is always an assistant with him and when there is a dispute, they throw the request paper at him; in this way, the king rectifies the injustices in the provinces. If there are unexpected calamities in the kingdom, he (the king) is unceremoniously rejected and replaced. The cape of the king is like two wings of a bird made of jewels and feathers. His clothes are made of brocade and he has no garment in front. His throne is made of gold and decorated with falling flowers, and on his side there is a bird with green feathers (a peafowl; Lat. *Pavo*)¹²⁰ that cries suddenly when there is poison in the food. They do not use ceramic bricks but they decorate the walls with white stones and the tiles of the houses are solid and elegant like the jade. They have a system of fountains to refresh the air. The men cut their hair and their clothes are finely embroidered, open on the right side. They have screened coaches (for the women) and small white-roofed one-horse carts. When carriages come and go, drums are beaten and flags and standards are raised. The women have white pieces of cloth made of brocade on their hair. The families always complain and many go to the palace court. They like to get drunk and to eat biscuits. They have many children. There are also many illusionists, who can spit fire out of their faces, have very nimble hands and can take out banners from their mouths and make balls of jade come out of their feet. There are excellent doctors¹²¹ who are able to open the stomach to take out the diseases and

¹¹⁹ In 717 AD, the twelve provinces were Ravenna, Istria, Rome, Naples, Calabria, Hellas, Thrace, Opsikion, Thrakesion, Anatolikon, Karabisianoï and Armeniakon.

¹²⁰ The ancient Greeks believed that the flesh of the peafowl did not decay after death, thus it became a symbol of immortality among the Christians.

¹²¹ An interesting account concerning the transmission of Greek medicine to China comes from a famous Arab doctor named Rhases (Er-Azi-Mohammed ben Zukariya, 865–923 AD). In Baghdad, the Arabs mainly studied medicine from the Greek authors such as Hippocrates or Galen (Claudius Galenus) through the Syrian Nestorian monks. At the time he was living in Baghdad, Rhases recorded that a Chinese came to live there in the city and had learned Arabic in only one year. He became friends with Rhases, and he asked him to read the sixteen books of

that can also repair the eyes. They have plenty of gold (*jin* 金), silver (*yin* 銀), phosphorescent jade (*yeguangbi* 夜光璧), precious stones (*mingyueqiu* 明月球), large seashells (*dabei* 大貝), mother-of-pearl (*chequ* 車渠), agates (*manao* 瑪瑙), *munan* (木難), empty jades (*kongchi* 孔翠), and yellow amber (*hupo* 虎魄). In the sea, there are oceans of corals; the mariners use big ships and they throw iron nets into the bottom of the sea. At the beginning of their lives, the corals are white, then they become yellow after one year, then they become red after three years and their branches are complex, to a height of 3 or 4 *chi* (less than one meter). They use the iron nets to cut the corals at their roots and then to bring them up into the ship, and when they pull up the nets, nobody dares go close to the waters. There is a beast large like a dog that they call "Zhi," fierce and evil, with great strength.¹²² In the northern area there are many sheep; they grow from the earth and their navels are linked to the earth; they die if it is cut. When the armored horsemen go out of the cities, they hit the drums and the umbilical cords (of the sheep) are cut; the sheep immediately follow the river grass and they are not in the herd anymore (and they die). The seventeenth year of the *Zhenguan* era (643 AD), the king of Fulin, Boduoli (波多力 Constantine II "Pogonatos") sent an embassy with colored glass and some "essence of green glasses." (The emperor Taizong) made gifts (of silk) in return. When the Arabs (大食 Dashi)¹²³ were getting stronger, the surrounding countries were slowly conquered and Muawiyah (Moye 摩拽) was sent to conquer the capital of Fulin. After this, a peace treaty was signed and every year the Fulin paid tributes of silk and gold to the Dashi as a

Galen that he fully copied and brought back to Tang dynasty China.

¹²² The ancient pronunciation of *zhi* (質) was *xian*, a transcription from the Greek word for "hyaena" according to B. Laufer, *Sino-Iranica* (Chicago 1919; reprinted Taipei 1970) p.436.

¹²³ The description of the Arabs starts in the *Xintangshu* (New Tang dynasty annals), chap. 221 (second part), *Liezhuan* 146: "Dashi (大食) is situated on the former territory of Persia; they have big noses and black hair," and the text continues, "They believe that when they get killed by an enemy they go to heaven and when they kill an enemy they get blessed." "大食，本波斯地。男子鼻高，黑而髮。" "死敵者生天上，殺敵者受福"

vassal country. The second year of the *Qianfang* era (667 AD) an embassy was sent bringing gifts and *theriaca* (*Diyejia* 底野加). The first year of the *Daju* era (701 AD), a new embassy came to the court. The first month of the seventh year of the *Kaiyuan* era (719 AD), a great ambassador of the Tuhuoluo came bringing gifts of two lions and two gazelles and few months later the monk Dade (David) arrived at the court. Two thousand *li* (880 km) at the southwest of Fulin there is a country called Molin, also called Laoposa (Ethiopia). Their people are black and strong. Nothing grows from the soil; there are diseases in the ground that dry every single herb in the valleys and in the forests. They feed the horses with rotten fish and eat dates.¹²⁴

The Syrian monk Abraham (*Shangde* Alopen) travelled to the Tang dynasty from Seleucia Tigris (Suli 宿利) with monks from Khotan in 635 AD. Tang Taizong (唐太宗 599–649 AD) received Abraham in the imperial palace and conversed with him about his religion. After Taizong received his arguments positively, or perhaps because of the trade opportunities that he

¹²⁴*Xintangshu* (新唐書), (New Tang dynasty annals), chap. 221 (second part), *Liezhuan* 146 (Traditions of Fulin) pp. 4748–4749. “拂菻, 古大秦也, 居西海上, 一曰海西國。去京師四萬里, 在苦西, 北直突厥可薩部, 西瀕海, 有遲散城, 東南接波斯。地方萬里, 城四百萬, 勝兵百萬。十里一亭, 三里一置。臣役小國數十, 以名通者曰澤散, 曰路驢分。澤散直東北, 不得其道里。東廓海二千里至驢分國。重石爲都城, 廣八里, 東門高二十丈, 釦以黃金。王宮有三襲門, 皆飾異寶。中門中有金巨稱一, 作金人立, 其端屬十二丸, 率時改一丸落。以瑟瑟以爲殿柱, 水精, 琉璃爲椽, 香木梁, 黃金爲地, 象牙闔。有貴臣十二共治國。王出, 一個挈囊以從, 訟書投囊中, 還省枉直。國有災異輒廢更立賢者。王冠如鳥翼綴珠。衣錦綉, 前無襟。坐金花塌, 側有鳥如鵝, 綠色毛, 上食有毒輒鳴。無陶瓦, 屑白石墜屋, 堅潤如玉。盛暑引水上, 流氣爲風。男子翦髮, 衣綉, 右袒而帔, 承輜駟白蓋小車, 出人建旌旗, 出鼓。婦人錦巾。家訾億萬者爲上官。俗喜酒, 嗜乾餅。多幻人, 能發火於顏, 手顏爲江湖, 口幡眊舉, 足墮球玉。有善醫能開胸出蟲以癒目眚。多出金, 銀, 夜光璧, 明月球, 大貝, 車渠, 嗎囷, 木難, 孔翠, 虎魄。海中有珊瑚洲, 海人乘大舶, 墮鐵網水底。珊瑚初生磐, 白如菌, 一歲黃, 三歲赤, 枝格交錯, 高三四尺。鐵發其根係網舶上, 絞而出, 之失時不敢即腐。有獸名質大如狗, 獷惡而力。北邑有羊, 生土中, 臍屬地, 割必死, 俗介馬而走, 击鼓以惊之, 羊臍絕。即逐水草, 不能群。貞觀十七年, 王波多力遣使獻亦波璃綠金精, 下詔賚答。大食稍強, 遣大將軍摩拽伐之, 拂菻約和, 逐臣局乾封至大足再朝獻。開元七年, 因吐火羅大酋獻師子, 羚羊。自拂菻西南度磧二千里, 有國曰磨鄰曰老勃薩。其人黑性悍。地瘴癘無草木五谷, 飼馬以槁魚人食鶻莽。鶻莽波斯棗也不耻烝報於夷狄最甚, 號曰“尋”其君臣七日一休不出納交易飲以窮夜”

could develop with the Western world, he ordered to be built a "Persian Monastery" or "Persian Church" (*Bosi si* 波斯寺) in Chang'an.¹²⁵ Twenty-one monks converted to Christianity, and they started to spread the religion in China. When Emperor Tang Gaozong (唐高宗 628–683 AD) took the throne, many other churches were constructed in Chang'an, Luoyang, Shazhou, Chengdu, Guangzhou and Yangzhou. Tang Xuanzong (唐玄宗 685–762 AD) was very favorable to Christianity as well, participating to the cults of the main church of Chang'an. The Nestorian ambassadors from Seleucia Tigris were welcome in the Chinese capital, and they exchanged gifts and established economic ties. The monks Gabriel (Jilie) and Johan (Luohan) were sent to China from Seleucia Tigris with gifts in 714 AD, and they received support as well as money and silk from the Tang imperial family. In 742 AD, sculptures of the Tang emperors Gaozu, Taizong, Gaozong, Zhongzong and Ruizong were erected within the main church of Chang'an and revered as those of the "Five Saints." In 745 AD, the "Persian monastery" was re-baptized "Daqin monastery" or "Roman church" (*Daqin si* 大秦寺), and it served not only to preach the "Daqin religion" (*Daqin jiao* 大秦教), but also as a strategic "embassy" to the East for the Western Christian world. The monk Georges (Qiehe) came as well from the Daqin in 745 AD. Balkh (Bactra), situated in the middle of the Silk Road to China was the meeting point for the missionaries going both to India or China from Seleucia Tigris, and it had an important church. Those missionaries were sometimes implicated in political affairs as Yazedbouzid (Yisi 伊斯), son of Milis, the great patriarch of Balkh, was employed by the Christian-converted Tang dynasty general Guo Ziyi (郭子儀 697–781 AD) as a military advisor.

About half of a century after Guo Ziyi, the Emperor Tang Wuzong (唐武宗 841–846 AD), who had become a fervent follower of Daoism, ordered the annihilation of Buddhism, Zoroastrism and Nestorianism in China, and that all the Christian priests had to quit their churches in 845 AD.

Although Nestorianism almost completely disappeared in China, it was still widely spread in Mongolia, and when the Mongols invaded China, the religion was reborn one more

¹²⁵ As the Nestorian monks did not have to follow the rule of celibacy, the term "church" (*eglesia*) is perhaps more appropriate than "monastery."

time in Chinese awareness. When Kubilai Khan (Hubilie 忽必烈 1279–1295) vanquished the Song (宋) dynasty in 1279, and the Yuan (元) dynasty was established, Nestorianism was reborn, four hundred years after its disappearance in China. Four ecclesiastical circumscriptions were sent with priests by the *Katholikos* in Baghdad: Datong, Kashgar, Khanbalik (Beijing), and Tangut.

Two famous Uyghur Nestorians, Rabban Sauma (1245–1294) and Markos, traveled to Baghdad in 1278. Markos became bishop of the Nestorian Church of all of China in 1281, keeping his position for thirty-six years. Arghoun, the Persian Khan, was a fervent Christian, and he had the will to protect Jerusalem against the Muslims. He sent an embassy led by the monk Rabban Sauma to Europe in 1284, and Sauma reached Constantinople and Rome. In 1288, Sauma met Pope Nicolas IV in Rome, bringing him letters and gifts from Arghoun. The pope sent back four Franciscan missionaries led by Giovanni da Montecorvino (1246–1328). Giovanni da Montecorvino stayed in China (Mongolia), preaching for the Roman church before being named bishop of Khanbalik in 1307 by Pope Clement V. In 1311, the attitude of the Mongol leaders changed, and they supported Buddhism instead, ordering the transformation of most of the Chinese Churches into Buddhist monasteries. During the fourteenth century, the Nestorians were cruelly persecuted by the Mongols who had been converted to Islam in Persia. In 1398, Yuanzhang (元璋) overcame the Yuan dynasty and proclaimed himself Emperor of the Ming (明) in Nanjing, ending the Daqin church in China.

10. Greco-Roman embassies and “visitors” to China

(Uncertain embassies or visitors are indicated with a “*”)

~240–230 BC*

An exiled Indo-Greek prince from Taxila passes through the Khunjerab pass and founds the kingdom of Khotan with a large mixed army of Indians and Sacae-Scythians.

~230 BC

Khotana armies advance further east and establish contact with Loulan–Kroraina or perhaps with the Qin kingdom.

220 BC	The Qin Emperor melts twelve chryselephantine statues in Gansu's Lintao and takes them as a trophy (from the Indo-Greek king after vanquishing him?).
108 BC*	An ox is offered by the Daqin to Han Wudi.
108 BC	Greek athletes are sent to China as a gift by the Parthians to Han Wudi.
36 BC*	Greco-Roman prisoners, in China after the submission of Zhizhi, build the city of Liqian.
33 BC	An embassy is sent from Hermaios (or his descendant) to Emperor Han Yuandi.
32 BC	An Embassy is sent from Hermaios (or his descendant) to Emperor Han Chengdi.
100 AD	An embassy from Doule (Doura-Europos?) and Mengqi (Makedonia?), situated at forty-thousand <i>li</i> on the Western Seas, arrives in Luoyang with gifts during winter.
120 AD	Greek jugglers and acrobats are offered by the kingdom of Chan.
166 AD	An embassy arrives from Marcus Aurellius with gifts.
226 AD	The Daqin merchant "Qinlun" visits Sun Quan.
281 AD	A Roman embassy to Guangzhou arrives via the Spice Road.
284 AD	A Roman embassy to Guangzhou arrives via the Spice Road.
361 AD	The Emperor of Pulin (蒲菴) sent an embassy to Luoyang with a letter of alliance to the Chinese Emperor. A Chinese embassy was sent back to Pulin in 363 AD in order to open diplomatic relations.
456 AD	The countries of Yada and Pulan send an Embassy with presents from the Emperor Flavius Marianus (Marcian). ¹²⁶

¹²⁶ *Weishu jiwu*, second part of leaf 6.

- 465 AD An embassy from Pulona and Polan offers “red hair” and “precious swords” from the Emperor Flavius Leo (Leo II).¹²⁷
- 467 AD The countries of Gaoli, Yutian, Pulan and Sute send an embassy with presents.¹²⁸
- Fifth to eighth century AD Nestorian monks and traders coming from the Daqin become permanent residents near Luoyang’s Yongmin Buddhist monastery during the reign of Xuanwudi (484–515 AD) and in other cities in the following centuries.
- 643 AD An embassy of Constantine “The Bearded” (Κωνσταντίνος Πρωγονάτος 641–668 AD) arrives.
- 667 AD An embassy of Constantine “The Bearded” (Κωνσταντίνος Πρωγονάτος 641–668 AD) arrives.
- 701 AD An embassy from Fulin (Byzantium) arrives.
- 711 AD An embassy from Fulin (Byzantium) arrives.
- 719 AD A Nestorian embassy from the Tuhuolo arrives.
- 719 AD A Nestorian embassy with the Syrian monk Dade (David) arrives.
- 742 AD A Byzantine embassy from Constantine V (Κωνσταντίνος Ε΄ 741–775) arrives.
- 745 AD Monk Georges (Qiehe) comes from the Daqin to China.
- 1081 A Byzantine embassy to the Northern Song dynasty at Kaifeng arrives with gifts of precious stones and swords.
- 1091 Two embassies from Byzantium arrive with gifts.
- 1289 Four Franciscan missionaries led by Giovanni da Montecorvino arrive in Beijing from Rome.
- 1307 Giovanni da Montecorvino becomes bishop of Beijing.

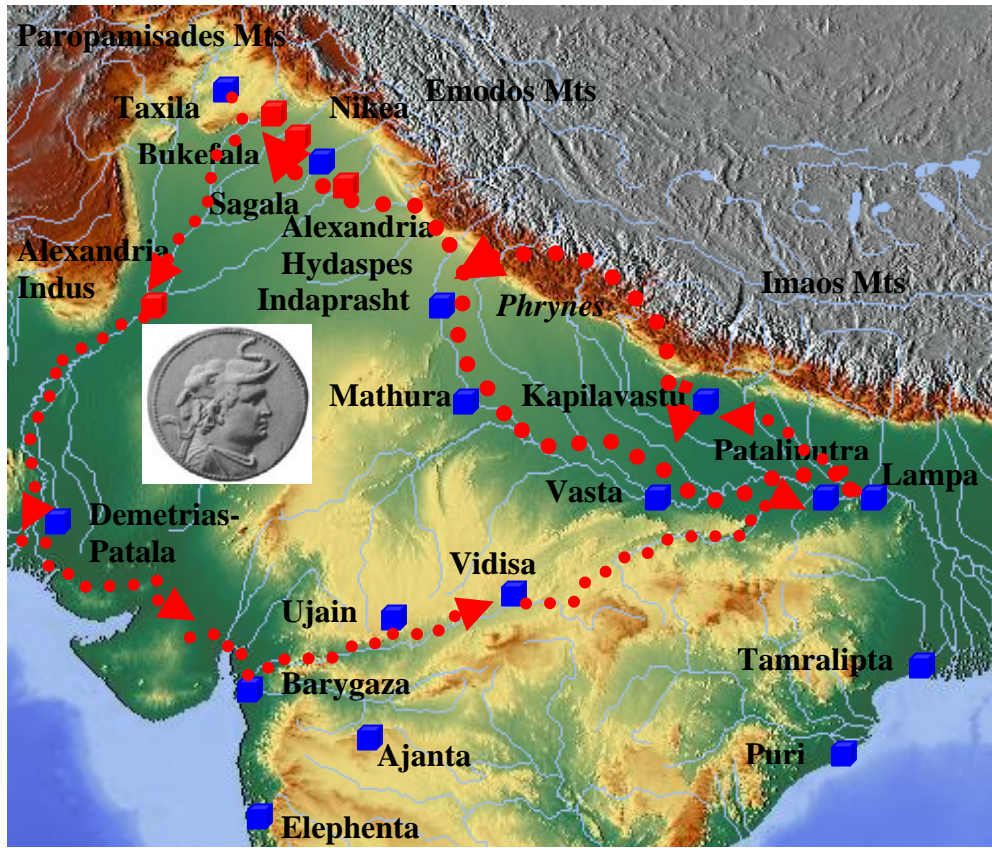
¹²⁷ *Weishu Jiwu*, first part of leaf 15.

¹²⁸ *Weishu Jiwu*, first part of leaf 5.

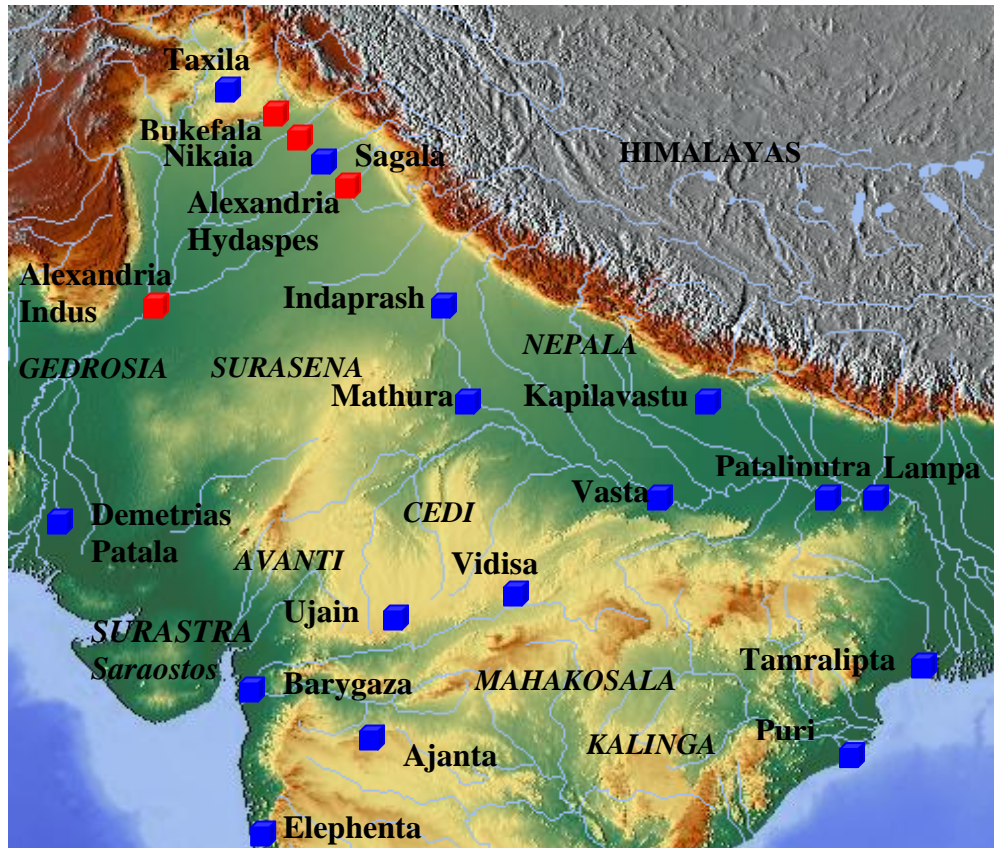
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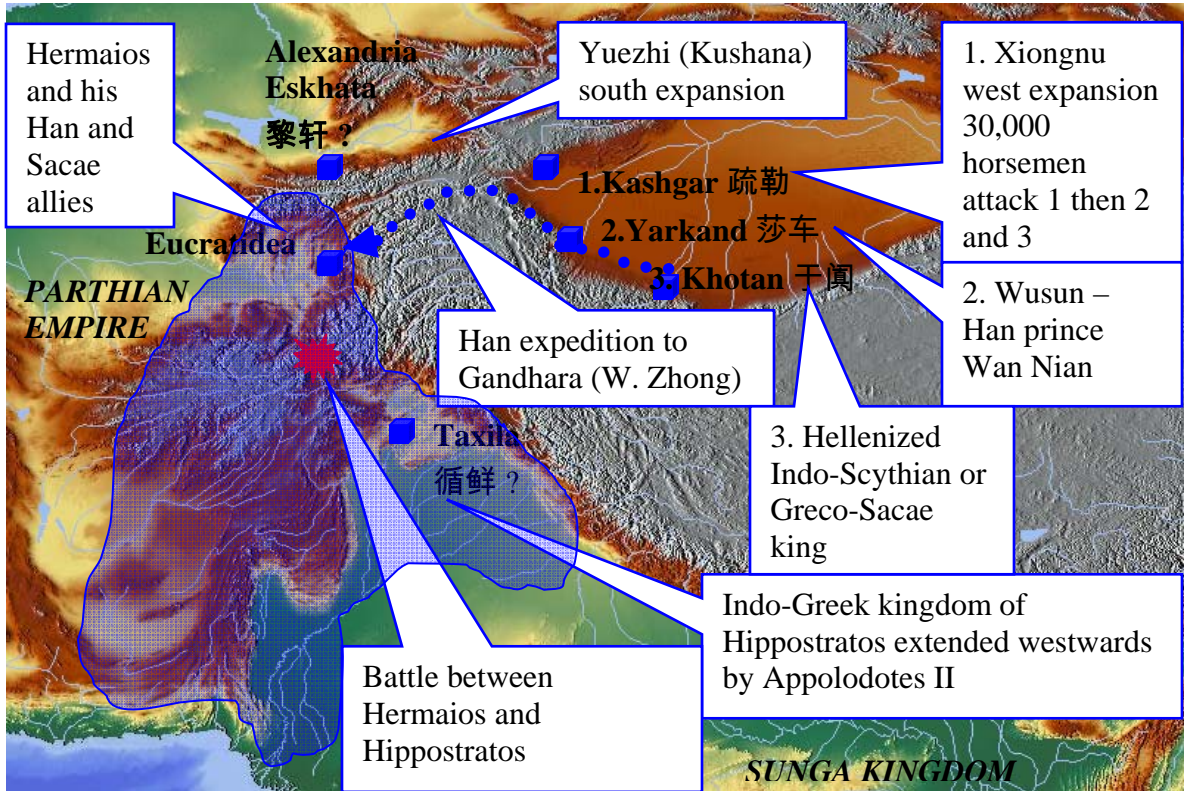
2. Demetrios' invasion of India around 180 BC



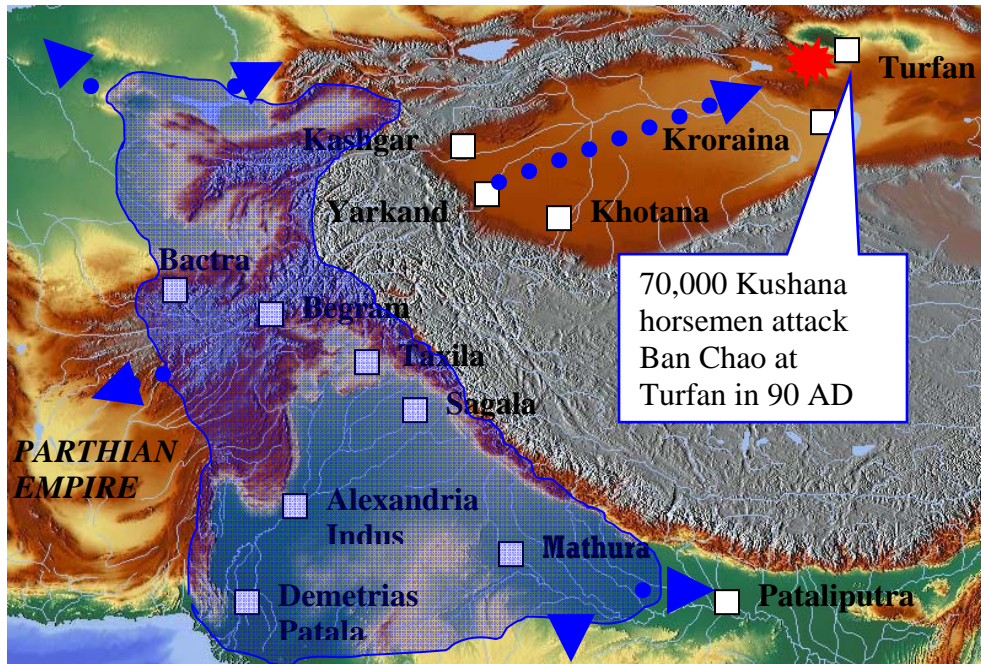
3. Principal cities of northern India



4. Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek Kingdom around 60 BC, at the time of the Han expedition in Gandhara

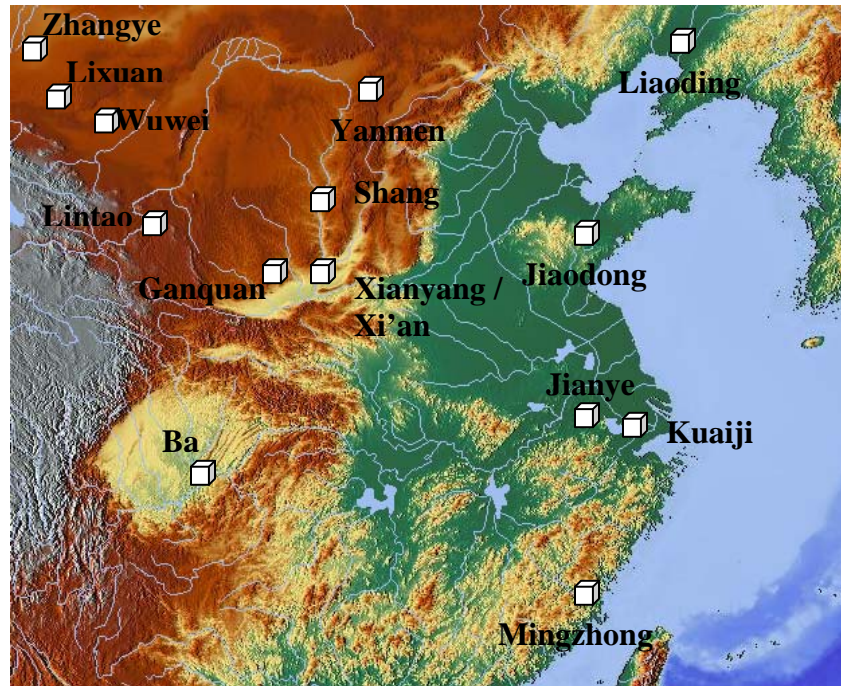


5. Kushana Empire after Kujula Kadphises, first to third century AD.

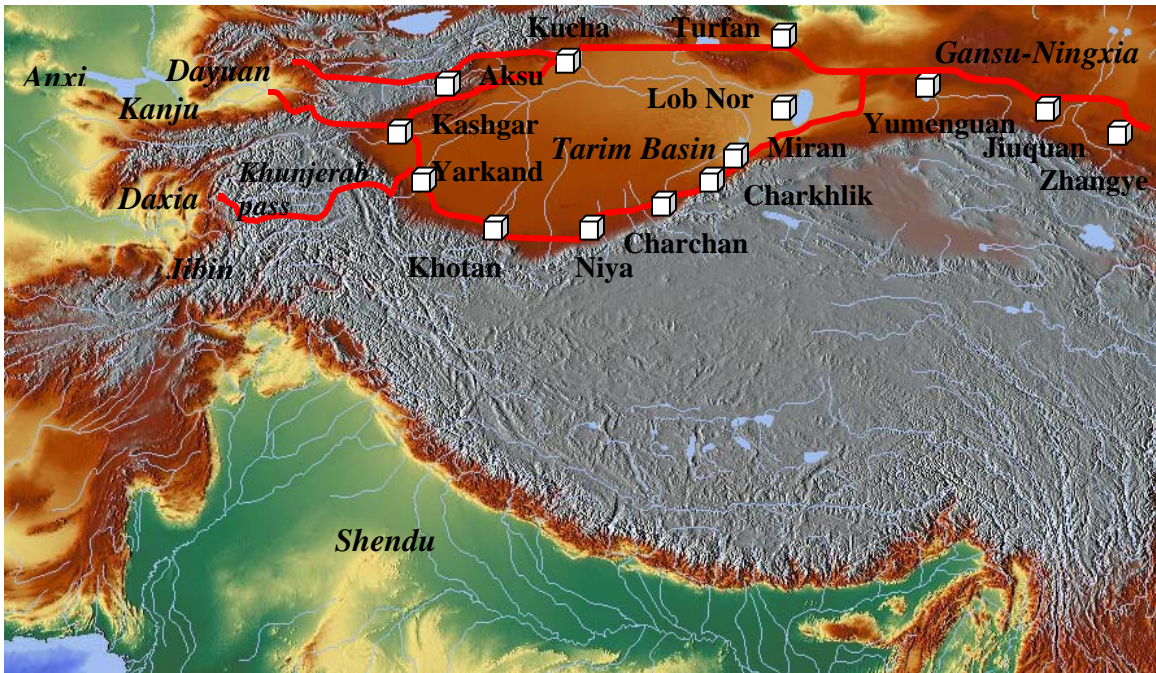


Map Group II:
China

1. Qin–Han dynasties (main cities)



2. Silk Road in the Tarim Basin during the Han dynasty



Map Group III:
Achaemenid and Parthian Empires;
Silk Road, Spice Road, and Scythian Highway

1. The main roads of the Achaemenid Empire at around 500 BC. The later Silk Road to China followed the same routes.



2. Parthian Empire during the first century AD

A. "Spice Road" by sea
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B. Summer "Scythian highway" - - - - -
- - - - -



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