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Οι Σχέσεις του ανατολικού Ρωμαϊκού κράτους με την Κίνα: Η εικόνα του Βυζαντίου στις κινεζικές πηγές

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**The Eastern Roman Empire
and its Relations with China:
The Image of the Byzantine in the Chinese Sources**

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FOREWORD

In recent decades, studies on the relations of the Greco-Roman world with China have been paid more attention in international level, and particularly in Greece and Mainland China. The studies are mainly relied on the written sources from the Mediterranean world about the Far East and those sources from China about the Far West — the world that extended beyond Persia — as well as the help of abundant archaeological materials, numismatics, epigraphy etc. The studies in Greece have been cultivated intensively in Ioannina (University of Ioannina) for more than 1/4 century with the accomplishment in monographs, articles, doctoral dissertations, lectures, conferences, workshops etc., some of which were achieved through close co-operations with scholars from Chinese universities (Tsinghua University, Northeast Normal University, Nankai University etc.) .

Following the general academic tradition of the studies on the relations of the Greco-Roman world with China in Ioannina, this dissertation will focus on the image of the Roman empire — mainly the eastern part of the empire, known to Chinese as Da-qin, and including the regions of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt — which was conceived by Chinese from the first century to the sixth century CE. Relying intensively on the Chinese sources referring to the Far West, as well as the parallel information provided by the Western sources, this study intends to recover this image, on which basis, to further expound on how ancient Chinese imagined, treated other states or people (or civilization), and its significance to the contemporary international relations. The basis of theory and methodology is the Imagology which originated from the French comparative literature explores literary images of foreign countries and peoples. This perspective on the subject has not been yet studied sufficiently, since most of the research has been very much rooted in topographical (identification of Da-qin and the routes of access to it), historical, and religious issues, as well as debates on mutual relations on the Silk Road through the criticism of the above sources.

As the completion of this dissertation, my five-year studies and life in Greece will also come to an end. Generally, I would be glad to say that I spent a wonderful and

memorable time in Ioannina, Greece. For the five-years Greek life, I should appreciate many people, without whom I could not realize my dream easily. Firstly, the highest gratitude belongs to Professor M. Kordosis. As my supervisor, he provided me such a rare opportunity to pursue my farther study in Greece, where I learned much and experienced another great ancient civilization. As a professional scholar, he led me into the studies on the relations of the Greco-Roman world with China which is a subject of far-reaching significance to the Greek-Chinese ancient and modern relationship. Without his aid through discussions on the dissertation's title, contents, bibliographies (the majority of the works being referred to are from Professor Kordosis' personal library) etc., I would not have been able to complete my dissertation on time. Special thanks will be given to his family, in which I enjoyed as a member of it: his wife, Angeliki, treated me as her third son. She not only cooked Delicious food to me, but also taught me ancient Greek with her excellent knowledge, in my heart, she is always my Greek mom; his sons, Stefanos and Alex helped me mastering modern Greek fast and showed me around in Greece, I will not forget our brotherhood. As members of my supervisor group, I am much grateful to Professors Ioannis E. Tzamtzis and Panagiotis Antonopoulos. Both of them provided me much freedom to write the dissertation and helped me to improve its quality. As my Chinese Professors, I owe much to Professors Xu Jia-ling, Zhang Xu-shan, and Lin Ying. They have given me invaluable suggestions concerning my studies, as well as care on my life abroad. I also gratefully acknowledge the guidance from Professors Costas N. Constantinidis, Christos Stavrakos, Athanasios Angelou, and Alexandros Alexakis. In the past years, I have acquired much valuable knowledge on Byzantine Studies through their lessons, seminars. My wife, Liu Xia, who is always together with me and encourage me to continue my study confidently, will be appreciated from my heart. The greatest gratitude I must express is to my dearest parents, without whom I will not be in the world. There are so many people who appeared in my life and gave me aid and courage that I could not list all their names one by one, but I know I owe them very much and I will keep them in my heart and never forget. The last, but the most important, gratitude should be expressed to IKY (Ίδρυμα Κρατικών Υποτροφιών) which sponsored me financially to accomplish my studies in Greece.

ABSTRACT

The Greco-Roman world's relations with the Far East, in particular China, have been an attracting subject which enjoyed much attention from sinologists for centuries. As a main component of that, the relations of the Roman Empire with China have been studied in width and depth, and valuable conclusions have also been achieved. Needless to say, the achievements gained through centuries' research have proved the existing relations between the Roman Empire and China, and more significantly, they cleared up lots of problems and ambiguities lying in the sources themselves (through the identification of geographical names, comparing the correspondence of products and historical events, pursuing the routes of communication between the two civilizations) etc. Though the studies of over the centuries have reached remarkable conclusions, they have not exhausted the topic; in addition, in the twenty-first century, the globalization is continuously developing, the relations between the West and China are more involving in. Considering the two mentioned aspects and the significance of the subject to the development of the West-Chinese relationship, there is still existing necessity to proceed the study. On the basis of previous research findings, this dissertation will pay more attention to the Chinese sources concerning the image of the Roman Empire conceived by Chinese, which has not received enough attention.

Since the first century CE, Chinese sources contained much information on the extreme west state Da-qin, which has been identified with the Roman Empire. This state was depicted as a treasure state, civilized state, and the greatest state in scale to the west of China. Through analyzing the information about the state, it is obviously found that the descriptions of it are mixed the realities with the non-realities (Chinese elements, myths, fantasies etc.). Regarding the characteristics of the image of the Roman Empire in Chinese sources, in the dissertation, four issues have been addressed: What is the image, how was it constructed, why did they have such an image, and what are its significance and implications.

The content of the study includes six chapters, as well as a Introduction and a

Conclusion At the beginning, the Introduction reviewed the historical thread of the Roman empire kept in Chinese sources and the general history of the studies on the relations between the Roman empire and China; meanwhile, the mission and object of the dissertation is referred to. Chapter One consisted of three parts: the first part is a literature review on the contributions to the study of the Roman empire and its relations with China from Chinese sources: in this way, the specific thread of these studies was provided, and particular focus was given to the Chinese research on these issues, which has not been paid enough attention, aiming at promoting the studies towards a more international level; in the second section, the basic terms of the study have been explained and offered for a better understanding of the later discussions; finally, the methodologies, in particular the core one, Imagology was explained. Chapter Two browsed the general historical condition of the Roman empire, China, and the intermediaries (in particular the Persian empires) between them from the period of the first century to the sixth century CE, with the aim of providing a general context for the image of the Roman empire in Chinese literature. Chapter Three referred to the Chinese sources containing the information on Da-qin, as well as the referred Western sources. In this part, the main Chinese sources on Da-qin as the official, private and religious writings were introduced and their values to the study were also indicated. The Western sources kept the parallel information on the Roman Empire which can be compared with the Chinese sources were also provided. Chapter Four represented the core of the study. In this part, as subject of the study, Da-qin's meaning was first analyzed, which has important significance to its image. Afterwards, according to contents of the Chinese sources, the image of Da-qin was reconstructed from different aspects; meanwhile, with the help of the corresponding Western sources, different identifications and commentaries of scholars on the key questions concerning Da-qin were reviewed and analyzed. Following the information provided by Chapter Four, Chapter Five concentrated on analysis of the characteristics of the image, the causes underlying its construction. Chapter Six paid attention to significance and implications of the Da-qin image to academic research and to modern international relations. The Conclusion summarized the results and limitations, and the significance of the study; additionally, its potential for future research was also provided.

The following conclusions are achieved in the study: The image of Da-qin, on the basis of the information from different bearers (Chinese, so-called Da-qin people, and other foreigners, most of whom were envoys or merchants) or the written sources from Central and Western Asia, was constructed by the Chinese authors. The image, apart from the realities shown inside, also contains many utopian, fanciful, and Chinese elements. This basic feature not only reflects the difficulties of understanding a far away state for Chinese, but more so reflects the Chinese's (mainly the Chinese authors') own thought regarding an alien civilization and their special intentions for the effect of their writings. The way that the ancient Chinese conceived of this alien state, and the method treating it reflect a strong sense of Sinocentrism which shows Chinese vanity and arrogance, meanwhile they also reflect Chinese respect to a foreign civilization.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The study of relations between the Roman empire and China (or Greco-Roman world and China) has been a fascinating subject to scholars from various disciplines for a long time, in particular to the sinologists. The study is both multi-disciplinary and multi-layered, as it focuses on the interactions between two of the greatest civilizations in ancient world in the fields of trade, diplomacy, literature, art and religion. As the subject covers vast geographical areas as well as a significant time span, it is necessary to consult a multitude of sources to verify each piece of information. Yet Western evidence is scarce, as stated by M. Kordosis: "It is a little curious to speak about Greek-Chinese studies, since, except for some details about the commerce of Chinese silk and some geographical information given by Ptolemy, there is almost nothing else in the Western sources."[1] In reality, from the Classical period until the end of the early eastern Roman empire, a great Far East state named Seres, Thinae (or Sinae), Tzinitza (or Tzinista)[2], and Taugast[3] was recorded in Greek and Latin sources with little and unclear information. Even so, after long-term research of various kinds of sources and linguistic comparisons, sinologists almost agreed that this state is ancient China[4]. Apart from the fuzzy image of the Far East state, there also exists little information on its relations with the Western world. The rarity of the sources from the West did not hinder the continuity of the study. The

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[1] M. Kordosis (1991a), p. 143. M. Kordosis emphasizes on the Greek-Chinese studies, because of the fact that the Roman Orient known to China was mainly inhabited by the Greek, that's also the reason why Da-qin points to Yonaka (= Greeks) in the Chinese version of *Milindapanha (Questions of Milinda),* ibid, pp. 199, 202. Many other scholars also hold the same view on the lack of the Western sources. See Lucas Christopoulos (2012), p. 2.

[2] The term Tzinitza or Tzinista and its connection with China has been well examined by Zhang Xu-shan (2004a, pp. 452-462; 2012, pp. 7-25).

[3] The research on Taugast has been summarized, reviewed and studied again by Zhang Xu-shan, see Xu-shan Zhang (2007b), pp. 79-85, (2012), pp. 41-66.

[4] The Western sources on these names have been collected, translated and well researched by Coedes, W. H. Schoff, Yule/Cordier, Poinsotte, Janvier, Dihle, Andre and Filliozat, Raschke, D. D. Leslie and K. H. J. Gardiner etc. These scholars believe that the foregoing names in Western sources should be China but with different explanations on their meanings. The details of their works can be referred to the bibliography of this dissertation.

information concerning the Roman empire in ancient Chinese literature greatly supported and promoted the study of Roman-Chinese relations. This information is either direct or indirect, and is impregnated with contrasting realities, misunderstandings, myth, and imagination.

In the extant ancient Chinese literature, the term Da-qin[5] (大秦) refers to a state situated in the extreme-west of ancient China. It made its appearance in Chinese literature from the second century BCE until the 19th century CE.[6] To be more specific, it features most prominently in the written or compiled sources dating from the first century to the seventh century, which record the history of this state from the first century until the sixth century. It is recorded as a great state located to the west of the state An-xi (安息), which has with certainty been identified with the Parthian empire[7], and even west of the Xi-hai (西海), which means the Western Sea[8]; it was the largest state to the west of ancient China; the state was abundant in treasures and all kinds of products, but the people wore barbarian clothing and used the barbarian (or foreign) language. In consideration of its detailed descriptions and its position in space and time, Da-qin has been almost unanimously identified as the Roman empire or part of it.[9]

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[5] This term Da-qin (大秦) is also written by scholars as Da-ch'in, Ta-ts'in etc, here I follow the Chinese Pinyin system, which has been recognized internationally; meanwhile, as to other Chinese terms, I will follow the same system in this dissertation.

[6] Zhi-qiang Chen (1994a), p. 12. In the following chapters, if there is no special statement, the time mentioned is in the Common Era.

[7] State of An-xi being identified with the Parthian empire has been almost regarded as a final conclusion, and the view assumes that An-xi is the transliteration of "Arsaces", after the dynasty's eponymous founder. See Hirth (1885), pp. 138-141; E. Chavannes (1907), p. 177; P. Pelliot (1938), p. 146; D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner (1996), p. 251; Tao Wang (2007), p. 90 etc.

[8] The identity of Xi-hai or the Western Sea is still in debate, and the most popular views include Persian Gulf, Caspian Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Euphrates and Tigris Rivers etc., the detailed study on it will be in the part "Geography" of this dissertation.

[9] For the discussion of the different views on the identity of Da-qin, the details can be referred to M. Kordosis (1991a), pp. 181-205; Zhi-qiang Chen (1994a), p.12; Xu-shan Zhang (1994), pp. 115-122, (2005), pp. 14-18; D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner (1996), pp. XVII-XXIV; Yan-ying Gong (2002), pp. 19-27.

As mentioned above, Da-qin had been attested in ancient Chinese literature since the first century[10]. It was first presented in a work called *Bie-guo-dong-ming-ji* (别国洞冥记), which was a compilation of mysteries. It was written by a Chinese official with the name of Guo Xian who lived in the first century. In the text, there is a passage that states "In the third year (108 BCE) of Yuanfeng period, state of Da-qin offered a bull with flower-shaped hoofs as a tribute (to the court of the Western Han)"[11]. As far as we know, it is the first presence of Da-qin as a foreign state in the extant Chinese sources. Nevertheless, the information is brief enough, and nothing more is given than the name of the Da-qin state, so that it is accordingly difficult to trace its real identity. Besides, for the Roman Republic, considering the political environment on the Eurasian Steppe in the second century BCE, it is impossible to accept that there were direct relations between it and the Western Han of China[12]. The next event concerning Da-qin in the extant Chinese sources happened in the year 97. It is related to an envoy named Gan Ying. In the year 97, he was sent by the Protector General of the Western Regions Ban Chao to pursue relations with the states in the extreme west, and the main destination was Da-qin. On his return, he was obliged to submit his report of the mission, including the information on Da-qin. Although Gan Ying's report was lost in history and we cannot check in detail what he reported, his mission, along with his description of Da-qin, was related by later historians, and his report is regarded as the beginning of information on Da-qin in Chinese sources.[13] Since then, much more often, Da-qin was depicted as a great state to the west of China in later Chinese sources. Though in ancient China, for different reasons, all kinds of disasters

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[10] Before the first century CE, Da-qin, recorded as a foreign state, had appeared in much earlier sources, such as *Shan-hai-jing* (The descriptions of Mountains and Seas, 山海经), which was written in the period from the fifth century to the third century BCE, however, it is believed that this state of Da-qin was the region where the ancestors of Qin Dynasties (the first united dynasty in China, from 221 to 207 BCE) used to live, see Zhi-qiang Chen (1994a), pp. 15-18.

[11] *BGDMJ*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 287; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 184.

[12] Zhang Xing-lang (1977, pp. 16-17) believes that "It sounds to be fantastic, but not necessarily a pure invention without any reality"; Though knowing the judgment of Zhang Xing-lang, through discussing the political influence of the Roman Republic, the Parthia, and the Western Han, Zhang Xu-shan (1994, pp. 115-116) has rejected the possibility of this information; Yu Tai-shan (2013, p. 185) also believes that this information is just a legend.

[13] D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner (1996), pp. 141-142.

happened to written sources, leading to the loss of countless valuable works of literature,[14] as regards the extant sources, the descriptions on Da-qin were still handed down, and many of them are found in the sources from the period of the third century to the seventh century.

The Chinese sources on Da-qin contain comprehensive information, including descriptions of its location, cities, people, life, political systems, customs, products etc. In addition to the considerable records about Da-qin from the first century to the seventh century, from the time of the Sui-Tang Dynasties[15] (581-907) onwards, another term, "Fu-lin" (拂菻), appeared in ancient Chinese literature, which was claimed to be the same state as Da-qin by ancient Chinese historians: "Fu-lin is a state to the west of Shan (苫国[16]), thousands of *li*[17] away from the mountains, and it is also called Da-qin"[18]. In the sources, the relations between Fu-lin and ancient China were closely knit through frequent embassies, religious missions and caravans. In addition, much more concrete information on the location, capital, and the foreign relations of Fu-lin was added. Hence, with the previous information of Da-qin and the new specific contents of Fu-lin, most sinologists strongly support that Fu-lin is the eastern Roman empire or the Byzantine empire,[19] and that Da-qin is the early Roman empire

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[14] In ancient China, written works encountered many times of disasters which led to a great loss; in addition, Chinese rulers also organized times of sorting old works and compiling new works, during which time, much important works and information were destroyed or modified for their need of governance. See Lin-Dong Qu (1999).

[15] Several scholars have traced the first appearance of Fu-lin back to 313 CE, "In the time of Zhang Gui, the Western Regions offered tribute of the golden barbarian cakes (金胡饼), which were made by Fu-lin. They have strange forms, are as high as person, two pieces". Nevertheless, since the information is little and simple, it is impossible for further identification; in addition, this view is only circulated in China, not attracting much international attention, see Lian-qing Chen (1982), p. 106; Zhi-qiang Chen (1994b), p. 130; Xu-shan Zhang (2012), pp.107-108.

[16] The state of Shan is widely identified with Syria, especially Damask, in Hirth (1909), p. 8.

[17] "li" is one of the basic ancient Chinese distance units. In the period of Qin-Han (BCE 221 to 220 CE), 1 *li* was equal to 415 m. See Denis Twitchett & John K. Fairbank (2008), p. xxxviii.

[18] Vol. 193, *TD*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), pp. 319, 406.

[19] This view is almost in agreement among scholars, e. g., Hirth (1885), (1909), (1913); E. Chavannes (1904), 1913; Shiratori (1956); P. Pelliot (1914); M. Kordosis (1994a); Zhi-qiang Chen (1994a); D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner (1996); Xu-shan Zhang (1998),

or its eastern part.

The specific knowledge about China reached Western Europe no earlier than the Middle Ages, when quite a number of direct communications existed between Europe and China; in particular, in the relatively peaceful period of the Mongol Yuan empire, when European Christian missions came to the central court in China, they got information about China and introduced it to Europe[20]. However, the knowledge which was brought to Europe was limited and did not form a clear nor reliable impression of China; moreover, no regular relations between the two civilizations were set up. Accordingly, with the fall of the Mongol Yuan empire in China, the communication was cut off. The communications between Europe and China were set up again no earlier than the 16th century with the coming of the Jesuits.

At the end of the 16th century, the Jesuits traveled from Europe to the Far East to spread their faith. Since China was regarded as the center of Eastern Asia, even though they were kept outside of China, the Jesuits never gave up the attempts to enter. When allowed to travel and live in China, they sought to make their religion acceptable in China in every possible way. For this purpose, they searched, collected and sorted the sources recording the relations between Europe and China in ancient Chinese literature, so as to find the evidence which supports that their religion already existed in ancient China, and that their dogma was not in conflict with the Chinese ruling philosophy, Confucianism. During this course, for the better understanding of China in the Western world, these sources were introduced to Europe. The discovery of the Chinese Nestorian Stele *Da-qin-Jing-jiao-liu-xing-Zhong-guo-bei* (Memorial of the Propagation in China of the Luminous Religion from Da-qin, 大秦景教流行中国

(2012).

[20] In the period of Mongol Yuan empire, a number of European priests came to China with ecclesiastic missions or diplomatic missions. During in China, they wrote down traveling notes or letters back to Europe, which directly transmitted the Chinese knowledge to Europe. The representatives of them are John Plano Carpini, William Rubruquis, John Monte Corvino etc. In addition, businessmen from Europe coming to China also introduced the grandeur of China to Europe, such as the most well known of them is Marco Polo. The detailed information about them and their writings can be found in Henry Yule, *Cathay and the way thither: being a collection of medieval notices of China,* 4 vols., London: Hakluyr Society 1913.

碑) in the 1620s proves that Christianity existed in ancient China at least by the seventh century[21]. The evidence from the Nestorian Stele motivated the Jesuits to continue their career in China. As the first Europeans who got the information of the stele, the Jesuits proceeded to elaborate it and also were the first to translate it and to introduce it to Europe. The writings of the Jesuits in China highly influenced European scholars, and it is on account of this that studying China became fashionable in the 18th century in Europe[22]. However, after the event of the Chinese Rites controversy[23], many missionaries, including the Jesuits, were expelled from China. This fact considerably decreased communications between Europe and China for a period of almost 100 years.

Starting at the end of the 19th century, with China's reopening, other Christian missionaries came back to China again. These missionaries continued the Jesuit's research on the relations between Europe and China. At the sane time, in addition to research dealing with religion, quite a number of sinologists from Western countries and Japan also joined in these activities, devoting a large amount of energy and time to study the field of European-Chinese relations, in particular the issues related to Da-qin and Fu-lin[24].

Through hundreds of years of research, the studies on the Greco-Roman world with China have reached a high level, and many publications can be found everywhere. This result reflects the high concern of scholars for communications between the West and the East. Nowadays, following the quick development of globalization, China is

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[21] The study on the "Nestorian Stele" has arrived at a very high level since its discovery, and a long bibliography can be given. For the achievements on it, see P. Y. Saeki (1916, reprinted 1928); Qian-zhi Zhu (1993); Wu-shu Lin (2003); M. Kordosis (2008).

[22] For the Jesuits in China and their contributions to Sinology, see David E. Mungello (1989); (2005).

[23] The Chinese Rites Controversy was a dispute among Roman Catholic missionaries over the religiosity of Confucianism and Chinese rituals during the 17th and 18th centuries. The result of this event was the expulsion of the European missionaries from China and the suspension of the relation between Europe and China, see The Chinese Rites Controversy: A Long Lasting Controversy in Sino-Western Cultural History by Paul Rule, PhD, http://usf.usfca.edu/pac_rim/new/research/pacrimreport/pacrimreport32.html, 30-12-2014.

[24] The details of the relative research will be presented in the literature review of this dissertation.

inevitably getting involved in international relations. Under these circumstances, for both Western countries and China, how to communicate with each other on an international level is a vital question that needs prompt answers. Since there are frequent and close communications between Europe and China today, these relations constitute a prominent issue from the perspective of economy, culture, politics, and diplomacy[25]. The relations between the Roman empire and ancient China, as an early example for communications between the West and East, play a key role in European-Chinese relations. A better understanding of these relations in history will be of crucial importance for contemporary international relations. Therefore, based on the contributions of the previous researchers and the valuable ancient Chinese literature, this dissertation will deal with the relations between the Roman empire and ancient China, with a focus on the study of the image of the Roman empire (Da-qin) in ancient Chinese literature. Compared with Western sources, with the help of Chinese sources, the study will attempt to reconstruct the image, analyze the influential factors of the image's construction, and examine its significance for contemporary international relations, especially for the improvement of contemporary European-Chinese relations.

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[25] The communication and cooperation between Europe and China is an attracting issue and increasingly deepening, the economic relation is no wonder at the first position. According to the news, "the European Union and China are two of the biggest traders in the world. China is now the EU's second trading partner behind the United States and the EU is China's biggest trading partner". See http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/china/, 07-01-2015.

CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW, BASIC TERMS, AND METHODOLOGY

The Roman and ancient Chinese empires were two of the most brilliant civilizations in world history. As simultaneously standing on either side of the Eurasian Steppe, their influence through political and economic systems, culture, religions, etc. comprises the basis of modern European civilization and Eastern Asian civilization; at the same time, through the connection of the extremely significant Silk Road, the two empires achieved long-term communications through caravans, diplomatic missions, and religious missions. As found through archaeological evidence, this communication was of great significance for interaction between Europe and Asia. In consideration of the historical and practical significance of Greco-Roman and Chinese relations, a number of scholars, together with the pioneers of the Jesuit researchers and sinologists, devoted themselves to this research for centuries. Compared with Western historical writings, Chinese historical writings have a much steadier and longer history, and abundant information on alien regions is kept in Chinese literature. Since the Roman empire and its relations with ancient China comprise no small part of Chinese sources dealing with foreign peoples, they became the main subject of European-Chinese research.

1.1 Literature review

Beginning with the discovery and first research of the Nestorian Stele, the study of Roman-Chinese relations has a nearly four hundred year-old history. Thousands of works have been done on a number of issues related to Da-qin (Roman empire) in Chinese sources, in different areas with different methods, and consequently, a number of valuable conclusions have been drawn. The scholars are from different countries and regions, and also from different disciplines, but the most influential ones are the sinologists in the areas of history and archaeology. The pioneers were from Europe, but later on Chinese and Japanese scholars also contributed in great part to the research. In this part, the review will be divided into the contribution of Western scholars and of Chinese scholars, for convenience.

1.1.1 Contributions by foreign scholars

Though the earliest study related to Da-qin can be traced back to the discovery of the Nestorian Stele in the 17th century, its more systematic study began in the 19th century. The first noticeable work is *Cathay and the way thither,* by Sir Henry Yule. It is the first large collection of sources gathered from Europe and China that retraces their earlier relations. Yule did not only provide us with the sources, but also with his relatively precise commentaries on them. It was first published with two volumes in 1866, and republished with the revision of Henri Cordier in four volumes during 1913 to 1915[26]. Since its publication, this work has been widely used and highly praised in academic circles, "All agree in considering it as the indispensable guide of all those interested in the historical geography nor only of China, not only of Central Asia, but also of Asia at large… At the time of its appearance, it included well nigh all that was then known regarding the history of the East."[27] In the second part of the first volume, Yule collected and commented on the Chinese sources related to the Roman empire, which was named Da-qin and Fu-lin. His general idea on the mutual understandings of the two civilizations is as follows: "In all these narratives we can distinguish many analogies between the fragmentary views of Ta-Ts'in and Fu-lin, expressed in the Far East, and those of the great Eastern civilization under the names of Sinae and Seres held in the West. In both we see the same uncertainty in degree as to the exact position, the same application of facts belonging to the nearer skirts of the half-seen empire as descriptive of the whole."[28] This viewpoint of Yule reflects the basic characteristics of Chinese sources on Da-qin and Fu-lin. This work of Yule is no doubt the first comprehensive study on the relations between Europe and China, and particularly, on the information concerning the Roman empire and China and their relations with each other. Some views in this work are still accepted by modern sinologists.

Another long-going popular monograph on the Chinese sources recording the Roman

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[26] Henry Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither: being a collection of medieval notices of China,* 4 vols., Henri Cordier revised, second edition, London 1913-1915.

[27] Henry Yule (1915), p. xii.

[28] Henry Yule (1915), p. 49.

empire was published in 1885: *China and the Roman Orient* by Friedrich Hirth. Compared with the *Cathay and the way thither*, this work, published almost two decades later, contains much more Chinese texts recording information on the Roman empire (such as the information on Li-xuan, Da-qin and Fu-lin). In the work, Friedrich Hirth provides relatively accurate English translations of the original Chinese texts; in addition, his extended commentary won him more reputation. His main contribution in the work is that he rejects the view that Da-qin (later with the name Fu-lin) is the Roman empire and its capital of Rome, but approves that Da-qin is the Eastern part of the Roman empire, which refers more in particular to Syria, Egypt and Asia Minor.[29] Though he partly modified this view after more than two decades,[30] it also got strong support among sinologists[31]. Since its publication, *China and the Roman Orient* has been a prominent masterpiece for Roman-Chinese studies. Although today many mistakes in the translation and textual research can be found in the work, it is still a basic and useful reference monograph on the relations of the Roman empire and China, especially for its topographical observations, which are still relevant and valuable nowadays. It is regarded as the beginning of sound research on the Roman empire in Chinese sources.

French scholars Edouard Chavannes and Paul Pelliot[32] are world renowned for their studies on Central Asia and the Far East, and are also great contributors to the study of European-Chinese relations. Quite a number of their studies concern the information on the Roman empire written in Chinese sources. Edouard Chavannes is known for his research on the geography of Central Asia and his translations of ancient Chinese

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[29] Hirth (1885), p. vi.

[30] Hirth's (1909, p.2) modified view is that "Ta-ts'in is the Roman empire with all its grandeur emanating from Rome, its capital; but the detail placed on records in the contemporaneous Chinese texts is confined to its Asiatic provinces, for which reason not Rome, but Antioch is described as the capital city. Its relations to China were of a commercial kind. Fu-lin is the eastern empire of Byzantium, but as in the case of Ta-ts'in, the Chinese accounts are confined to certain Asiatic portions of it, and its relations to China were chiefly ecclesiastical." He said that his view is based on the study of the Fu-lin chapters in Chinese Standard Histories.

[31] M. Kordosis (1991a), p. 160.

[32] For the details of the publications of E. Chavannes and P. Pelliot, see the bibliography of Leslie, D. D., and K. H. J. Gardiner, *The Roman Empire in Chinese sources*, Rome: Department of Oriental Studies, University of Rome 1996, pp. 349-374.

texts on the subject[33]. He also studied the names of the key sites in Chinese sources related to the Roman empire, which provided valuable inspiration to later scholars. As a student of E. Chavannes, P. Pelliot inherited his teacher's career, but went further. In addition to his abundant studies on Central Asia and Chinese Western Regions, he has discussed the relation between Li-xuan and Da-qin[34]. His most important theory that Fu-lin=From=Rome[35] has been accepted unanimously and has promoted the study of recordings on the Roman empire in Chinese sources.[36]

Japanese Sinology started relatively late compared with that of Europe. Nevertheless, because of its advantage of close-knitted relations with China, it developed very quickly and produced a number of excellent sinologists, many of whom also devoted themselves to Greco-Roman and Chinese relations. Among them, the best known is Shiratori Kurakichi. As the founder of the School of East Asian History in Tokyo, Japan, he was concentrating on the research of Western Regions for a long time. As part of his research, in the 1920s and 1930s, he published a series of influential articles on the topics concerning Da-qin and Fu-lin that were recorded in Chinese sources.[37] The most debated of his conclusions is his utopian theory. He assumes that "The Chinese of the Later Han period recognized the Roman Orient under the name of Ta-ch'in. The tendency, however, to idealize the state, discernible in the earliest description of it, grew ever more conspicuous with the lapse of time, until at last, in the epoch of the Northern and Southern Dynasties, we found it converted into a pure

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[33] He translated many Chinese sources, such as *Shi-ji*, *Xi-rong-zhuan of Wei-lue*, part of *Hou-han-shu*, and his representative work on Central Asia is "Documents sur les Tou-kiue (Turcs) Occidentaux".

[34] P. Pelliot, "Mélanges: Li-Kien, autre nom du Ta-Ts'in", *T'oung Pao* 16 (1915), pp. 690-691.

[35] P. Pelliot, "Sur l'origine du nom Fou-lin", *JA* der. 11, vol. 3 (1914), pp. 497-500. This view nowadays is regarded as the standard explanation to the meanings of Fu-lin.

[36] For the detailed bibliographies of P. Pelliot see D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner (1996), p. 360.

[37] Shiratori Kurakichi's four articles have been translated into English and republished in *Memoires of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, vol. 15, Tokyo, 1956: "A Study on T'ao-chih" [條支], pp. 1-23; "Chinese ideas Reflected in the Ta-ch'in", Accounts, pp. 25-72; "The Geography of the Western Region Studied on the Basis of the Ta-ch'in Accounts", pp. 73-163; "A New Attempt at the Solution of the Fu-lin Problem", pp. 165-329.

utopia. Ta-ch'in was no longer a real state, but a mere conception in the Chinese mind".[38] Even though his theory of utopia was not shared by all scholars[39], it has to be said that his research caused scholars to rethink the subject.

After decades of quiet, the Roman-Chinese relations became once more a subject of interest for Western scholars. Greek scholar M. Kordosis first became attracted to this topic in the 1980s. He has studied widely issues concerning the interactions between the Greco-Roman and Chinese worlds and published dozens of articles and monographs[40] which have been acknowledged for their great value.[41] M. Kordosis'

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[38] Shiratori (1956), p. 196.

[39] M. Kordosis (1991a, pp. 161-177) does not support the utopia theory..

[40] "China and the Greek World. An Introduction to Greek-Chinese Studies with Special Reference to the Chinese Sources. I. Hellenistic -Roman-Early Byzantine Period (2nd c. B.C.-6th c. A.D.)", *Graecoindica-Graecoserica* 02 1991, pp. 143-253; «Από την Κίνα στο Βυζάντιο. Οι κινεζικές πηγές», *Πρακτικά Β' Διεθνούς Συμποσίου «Η επικοινωνία στο Βυζάντιο»*, Αθήνα 1993, pp. 551-564; "The Name Fu-lin (=Romans)", *Ιστορικογεωγραφικά* 4 (1994), pp. 171-178; M. Kordosis, «Πάλι περί Ta-Ch'in και Yavana». *Ιστορικογεωγραφικά* 4 (1994), pp. 193-198; "China and the Greek World. An Introduction to Greek-Chinese Studies with Special Reference to the Chinese Sources". Bibliography, *Ιστορικογεωγραφικά* 4 (1994), pp. 251-300; «Πρεσβείες μεταξύ Fu-lin (Βυζαντίου) και Κίνας κατά τη διάρκεια του Μεσαίωνα και η ιστορικογεωγραφική πραγματικότητα», *Δωδώνη* 23/1 (1994), pp. 111-260; "The Sea route from China to Ta-ch'in (Roman-Early Byzantine State) according to the Chinese Sources", *Byzantinische Forschungen*, Amsterdam 1999, pp. 47-54; "Byzantine Relations with China", Lectures I (Winter 1996-Spring 1997), Friends of the Byzantine Museum of Ioannina, Ioannina 2000, pp. 31-55; "China and the West: The silk route", *Πρακτικά Sixth International Congers of Graeco-Oriental Studies*, Nicosie 2000, pp. 233-241; *Το Βυζάντιο και ο δρόμος προς την Ανατολή*, Αθήνα 2002; «Συμβολή των κινεζικών πηγών στη μελέτη τριών θεμάτων που αφορούν στο Βυζάντιο και κατ' επέκτασιν στη Δύση...», *Ιστορικογεωγραφικά* 10 (2004), pp. 237-253; *T'ang China, the Chinese Nestorian Church and "Heretical" Byzantium (A.D. 618-845)*, Ioannina 2008; «Βυζάντιο και Κίνα των T'ang. Γεγονότα και συμπτώσεις», *Πρακτικά Α' Συνεδρίου Σινο-ελληνικών Σπουδών*, Ιωάννινα 2008, pp. 235-252 etc.

[41] See the reviews on M. Kordosis' works: F.G. Naerebout, "Review: China and the Greek world…Thessaloniki 1992", *Mnemosyne* volume 49 Issue 3 (1996), pp. 373 − 377; Samuel N. C. Lieu, "Review: M. Kordosis: T'ang China, The Chinese Nestorian Church and "Heretical" Byzantium. Ioannina, 2008", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, volume 73 Issue 3 (2010), pp. 559-562; Klaus Peter Todt, "Tang China, the Chinese Nestorian Church and "Heretical" Byzantium (AD 618–845)", *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 61 (2011), pp. 268-269; Peter Schreiner, "Tang China, the Chinese Nestorian Church and "Heretical" Byzantium (AD 618–845)", *Byzantinische*

studies are characterized by a combination of different sources. As a Greek scholar, Kordosis is familiar with the sources in Greek and Latin, and he also understands the limitation of these sources in respect to the orient; during his research, he finds that the sources from Armenia, Syria and India are also helpful to the study of the relations between the Greco-Roman and Chinese worlds; and he especially realizes the accuracy of the Chinese sources on Da-qin and Fu-lin. Hence, based on the comparison of the different sources, many of his conclusions are innovative and offer us new perspectives. On agreeing with Hirth that Da-qin and Fu-lin are the Roman Orient, his first contribution to the subject is that he believes the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers should be the Western Sea before arriving at the Roman empire (Da-qin) rather than the Persian Gulf.[42] His conclusion is not only based on topographical, but also historical, terminological and literary arguments, the latter of which were done through a comparison of Chinese and Western texts, mainly Strabo, Pliny the Elder, Ammianus Marcellinus and Procopius. Additionally, by combining the history of Hellenistic Kingdoms in Central Asia, Chinese texts on Da-qin, and Central Asian sources, he also puts forward the theory of Greek=Yavana=Da-qin[43], which he believes is significant for Greco-Oriental studies.

At the same time, Australian sinologists D. D. Leslie and K. H. J. Gardiner were also devoted to the study of Da-qin. Since the first co-published article "Chinese Knowledge of Western Asia during the Han"[44], they have been concentrating on this research. In 1996, on the basis of the aforesaid article, a monumental monograph *The Roman Empire in Chinese Sources*[45] was published by them. Compared with the previous studies on Da-qin, this work collects the most comprehensive Chinese texts from the second century BCE until the 12th century CE concerning the Roman empire under the name of Da-qin. Referring to the previous studies with an analysis of the texts' contents, the two authors provide a wide array of historical, geographical, and linguistic material, including sound references on Da-qin and commentaries. This

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Zeitschrift, 106 (2013), pp. 207-210.

[42] M. Kordosis (1991a), pp. 144, 181-194.

[43] M. Kordosis (1991a), pp. 194-205.

[44] D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner, "Chinese Knowledge of Western Asia during the Han", *T'oung Pao* 68 (1982), pp. 254-308.

[45] D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner, *The Roman Empire in Chinese Sources*, Rome: Department of Oriental Studies, University of Rome 1996, pp 420.

work is similar to the one of Hirth. Comparing the two studies, it can be noticed that though the latter does not include the original Chinese texts, it presents an introduction to each text, and at the same time reflects the studies of their predecessors, even including some achievements of Chinese scholars. Moreover, it revises and updates the proposals of the proceedings. The conclusions of this work do not agree with Hirth's theory claiming that Da-qin stands for the Roman Orient or especially Syria, but that it represents the whole Roman empire with Rome as its Capital[46]. Though it builds upon the study of Hirth, Pulleybank claimed that "*The Roman empire in Chinese Sources* would do little more than Hirth, but nevertheless provided an alternative interpretation, with its corresponding set of assumptions and linguistic analyses."[47]

Recently another new monograph on Chinese texts related to our subject was put forward by J. E. Hill. For the first time he makes a complete English translation of the *Hou-han-shu* with rigorous examination in *Through the Jade Gate to Rome: A Study of the Silk Routes during the Later Han Dynasty 1st to 2nd Centuries CE*[48]. Thanks to reviews on the internet, it should be considered quite valuable. Hill also put another Chinese text *Wei-lue* for review on the internet, which is also the core source for Da-qin. Though it has not yet been published, the internet version can be found online. Krisztina Hoppal, a young Hungarian scholar who has good experience studying in China, published an essay entitled "The Roman Empire according to the Ancient Chinese Sources"[49] in 2011. In this article, with the help of the five basic Chinese annuals (*Hou-han-shu*, *Wei-lue*, *Jin-shu*, *Wei-shu*, *and Song-shu*) related to the Roman empire, through topics, she reexamined the information on the Roman empire recorded in these sources. Indeed, her study sufficiently referred to both her predecessors' research conclusions and to the Western sources, and while it is an excellent attempt on the issue, it is still a preliminary study.

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[46] D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner (1996), p. 279.

[47] E. G. Pulleybank (1999), p. 72.

[48] J. E. Hill, *Through the Jade Gate to Rome: A Study of the Silk Routes during the Later Han Dynasty 1st to 2nd Centuries CE- An Annotated Translation of the Chronicle on the 'Western Regions' in the Hou Han-shu*. Lexington 2009.

[49] Krisztina Hoppal, "The Roman Empire according to the Ancient Chinese Sources", *Acta Ant. Hung*. 51 (2011), pp. 263–305, DOI: 10.1556/AAnt.51.2011.3–4.5.

Except for the above main researchers on the subject of the Roman empire in Chinese sources and their relations, some other influential and valuable studies deserve to be mentioned. These studies mainly focus on thematic research, shedding a new light on different aspects of the field. These researchers are H. J. Allen[50], A. Hermann[51], P. Boodberg[52], Miyazaki Ichisada[53], Fujita Toyohachi[54], E. H. Schafer[55], J. Needham[56], Y. Harada[57], J. Thorley[58], M. G. Raschke[59], E.G. Pulleyblank[60]. Some of their conclusions significantly promoted the progress of the study on Da-qin and its relations with China.[61]

Apart from the thematic studies, some general studies also shed light on the topic. Published in 1931, C. F. Hudson's monograph *Europe & China*[62] has been regarded as a representative work for the study of European-Chinese relations. It not only uses the achievements of almost all the Western scholars who had done previous research

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[50] H. J. Allen, "Where Was Ta-ts'in?", *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 21 (1886), pp. 91-97.

[51] A. Hermann, "Die Lage des Lands Ta Ts'in", *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift* 14 (1927/28), pp. 196-202.

[52] P. Boodberg, "Two notes on the History of the Chinese Frontier", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 44 (1936), 283-307.

[53] Miyazaki Ichisada, "Taiozhi, Da-qin and the Western Sea" [條枝と大秦と西海], *Shilin* 24~1 (1939), pp. 55-86.

[54] Fujita Toyohachi, "Li-xuan and Da-qin" [黎軒と大秦]. In *Historical studies on East–West contacts: The Western Regions* [東西交渉史の研究·西域篇], Tokyo: 荻原星文館 1943, pp. 466-497.

[55] E.H. Schafer, "The Pearl Fisheries of Ho-p'u", *JAOS* 72 (1952), pp. 155–168; *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of T'ang Exotics*, Los Angeles 1963.

[56] J. Needham, *Science and Civilization in China, Vol.1*, Cambridge 1961.

[57] Y. Harada, East and West (II), *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 29 (1971), pp. 57-79.

[58] J. Thorley, "The Silk Trade between China and the Roman Empire at its height, circa A. D. 90-130", *Greece and Rome* 2.18 (1971), pp. 71-80.

[59] M. G. Raschke, "New Studies in Roman Commerce with the East", *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II. 9.2 (1978), pp. 604-1233.

[60] E. G. Pulleyblank, "The Roman Empire as known to Han China", *JAOS* 119.1 (1999), pp. 71-79.

[61] M. Kordosis (1994, p. 251 ff) published a fully bibliography on the subject, which was updated until 1994. .

[62] C. F. Hudson, *Europe & China: A Survey of their Relations from the earliest times to 1800*, London: Edward Arnold & Co. 1931.

on the history of communication between Europe and China, but also provides special views on key issues. For instance, *Rome and China*[63]*,* by Frederick J. Teggart, is a much more special monograph than others. By comparing the events happening simultaneously in the two empires, the author found that the events taking place on each side were often affected by the actions taken by the other. Thus, he concludes that there existed complex political relations in the communications between the West and the East, rather than mere trade activities.

Nowadays, as the world is becoming more globalized, and therefore allows for quicker interaction, the differences, similarities and the interactions among civilizations are increasingly attracting the attention of scholars. In this context, comparative study has become highly popular in international academic circles, in particular the comparative study between the Roman empire and China. *The Stanford Ancient Chinese and Mediterranean Empires: Comparative History Project*[64] gives us a proper example of the comparative perspective, led by Walter Scheidel. According to the introduction and bibliography of this project, it can be found that a number of works on the comparative study of the Roman empire and China have been made. The main goal of this project is to establish a conceptual framework for the comparative analysis of ancient Mediterranean and Chinese empires, and to design a set of central questions. Apart from that, an issue named *Graecoindica-Graecoserica* in the journal of *Ιστορικογεωγραφικά* edited by M. Kordosis, also has published quite number of articles on the relations of the Greek world with the Far East in comparative perspective, and its influence has been being recognized.

1.1.2 Contributions by Chinese scholars

Though Da-qin had made its appearance in Chinese sources long ago (since Gan Ying's mission in the year 97), and had been noticed by generations of historians, compared to the European scholars, its systematic study in China did not start earlier than the 1930s. Nevertheless, through the endeavor of Chinese scholars, plenty of

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[63] Frederick J. Teggart, *Rome and China: A Study of Correlations in Historical Events*, Greenwood Pub Group 1983.

[64] The Stanford Ancient Chinese and Mediterranean Empires: Comparative History Project, http://web.stanford.edu/~scheidel/acme.htm, 16-12-2014.

publications have been done. Many valuable conclusions also have been drawn which, although helpful, for a number of reasons did not receive enough attention from the International academic circle[65]. These Chinese scholars on the study can be divided into two groups: scholars on the relations of Europe and China, and Byzantinists.

In 1930, Zhang Xing-lang published his monumental work *Collection of the Historical Sources on the Sino-West relation*[66] in six volumes. This work embraces nearly all the Chinese sources on the Sino-West relation at hand. In the 1st volume *Communications between Ancient China and Europe*, the records of Da-qin and Fu-lin were extracted and compiled with textual criticisms and explanations. This work also introduced, referred to and commented on the latest research from contemporary Western scholars, such as Henry Yule, Laufer, and Hirth etc; among them, he mainly references the works of Henry Yule[67]. This volume is still the main work being quoted by Chinese scholars on the study of Roman-Chinese relations. In 1934, another great work on the relations of China and the West was published by Xiang Da. The work is titled *The History of Communication of Sino-West*[68], and it mainly summarizes the relations between the Chinese and the Roman empire in Chinese sources from the second century BCE until the sixth century CE. In 1935, Feng Cheng-jun, in his "Examination of the Tablet of Nestorians"[69], enclosed an article on the textual research of Da-qin. After an examination of a series of studies conducted by different scholars, he concludes that Da-qin is the Roman empire.

Yang Xian-yi[70] is a well-known Chinese translator who also had written articles[71]

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[65] Averil Cameron also expressed the same view in a lecture given in the Academy of Chinese Social Science in 2010, http://whis.cssn.cn/sjs/sjs_xsbgt/201312/t20131217_910390.shtml, 30-04-2014.

[66] Xing-lang Zhang, *Collection of the Historical Sources on the Communication of Sino-West* [Zhongxi jiaotong shiliao huibian], Shanghai 1930.

[67] In the article "Zhang Xing-lang and 'Collection of the Historical Sources on the Sino-West relation'", Cai-bo Xiu (2010, pp. 96-104) analyzes in detail the references to Western scholars by Zhang Xing-lang in his multi-volume work.

[68] Da Xiang, *The History of Communication of Sino-West* [Zhongxi jiaotong shi], Shanghai: Zhonghua Book Company 1934.

[69] Cheng-jun Feng, *On the Stele of Nestorians* [Jingjiaobei kao], Shanghai: The Commercial Press 1935.

[70] He was a modern Chinese translator, known for rendering many ancient and a few modern

related to information on the Roman empire in Chinese sources in the 1940s. In these articles, through exploring the routes to Da-qin, different names of Da-qin, its institutions and customs, he holds the opinion that Da-qin points to Greece at the beginning, but later on to the eastern Roman empire with the capital in Constantinople. He also points out that Chinese sources are more reliable than sources from the west which is against the opinion of Shiratori. Another well--known historian, Cen Zhong-mian, in 1958 explained his viewpoint on Li-xuan, Da-qin and Fu-lin[72] from an etymological point of view. He points out that Li-xuan, Da-qin and Fu-lin generally all point to the West or Western Regions, but that they differ in extent. At the beginning they would designate Rome, later on they point to the eastern Roman empire, or Syria.

Father Fang Hao who was a scholar from Taiwan, in 1987, has published his *The History of Communication of Sino-West*[73]. It is regarded as the first most integrated work on communication between China and the West. In this general historical work, in accordance with the sequence of Chinese dynasties, he describes the Sino-West relationship. In this book, he gives attention to the relations between Han China and Da-qin, especially on the examination of the name of Da-qin, the record of Da-qin in *Hou-han-shu*, business, dances from the Roman empire in China and so on, some of his ideas deserve to be noticed. Hsing I-tien, a contemporary Taiwan specialist in the comparative history of the Han China and Roman empires, since finishing his PhD dissertation "Roman and China: The Role of the Armies in the Imperial Succession: A Comparative Study" at the University of Hawaii in 1980, has paid close attention to the comparison of the Roman empire and China[74], and his views through the

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Chinese classics into English, including *Dream of the Red Chamber* (Hong-lou-meng).

[71] Xian-yi Yang, "On the route to Da-qin" [Da-qin daoli kao], pp. 146-150, "On the Different Names of Da-qin" [(Da-qin yiming kao], pp. 151-153, "On the Institutions and Customs of Da-qin" [Da-qin guo de zhidu yu fengsu], pp. 154-156, in *Yiyu oushi*, Jinan: Shandong Pictorial Publishing House 2006.

[72] Zhong-mian Cen, On the Etymology and Extent of Li-xuan, Da-qin and Fu-lin [Li-xuan, Da-qin yu Fu-lin yuyi ji fanwei], in *On the Historical Sources of Western Turks* [Xitujue shiliao buque ji kaozheng], Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 1958, pp. 223-233.

[73] Hao Fang, *History of Sino-West Relations* [Zhongxi jiaotong shi], Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House 1987.

[74] I-tien Hsing, "Reexamination of the Relation between Han China and Roman: Review of 'New Studies in Roman Commerce with the East'" [Handai zhongguo yu luoma guanxi zai

comparative perspective give us significant enlightenment.

Yu Tai-shan from the Institute of History in the Chinese Academy of Social Science has been devoting himself to the research of the Sino-West relations for thirty years. Most of his works focuses on the research of geography, ethnicity, and Kingdoms in Western Regions recorded by Chinese sources, their translations and textual research of the sources. In *the Records of the Roman Empire in Chinese Sources*[75], he collects information related to the Roman empire from 43 works, including official annals, private writings, novels and Buddhist texts, which are written from the second century BCE until the eighth century CE. In the same work, he also identifies the names of places mentioned in the texts. Most of his remaining articles on the Roman empire and its relationship with China have been included in the monograph "The Research of the Relation between the Ancient Mediterranean Sea and China"[76].

The Byzantinists in China are the new generation who grew up together in new China (the PRC), and most of whose educational background includes overseas education. Accordingly, they have an international view on the relations of the West and China. A number of contributions have been made by them to the study of the Roman empire and its relations with China through Chinese sources (some of them referring to Western sources). Yet, taking into consideration their interests, the majority of their studies give more emphasis on the relations between China and the eastern Roman

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xingcha-laxike zhu <luoma dongfang maoyi xintan> duji], *Hanxue yanjiu* 03 no.1 (1985), pp. 331-341; "Relations between Han China and the Roman Empire Revisited (1985-95)" [Handai zhongguo yu luoma guanxi de zai jiantao (1985-95)], *Hanxue yanjiu* 15.1 (1997), pp. 1-31. Reprinted in *Xueshu jilin*, Shanghai: The Far East Book Co., Ltd 1998. 12, pp. 169-202; "Restudy the Questions of Liqian city of Romans from Wooden strips of Han Dynasty and the Roman sources" [Cong jinguan, xuanquanzhi hanjian he luoma shiliao zaitan suowei luomaren jianli lixuancheng de wenti], *Disquisitions on the Past & Present* 13 (2005), pp. 49-72.

[75] Tai-shan Yu, "The Records of the Roman Empire in Chinese Sources" [Hanwen shiji youguan luoma diguo de jizai], *Journal of Literature and History* 71 (2005), pp. 31-96.

[76] Tai-shan Yu, *The Research of the Relation between Ancient Mediterranean Sea and China* [Gudai dizhonghai he zhongguo guanxi shi yanjiu], Beijing: The Commercial Press 2012; most of his research articles on the same topic are republished in "China and the Ancient Mediterranean World: A Survey of Ancient Chinese Sources", *Sino-Platonic Papers*, Number 242 November (2013), pp. 1-268+v.

empire or the Byzantine empire which is preferred by them. However, many valuable studies on early relations have also been analyzed. Xu Jia-ling, Chen Zhi-qiang, Zhang Xu-shan and Lin Ying are the representatives of this group. In the article "Notice of Roman-Byzantine Empire World in Ancient Chinese Sources"[77] submitted to the 1st International Congress for Sino-Greek Studies, Xu Jia-ling emphasizes the comprehensive information in Chinese sources on the whole Roman empire (including the early Roman empire and the Byzantine empire). She concisely summarizes the Chinese sources containing the Roman information and divides them into three parts, based on the date of their compilation. She pays attention to the key historical characters and events in the sources regarding the communications between the Byzantine empire and China. In the last part, she reviews the key issues related to the names of the early Roman empire and Byzantine empire, such as Da-qin, Li-xuan, and Fu-lin. In all, her research outlines the basic studies on the relationship between the Roman empire and ancient China, in order to attract more attention from the West to this topic.

Chen Zhi-qiang and Zhang Xu-shan all finished their PhD dissertations in Greece (in Thessaloniki and Ioannina respectively), focusing on the relations between China and the Byzantine empire. During his PhD study in Greece, Chen Zhi-qiang published several articles on the geography and the conception of Da-qin in Chinese sources[78], as well as a comprehensive monograph on the translation of Chinese sources recording information on the Roman empire.[79] His preliminary studies and translated sources, no doubt, promoted Roman-Chinese studies in Greece. His dissertation titled "Study on the History of Byzantine-Chinese Relations" (Μελέτη της ιστορίας των

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[77] Jia-ling Xu, "Notice of the Roman-Byzantine Empire World in Ancient Chinese Sources", *Proceedings of the 1ˢᵗ International Congress for Sino-Greek Studies*, Ioannina 2008, pp. 225-234.

[78] Zhi-qiang Chen, "The Conception of Ta-ts'in in Ancient and Medieval Chinese Books", *Βυζαντιακά* 13 (1993), pp. 119-150; «Οι γεωγραφικές πληροφορίες για το Ta-ts'in στις κινεζικές πηγές», «Οι χερσαίοι δρόμοι επικοινωνίας μεταξύ της Κίνας και του Βυζαντίου», *Ιστορικογεωγραφικά* 4 (1994), pp. 123-148, 149-164; *Μελέτη της ιστορίας των Βυζαντινό-κινεζικών σχέσεων* (4ος—15ος), Διδακτορική διατριβή, Θεσσαλονίκη 1994.

[79] "The Sources of the Roman-Greek World in Ancient and Medieval Chinese texts", *Ιστορικογεωγραφικά* 10 (2004), pp. 255-434. This collection of Chinese sources on Da-qin and Fu-lin is parallel with the work of Hirth but adding more texts and correcting the mistakes of English translations in the previous one.

Βυζαντινό-Κινεζικών σχέσεων), researches the relationships between the eastern Roman empire and ancient China from the fourth century to the 15th century. In his dissertation, he identifies the state Da-qin (or Fu-lin) mentioned by Chinese writers with the early Roman and Byzantine empire, through comparing both the early Western, the Byzantine and Chinese sources. Through tracing the history of Byzantine-Chinese relations, the trade routes between them, and the 24 diplomatic and commercial exchanges between Da-qin (Fu-lin) and China that took place from the year 327 to 1423, he concludes that there were continuous, and at times frequent, relations between China and Byzantium. It has to be stressed that his study is very fertile and has definitely contributed the study of the relations between the Byzantine empire and China. Nevertheless, because of the long time span which it covers and the vast amount of topics it discusses, many issues have not been deeply analyzed and need further attention.

Having similar experience and interests with Chen Zhi-qiang, Zhang Xu-shan also paid attention to communications between the Greco-Roman world and China. The dissertation of Zhang Xu-shan is more specific compared to that of Chen Zhi-qiang. It concentrates on the relations between China and the Byzantine empire during the sixth and the seventh centuries CE. First, he presents Byzantine knowledge of China and silk trade from four Byzantine writers: Cosmas Indicopleustes, Procopius of Caesarea, Menander Protector and Theophylactus Simocatta. He proceeds to sketch out Chinese-Byzantine relations based on Chinese sources, giving special attention to Byzantine-Chinese exchanges in techniques and commodities. Finally, the middlemen and their role in the Byzantine-Chinese relations are also surveyed. He concludes that, on the one hand, although in the fifth and the sixth centuries Byzantine-Chinese relations were still indirect and tentative, in the seventh and the eighth centuries, direct relation appeared; during this time, a large quantity of silk was exported from China to the West, mainly to Byzantium. However, as the author said, because of the lack of Chinese sources in Greece at that time (1998), the study was achieved mainly using Byzantine sources, and even though it had made progress compared with the earlier studies, it still needs to be supported by more Chinese sources. This regret was expressed when the dissertation was republished as a monograph in Chinese with a major supplement in 2012. The monograph is divided into three main parts: China and objects in Byzantine historical sources, the Byzantine empire and its objects in

Chinese historical sources, and intermediaries in the Byzantine-Chinese relations. Obviously, the structure of the monograph is much more systematic than the dissertation. It enriches the Byzantine information using Chinese sources, and separates it as a single part of the study. The author's recent in depth research on some key issues are also included, such as the spread of silk, Taugast in Simocatta, the Nestorians in China, etc. As a full-scale piece of research, it is certain that this monograph is the greatest achievement among Byzantine-Chinese studies. The relations between the early Roman empire and China are also the main research subject of Zhang Xu-shan. He has summarized and reviewed the research on the name of the early Roman empire in Chinese sources, analyzed the respective approaches of the two great powers through the Silk Road, and examined the information about the empire in Chinese sources and the question of the Roman legion.[80]

Though Lin Ying is also a Byzantinist, she inclines more on Chinese sources and the archaeological findings excavated in China. Her dissertation "Fu-lin in Tang China" is the first influential research on Byzantium from a fully Chinese perspective. She sets the study in the spacial and temporal context surrounding the knowledge of Byzantium that reached China. Combining the written sources with the objects discovered in China (the Byzantine garments, images, and coins), a comprehensive image of the Byzantium-China relationship is vividly presented in her research. In addition, she also did much work on the early relations between the Roman empire

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[80] Xu-shan Zhang, "China and the Graeco-Roman World: their approaches to each other through the silk road before the 3rd century AD", *Journal of Oriental and African Studies* 9 (1997-1998), pp. 19-28; "Review on Studies of Li-kan and Ta-chin", *Ιστορικογεωγραφικά* 4 (1994), pp. 107-122; "On the Question of 'Roman Captures' in China" [Zhongguo jingnei de luoma zhanfu wenti jianping],*Trends of Recent Researches on the History of China* 3 (2000), pp. 10-16; "The Roman Empire's Exploration toward the Orient by Sea" [Luoma diguo yan hailu xiang dongfang de tansuo], *Journal of Historical Science* 1 (2001), pp. 87-92. "On the Greek Legend heard by Gan Ying" [Gan Ying xishi Da-qin huowen xilachuanshuo kao], *Journal of Historical Science* 12 (2003), pp. 118-120; "Reflection on the Arrival of the Business Group of 100 CE to China" [Guanyu "gongyuan 100 nian luoma shangtuan daoda zhongguo" wenti de yidian sikao], *World History* 2 (2004), pp. 111-114; "Review on the Research of Li-xuan and Da-qin in recent One Hundred Years" [Jinbainianlai Li-xuan, Da-qin wenti yanjiu zongshu], *Trends of Recent Researches on the History of China* 3 (2005), pp. 11-19.

and China.[81] In the article "Da-qin: the Image of the Roman Empire in Chinese Society from the First Century to the Fourth Century", by examining of the routes of the Da-qin commodities to China and the use of storax and glass in China, she analyzes how the image of the treasure state of Da-qin was formed in Chinese society[82]. Her article "Hearsay about the Roman Empire in 1-5th Century Chinese Sources" pays attention to the features of the Chinese records on the Roman empire, with focus on the Da-qin recorded in *Hou-han-shu*. She concludes that the records related to the Roman empire are mainly hearsay, and spread to China by middlemen (such as Persians, Kushans and residents of south India) rather than through the Chinese witnesses. Additionally, she also summaries the possible course of the evolution of the Da-qin hearsay in China.[83] It can be observed that her studies care about the construction of the Roman-Byzantine image in Chinese sources, and she provides valuable conclusion.

Apart from the fore-mentioned special research, there also exist plenty of studies on topics related to the Roman empire and its relations with China through Chinese sources. These studies compellingly promoted the research of Roman-Chinese relations in China. Besides, there is also an ongoing international program related to this study with participants from China. The program is called *China and the Mediterranean World: Archaeological Materials and Literature*[84], and it is sponsored by the UAI (Union Académique Internationale), with an international academic team from different countries, including China. Its goal is to strengthen the understanding

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[81] Ying Lin, "Da-qin: the Image of Roman Empire in Chinese Society from the First Century to the Fourth Century", *Latoumus: Revue D'Études Latines* tom. 63, fasc. 2 (2004), pp. 327-339; "Hellenic Elements in a Third Century Chinese Sources on the Roman Empire", in *East and West: Essays on Byzantine and Arab Worlds in the Middle Ages*, J.P. Monferrer-Sala, V. Christides, T. Papadopoullos eds, New Jersey: Gorgias Press 2009, pp. 297-308; "Hearsays about the Roman Empire in 1-5th Century Chinese Sources: Centered on the biography of Da-qin in Hou Han-shu" [Gongyuan 1 dao 5 shiji zhongguo wenxian zhong guanyu luomadiguo de chuanwen—yi Hou-han-shu weizhongxin de kaocha], *The Journal of Ancient Civilizations* 4 (2009), pp. 54-62; Research on the Gan Ying's Mission to Da-qin [Gan Ying chushi Da-qin kao]. In *Conference Proceedings of International Symposium on History and Culture of Inner Eurasian*. Xilinhot, China, 2013, pp. 293-301.

[82] Ying Lin (2004), pp. 327-339.

[83] Ying Lin (2009), p. 62.

[84] China and the Mediterranean World, http://www.vitterhetsakad.se/uai, 16-12-2014.

of the historical dynamics of European-Chinese contacts and their interaction. Their publications are of great value to this study.

1.2 Basic terms

Roman empire

It is well known that the Roman empire lasts more than a thousand-year history: from BCE 27 to 1453 CE, which was composed of two main periods: the early Roman empire and the later (eastern) Roman empire (or Byzantine empire). Not until the 16th century, during sorting out the Greek manuscripts, German scholar, Hieronymus Wolf (1516 - 1580), adopted the name Byzantine to describe the Greek texts from Middle Ages, which led to the use of the Byzantine empire for the later Roman empire in a large scale[85].

As a Chinese term for the Roman empire, the word "Da-qin" was in use in Chinese sources from the first century until the 19th century, while, its intensive use was in the sources from the first century to the seventh century. Later than this period, it was substituted by another term Fu-lin (sometimes, Da-qin was still used, but as synonym of Fu-lin). On the basis of this fact, it is almost sure that ancient Chinese did not master much clear knowledge about the Roman empire, and they did not know the difference between the early Roman empire and the later Roman empire (Byzantine empire). For them, the fact is only that the state called Da-qin in Chinese sources from the first century, in the seventh century got another name Fu-lin. Considering this reality, we believe that, in the consciousness of ancient Chinese, Da-qin and Fu-lin refer to the same state, the only difference is that Da-qin refers to the state or clearly the Roman empire before its substitution by another name Fu-lin. Hence, on the basis of the above analysis, the Roman empire but not both the Roman empire and the

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[85] Although its first appearance was in the 16th century, Rosser mentions (2011, p. 2) that it was not until the mid-19th century that the term came into general use in the Western world. As regards the English historiography in particular, the first occasion of the "Byzantine Empire" appears in an 1857 work of George Finlay (*History of the Byzantine Empire from 716 to 1057*). Even so, there is a group of scholars with the representative J. B. Bury (1889, pp. v-vii) holding the view that the Roman empire since its beginning continued until 1453 without divisions, and it is also not proper and confused to introduce the term "Byzantine Empire".

Byzantine empire is preferred in the whole dissertation on discussing the information on Da-qin.

Xi-yu (Western Regions)

Xi-yu, which means the Western Regions, is a term adopted by ancient Chinese in their historical writings referring to the regions in Northwest China from the Han until the Qing Dynasty.[86] Since in ancient China the territory in the west was frequently changing, neither were the referents of Xi-yu consistent. In consideration of the long period, it is generally agreed that Xi-yu has two referents: in the broad sense, it points to the vast western area outside of the Jade Gate of China, which was the western gate of ancient China; in a narrow sense, it only points to the southern part of the modern Xinjiang Province, Turfan, and Hami.[87] Since the states Da-xia, Da-yuan, Da-qin, An-xi, Shen-du etc, which were included in the ancient Chinese sources Da-yuan-lie-zhuan of *Shi-ji*, Xi-yu-zhuan of *Han-shu*, *Hou-han-shu* etc., were far away from the modern region of Xinjiang Province of China which was in the narrow sense of Xiyu, the broad sense of Xi-yu is referred to in this study.

Image

Image is the subject and keyword of this study. In the study, the term is different from the common definition which is meant in everyday speech. i.e. a picture being detected by eyes or imagination. Rather, the term signifies an image constructed in people's consciousness through writings. What is this kind of image, and what is the difference between it and other images? For these questions, professional theories should be referred to, in order to better understand the study.

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[86] Wei-jiang Tian (1998), p. 67.
[87] Xin-jiang Rong, & Xin Wen (2012), p. 113.

Image

likeness
resemblance
similitude

Graphic	Optical	Perceptual	Mental	Verbal
pictures	mirrors	sense data	dreams	metaphors
statues	projections	"species"	memories	descriptions
designs		appearances	ideas	
			fantasmata	
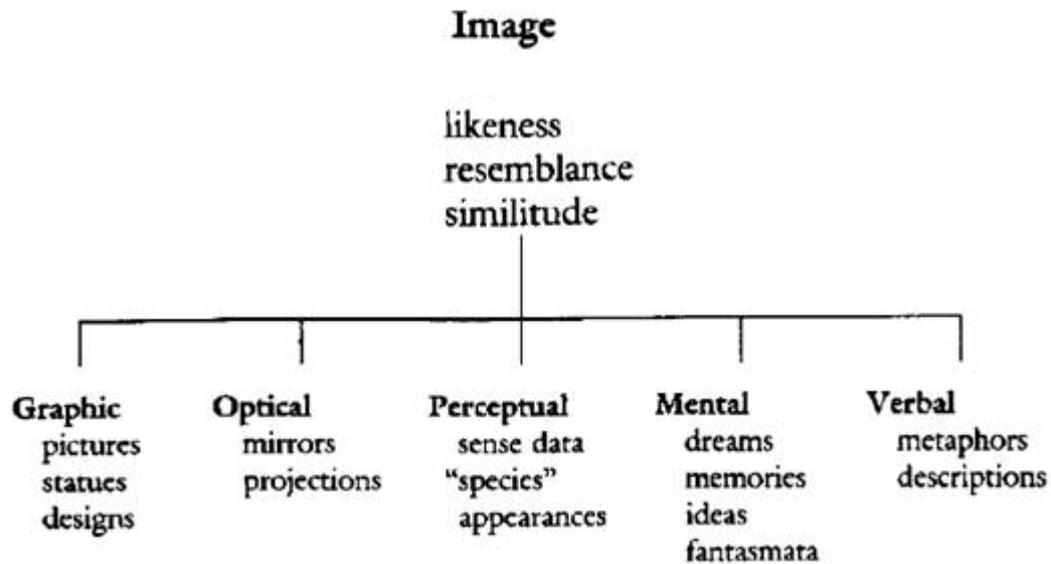
(W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*, University Of Chicago Press 1987, p. 10)

The above graphic is a diagram of the image types given by Mitchell. In this graphic, Mitchell points out that each branch of this chart designates a type of imagery that is central to the discourse of some intellectual discipline. Based on this approach, he shows us the field in which each type of image is dealt with: mental imagery belongs to psychology and epistemology; optical imagery to physics; graphic, sculptural, and architectural imagery to the art historian; verbal imagery to the literary critic; perceptual images occupy a kind of border region where physiologists, neurologists, psychologists, art historians, and students of optics find themselves collaborating with philosophers and literary critics.[88] From this explanation, it can be seen that there really are different images existing in the world.

After delineating the different types of images, it is time to define the specific meanings the term will have in this study. In discussing "Perception, image, imagology", Manfred Beller points out that "images of other peoples can also be found in paintings and caricatures, they are projected optically, perceived in their outward appearance and also defined metaphorically, but the most important sphere of origin of all national-typological fictions are the mental images, ideas and Vorstellungsbilder (imagined images). Images are not just a particular kind of sign,

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[88] W. J. T. Mitchell (1987), p. 10.

but something like an actor on the historical stage, a presence or character endowed with legendary status, a history that parallels and participates in the stories we tell ourselves about our own evolution from creatures 'made in the image' of a creator, to creatures who make themselves and their world in their own image".[89] Since the image of the Roman empire (Da-qin) in Chinese literature was constructed in official histories and private writings, paintings and poems and myths which are almost without the testimonies of the writers, therefore, image in this study resembles the one described by Manfred Beller, but with minor changes. Hence, in this study, an image is a construction from the sum of knowledge originating from eventual testimonies and myth or fantasies as well as their elaboration by the narrators.

1.3 Methodology

This study applied the basic methods of historical studies, especially the approach of comparative study; in addition, given that the topic discussed is the alien image in a country's writings, the theories of Imagology are regarded as the proper methodology.

Imagology (Imagologie) is rooted in the field of literary studies, precisely that of Comparative Literature. It began and developed in the middle of the twentieth century in Western Europe, in particular France and Germany. It is a noticeable field, and its main goal is to study the "hetero image" and "auto image" of a nation in the works of literature, history, and other writings. Its key research is not on correctness of "image" but on its formation, development and influence, paying more attention to the development and cause of the "hetero image" and "auto image" in literature and non-literature. Daniel-Henri Pageaux, in his discussion the "other", has gives an influential definition of "image": "image is the representation of a cultural reality through which the individual or the group developed"[90]. In another work, he states "all the images are originated from 'auto' and 'hetero', and among the consciousness of the relationship between local and exotic, even this consciousness is weak."[91]

Though Imagology originated in literary studies, it is not confined to the domain of

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[89] Manfred Beller (2007), p. 4.
[90] Daniel-Henri Pageaux (1989), pp.138-139.
[91] Daniel-Henri Pageaux (1994), p. 60.

literature. As one of the founders of the concept of Imagology, Jean Marie Carre, defined it, Imagology is a "mutual interpretation among the various nationalities, travel notes and imaginations".[92] Hence, travel notes are treated as part of Imagological study in Comparative Literature. Actually, in history, the descriptions of foreigners were rare in pure literature, particularly in Chinese literature. Most of those descriptions appear in diaries, notes and travel notes. Consequently, this tradition paves the way for an Imagological study of foreign states in ancient Chinese sources.

As the present study concerns the image of Da-qin in Chinese literature, and also the Imagology is an exactly proper methodology concerning the subject, hence, the theories of the Imagology are accordingly applied for reconstructing the image of the Roman empire in ancient Chinese sources, and analyzing the characteristics of the image and the factors that influenced its formation, and their implications. It is hoped that this case study will shed light on the way ancient China approached and treated foreign powers, and to provide insights which may be useful in contemporary international relations between China and Europe.

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[92] M. F. Guyard (1951), p. 6.

CHAPTER 2

GENERAL HISTORY FROM THE FIRST CENTURY TO THE SIXTH CENTURY CE: THE ROMAN EMPIRE, CHINA AND THE INTERMEDIARIES BETWEEN THEM

The name Da-qin, pointing to the Roman empire in extant Chinese sources as early as the middle of the third century, was first mentioned by Gan Ying concerning his mission to Da-qin, in the year 97. Since then, the term Da-qin for the Roman empire was much often mentioned in Chinese sources, until being replaced by another name, Fu-lin, in the beginning of the seventh century.[93] This fact proves us that Da-qin in Chinese sources concerns the Roman empire from the first century until the sixth century. This period was crucial to the Roman world and ancient China, both of which experienced revolutionary transformations. During this course, two worlds showed respective different political and cultural features; meanwhile, with the formation of the Silk Road in the second century BCE, communication from both sides of the Eurasian Steppe took place by land and sea, even though intermediaries (mainly the Persians) frequently blocked their communication. Under such a condition, the mutual knowledge and communications of the Roman empire and China also endured a course from rarity to abundance. For better understanding the interactions between them, the focus in this part will be put on the general history of the Roman empire and ancient China, as well as the history of the intermediate area between them in the first six centuries of the Common Era.

2.1 From the *Pax Romana* to
the formation of the eastern Roman empire

The time spanning from the first century to the sixth century is a *longue durée* in history. Within this period, the Greco-Roman world experienced drastic changes: the

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[93] Although some scholars [Lian-qing Chen (1982), p. 112; Fu-wei Shen (2006), p. 85; Zhang Xu-shan (2012, p. 114)] have found the first appearance of Fu-lin in Chinese sources concerning the events in the year of 313, a quite number of scholars support the view that the frequent use of Fu-lin occurred since the beginning of the seventh century.

Roman Republic transitioned into the Roman empire, and the eastern Roman empire (or the Byzantine empire) survived and developed into a new world empire. Apart from the alteration of the state's political form, it also went through great changes in territory, economy, diplomacy and even culture. On the basis of a political perspective, the period can be divided into two main phases: the first two centuries, which are labeled *Pax Romana*; and the remaining four centuries, which are included in Late Antiquity.

Pax Romana

The period from the reign of Augustus until the beginning of the third century is known as *Pax Romana*.[94] The feature of it is the formation of the Roman empire and its stability and prosperity created by the Emperor Augustus and his inheritors.

Octavian or later titled Augustus, as the founder of the Roman empire, obtains extremely high reputation.[95] Under the governance him, who was regarded as the *princeps* (first citizen among equals) and *pater patriae* (father of the state), the Roman Republic fully transformed the into a *de facto* world empire. With the management of Augustus, especially his reform of the administration of the provinces, he consolidated the frontiers of the empire, stabilized the economy and made the Mediterranean basin nearly self-sufficient. After his death, "Augustus bequeathed as a valuable legacy to his successors, the advice of confining the empire within those limits which nature seemed to have placed as its permanent bulwarks and boundaries; on the west the Atlantic Ocean; the Rhine and Danube on the north; the Euphrates on the east; and towards the south the sandy deserts of Arabia and Africa."[96]

After Augustus, the empire experienced a politically turbulent period of adaptation to the new structural reality, and then quickly entered a golden age from 96 to 180, which was called by Gibbon the era of the "Five Good Emperors". In those times, the style and theory of governance introduced by Augustus had been well assimilated by

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[94] The span of this period is not arrived an agreement among scholars, see Lawrence Waddy (1950), p. 69; Walter Goffart (1989), pp. 111 ff.

[95] Lawrence Waddy (1950, p. 27) proclaims that "Augustus has began to take his right place as one of the world's great men".

[96] Edward Gibbon (1906), p. 3.

the emperors, and the empire was on the way to becoming a mighty world empire. Even though, during this period, the most well known Emperor was Trajan (Marcus Ulpius Traianius). He was one of most admirable figures in the early Roman empire, a hero who personally led Roman armies to great victories against barbarian enemies.[97] Under his reign, the Roman territory reached its maximum size. As to his conquests in the east, it was said that Trajan descended the river Tigris in triumph from the mountains of Armenia to the Persian Gulf. He enjoyed the honor of being the first, and the last, of the Roman generals to navigate that remote sea. His fleets ravished the coasts of Arabia, and Trajan vainly flattered himself that he was approaching the confines of India.[98] After his death, the new Emperor Hadrian was unwilling to maintain control over the new provinces and came to a settlement with the Parthians which involved his withdrawal from much of the conquered territory[99]: he withdrew the Roman garrisons from the provinces of Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Assyria and, in compliance with the precepts of Augustus, once more established the Euphrates as the frontier of the empire.[100] Marcus Aurelius who ruled from 161 to 180 was the last of the "Five Good Emperors". Though he acquired the reputation of a philosopher king within his lifetime, he was not as lucky as his predecessors. As summarized by Cassius Dio, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, the empire met lots of problems from the frontiers, and he was busy fighting in different battles:

> Marcus did not meet with the good fortune that he deserved, for he was not strong in body and was involved in a multitude of troubles throughout practically his entire reign. But for my part, I admire him all the more for this very reason, that amid unusual and extraordinary difficulties he both survived himself and preserved the empire. (Trans. by Earnest Cary)[101]

Following Marcus Aurelius' death and the ascendancy of his son Commodus to the throne, the peaceful period of the empire came to an end and the tumultuous third century was near.

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[97] Richard Alston (1998), p. 191.
[98] Edward Gibbon (1906), p. 8.
[99] Dio Cassius, LXVIII 17-23.
[100] Edward Gibbon (1906), p. 9.
[101] Dio Cassius, LXXI 36.3–4.

From the *Nova Roma* (Constantinople) to the formation of the eastern Roman empire

Late Antiquity is a modern term which has been popular debated since the middle of the twentieth century, ascribing to the historical period of the third century to the eight century in the West[102]. It is an important period of transition from classical antiquity to the Middle Ages, in both mainland Europe and the Mediterranean world. Before the twentieth century, following Edward Gibbon's view expressed in *Decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, a great number of Western scholars inclined to regard this period as a course of the empire's declining; however, in the twentieth century, more and more scholars realized that "It is not, as it once was for Edward Gibbon, a subject of obsessive fascination only as the story of the unraveling of a once glorious and 'higher' state of civilization. It was not a period of irrevocable Decline and Fall; nor was it merely a violent and hurried prelude to better things… not only did late antiquity last for over half a millennium; much of what was created in that period still runs in our veins."[103]   On the great changes happened in this period, modern scholars regard it as a vital phase of transformation from the early Roman empire to the eastern Roman empire.[104]

This period started with the so-called third century crisis[105]. Between 211 and 300, it was a disorder to the ruling of the empire, there were more than seventy emperors who vied for control of the Imperial office. At the same time, the frontiers disintegrated, the barbarian tribes began to move into the territory of the empire itself, cities were sacked or declared their independence from Rome, slaves rebelled against the government, and civic responsibility disappeared. The serious domestic social crisis and the invasion of the barbarians meant turmoil for the empire. The turbulent situation was terminated until the end of the third century, with Diocletian's accession

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[102] Precise boundaries for the period is still in debate, see Peter Brown (1971); Averil Cameron (1993), (2011); Bertrand Lancon (2001).

[103] G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, & Oleg Grabar (1999), pp. ix-x.

[104] Willem M. Jongman (2007), p. 183.

[105] Though traditionally the third century was regarded as the "crisis" period of the empire, now quite a number of scholars are inclined to regard it as a period of transformation for the empire, emphasizing on the continuity of the empire, see Peter Brown (1993), p. 2; Wolf Liebeschuetz (2007), p. 11 etc.

to the throne. As an able general, Diocletian adopted a series of reforms in economy, military, and politics, which led to the survival of the empire from disruption. His reforms are regarded as the beginning of the Roman Orient's prosperity, but not the chance for the recovery of the western part of the empire.[106]

On the basis of the reforms by Diocletian, Constantine the Great, who is regarded as the founder of the eastern Roman empire, continued to enact many administrative, financial, social, and military reforms to strengthen the empire. At the same time, he also recognized the legal status of Christianity, which later became the main religious faith of modern Western Civilization. His decision of building the *Nova Roma* Constantinople and moving capital from Rome to this great city shows the change of the empire's center, which directly led to the formation of the eastern Roman empire (or the Byzantine empire). Considering the changes in the empire after the reforms of Constantine the Great, "the age of Constantine the Great can reasonably be seen as the watershed between the old Roman empire and the new Byzantine empire".[107]

However, from the fourth to the fifth century, the empire was not in peaceful environment because of the harsh invasions of the Huns, who did much devastation in the Balkan regions, and the Germanic peoples (the Visigoths, the Ostrogoths, and the Vandals). The Germanic peoples took almost all the land of the western part of the empire, and only the eastern Roman empire remained. Culturally, it is a period of high development for Christianity, which became the official religion of the empire, as well as a critical period of debates over the heresies (mainly Arianism, Nestorianism, and Monophysitism). The emperors intended to solve the religious problems through the ecumenical synods; however, at that time, it was not easy to deal with the religious problems because they happened mainly in the eastern provinces of the empire, where there was the continual danger of invasion by the Persian empires. During this period, Constantinople was made as the indisputable center of the empire. Emperor Theodosius II through constructing stronger walls extended much the scale of the city.

Through two hundred years' management of Roman emperors, the empire under the

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[106] Xu-shan Zhang (2012), p. I.
[107] Timothy E. Gregory (2010), p. 49.

reign of Justinian the Great arrived at its peak. J. B. Bury called the sixth century the age of Justinian, and the role of Justinian was like the colossal Janus bestriding the way of passage between the ancient and medieval world.[108] This is not an exaggeration. As one of the greatest Emperors in the history of the Roman empire, he contributed greatly to the development of the empire. As Jones stated, Justinian the Great was a commanding personality and a most conscientious emperor.[109] With a number of able generals and ministers, he once again made the empire into a world empire. With respect to territory, he realized his goal of making the Mediterranean Sea again the *Mare Nostrum* as the early Roman period; in law, he promulgated the great *Corpus Juris Civilis* which, as the basis of civil law in many modern states,[110] influenced the development of law throughout the world; for religion, his ecclesiastical authority influenced the distant future of Christendom.[111]

In order to realize his dream concerning *Mare Nostrum,* throughout his life, Justinian the Great launched numerous wars, some of which were offensive, others defensive. The former were carried on against the barbarian Germanic states of Western Europe; the latter were directed against Persia in the East and the Slavs in the north.[112] A. A. Vasiliev believes that, to Justinian, the principal enemies of the empire, were the Germans;[113] hence, he not only took defensive measures in the east, but also at all costs made treaties with the Persians to keep peace in the east, concentrating on his western wars. Under such conditions, the Persians succeeded in reaching the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Although Justinian the Great greatly enlarged the size of the empire, his general external policy brought about an extremely severe internal economic crisis within the empire,[114] which led to a crisis after his death. After the Justinian, the problems from the invasion of the Arabs became more serious; the Slavs in cooperation with the Avars started to break through the borders along the Danube River. At the beginning of the seventh century, Persians took much land of the eastern part of the empire in Asia, which was retaken by the Heraclius, however, soon the

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[108] J. B. Bury (1889), p. 351.

[109] A. H. M. Jones (1986), p. 269.

[110] John Henry Merryman & Rogelio Pérez-Perdomo (2007), pp. 9-11.

[111] J. B. Bury (1889), p. 353.

[112] A. A. Vasiliev (1952), p. 133.

[113] Ibid, p. 133.

[114] Ibid, p. 142.

land was falling into the hands of the Arabs.

There is no doubt that Late Antiquity is a crucial stage in the long existence of the Roman empire. Politically, it witnessed the transition of the Roman Republic into the Roman empire, and the formation of the eastern Roman empire. At the same time, it also underwent considerable social, cultural and organizational changes that influenced the later development of the empire. One of the changes was the acceptance of Christianity as the official religion, which was an important part of the civilization of the eastern Roman empire, as well as part of the basis of modern Western civilization.

Throughout this period, as to the Roman Orient, the main opponent of the Roman empire was Persians. With the intention enlarging its territory eastwards, the generals and emperors of the empire remained and managed in the East for a long time. However, the inheritors of the Achaemenid empire, the Parthian empire and the Sassanian empire ruined the plan of the Roman empire in Asia through long-term conflicts, leaving the Euphrates River as the border between them for centuries. During the *Pax Romana* period, having learned from its loss in the battle of Carrhae, following the advice of Augustus, the Roman emperors kept a generally peaceful policy to the eastern frontier with the Parthian empire, even though minor conflicts occurred. When the Sassanian empire conquered the Parthian empire, as Jones observes, the Persian empire under Sassanian Dynasty was certainly a more formidable enemy than had been the Parthian empire in the first two and a half centuries of the Principate. It was probably, when it put its full strength into play, more formidable than any enemy except for the largest concentration of German tribes, and the largest Roman armies on record were mustered against Persia.[115] As a testimony to this fact, within the 240 years which passed between the ascension of Diocletian and that of Justinian, there was a state of war between Rome and Persia for less than forty years, and in most of those forty years there were no hostilities, but truces, official or unofficial, during which negotiations were pursued.[116]

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[115] A. H. M. Jones (1986), p. 1029.
[116] Ibid, p. 1031.

2.2 The Era from the Eastern Han Dynasty to the Six Dynasties

The Chinese history of the first six centuries in the Common Era consists of two periods: the Eastern Han Dynasty and the Six Dynasties.[117] Together with the Qin Dynasty and the Western Han Dynasty[118], this era played a vital role in the early period of the formation of Chinese civilization.[119]

The Eastern Han Dynasty covered the history from the year 25 to 220. Historically, it was regarded as the continuance of the Western Han. At the beginning, the rulers of the Eastern Han, seeking to avoid the path that had led to the collapse of the Western Han, took the right and *ad hoc* measures realizing the prosperity of the empire for 200 years (This period took place almost at the same time as the *Pax Romana*). On foreign relations, one of the features in this period is the management of the Western Regions. "The successes of the Later Han dynasty (the Eastern Han) in the Western Regions were in fact largely the personal achievements of Pan Ch'ao (Ban Chao) and his son Pan Yung (Ban Yong)".[120] At the beginning of the Eastern Han, the direct relations of China with the Western Regions, which were set up during the Western Han period, were cut off by the powerful Xiongnu. In order to solve the threat of the Xiongnu and reconstruct the relations between China and the states in the Western Regions, the skilled diplomat and general Ban Chao was dispatched there by the Eastern Han court. Through 30 years' management by Ban Chao, the relations were reconstructed, and prosperity reappeared in the Western Regions:

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[117] Qin and Western Han were the first two united empires in Chinese history, which covered the history from 221 BCE to 8 CE.

[118] "The name Six Dynasties is derived from the number of states during this period that located their capitals in what is now modern Nanjing. Capitals heretofore had been in the north, primarily at modern Xi'an or Luoyang, but the moment of northern non-Han peoples into north China and their establishment of their own states on Chinese territory forced the surviving Chinese entities to seek a refuge in south, creating a situation aptly encapsulated by another label for this age, the Nanbeichao (南北朝), or Northern and Southern Dynasties", in Albert E. Dien (2007), p. 1.

[119] Michael Loewe (2008, pp. 14-19), in the Introduction of the *Cambridge History of China: The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 B.C.-A.D. 220*, has highly summarized the significance and features of the Qin-Han era in Chinese history.

[120] Ying-shih Yü (2008), p. 415.

In the sixth year, Ban Chao attacked again and defeated Yan-qi. Thereupon, more than 50 states all offered hostages and entered [the Han empire] as subjects. States such as Tiao-zhi and An-xi, and those right up to the edge of the sea, more than 40,000 *li* distant, all presented tribute via multiple interpreters. In the ninth year, Ban Chao dispatched his adjutant Gan Ying all the way to the coast of the Western Sea and back. Former generations have never reached any of these places, nor has the Classic of the Mountains given any details of them. He made a report on the customs and topography of all these states, and transmitted an account of their precious objects and marvels. Thereupon the distant states Meng-qi (蒙奇) and Dou-le (兜勒) both came to make their submission, sending envoys to present tribute.[121]

After Ban Chao, his youngest son Ban Yong continued his father's career (in the year 107). It is recorded that with his experience and capacity, all the major powers of the Western Regions came to submit to the Eastern Han.[122]

The history of the Six Dynasties lasted 370 years (220-589), in which China went through three important phases: the Three Kingdoms and the Western Jin, the sixteen states with five barbarian powers and the Eastern Jin, and the Southern-Northern Dynasties.

This period is often called "Dark Age" of China by historians,[123] because it is an age of disunion and widespread disorder; in most of the period, North China was under the rule of nomadic tribes which had invaded China from the northern steppe, while South China was ruled by weak Chinese governments, staffed by an elite more interested in personal cultivation than in administration. Yet, nowadays, with the notice of the magnificent achievements in the cultural arts, a increasing number of scholars believe that this period was a time of innovation and accomplishment in many areas, cultural, political, social, artistic, and technological.[124]

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[121] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 277; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 57-58.

[122] Ying-shih Yü (2008), p. 416.

[123] Ray Huang (2007), vol. 7; Zhong-kun Wang (2003), preface, p. 5.

[124] Albert E. Dien (2007), p. 1.

By the second century, the Eastern Han declined amidst land acquisitions, invasions, and feuding between consort clans and eunuchs. The Yellow Turban Rebellion in 184-215 finally broke the central regime of the Eastern Han, leading China into a situation without a strong central authority but separated regimes. The power firstly was separated by the Wei, Shu, and Wu, three regimes which comprise the Three Kingdoms period (220-280). Later experiencing a short period of unity by another regime the Western Jin (266-316), China soon fell into a succession of foreign states in the north with a weak Han people regime named Eastern Jin in the South. This period in Chinese history was called "the Five Barbarians bringing disorder to China", and the five included the Xiongnu, Tibetans, and Turks (Xiongnu, Xianbei, Jie, Di, Qiang), who established a series of sixteen ephemeral states in the north, ushering in this so called "Dark Age" of Chinese history.[125] The last phase of this period is named the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589). Within this period, in the south, the Eastern Jin regime was overthrown by a group of powerful generals, who set up four successive regimes; meanwhile, in the north, one of the "barbarians" Xianbei (鮮卑) became strong and gradually united the north of China setting up Wei Dynasty, which later on again separated into different regimes. Until the unity by the Sui Dynasties (581-618) in 589, China entered a new united phase leading to the quick development and prosperity of Chinese Civilization.[126]

During this period, even though China was in a condition of separation in regime and disturbance by different nomadic tribes, however, it was not a "Dark Ages" as often called by some historians. The nomadic tribes who were active in North China around 303-535, after coming into the region of Han people, quickly sinicized, meanwhile Chinese also accepted their different customs, such as the popularity of *Hu* clothing.[127] This course accelerated the progress of the formation of Chinese nation. At the same time, the flourishing of Buddhism and Daoism had shaken the ruling status of Confucianism, which led to the prosperity of the philosophy in this period. Under such a condition, literature also shows a flourishing view. In general, the Six

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[125] Albert E. Dien (2007), p. 6.

[126] For the Chinese history in this period, see Rafe de Crespigny (1991), pp. 1-36, 143-164; Zhong-kun Wang (2003); Albert E. Dien (2007), pp. 1-14; Xu-shan Zhang (2012), pp. IV-V;

[127] J. Needham (1988), p. 119.

Dynasties is a transformative era, which witnessed the gradual formation of Chinese Civilization.

As to the foreign relations, although sometimes the communication to the Western Regions was cut off by wars and conflicts, the records provided by Chinese sources and archaeological evidences prove us that there were still frequent embassies and merchants from the Western Regions coming to China, meanwhile China also had sent embassies to the states in these regions. In addition, the authorities in South China (especially in the time of Three Kingdoms and the Western Jin) also had managed well their relations with the states from South and Southeast Asia.

2.3 The intermediaries with focus on the Persian empires

Before the coming of the Industrial Age, communications between the Greco-Roman world and Asia (even around the world), which were connected by the Eurasian Steppe, were rare and difficult to realize. Even though there existed few examples of direct communications, which were realized through years, for the most part of the history, the communication was indirect, and realized through intermediaries. The intermediaries, especially those who lived in strategic regions, controlled the communication between the two civilizations as they wanted or needed, either promoting or blocking them.[128] During the first six centuries of the Common Era, on the Eurasian Steppe between the Roman empire and China, there were different peoples who acted as intermediaries, such as Arabs, Persians, Kushans, Turks, Sogdians, Indians, Kunlun people (possibly living in Malaysia and the islands of Indonesia). They were active in different periods and played an influential role in connecting the two sides of the Eurasian Steppe. During those times, they had close relations with the two great empires through wars, diplomatic and commercial activities, religions etc.

Regardless, with respect to communication between the Roman empire and China, the most influential and powerful intermediary for the longest period of time was the

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[128] Xu-shan Zhang (2012), p. 248.

Persian empires.[129] During the aforementioned period, the Persian empires went through two important phases: the Parthian empire and the Sassanian empire.

The Parthian empire consisted of Iran and Mesopotamia for more than four and a half centuries (247 BCE- 224 CE).[130] The early kingdom of Parthians was set up in 247 BCE at the ancient city of Asaak in the southern borders of Caspian Sea.[131] It is believed that by the middle of the second century BCE, the center of gravity of the Parthian empire had shifted to Mesopotamia, and apart from occasional encroachment on one side or the other, the Euphrates formed Iran's western frontier until the end of the Sassanian period in the seventh century.[132] Some scholar believes that from the end of the second to the beginning of the first century BCE (during the reign of Mithridates II, 124/3-88/87 BCE), the Parthian empire formally emerged onto the international stage.[133] During this time, Parthians succeeded in extending their rule into Armenia and Mesopotamia,[134] which led them to be in contact with Rome. When Syria became a province of Rome in 64 BCE, Parthian empire directly met with the powers of the Rome.[135] It has to be admitted that Parthians remained the greatest unconquered foes of imperial Roman through most of their rule. In the following centuries, wars and treaties often happened between them. The result of this situation is that the extension of Rome to the east was blocked by the Parthian empire, and the westward activities of the Parthian empire were similarly stopped by Rome, so that the Euphrates River remained the long-term border between them. Apart form the

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[129] The high influence of Persian land to the world has been given such remark: As a power which dominated many lands, influenced many cultures, and was receptive in turn to their impact, the place of Iran in world history and its contribution to world culture can be understood only in the light of its exchanges with the societies and the friendly or rival powers which surrounded it. See E. Yarshate (2006), p. 480.

[130] Parvaneh Pourshariati (2008), p. 20.

[131] The early development of Parthians is presented in kinds of works, such as E. Yarshate (2006), pp. 28-29; Parvaneh Pourshariati (2008), pp. 19-20.

[132] E. Yarshate (2006), p. 483.

[133] Beate Dignas & Engelbert Winter (2008), p. 9.

[134] Arnaud (1987), pp. 129-146. Parvaneh Pourshariati (2008, p. 20) puts forward that as early as 140s, during the reign of the Mithridates I (or Mithradates I), the Parthian power in Mesopotamia was beyond doubt: by 141 BCE, Mithridates I's power was recognized as far as the ancient city of Uruk in Mesopotamia. Around this time, Mithridates I also conquered the important Seleucid city Seleucia, where he crowned himself king.

[135] Beate Dignas & Engelbert Winter (2008), p. 12.

military conflicts between them, the Parthian empire also controlled the commercial activities of the Roman empire on land with the Far East. The following information provides us evidence of the block by Parthians of the silk trade of the Roman empire with China.

> The King (of Da-qin) always wanted to enter into diplomatic relations with the Han. But the An-xi wanted to trade with them in Han silk and so put obstacles in their way, so that they could never have direct relations [with Han].[136]

Because of the block on land, in the discussed period, the Roman empire turned its attention and successfully opened the sea route to Indian and South China, directly touching the origin of the Chinese silk. Thus, to an extent, they break the monopoly of Parthians for raw silk in the first two centuries CE.[137]

On the eastern side, the earliest information about the Parthian empire in Chinese sources appeared in *Shi-ji* and *Han-shu,* which record the information given by Zhang Qian, who was on missions to the Western Regions and further. Apart from many detailed descriptions on the local conditions of the Parthian empire, the first official diplomatic relation between the Parthian empire and China was also written down:

> Emperor Wu was the first to send envoys to An-xi. The king ordered a general to take a force of 20,000 cavalry to greet them at the eastern border. The eastern border is several thousand *li* distant from the king's capital. When in the course of a journey one is about to approach [the capital] one passes through towns which can be numbered in the tens, and where settlements are uninterrupted. [The king] took the occasion to send out [his own] envoys to come to Han in company with the Han envoys so as to observe Han territory. They took large birds' eggs and conjurors from Li-jian as a present for the Han [emperor], and the Son of Heaven was delighted. East of An-xi is the Darouzhi.[138]

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[136] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 272; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 72-73.

[137] Xu-shan Zhang (2001), pp. 87-92.

[138] Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 54-55. Darouzhi (大月氏, the characters in Pinyin system spell Dayuezhi, however, in ancient Chinese it was pronounced as Darouzhi) was an ancient Chinese tribe, who originally settled in the arid grasslands of the eastern Tarim Basin area,

This text informs us that during the reign of Emperor Wu (157-87 BCE), a Chinese envoy was accepted by the king of An-xi. Afterwards, the An-xi king sent his own envoy to China bearing a tribute along with the Chinese envoy in order to learn of the greatness of China. Since this event happened in the reign of Mithridates II, and it is known that An-xi is Parthia, it is assumed that the envoy from Parthia was sent by Mithridates II.[139] Later on, from about 100 BCE until 87 CE, there is no mention in Chinese sources of any embassies from Parthia. Then, in 87, 94, and 101, envoys from Parthia are again recorded.[140] These recordings prove that, since at least the end of the second century BCE, the Parthian empire had set up official relations with China. Later on, in the first century, official relations between them were very frequent. Based on the relations set up by embassies, commercial and cultural activities also flourished.[141] Some scholars even propose that the embassies from An-xi in the first century stimulated the mission of Gan Ying to Da-qin.[142]

As the inheritor of the Parthian empire, the Sassanian empire was set up in 224[143]. It is said that during Late Antiquity, the Sassanian Empire is considered to have been one of Iran's most important and influential historical periods, and constituted the last

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in what is today Xinjiang and western Gansu, in China. In the second century BCE, defeated by Xiongnu, they moved west until Bactria. Later on, a group of them set up the Kushan empire (30-375), see Xin-ru Liu (2001), pp. 261-292.

[139] Yu Tai-shan (2013, p. 55) holds that the first envoy to An-xi from Han during the reign of Emperor Wu must have been the deputy envoy dispatched by Zhang Qian, when he was on the mission to Wusun. Zhang Qian's mission to Wusun occurred early in the Yuanding reign period, and this deputy envoy must have reached An-xi in the first or second year of the Yuanding reign period (116 or 115 BCE). At the time, Mithridates II's (c. 124/123 - 87 BCE.) attack against the Sakas was close to victory, and his army was gathered on the eastern border. It was probably because of this that Mithridates II sent a force of 20,000 cavalry to greet the Han envoy. This view is supported by a number of scholars, also see J. Thorley (1971), p. 71; Xu-shan Zhang (2012), p. 271.

[140] D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner (1996), p. 140.

[141] Through the abundant information on An-xi in written sources, Sun Yu-tang (1978, p. 10) considers that the communications in commerce and culture were .also very frequent.

[142] D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner (1996), p. 140.

[143] For the early history of the Sassanian empire, see Arthur Christensen (1939), pp. 109-110; Richard N. Frye (2007), pp. 464-467 etc.

great Iranian empire before the Muslim conquest and the adoption of Islam.[144] Since the beginning, the empire held hostility toward the Roman empire. It established a formidable new power on the Roman empire's eastern frontier, and relations between them over the next four centuries were neither smooth nor friendly. Considering their hostile attitude, the Roman empire also viewed the Sassanian empire as a serious opponent right from the beginning of their relations.[145]

Even though the two had such a relationship, they not only kept relations in diplomacy and wars, but also in trade.[146] At the beginning, as in the period of the Parthian empire, the most important contacts were realized by the peoples of the Fertile Crescent. By the third century the principal inhabitants were either Aramaic, Syriac speakers (including Palmyrene, Hatran and other dialects) or Arabic speakers.[147] However, gradually these trading states were absorbed by the Romans, with the Nabataean kingdom conquered by Trajan in 106, Edessa by Caracalla in 214 and finally Palmyra by Aurelian in 272; in the east, the Sassanians were taking the same actions: Spasinou Charax at the head of the Persian Gulf was conquered by Ardashir early in his reign, and the last of the 'caravan cities', Hatra, was taken by him at the end of his rule in 240.[148] The absorption of the trading states by the Romans and Sassanians led to their face to face confrontation, as well as to a decline in commerce.

This hostile situation exacerbated the difficulties of communication between them; for the Romans, more serious problem was that its commercial activities and access to luxury goods were cut off by the Sassanians. It is said that for rather selfish reasons the Sassanians permitted the neighboring peoples to engage in trade as they pleased; they made good profit from the exchange of these luxury goods, which included not only silk but also precious stones, spices, incense and ivory.[149] For getting access to the eastern goods, in 298 and 408-409, the Roman empire requested the Sassanian

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[144] Albert Hourani (1991),. P. 87.

[145] Beate Dignas & Engelbert Winter (2008), p. i.

[146] Beate Dignas & Engelbert Winter (2008), pp. 2, 195.

[147] Richard N. Frye (2007), p. 473.

[148] Richard N. Frye (2007), pp. 472-473.

[149] Beate Dignas & Engelbert Winter (2008), pp. 195.

empire to agree to open Nisibis, Callinicum, and Artashat as open ports for mutual trade,[150] in particular for silk. In later times, more specific evidence that the Sassanian empire restricted the access of the Roman empire to oriental products can be found during the reign of the Justinian the Great. Until to the sixth century, the Sassanians and their kings controlled the intermediate territory of Mesopotamia between Byzantium and the East. Ruling from their capital of Ctesiphon (now in Iraq) the Persians, under King Chosroes I, dominated most of Byzantium's southern access to silk trade through the Silk Road via the Persian Gulf and the Tigris-Euphrates watersheds. Procopius records that, in order to break this block, Justinian the Great "purposed that the Ethiopians, by purchasing silk from India and selling it among the Romans, might themselves gain much money, while causing the Roman to profit in only one way, namely, that they no longer be compelled to pay over their money to their enemy" (Tans. by H. B. Dewing).[151] However, Justinian the Great did not succeed, since he underestimated the strength of the Persian grip.[152] Procopius told us that the Sassanian traders completely dominated the Indian Ocean and were able to buy up all the silk arriving in Ceylon from further east; consequently, the Ethiopian traders were never able to buy directly from the exporters.[153] Finally, the introduction of silkworms into the Roman empire in the 550s and the alliance with the Sogdians and Turks broke the monopoly of the Sassanian empire on silk,[154] and relations between the two empires dealt mostly with diplomacy and military in the later period.

Relations between the Sassanian empire and China before the fifth century were not as close as before, with the ever-changing political condition of China. As mentioned before, in the period from the third century to sixth century, China was in an uncertain period with the frequent alteration in politics, culture, and ethnicity. Communications with the Western Regions and further were often cut off. In Chinese sources, the first embassy from the Sassanian empire to the Northern Wei court of China happened in 455, and afterward, another ten embassies from there to north China were recorded.

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[150] A. H. M. Jones (1964), p. 827; L. Boulnois (1966), p. 119; Κατερίνα Συνέλλη (1986), pp. 89-98.

[151] Procopius, *Wars* I. xx.9.

[152] Michael Maas (2005), p. 502.

[153] Procopius, *Wars*, I. xx.12.

[154] Michael Maas (2005), p. 503; Xu-shan Zhang (2012), pp. 265-268; Stefanos Kordosis (2012), pp. 276-283.

Through the archaeological excavations, many Sassanian silver coins have been found in north China. Hence, it is clear that in fifth to sixth centuries, the Sassanian empire and north China had very frequent economics and cultural communications.[155] It is recorded that from China, in 468, envoys were sent by the Northern Wei of China to the court of the Sassanian empire.[156] Zhang Xu-shan argues that, in this period, the Sassanian empire initiated frequent embassies and tried to develop a relationship with China in order to form an alliance with them so as to better deal with the Hephthalites and the later Turks.[157] Also, taking into account the Sassanians' control of the sale of Chinese silk to the Roman empire, it can be induced that the commercial profits and political intention are the two-fold reason for the Sassanians' constructing relations with China.

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[155] Zhong-kun Wang (2003), p. 668.

[156] Xu-shan Zhang (2012), pp. 271-272.

[157] Ibid, pp. 272-273.

CHAPTER 3

CHINESE SOURCES ON THE ROMAN EMPIRE
AND THEIR PARALLEL WESTERN SOURCES

3.1 Chinese sources

In China, historical writing is a tradition lasting thousands of years, and quite a lot of historical works have been preserved until today. In these works, a considerable portion of comprehensive information on Da-qin (the Roman empire), as well as its relations with ancient China, have been recorded.[158]

In Chinese historiography, including literature and other texts, dynastic histories play an influential role, and most of them have been handed down to us. The most well-known collection of dynastic histories is the *Er-shi-si-shi* (Twenty-four Dynastic Histories,[159] 二十四史). It is a collection of Chinese dynastic histories written by official historians either under the orders of rulers or approved by them. The historical span of the collection starts from the Yellow Emperor[160] (2717-2599 BCE) to 1644 CE[161]. Since the works were written by the previous dynasties and also confirmed by the rulers, they are believed to be relatively more exact and reliable than private works. Accordingly, the works in the *Er-shi-si-shi* are also called Standard Histories (Zheng-shi, 正史). *Er-shi-si-shi* no doubt has great value for the study of Chinese history.[162]

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[158] The sources on Da-qin have been collected in several works, such as Henry Yule (1866, Cordier revision 1913-1915, Chinese version 2002, 2008); Hirth (1885); Xing-lang Zhang (Chinese 1934); D.D. Leslie and K. H. J. Gardiner (1996); Zhi-qiang Chen (2004); Tai-shan Yu (Chinese version 2012, English version, 2013).

[159] *Er-shi-si-shi* includes 24 works of the dynastic histories of ancient China, however, there are also sayings of *Er-shi-wu-shi* and *Er-shi-liu-shi* which include 25 works and 26 works, see Endymion Wilkinson (2000), p. 506.

[160] A legendary King in prehistory of China, he was regarded as the first ancestor of Chinese.

[161] Endymion Wilkinson (2000), pp. 503-505.

[162] "The Standard Histories constitute a monumental oeuvre, the importance of which can hardly be exaggerated. They provide remarkably accurate coverage of over 2000 years of Chinese history (from the official, Confucian standpoint, as seen from the imperial court),

Apart from the dynastic histories, ancient Chinese intellectuals also enjoyed writing private historical works and other literature, which includes diaries, traveling notes, novels, and academic writings. Because of the will of the rulers and the interest of the writers, sometimes the private works even contain valuable facts which do not appear in the Standard Histories, hence, to some extent, they can make up for the inefficiencies of the dynastic histories.

The third group of sources is from the works of Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Nestorianism. Following the Silk Road, the religions originated from outside of China, especially Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Nestorianism, were also spread into China before the seventh century. During the spreading time, plenty of religious sculptures were accordingly translated into Chinese; meanwhile other related religious writings were composed in Chinese. These religious works left us comprehensive information about exotic things from the states on the Eurasian Steppe or further, and they have been being discovered and research constantly, easily accessible to us today.[163]

3.1.1 Dynastic histories

Hou-han-shu (后汉书), *Jin-shu* (晋书), *Song-shu* (宋书), *Liang-shu* (梁书), *Wei-shu* (魏书), and *Bei-shi* (北史), which are taken from the *Er-shi-si-shi,* are dynastic histories, and they are regarded as the standard works for Chinese history. The period of Chinese history covered by them is from the beginning of the first century to the end of the sixth century.

Hou-han-shu (Standard History of Later Han) was compiled by Fan Ye (398 -445). It

and they include historical profiles of the rulers, events, leading personalities, major institutions, and administrative boundaries of each dynasty, as well a considerable quantity of detailed information on the peoples of East, Inner, and Southeast Asia. The value of the earlier Standard Histories is greatly enhanced by the fact that many of the sources upon which they were based have since been lost, and alternative sources are lacking." Endymion Wilkinson (2000), pp. 506-507.

[163] There are plenty of such religious works available to us. In this dissertation, the religious texts will be referred to Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), in particular Tai-shan Yu (Chinese edition 2012, English edition 2013)

covers the history of the later Han Dynasty from the years 25 to 220. This work has 90 volumes, in which 10 are annals and 80 biographies. Later, 30 volumes of monographs were added from another history of the Han written by Sima Biao in the third century during the Western Jin.[164] It is said that this work made use of seven other popular writings on Eastern Han which were written during the author's lifetime, most importantly *Hou-han-ji* (a private text on Eastern Han, which will be discussed later). Hence, it surpasses the merit of all the Eastern Han histories and is regarded as the standard history of the Eastern Han. Volume 88 is a key source for the cultural and socio-economic data on the Western Regions, including the accounts of Da-qin (the Roman empire), and some of the most detailed early reports on India and Central Asia. Its account on Da-qin is the first and most comprehensive text in the Chinese official histories providing information on the general condition of Da-qin. The information includes the name, location, people, crops, plants, animals of transportation, territory, the king and his rule, the appearance of common people, the organization of their postal and security systems, the punishment of officials, currency, neighbors, kinds of products etc.[165] It also records the early attempts of diplomatic communications between Da-qin and China.

Since *Hou-han-shu* is the most detailed official historical writing, the rest of the official historical writings, apart from the repeated information, can provide several pieces of new information as a supplement. *Jin-shu* covers the history of the Jin Dynasty from 265 to 420. It was compiled in 648 by a number of officials commissioned by the imperial court of the Tang Dynasty, with chancellor Fang Xuan-ling as the chief editor, drawing information mostly from official documents left from earlier archives. The main prototype of this book is another by the same name, written by Zong Yun-gu (415-488). The information on Da-qin was kept in volume 67 (*Four Barbarian Tribes*)[166] of this prototype. *Song-shu* was written in 492–493 by Shen Yue from the Southern Qi dynasty (479–502) for the Liu Song Dynasty of the Southern

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[164] Endymion Wilkinson (2000), p. 787.

[165] Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), pp. 270-278; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 56-79. As a rule, in this dissertation, all the Chinese sources refer to the latest works of Zhi-qiang Chen (2004) and Tai-shan Yu (2013), as well as few modifications.

[166] Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), pp. 303-305; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 114-117.

Dynasties of China. It covers history from 420 to 478.[167] There is a concise summary on the condition of Da-qin and its communications with ancient China. *Liang-shu* was compiled under Yao Si-lian (557-637), completed in 635. It focuses on the history of the Liang Dynasty from 552 to 557. The record related to Da-qin was kept in volume 54 (Barbarians)[168]. *Wei-shu* was written by historian Wei Shou (507-572), recording the history of the Northern Wei from the fourth century to the sixth century. In volume 90, the records on Da-qin were kept together with other information on the Western Regions[169]. *Bei-shi,* which was compiled by Li Yan-shou from 643 to 659, covers the history of the Northern Wei, the Western Wei, the Eastern Wei, the Northern Zhou, the Northern Qi, and the Sui dynasties from 386 to 618, Da-qin was kept in the part of Xi-yu-zhuan[170].

3.1.2 Private writings

There are private writings that hold information on foreign states. The main works concerning Da-qin are as follows: *Wei-lue* (魏略), *Hou-han-ji* (后汉纪), *Nan-fang-cao-mu-zhuang* (南方草木状), *Wu-shi-wai-guo-zhuan* (吴时外国传), *Qi-bu-fu* (奇布赋), *Guang-zhi* (广志), *Bo-wu-ji* (博物志), *Xuan-zhong-ji* (玄中记), *Nan-zhong-yi-wu-zhi* (南中异物志), and *Tong-dian* (通典).

Wei-lue (Abridged Account of Wei) is a private written historical source compiled by Langzhong (郎中)[171] Yu Huan, who lived in the third century during the "San guo" period (Three Kingdoms). Though the time of its writing is still in debate, the most acceptable one is 239-265[172]. It records the history of the Wei in detail, which was the northernmost kingdom of the three. The original text has been lost, but the volume on

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[167] Endymion Wilkinson (2000), p. 810.

[168] Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), pp. 305-307; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 118-121.

[169] Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), pp. 298-301; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 121-126.

[170] Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), pp. 301-303.

[171] He holds a kind of official position in ancient Wei China, during the Three Kingdoms period. Langzhong's duty is to assist the Shangshu (minister) for certain kinds of affairs, and belongs to the middle ranks of the official hierarchy.

[172] B. Laufer (1915a), p. 104; John E. Hill (2004), http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/weilue/weilue.html, 20-11-2014. Lin Ying (2004, p. 328) proposes the writing date should be before 265.

Xirong (西戎) was kept in good condition as an extensive footnote to volume 30 of the *San-guo-zhi* (三国志, Records of the Three Kingdoms)[173] by Pei Song-zhi, which was first published in 429. The text on Da-qin in Xi-rong-zhuan of *Wei-lue* is a long narrative containing abundant information on state matters, and it is also the first detailed private source in Chinese literature on Da-qin[174]. The text treats all the topics kept in *Hou-han-shu* but with much more detail and has the advantage that it contains a detailed description of the roads towards Da-qin and the vassal states, as well as a long list of the products. Since the similarities between the Xi-rong-zhuan in *Wei-lue* and the Xi-yu-zhuan in *Hou-han-shu*, some scholars believe that the latter was written using the former.[175] However, since both texts hold abundant information on Da-qin, their combination can be used to reconstruct a specific and vivid image of Da-qin, though much information is full of myth, misunderstanding and hearsay.

Hou-han-ji was written by Yuan Hong in the period of 351-354. It records the history of the Eastern Han from 23 to 222. It is one of two extant ancient Chinese sources on the Eastern Han. However, as it was written down more than fifty years earlier than *Hou-han-shu*, and the author likely had more access to earlier sources[176], *Hou-han-shu* also referred to it. The paragraph on Da-qin is located in volume 15[177].

Nan-fang-cao-mu-zhuang was written by Ji Kang in 304. It is a book on the plants in South China. Many plants said to be from Da-qin are recorded and explained in different volumes[178]. *Wu-shi-wai-guo-zhuan* was written by Kang Tai in the second half of the third century. It is a book that records information on more than a hundred foreign countries by a Chinese ambassador who was sent to countries south of China. There are several records on Da-qin, including its products, its relative location

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[173] It is a Chinese historical text which covers the history of the late Eastern Han Dynasty (184–220) and the Three Kingdoms period (220–280). It is widely regarded as the official and authoritative historical text for that period.

[174] Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), pp. 278-286; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 80-114.

[175] Shiratori (1956), pp. 137-145; Tai-shan Yu (1996), pp. 47-51. D. D. Leslie and K. H. J Gardiner (1996, pp. 20-22) do not accept this view, but they believe that *HHS* is independent of *WL*.

[176] Tian-you Zhou (1987), pp. 7, 9.

[177] Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 129-141.

[178] Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), pp. 287-289; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 170-175.

compared with other states etc[179]. *Qi-bu-fu* was a poem composed in the period of the Western Jin (266-316) and provides us with information on the envoys from Da-qin in the year 281[180]. *Guang-zhi* was composed by Guo Yi-gong in the Jin Dynasty. Several passages about products in Da-qin were included[181]. *Xuan-zhong-ji,* which was written in the beginning of the fourth century, records strange things[182]. Products from Da-qin are discussed in it. *Nan-zhou-yi-wu-zhi* is a book written in the third century by Wan Zhen about the products, customs, and technology used for production in South China. Several products related to Da-qin were mentioned.[183] *Tong-dian* was composed by Du You in 801. It is regarded as the first comprehensive work on institutional history in Chinese. Where it discusses the defense of borders in volume 193, Da-qin is recorded in detail[184]. While it is clear that most of the information was taken from earlier sources, much new information is also present.

3.1.3 Religious works

This group includes the religious works which belong to Daoism, Buddhism and Nestorianism. They are seven texts: *Tai-qing-jin-ye-shen-dan-jing* (太清金液神丹经), *Na-xian-bi-qiu-jing* (那先比丘经), *Fo-shi-bi-qiu-jia-dan-yan-shuo-fa-mo-jin-xie-jing* (佛使比丘迦旃延说法没盡偈经), *Fo-shuo-shi-er-you-ji* (佛说十二游经), *Pu-yao-jing* (普曜经), *Fo-ben-xing-ji-jing* (佛本行集经), *Luo-yang-jia-lan-Ji* (洛阳伽蓝记), *Da-qin-jing-jiao-liu-xing-zhong-guo-bei* (大秦景教流行中国碑) etc.

Daoism is a traditional Chinese indigenous religion. Its origin is generally traced back to Lao Zi[185], and during the end of the Eastern Han, it quickly developed. It is

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[179] Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), pp. 289-290; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 153-156.

[180] Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 331; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 169-170.

[181] Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 175-178.

[182] Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), pp. 293-294; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 86-88.

[183] Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), pp.294-295; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 159-164.

[184] Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), pp. 315-321; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 140-152.

[185] Lao Zi was a philosopher and poet in ancient China. His most famous work is the *Dao-de-jing* (道德经), and he is regarded as the founder of the Daoism, but he is also revered as a deity in religious Daoism and traditional Chinese religions. Although a legendary figure, he is usually dated to around the sixth century BCE and reckoned a contemporary of Confucius, but some historians contend that he actually lived during the Warring States

believed that Daoism had exercised considerable influence on the development of Chinese culture and psychology, customs and habits, science and technology, philosophy, cuisine and hygiene, and even political life.[186] In our dissertation, *Tai-qing-jin-ye-shen-dan-jing* is the Daoist text used. It was probably written in the period spanning from the end of the Western Han to the beginning of the Eastern Han (the end of the first century BCE to the beginning of the first century CE)[187]. In this text, a detailed description on Da-qin is recorded through the story of a Chinese merchant's visit there. Since the information includes many myths and fanciful elements, some scholars believe it expresses a utopian vision of Da-qin.[188]

As a foreign religion, Buddhism was spread to China no later than the period of the Emperor Ming (28-75).[189] Buddhism spread in China very quickly, especially during the middle of the fourth to the end of the eighth century, which was later called the Buddhist age of Chinese history.[190] In this period, the translation of Buddhist sculptures was prevalent in China, which left us plenty of sources. In the following part, we will refer to the Buddhist texts concerning Da-qin. *Na-xian-bi-qiu-jing* is the Chinese translation of *Milinda Panha* (Questions of Milinda) which was translated during the Jin Dynasty. *Milinda Panha* is a Buddhist text which dates back to approximately 100 BCE. It purports to record dialogues in which the Indo-Greek King Menander I (Pali Milinda) of Bactria, who reigned in the second century BCE, posed questions on Buddhism to the sage Nagasena. Two short dialogues in the text mention that the birthplace of the king was the Da-qin state.[191] *Fo-shi-bi-qiu-jia-dan-*

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period of the fifth or fourth century BCE, see Kohn (2000), p. 4. There was legendary that after leaving China, Lao Zi went to the West and taught the people there, see Kohn & Lafargue (1998), pp. 14, 17, 54–55.

[186] Yi-jie Tang (1991), p. 67.

[187] Guo-fu Chen (1983), p. 291.

[188] The text was firstly published by Maspero in the West. He assumes (1950, pp. 102ff) that "at the end of the Han dynasty, the Daoists contributed to the elaboration or enrichment of the picture of the utopia of Da-qin"; Stein also had contributed to the study of the text, see R. A. Stein (1963), pp. 1-78. Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 193-199.

[189] The most accepted date for the Buddhism entering China was in the years 58-75, however, there sill exist different views, see Edwin O. Reischauer & John. K. Fairbank (1960), p. 146; Yi-jie Tang (1991), p. 89.

[190] Edwin O. Reischauer & John. K. Fairbank (1960), p. 147.

[191] The questions concerning *Milinda Panha* and the word Da-qin inside have been analyzed

yan-shuo-fa-mo-jin-xie-jing (Sutra on Buddha's causing the Bhiksu Katyayana to preach the Gatha on the destruction of the law) was translated in the Jin Dynasty. In the text, three devil Kings are mentioned, one of which is of Da-qin.[192] *Fo-shuo-shi-er-you-jing* (Dvadasa-varsa-viharana-sutra) was translated by Kalodaka into Chinese in the period of the Eastern Jin. Four sons of the sky were recorded, and the King of Da-qin was the one located in the west, with the Chinese King in the east, the Indian King in the south, the Kushan King in the north[193]. *Pu-yao-jing* (Lalitavistara) was translated by Dharmaraksa in the period of Western Jin. In a paragraph on different languages around the world, that of Da-qin is mentioned[194]. *Fo-ben-xing-ji-jing* (Buddha caritra) was translated by Jnanagupta during the Sui Dynasty. The language Ye-mei-ni (the language of Da-qin as Sui called it, 耶寐尼) is mentioned[195]. *Luo-yang-jia-lan-ji* is a book mainly on Buddhism, but also includes history, geography and literature on the Tang Dynasty. It was made by Yang Xuan-zhi in the middle of the sixth century. Da-qin as a far west state was recorded in several places.[196]

Nestorianism was the first sect of Christianity spread to China. It is known through the history of Christianity that Nestorianism was a sect condemned as a heresy in the Christian world since the fourth century (condemned as heretical at the First Council of Ephesus in 431 and the Council of Chalcedon in 451).[197] Under the acceptance and protection of the Persian empire it was preserved and spread into Central Asia, even to the Far East.[198] Nestorianism's presence in China has been thoroughly proved by abundant archaeological materials, including sculptures, paintings, crosses, epigraphies etc.[199] Among this evidence, the first and foremost Nestorian source is

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in detail in the following works: T. W. David Rhys (1890), pp. 2, 127; Pelliot (1914), p. 401ff; Demiéville (1924), pp. 90-91, 168; M. Kordosis (1991a), pp. 197-201; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 226-236.

[192] Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 203-204.

[193] Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 293; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 204-206.

[194] Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 206-207.

[195] Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 322; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 207-208.

[196] Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), pp. 297-298; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 214-217.

[197] M. Kordosis (2008), pp. 11-13.

[198] Ibid, pp. 17-18.

[199] One of the most recent publications referring to the Nestorianism and its remains in China is Roman Malek, & Hofrichter Peter eds., *Jingjiao: The Church of the East in China and Central Asia,* Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica 2006.

the Nestorian Stele. The full title of it is *Da-qin-jing-jiao-liu-xing-zhong-guo-bei* (Memorial of the Propagation in China of the Luminous Religion from Da-qin, 大秦景教流行中国碑). It is a Tang Chinese stele erected in 781 recording 150 years of early Christianity (Nestorianism) in China. On top of the tablet, there is a cross. Below this headpiece there is a long Chinese inscription, consisting of around 1,900 Chinese characters, which is glossed occasionally in Syriac (several sentences, amounting to about 50 Syriac words). Calling God "Veritable Majesty", the text refers to Genesis, the cross, and baptism. It also pays tribute to missionaries and benefactors of the church, who are known to have arrived in China in 635. Its greatest value to us is that, other than its appearance in the title, Da-qin is mentioned again in the inscription about the birth place of Jesus Christ. Because of its importance to Christianity and historical research, it has been studied by scholars for nearly four hundred years since its excavation in the 1620s,[200] and research on it is regarded as the beginning of the study of the relations of the Roman Empire and China.

3.1.4 Supplementary sources

Apart from the main sources, there are still other sources with useful information connected with Da-qin. These sources will improve our understanding on the Da-qin image. One of these sources is *San-cai-tu-hui* (三才图会). It is a Chinese encyclopedia completed in 1607 and published in 1609. A portrait of the Da-qin people and a map of the world with Da-qin on the far west are provided. This portrait and map were made based on earlier sources. Through them, we can learn directly the location of this extreme western state and its people as conceived by the ancient Chinese.

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[200] The main Western studies include Henri Havret (1895, 97, 1902); Paul Carus, Alexander Wylie, Frits Holm (1909); Yoshiro Saeki (1916, 1937) [Yoshiro Saeki was the most well-known Japanese scholar who took on the research of the Nestorian Stele. Apart from the study of stele, his research also extends to other different Nestorian documents and liturgy books in Chinese]; Arthur C Moule (1930); John Foster (1939); Paul Pelliot (1996); M. Kordosis (2008), Michael Keevak (2008) etc. The main Chinese studies are Qian-zhi Zhu (1993); Wu-shu Lin (2000); Xiao-Chun Yang (2004) etc.

3.2 Western sources

The Chinese sources, referred to in this study, provide us with abundant information on the Roman empire and its relations with China from the first to the sixth century. Yet some descriptions on the empire are not clear, and some others are full of fantasies. Meanwhile, plenty of Western sources originated from the same period, which record comprehensively the history of the Roman empire. In particular, writings on its eastern part are useful for ascertaining the accuracy of the knowledge of the Roman empire kept in Chinese sources, in particular for distinguishing fantasy from fact in the Chinese writings.

Among the Western sources of great value to this study, *The Natural History* by Pliny the Elder[201], *Lives of the Caesars* by Suetonius[202], *Roman History* by Dio Cassius[203], *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*[204], *The Geography* by Strabo[205], and *The Geography* by Ptolemy[206], constitute the first group. These sources, written down during the first and the second centuries, are very valuable for studying the history and geography of the Roman empire in the first two centuries of the Common Era, when the empire became the exclusive ruler of the Mediterranean world. The valuable information inside these sources for this study include the descriptions on the Roman Orient's geography and topography (especially the regions of Armenia and Mesopotamia), products (plants, corps, mineral resources, goods etc), and different peoples, emperors and their governance of the empire, the empire's diplomatic and commercial relations with Central Asia and the Far East (Persia, India, China etc) etc. Similar contents on the above aspects are contained in Chinese sources on Da-qin,

[201] Pliny the Elder, *Pliny's Natural History*, H. Rackham, W.H.S. Jones, &D.E. Eichholz trans., Mass.: Harvard University Press 1949-1954.

[202] Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars* (Vol. II) (J.C. Rolfe trans.), Loeb Classical Library edition, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1914.

[203] Dio Cassius Dio's history is referred to *Roman History* (Earnest Cary trans.), vol. IX, Loeb Classical Library edition, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1927.

[204] W. H. Schoff, *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea: travel and trade in the Indian Ocean*, New York: Longmans, Green 1912.

[205] Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo,* vol.1 of the 8 vols., Jones, H. L., trans., London: Heinemann 1917.

[206] Ptolemy, *Claudius Ptolemy: The Geography,* Edward Luther. Stevenson trans. and ed., New York Public Library 1932. Reprint: Dover 1991.

which is identified as the Roman empire. Hence, the above Western sources are the proper evidence for judging the credibility of the Chinese records on the empire.

Ammianus Marcellinus is an important fourth-century Roman historian, who is regarded as "an accurate and faithful guide, who composed the history of his own times without indulging the prejudices and passions which usually affect the mind of a contemporary".[207] His work *Res Gestae*, whose only remaining section is that on the years 353 to 378, records in detail the geography of the Roman Orient (especially the region of Mesopotamia) and Roman relations with Persia in his time,[208] some parts of which can be compared with the Chinese sources which talk about the same region during that period. The value of this work also lies in its mythical information about the Seres, who are identified as Chinese. Other fourth-century Western works also provide us much useful information, such as *Expositio totius mundi et gentium*'s information for Camarini, who led a utopian life in the Far East. It allows us to compare it with the Chinese sources on the utopian descriptions.

The Western works in later period significant to this study concentrate on the sixth century. *Christian Topography*[209] was written by Cosmas Indicopleustes, who was a sixth-century traveler from Alexandria, Egypt, making several voyages to Ethiopia, India and perhaps Sri Lanka (Taprobane) during the reign of emperor Justinian. This work records the frequent trades between the eastern Roman empire and India by sea and also the transportation of Silk from China to the West, which can be important proofs for the long-term communication between the eastern Roman empire and the Far East (till China) through the sea route. A list of cities of the eastern Roman empire in the sixth century is kept in the work of *Synecdemus*, written by Hierocles[210]. The number of the cities in the Roman Orient in the list is of much significance for the comparison with the number of the cities of Da-qin in Chinese sources.

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[207] Edward Gibbon (1906), vol. 4, p. 326.

[208] Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum gestarum libri qui supersunt,* 2 vols., John Carew Rolfe ed., Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press 1935-1940.

[209] Cosmas Indicopleustes, *The Christian Topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes*, J. W. McCrindle ed, Hakluyt Society 1897 (Reissued by Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[210] Ernest Honigmann, *Le Synekdèmos d'Hiéroklès et l'opuscule géographique de Georges de Chypre*, Bruxelles 1939.

Procopius, as the first prominent historian of the era of Justinian the Great, in his writing *The Wars of Justinian* provides us abundant information about the Armenian regions located in the northern part of the Tigris River, which can be compared with the vassal states of the Roman empire mentioned by Chinese sources. Additionally, in the same work, he also wrote down the polemic and diplomatic relations of the eastern Roman empire with the Persians concerning the problems on the Roman-Persian borders, as well as the transportation of silk. In *The Secret History* he tells us the efforts by Justinian the Great to obtain silk and the story of how silk-worms came from the Serinda to Constantinople.[211] Menander the Guardsman from the six century provides us some certain interesting events concerning the import of silk in Constantinople and its transportation through the northern road (through the Oxus River and north of Caspian Sea); in particular he wrote down the details for the relations between the eastern Roman empire and the Turks in Central Asia, which were brought back by the two times of the Roman embassies who went into the hinterland Asia in the East.[212]

The sixth-century sources from the eastern Roman empire provide us abundant information concerning the Roman Orient, the situation on the Eurasian Steppe, the obstacles by the intermediaries, and the empire's struggle for communication with the Far East. All the information above can not only verify the Chinese sources on the Roman empire, but also can explain the causes for the gradual disappearance of information on the Roman empire (Da-qin) in Chinese sources through sea route but appearance of new information about it in the name of Fu-lin through land route.

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[211] Procopius's works have been published worldwide with different editions and languages, in this dissertation they are referred to *Procopius,* edited by H. B. Dewing, 7 vols., Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press and London, Hutchinson 1914-1940.

[212] Roger Blockley, *The History of Menander the Guardsman,* Liverpool 1985.

CHAPTER 4
THE NAME OF DA-QIN AND ITS IMAGE

Although Chinese sources have given the meaning of the name Da-qin, its specific reference has been being debated for long time without conclusion, since its meaning is also a key to unveil the Da-qin image, it is of need to make it clear firstly.

4.1 Name of Da-qin

Although it is widely accepted among sinologists that the name Da-qin, with the Chinese characters' meaning of Great Qin (大秦), refers either to the Roman empire as a whole or part of it, there is no consensus whether it points to the entire empire with Rome as its capital or only to the eastern provinces[213].

The strongest voice was from Hirth, who at first proclaimed Da-qin to be the Roman Orient, including Syria, Egypt, and Asia Minor, with Syria as the most certain of these.[214] Though his view got a lot of followers, in 1910, he modified his view that "Ta-ts'in is the Roman empire with all its grandeur emanating from Rome, its capital; but the detail placed on record in the contemporaneous Chinese texts is confined to its Asiatic provinces, for which reason not Rome, but Antioch is described as the capital city".[215] Why did he modify his view? It seems to me that the problem lies with the contradictions in Chinese sources on Da-qin. Fang Hao suggested that Da-qin has wide and narrow definitions, so that Da-qin is sometimes near to China, sometimes further away, pointing to different places. Accordingly, the criticism should be limited to each document: the wide definition of Da-qin is to be the "West", similar to the term Hai-xi (west of the sea), which is like today's Xi-yang (West), which points to a

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[213] Apart from the mentioned theories of Da-qin, there are also other kinds of identifications on Da-qin, such as Macedonia, Arabia Felix, and Egypt etc., however, these views are minor voices lacking of sufficient evidence. See M. Kordosis (1991a), p. 160; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 1.

[214] Hirth (1885), p. vi.

[215] Ibid, p. 1.

large area.[216] J. E. Hill's idea is similar to Fang Hao's, but more specific: he suggests that, depending on the context, the term Da-qin could be translated as the city of Rome, Roman territory or the Roman empire.[217]

Apart from the topographical problem, the name of Da-qin is also an interesting issue. What's the origin of the term Da-qin? Why was the state believed by us to be the Roman empire named Da-qin? The first place we should go is to the ancient Chinese texts which give a consistent explanation.

The texts concerning the meaning of Da-qin appeared in *Hou-han-shu*, *Wei-lue*, *Hou-han-ji*, *Bei-shi*, and *Tong-dian*:

> The people are tall and strong, and well-proportioned, resembling Chinese, whence it is called Da-qin.[218]

> The people are tall and strong, and well-proportioned, resembling Chinese but in *Hu* clothing, they say that they used to be a branch of Chinese.[219]

> The people are tall and strong, and well-proportioned, resembling Chinese, whence it is called the foreign Da-qin, they say that they used to be a branch of Chinese.[220]

> The people are tall and strong, and well-proportioned, their mode of dress, carriages and banners resemble those of the Chinese, whence they are called Da-qin by other foreign states.[221]

> The people are tall and strong, and well-proportioned, resembling Chinese,

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[216] Hao Fang (1987), p. 158.

[217] John Hill (2009), p. 256.

[218] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 271; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 68-69.

[219] Xi-rong-zhuan, *WL*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 279; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 91-92.

[220] Vol. 15, *HHJ*, Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 138.

[221] Vol. 97, *BS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 302.

whence it is called Da-qin. Or, it is said that they are originally Chinese.[222]

These texts are from different Chinese sources written or compiled from the first century to the seventh century and are written about the empire during the first six centuries of the Common Era. The general pattern in them as to the origin of Da-qin is similar: the reason for the origin of the name of "Da-qin" is linked to the personal appearance and customs of the people which, in some way, are thought to resemble those of the Chinese, except that they had a larger body size. In addition, among the sources there are differences and new information, especially in later sources, e. g., the most verisimilar information is that they are originally a branch of Chinese or Chinese.

The above statements of the Chinese texts on the meaning of Da-qin are accepted by the majority of scholars, and some of them also managed to find reasonable explanations. Shiratori is the main supporter of this etymology. In the article "Chinese Ideas Reflected in the Ta-ch'in Accounts", he spent half of the article discussing the name of Da-qin. He believes that Da-qin is "a purely Chinese name given by the Chinese". Apart from the evidence of the Chinese texts, he also found other similar examples in Chinese sources to support the "Great Qin" theory. In the analyses, he points out that since we know of "the habitual national pride of the Chinese who constantly extolled their own country as Middle Kingdom, and despised all foreign people as wild tribes, it is hard to explain why they should have so humbled themselves as to confer such a fine name as Ta-ch'in on a barbarian country"; however, in searching for explanations, he assumes that China heard of Da-qin or perceived it as an "exceedingly wealthy and happy nation, richly endowed with all sorts of valuable goods" which challenged China's superiority; in order to reconcile themselves to the "painful reality", the Chinese found comforted themselves by declaring Da-Qin to be the descendants of Chinese. Additionally, at that time China was also sometimes called "Qin", accordingly, the Roman empire was named also with "Qin". For explaining the word "Da" as great, he mentioned that the Chinese had the habit to name "great" people who are tall in height, and at the same time "this western country of Ch'in was associated in the Chinese mind with the paradise of

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[222] Vol. 193, *TD*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 315; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 141-142.

Hsi-wang-mu on account of its assumed proximity to the latter and of its prosperity and advanced civilization. As a consequence, the huge stature commonly attributed to the inhabitants of sacred regions was extended to its people, so that the character 'da' (大), meaning 'large', came to be prefixed to Ch'in".[223]

The main attitude of Shiratori is accepted by a number of scholars. Edwin G. Pulleyblank also shows his acceptance of the ideas in the Chinese texts, "in Chinese records, the Roman empire came to be known as "Da-qin", Great Qin, apparently thought to be a sort of counter-China at the other end of the world."[224] The author of "Han Foreign Relations" in *Cambridge History of China*, Yü Ying-shih, also supports the view, "as their geographical knowledge of the world grew with time, the Han Chinese even came to the realization that China was not necessarily the only civilized country in the world. This is clearly shown in the fact that the Later Han Chinese gave the Roman empire (or, rather, the Roman Orient) the name of Great Ch'in (Ta Ch'in)…According to *Hou-Han-shu*, the Roman empire was so named precisely because its people and civilization were comparable to those of China."[225] Now the explanation of "Qin" by Shiratori and other scholars[226] is widely accepted, but there are different views on "Da". D. D. Leslie and K. H. J. Gardiner believe that "Great or Greater Ch'in" was deliberately chosen for the great military power in the west Rome."[227] Along with this interpretation, we can find that they actually support "Da" to indicate the military power of the Roman empire. Samuel N. C. Lieu holds similar views: "The term Da-qin was used from the Han Dynasty onward to designate a mighty and Utopian state to the north-west of the Parthian empire, which could only be the Roman empire. The title of Qin was conferred on the Roman empire out of respect for the territorial unification and expansion of China achieved under Qin Shi-huangdi and its resultant rise in international status."[228]

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[223] Shiratori (1956), pp. 26-49.

[224] Edwin G.Pulleyblank (1999), p. 71.

[225] Ying-shih Yü (2008), p. 379.

[226] There is also the same attitude to "Qin" from Pelliot (1912), p. 739, (1959), p. 268; Berthold Laufer (1919), pp. 568-570; Otto. Franke (1937), pp. 101-102; Lien-sheng Yang (1955), p. 276; Hao Fang (1987), p. 171 ff.

[227] D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner (1996), p. 232.

[228] Samuel N. C. Lieu (2013), p. 126.

Meanwhile, some others, wondering about the authenticity of the Chinese texts or having other understandings of the texts, put forward different theories on the meaning of this term. Most of these scholars paid more attention to the etymology of Da-qin, attempting to find a corresponding word in Western, or especially Central Asian, languages. The first such theory is that Da-qin represents Great Syria or Tyros. In this theory, it is said "Ta-ts'in in old Chinese Ta Sir, or Syria, was apparently indifferently used for Syria itself or the Roman empire… Syria was called Great Syria in contradistinction to Ts'in or Sir nearer home, the native home of the Seres of the classical writers"[229]; Hirth quotes that "... the Chinese Name Ts'in corresponds to the Hebrew form Tsur or Sur for Tyros… As a transcription for Tsur or Sur, a Chinese Ts'in would definitely not be something unusual. Obviously Ts'in can stand as an equivalent for Syria, according to Paravery, who confesses to be a supporter of the etymology of the name Syria from Tsur or Sur (Tyros) against the Assyrian theory. Further conclusions of the excessively witty scholar seem too risky to me. The Serians would then be, according to the name, the Syrians of the East, so that Ser would be the equivalent of the Chinese Ts'in as a name for China, Syr would be the equivalent of the Ta-ts'in of our text. This is contradicted by the opinion, which we can obtain from the law of transcription that forms the basis of the identity of Ts'in with Syr or Ser."[230] Hence, this viewpoint, which is only based on linguistic evidence, is difficult to be accepted,[231] and the supporters could not find other strong evidence for it.

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[229] Thos W. Kingsmill (1879-1880), p. 166.

[230] "Wo-nach der chinesische name Ts'in der hebraischen Form Tsur oder Sur fur Tyros entspricht… Als Transcription fur Tsur oder Sur ware ein chinesisches Ts'in auch durchaus nichts Ungewohliches. Selbstverstandlich darf nun Ts'in nach Paravey, der sich als Anhanger der Etymologie des namens Syria aus Tsur oder Sur (Tyros) gegenuber der asiyrische Theorie bekennt, auch als aequivalent fur Syrien gelten. Die weiteren Schlussfolgerungen des bis zur Maasslosigkeit geistreichen Gelehrten scheinen mir sehr gewagt. Danach waren die Serer dem Namen nach eigentlich nur die Syrer des Ostens, so dass Ser den Ts'in der Chinesen als Name für China, Syr dem Ta-ts'in unseres Textes entsprache. Dem widerspricht die einige Anschaung, die wir von dem der identitat von Ts'in mit Syr oder Ser zu Grunde liegenden transcriptionsgesetze gewinnen Konnen", in Hirth (1899), p. 443 note.

[231] We will analyze the following theory of identification with the perspective of linguistics, which seems much more credible.

The theory of "dasina", advocated by the Japanese scholar Fujita, has been more agreed on.[232] Fujita believes that "dasina" is the etymology of Da-qin -- in other words, Da-qin is the transcription of "dasina". "Dasina" is an ancient Persian word denoting both "left" and "west". Fujita found that the position of Da-qin in *Wei-lue* is in accordance with the meaning of "dasina": "it (Da-qin) is to the west of the sea lying west of An-xi and Tiao-zhi" and "this country (Da-qin) is to the west of the sea, whence it is commonly called Hai-xi (海西, west of sea)"[233]; He also argues that Chinese knowledge of the name Da-qin dates back to the year 97 when Gan Ying was sent to Da-qin and to Tiao-zhi, during which trip he received detailed information about Da-Qin from sailors on the western Parthian border. In those times, the residents of An-xi (Parthia) probably called the Roman empire and its eastern provinces by the name "dasina", i.e., "West", which the Chinese may well have transcribed with the character Da-qin. It is also similar to the name of "Far-West (*Yuanxi*, 远西) and extreme-west (*Taixi*, 泰西)" the names the Chinese used to designate Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries.[234] Chinese scholar Cen Zhong-mian drew the same conclusion as Fujuta, i.e. that Da-qin is the transcription of "dasina" and means "west". At the same time, the early Chinese "Qin" Kingdom was also located in the west of China. Accordingly, Da-qin has both a western etymology and a corresponding Chinese one. Further on, he also points out that the name of Da-qin was recorded by Ban Yong, the Protector General of Western Regions, who was the youngest son of the elder Protector General Ban Chao.[235] Similarly, before Fujita, English scholar Bushell had mentioned that "Ta-ch'in was the Chinese rendering of 'Dachinabades', the Greek form of the Sanskrit 'Dakshinapatha', the south region, the modern Deccan". However, his theory somewhat differs from Fujuta's version, since he said that "'dasina' stems from the same etymology as the 'Dakshina', which signifies left and south stood for the name of southern India, accordingly, as some of the inhabitants of Ta-ch'in came to the Far East, for commercial reasons and they were easily confused with the southern Indians who came from the same direction".[236] The theory of "dasina" was rejected by Shiratori because no historical evidence was

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[232] M. Kordosis (1991a), p. 195; Xu-shan Zhang (2012), pp. 103-104.

[233] Xi-rong-zhuan, *WL*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 278; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 88.

[234] Fujita (1929), pp. 43-75.

[235] Zhong-mian Cen (1981), p. 187.

[236] S. W. Bushell (1885-1887), p. 21; M. Kordosis (1991a), p. 195.

found that could support the thesis of the Roman empire being called "dasina" or West except in Chinese sources.[237]

However, in recent years, Chinese scholar Zhang Xu-shan brought back the explanation of Fujita and Cen Zhong-mian and presented it more compellingly. He believes that, as to the mission to Da-qin, when Gan Ying arrived at the sea (Persian Gulf), some sailors told him about the difficulties of crossing the sea to Da-qin, as well as the name "dasina" given to the Roman empire by Parthians.[238] Though Gan Ying did not continue his journey, he brought the name and information of the Roman empire back to China. Furthermore, Zhang Xu-shan strengthened his own argument with using Chinese characters and history. He provides evidence for the early existence of the term Da-qin in Chinese sources, which was interwoven with legendary meanings,[239] and also mentions that the "Qin" had the meaning of "powerful state" during the Han period, while "Da" also had the meaning of "far". On account of this evidence, he perceives that "Da-qin" can be interpreted as meaning "the powerful state in the far away place". In conclusion, he assumes that the name "Da-qin" could be the combination of the transcription of the Western pronunciation and the Chinese meaning.[240]

Though these explanations of Da-qin's origin – deriving from the Chinese understanding of the Western pronunciation – seem reasonable, especially the theory of "dasina", M. Kordosis believes that it is unsafe to identify Chinese toponyms with Western toponyms only on the grounds of their mutual phonetic resemblance. Avoiding this assumption and approaching the issue from another angle,[241] he provides strong evidence that Da-qin is the Roman empire.

Yavana (or *Yona*, *Yonaka)* is a term that appears in sources from states on the Eurasian Steppe, derived from "Ionia", which at the beginning signified the Ionians of Asia Minor, who were Greeks, later on was widely used for foreigners. Kordosis supports

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[237] Shiratori (1956), p. 29.
[238] Xu-shan Zhang (2012), pp. 103-104.
[239] Chen Zhi-qiang (1994a, pp. 15-19) also discussed about the legendary use of Da-qin.
[240] Xu-shan Zhang (2005), p. 19.
[241] M. Kordosis (1991a), pp. 194-195.

that Yavana or Yona came from the Persian world "Yaunas", and it was known to Indians before the time of Alexander the Great, when there was a Greek settlement in the northwest side of India, before Alexander's arrival.[242] Afterwards, the meaning was broadened to "Westerner" generally rather than only "Greek" specifically. Indeed, when *Yavana* occurs in contexts associated with Roman trade, it was often taken as meaning "Roman".[243] Though sinologist J. Edkins as early as the 19th century first proposed that Da-qin and *Yavana* had an etymological relationship,[244] he could not provide us convincing evidence for his view. In agreement with this view, M. Kordosis further analyzed the relations of the two terms in Western and Chinese sources. He found that, after Buddhism came to China in the first century, *Yavana* in some translations of Buddhist sculptures was translated into Chinese by the term Da-qin.[245] The Buddhist work the *Milindapanha* (Questions of Milinda) is such an example. The text of *Milindapanha* records a dialogue between the Greek Menander (Milinda), who was the famous King of the Indo-Bactrian regions,[246] and the Buddhist sage Nagasena. This extensive dialogue only exists in a Pali version and a fourth century Chinese translation including part one and some pages of part two of the Pali version. The *Yonaka* of the Pali text, equivalent of *Yavana*, was replaced by Da-qin in Chinese translation.[247] Based on the fact that *Yavana* means "the place where Greeks lived", which can be Central Asia and the Eastern Mediterranean area, M. Kordosis insists that Da-qin is the Chinese name for the place where Greeks lived.[248] Especially when talking about the detailed information about Da-qin in

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[242] M. Kordosis (1991a), pp. 195-196.

[243] Old Persian Yauna, Hebrew Yawan, Arabic Yunan, Chinese Ye-meï-ni, etc, see Warwick Ball (2000), p. 126, and endnote. 61.

[244] J. Edkins (1883, p. 233) assumes that Chinese compared the Roman empire with China since its swift military success over the surrounding countries like Chinese Qin Dynasties, or because the Buddhists who came to China called Rome as Da-qin and brought this name Da-qin to China. Jence, the name can be found in the currently spoken languages in India.

[245] There are also some Chinese translated Buddhist texts providing *Yavana* with the transliteration of *ye-mei-ni* (耶寐尼) through the pronunciation, see Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 233.

[246] Menander I was a second century BCE Greek king of the Indo-Greek Kingdom who established a large empire in South Asia and became a patron of Buddhism, the detailed life and career of the Menander I see Tarn (2010), pp. 225-269.

[247] M. Kordosis (1991a), p. 197.

[248] On accepting the view that Da-qin can be pointing to the places where Greek lived, such as the Roman Empire and Northwest India, through analyzing the translated text of

Chinese sources, such as in *Wei-lue*, the term should denote the Mediterranean regions, that is, the Roman empire.[249] He also states that Chinese knew that "a link connected the residents of the East Mediterranean Sea and those who stayed in some regions of northwest India, i. e. that they were of the same race and language... ".[250] He connects also the name "Qin" with Cina of Northwest India, where many Greeks lived, and accepts the standpoint of Stein that Da-qin has the same meaning as the Indian word "Mahacina", which signified "exterior China", i. e., regions outside of main China, in Tibet and in India.[251]

Having discussed the main theories about Da-qin made by European scholars, I insist on the theory based on Chinese sources. Since Da-qin was first used to indicate the Far West state or the Roman empire in Chinese sources by Gan Ying after his embassy to Da-qin and Tiao-zhi in *Hou-han-shu*, it is regarded as the earliest usage of Da-qin. In *Hou-han-shu*, the author also mentions that his information for the time of Gan Ying's mission was taken from Ban Yong[252]. Ban Yong was the youngest son of Ban Chao, who sent Gan-Ying to Da-qin and Tiao-zhi. He was together with his father in the Western Regions until the year 101, when he was sent back with Parthian envoys to Luoyang. Hence, he must have been familiar with Gan Ying and known his mission to Da-qin and Tiao-zhi, and it is reasonable that he obtained the information

Chavannes on Western Turks in the sources of Tang Dynasties, Stefanos Kordosis (2008, pp. 27-37) found that one district of Bactria was also named with Da-qin. He believes that this discovery strengthens the theory that Da-qin is for the regions where the Greek lived.

[249] M. Kordosis (1991a), pp. 194-205.

[250] M. Kordosis (1991a), p. 199, see also p. 202: "This view is strengthened by a passage in Wei-lio (about which it has already been said that it contains the most ancient material about Ta-Ch'in and T'iao-chih) where it is mentioned: 'Formerly, T'iao-chih was wrongly believed to be in the west of Ta-ts'in; now its real position is [known to be] east'. I think it was Ta-Ch'in of the Indo-Bactrian region west of which they believed that T'iao-ch'in (Babylonia) was found. After the enlargement of knowledge and the realization that the Yavanas had come from Li-kan, the Chinese changed the name of this country and, so, from this time onward the main Ta-Ch'in was, for the Chinese writers of the dynastic histories, the regions beyond the rivers Tigris and Euphrates".

[251] M. Kordosis (1991a), p. 205.

[252] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Section 1-Historical Background, in Xi-yu-zhuan of *HHS*, trans. By Hill, https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/hhshu/hou_han_shu.html#sec1, 15-01-2015. It is known that *Hou-han-shu* refers to *Hou-han-ji*, thus, this saying firstly appears in *Hou-han-ji*.

on Da-qin from Gan Ying and wrote it down. With the above analysis, I believe that the theory of Da-qin in Chinese sources, which is based on the records of Ban Yong, and ultimately from Gan Ying, should be reasonable, since it is probably from the place near to Da-qin.

In conclusion, in order to find a proper and logical explanation for Da-qin's correspondence with the Roman empire, apart from the identification based on the topographical description and other comparisons, the origin and exact meaning of the name has also received much attention. Through the endeavor of many generations of scholars, a number of conclusions have been drawn based on textual criticism, geographical analysis and etymology. Though some of the theories are influential and seem convincing, the fact is that there is still no final agreement among scholars on the origin of Da-qin. On account of the reliability of the Chinese texts, the most credible theory is still the one given by the Chinese sources: Da-qin means the Great Qin (China) because of the state's (the Roman empire's) resemblance with ancient China the people of Da-qin were taller than the Chinese. The theories of the connection of Da-qin with Exterior China by Stein and the connection of Da-qin with Northwest India and its western part by M. Kordosis, are two very interesting attempts. It is possible that the *Mahacina* in India also included the Greeks who lived on the land, and later on, it might also have been used for the Greeks in the West.[253] However, to prove these claims, still more evidence must be provided.

4.2 Image of Da-qin

4.2.1 Geography

The geographical location of Da-qin—as rendered in the Chinese texts' description of Da-qin – is always situated either at the beginning of the Chinese sources or lies in a prominent position. Accordingly, it can be inferred that it is of central significance to the comprehensive information on Da-qin, and also holds a crucial position in the Chinese's image of Da-qin. According to the content of the descriptions, the information can be divided into two parts: location, and the routes that lead to it.

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[253] See Stein (1963), pp. 19-20; M. Kordosis (1991a), pp. 204-205.

Location

As to the location, the most frequent mentioned orientation of Da-qin is to "the west of the sea", and this is why Da-qin was called "the country west of the sea". This description first appeared in *Hou-han-ji*, *Hou-han-shu*, and *Wei-lue*; later on, it was like a label for Da-qin widely quoted by later sources:

The state of Da-qin is also called Li-xuan. It lies west of the sea.[254]

In the first year of the Yongning period (in 120), the king of the state of Shan (northeast of Burma), called Yong youtiao, again sent an embassy...they said: we are from the west of the sea; the west of the sea is the same as Da-qin.[255]

The state of Da-qin is also called Li-jian. Since it is situated to the west of the sea, it is also called "state of west of the Sea."… It is also said that from An-xi by the land-route, one goes around north of the sea, comes out from the west of the sea, and arrives in Da-qin.[256]

The state of Da-qin: it is also named Li-jian. It lies to the west of the Great Sea which is west of An-xi and Tiao-zhi. From the town of An-gu on the frontier of An-xi, one travels by boat directly across to the west of the sea. If one meets with favorable winds, it takes two months, but with delaying winds, it takes perhaps one year, and with no wind at all, perhaps three years. As this state lies west of the sea, it is popularly called "West of Sea."… There is in addition the state of Yan-cai, which is also named A-lan. These states all have the same way of life as that of Kang-ju. [These states] to the west adjoin Da-qin, to the southeast, Kang-ju.[257]

The most distant part of the west is Da-qin which is at the western extreme of

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[254] Vol. 15, *HHJ*, Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 134.

[255] Vol. 86, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 276; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 56-57.

[256] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 271-272; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 66-67, 74.

[257] Xi-rong-zhuan, *WL*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 278; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 88, 111.

earth and sky.[258]

In the above texts, it can be noticed that Da-qin was located not only to the west of China, west of Burma and India (derived from the information on the sea route), but even west of An-xi (Parthia), west of Tiao-zhi, and west of the Great Sea (from the information on land routes). Since An-xi has been surely identified with Parthia by scholars,[259] it is clear that Da-qin is pointing to the state after Parthia, Tiao-zhi and the Great Sea which sometimes is called the Western Sea. These elements, which are important in identifying the position of Da-qin, are still debated. Since the Great Sea was mentioned very often and was always connected with other key places for identifying the location of Da-qin, the identification of the Great Sea is no doubt one a decisive issue for solving the problem. In addition, the earliest bearer of information on Da-qin to China, Gan Ying arrived at Tiao-zhi and went only as far as the Great Sea, which was on the border of Parthia and Da-qin; accordingly, the topographies of Tiao-zhi and the Great Sea are always discussed together. Their main identifications include the Caspian Sea with the city near it[260], with the Persian Gulf with the city near it[261], Antioch (Seleucia) with the Mediterranean Sea[262], and Antioch (Charax) with the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers[263].

Since the identification of the Caspian Sea with the Western Sea is less convincing and not consistent with the Chinese description, not many scholars follow it any longer.[264] The most popular ones are the Persian Gulf with the cities[265] near it and

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[258] Vol. 4, *LYJLJ*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 298; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 215.

[259] "The state of An-xi mentioned in historical records in the Han and Wei times is generally believed to refer to Persia under the rule of Parthians. "An-xi" was the transcription of "Arshak", the name of the founder of the Parthian Kingdom", in Tai-shan Yu (1998), p. 173, also see Hirth (1885), pp. 139-141; Chavannes (1907), p. 177, note. 1; E. G. Pulleyblank (1963), pp. 77, 221.

[260] Richthofen (1877), pp. 451-452; Allen (1886); Hujita Toyohachi (1935).

[261] Fujita Toyohachi (1943), pp. 211-252; E. Chavannes (1905), pp. 519-571, (1907), pp. 149-234; Hirth (1885), pp. 147-153; Shiratori (1956), 1-23; Suziki Osamu (1964), 39-65; Soma Takashi (1977), pp. 319-344; Yu-tang Sun (1979), p. 79.

[262] Miyazaki Ichisada (1939), pp. 55-86; Zhong-mian Cen (1981), pp. 199-200; D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner (1996), p. 272; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 6-8.

[263] M. Kordosis (1991a), pp. 181-192, 208-209.

[264] M. Kordosis (1991a, p. 181) has rejected the theory of the Caspian Sea and also other

the Mediterranean Sea with Seleucia, Antioch. The theory of Antioch (Charax) with the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers is relatively new but supported by some convincing evidence by M. Kordosis. Here the identification of Tiao-zhi with Antioch is almost unanimously agreed on by scholars based on the similarity of pronunciation: Tiao-zhi= (An) tiochi[266]. However, since there were many cities with the name of Antioch in the area between Mesopotamia and the eastern bank of the Mediterranean Sea, and the topography of the city Tiao-zhi in Chinese texts can also be matched with different cities, its identification always involves the identification of the Western Sea. As mentioned above, the most popular interpretations of the Western Sea are the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea. The former one was strongly held by Hirth and a group of supporters. Hirth believes that, according to the description of the position of Da-qin near to Parthia in Chinese texts, compared with the border of Parthia with the Roman empire in the first century, the Caspian Sea and the Mediterranean Sea cannot be the Western Sea. Also considering the long journey on the Western Sea mentioned in the Chinese texts, according to the viewpoint of Hirth, only the Persian Gulf could be the Western Sea. Furthermore, he believes that the city of Hira, located on the region of Chaldaea Lake, matches a description of the city of Tiao-zhi.[267] Until now, this Persian Gulf theory still has the support of the majority, though the city of Tiao-zhi is still disputed under other conjectures, and the debates mainly focus on the Chinese description of the city. The viewpoint of Hirth is vigorous from a practical point of view. In fact, the biggest disadvantage of the Persian Gulf theory is that the distance for Da-qin through the Persian Gulf and the

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minor theories: "The other theories about the place of the Western Sea---which, I think, is the key to the problem---present more difficulties than Hirth's. If it is difficult to accept the Persian Gulf as the point of departure for Da-Ch'in, it is even more difficult to identify the Western Sea with the Caspian Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Erythraean Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea or with an imaginary sea northwest of the Persian Gulf, in the Arabian Desert. The land road to Parthia from the direction, in which the voyager comes, does not coincide with any of the above-mentioned seas".

[265] The identity of this city is also a debated issue of which kinds of theories have been put forward, such as Fars by Fujita Toyohachi (1943), pp. 211-252; Chaldaea by E. Chavannes (1905), pp. 519-571, (1907), pp. 149-234; Hira by Hirth (1885), pp. 147-153; Charax by Shiratori (1956), 1-23, Yu-tang Sun (1979), p. 79; M. Kordosis (1991a), pp. 208-209; Susiana by Suziki Osamu (1964), 39-65; Soma Takashi (1977), pp. 319-344.

[266] Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 8.

[267] Hirth (1885), pp. 144-150.

Erythraean Sea is too much for travel and the transportation of products.[268]

The second identification of the Mediterranean Sea with Seleucia is also a popular viewpoint held by a group of scholars. Yu Tai-shan is the representative of them. The common standpoint of this group of scholars is that they consider Da-qin the Roman empire with Rome as its capital: in short, Da-qin is clearly Italy. As to the Western Sea and city of Tiao-zhi, they almost put forward the same evidence. They believe that, along with the Chinese description, the Western Sea should be to the west of Parthia, but the Persian Gulf is on the south of Parthia. The described environment matches with what could be the coastline area of the Mediterranean Sea, but also of the Persian Gulf; however the products, such as Struthio camelus, that appeared in the text can only be found in the Syrian Desert, not in the area of the Persian Gulf. Hence the Mediterranean Sea is confirmed to be the Western Sea. Accordingly, the city of Tiao-zhi is taken to be Seleucia of Antioch, which used to be the most important harbor on the eastern bank of the Mediterranean Sea.[269]

Actually, the weak evidence of this point of view lies in the identification of Da-qin with Italy; besides, the border of Parthia did not meet the bank of the Mediterranean Sea during the first century.[270] From the other side, the Mediterranean Sea is vast in width, when the Chinese sources write that Da-qin locates to the West of that, we can not be sure that it stands for Italy, because it also could be Greece, and even more Spain. Besides, the direction towards Da-qin "first to the north, then continue to the west" also confuses us. If this direction is correct, we should find another smaller sea from the Mediterranean Sea to match it (such as the Aegean Sea, the Adriatic Sea, or the Tyrrhenian Sea).

The theory of identifying the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and the city Antioch (Charax) with the Western Sea and Andu is put forward by M. Kordosis. It can be

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[268] M. Kordosis (1991a), p. 161, (2008), p. 6.

[269] Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 1-42.

[270] Though proclaiming Da-qin to be the Roman Empire with Rome as capital, D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner (1996, p. 146) also believe the sea arrived at by Gan Ying is the Persian Gulf; besides, they also assume that the Western Sea appeared in different Chinese sources has different correspondences.

seen that his theory is the compromise of the two foregoing theories. In consideration of the deficiencies of the other theories, especially the theories of the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf, he suggests that the identification should be made in terms of history, topography, terminology, and criticism of the sources[271]. After rejecting the main theory of the Persian Gulf, he argues that the theory on the trip around the Persian Gulf to the eastern bank of the Mediterranean Sea supported by Hirth is difficult to retain. He thus assumes that the recorded distance between China and Da-qin equals the distance from the eastern edge of the world through the Caspian Sea to Antioch mentioned by Strabo (30, 000 *li* from the eastern edge of the world to the Caspian Sea and 10, 000 *li* from the Caspian Sea to Antioch); secondly, the Chinese description of the wild animals along the trip are consistent with the reality of north Mesopotamia mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus[272]; thirdly, the Euphrates and Tigris in ancient times were thought to meet in the north part, and the saltiness and bitterness of the water described by Gan Ying is the same as the description in the works of Strabo about the water of the Tigris River; furthermore, the names of the satrapies in Armenia have a terminological relationship with some of the toponyms of the dependencies of Da-qin in Chinese texts.[273] While the theory of M. Kordosis that the Western Sea is the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers is much more convincing, many questions still need to be addressed.

Agreeing with the theory of Hirth, M. Kordosis believes that the Chinese distance unit *li* in *Hou-han-shu* and other sources was equivalent to *stadium* (around 180 meters).

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[271] M. Kordosis (1991a), p. 181.

[272] Amminani Marcellini, XVIII, 7, 5: "Amid the reed-beds and thickets of the Mesopotamian rivers lions range in countless numbers; and during the moderate winter, which is there very wild, they are always harmless. But when the sun's rays have brought the season of burning heat, in regions parched by drought they are tormented both by the sultry breath of the sun and by crowds of gnats, swarms of which fill all parts of that land. And since these same insects make for the eyes, as the moist and shining parts of the body, and settling along the eyelids bite them, those same lions, after suffering long torture, either plunge into the rivers, to which they flee for protection, and are drowned, or after losing their eyes, which they dig out by constantly scratching them with their claws, become frightfully savage. And were it not for this, the entire Orient would be overrun by such beasts".

[273] Yü-lo/Hira, Ssǔ-fu/Sof-Sophene, Hsien-tu/Anjit-Anzitene etc., M. Kordosis (1991a), pp. 182-191.

He also mentions that, in the later Chinese sources (periods of the Sui and Tang), the length of the distance unit *li* was more than two times as long as it was in sources in the earlier period. The reason for the difference of the length in *li* is that the later sources follow the traditional Chinese distance of *li* (415 meters).[274] If we accept his claim that the information of Chinese historians was obtained from the sources of the Central East (the sources concerning the regions of Tigris and Euphrates), it is easy to explain the contradiction between the distance recorded in Chinese sources and the real distance.

After reviewing the above theories, it can be found that the identification of the Western Sea should be connected with the time that the information was firstly obtained. The earliest time on the knowledge of Da-qin in Chinese sources is traced back to the time of Gan Ying, who went on a mission to Da-qin and Tiao-zhi in the year 97. Therefore, the knowledge of the Western Sea should be restricted to the first century. The second issue concerns the problem of the border of Parthia: in the first century, the powerful Parthian empire was the main enemy of the Roman empire in the east, and they always had wars, which led to the frequent changing of borders. However, during the first century, the longest lasting eastern border between them was the Euphrates River. Hence, to identify the Western Sea with the Mediterranean Sea is less reasonable, and our attention should be turned to the seas mentioned before this period. The Caspian Sea is also out of our consideration if we take into account the reality of the period when the border of the Parthian empire was beyond the sea, that is to say, the first century. This is how the problem could be solved between the Persian Gulf and the two Mesopotamian rivers. As we have discussed above, the problem of Hirth concerns the identification of the Western Sea with the Persian Gulf, which is a long distance to travel; meanwhile, the problem of the theory provided by M. Kordosis, which identifies the Western Sea with the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers using evidence from Western and Chinese sources, is that he did not refer to any Western sources mentioning the two rivers as a sea. However, later on, A. Bousdroukes found sources from the Central East (and also in Greek sources) that mentioned the two rivers as a sea[275]. Hence, the theory of M. Kordosis is now more

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[274] M. Kordosis (1995), p. 155.

[275] See A. Bousdroukes (2008), pp. 1-26. He is the first scholar who proves that the Tigris

convincing with the support of Western sources.[276]

Routes for Da-qin

In the Chinese sources concerning Da-qin, different routes towards Da-qin from the East are recorded. According to the specific description and direction, they can be divided into two types: land routes, and sea routes.

Land routes from An-xi (Parthia)

From An-xi going west 3,400 *li* one reaches the state of A-man (阿蛮), then going west from A-man 3,600 *li*, one reaches the state of Si-bin (斯宾); then from Si-bin, going south, crossing a river, and continuing southwest, one reaches the state of Yu-luo (于罗), after 960 *li*, the extreme western frontier of An-xi. From here one puts to sea to the south, and only then does one communicate with Da-qin… It is also said that from An-xi by the land-route, one goes around north of the sea, comes out from the west of the sea, and arrives in Da-qin.[277]

The state of Da-qin: it is also named Li-jian. It lies to the west of the Great Sea which is west of An-xi and Tiao-zhi. From the town of Angu (安谷) on the frontier of An-xi, one travels by boat directly across to the west of the sea. If one meets with favorable winds, it takes two months, but with delaying winds, it takes perhaps one year, and with no wind at all, perhaps three years. As this state lies west of the sea, it is popularly called "West of Sea."… Now, from the town of An-gu, going due north by land one gets to north of the sea. Continuing on due west one gets to west of the sea. Continuing on due south one gets to the town of Wu-chi-san. Crossing a river, only after one day's journey by boat does one get across. Going all the way round the sea, one must still always cross over a Great Sea, and only after six days does one arrive at this state…From An-xi, one goes round the north of the sea to reach this state.[278]

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and Euphrates Rivers together were named "sea" in Greek and Central East sources.

[276] M. Kordosis (2008), p. 160.

[277] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), pp. 272, 274; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 65-66, 74-75.

[278] Xi-rong-zhuan, *WL*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), pp. 278-282; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp.88-92,

The Chinese texts clearly mention that access to Da-qin from the East on land requires that one pass through An-xi (Parthia), which had always been controlling the artery of traffic connecting the West and the East.[279] For the journey starting from An-xi to Da-qin, the texts show us three different routes: The first route, setting out from An-xi westward, passing A-man, Si-bin, then traveling southward, passing a river to Yu-luo , which is on the western border of An-xi, and from here going through the sea to Da-qin; the second route begins from An-gu City, which is on the border of An-xi, goes north of the sea, turns to the west of the sea, then goes towards the south as it passes Wu-chi-san and a river, and arrives in Da-qin (there is still another sentence recording "from the land route of the Parthia around the north of the sea to Da-qin", it is not certain if it is the same as the this one); the third one also started from Angu, but involves going westward around the sea until one arrives in Da-qin.

It is obvious that the information on land routes in Chinese sources originates with Gan Ying, who was the first Chinese to arrive at Tiao-zhi and face the sea toward Da-qin. Hirth assumes that the "Tiao-zhi" which Gan Ying arrived at is synonymous with Yu-luo=Hira and Angu=Uruku. Taking Angu City as the starting point, there were three land routes to Da-qin: the northern route went through Mesopotamia; the western one was a caravan route through the Syrian Desert probably *via* Palmyra; the southern one passed through the Persian Gulf.[280] Although Hirth's view has been popular among many scholars, on account of the defects of Hirth's examination and the disagreements on identifications of the topographical locations and the Western Sea, a number of different viewpoints have been put forward. Apart from the views that do not differ much with each other, M. Kordosis holds a very distinctive theory. He points out that if the directions of the routes mentioned in Chinese sources are

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[279] Chinese sources record much more clearly different routes starting from China until An-xi, such as the journey of Gan Ying. Besides, these routes are parts of the Silk Road. Since the routes from An-xi to Da-qin are keys to the location of Da-qin, here the attention will be given to them. For the eastern part of the routes and the discussions, see Ren-nan Mo (1982), pp. 13-19; Zhi-qiang Chen (1994c), pp. 149-164; Tai-shan Yu (1995), p. 219; Gong-le Yang (2001), pp. 115-118; Xu-shan Zhang (2003), pp. 118-120; Ying Lin (2013), pp. 293-301.

[280] Hirth (1885), pp. 151-157, 184-189.

acceptable, it is impossible to identify the Persian Gulf as the Western Sea, because in that case, the land of the Arabs must be identified with Da-qin. Hence, the theory identifying the Western Sea with the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers is the most realistic. He also proved the rationality of his theory with much evidence from the aspects of terminology, topography and history.[281] We presume that the sign for the start point of all the routes, connecting with the directions of them, is against the theory for identification of the Western Sea with Persian Gulf. Looking at the current state of the debate, it is very likely that the theory on Tigris and Euphrates Rivers will greatly promote the study of Da-qin in Chinese sources.

Sea routes through the Indian Ocean

Land routes, the earliest means of traveling between the West and the East on the Eurasian Steppe, were popular for long time. However, with the obstacle of Persians, both the Romans and other people in the East, most of whom were merchants, sought new routes for communications, that is, by sea, the relative texts are as follows:

> In the first year of Yongning period (the year 120)... From the southwest of the state of Shan (northeast of the Burma), people can go to Da-qin.[282]

> It (Shen-du, India) communicates to the west with Da-qin, and (so) has the exotica of Da-qin...Until the ninth year of the Yanxi in the period of the Emperor Huan (the years 166), An-dun, King of Da-qin, sent an envoy from beyond the frontier of Ri-nan, who offered elephant tusks, rhinoceros horn, and tortoise shell. It was only then that for the first time communication was established between the two states.[283]

> Not only is there a route to Da-qin communicating from north of the sea by land, but there is also one coming south following the sea, which connects with the barbarians outside the seven prefectures of Jiao-zhi and the others. There is also a water route communicating with Yizhou and Yongchang, and that is why

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[281] M. Kordosis (1991a), pp. 181-194.

[282] Vol. 86, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 276; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 56-57.

[283] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), pp. 272, 276; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 72, 77.

Yongchang produces exotica. Former generations only mentioned a sea route, and they did not know a land route. Here now is a summary. As for the numbers of individuals and households, we cannot set them out in detail.[284]

"Southwest of Jia-na-tiao one enters a great bay. It is about 700 or 800 *li* away; one reaches the great estuary of the Zhi-he-li River. One crosses the river and continues west and arrives in Da-qin"… From Jia-na-tiao, one sails on a huge ship, on which seven sails will be hoisted, to enter the territory of Da-qin, with favorable winds in more than a month.[285]

In the second year of the Taikang period of the Emperor Wu, the state of Da-qin offered their gems to our court. They passed through the Zhou. All the gems were beautiful; and the asbestos cloth was especially marvelous. In the 12th month of the fifth year of the Taikang period, the countries of Lin-yi (ancient Kingdom since the year 137, located in the middle part of the modern Vietnam) and Da-qin sent their embassies to offer tribute to our court.[286]

Its people (Da-qin) are traders and often visit Fu-nan (ancient Kingdom in the present Cambodia, the southern part of Laos and Vietnam) and Ri-nan (Ri-nan Prefecture, its seat of government is located where the Quang Tri and Cam Lo rivers meet in the present Binh Tri Thien Provience of Vietnam) and Jiao-zhi (Jiao-zhi Prefecture, its seat of government is located to the northwest Hanoi, Vietnam), but people from these countries rarely reach Da-qin. In the fifth year of the Huangwu reign-period of Sun Quan (the year 226), a merchant of Da-qin named Qin Lun came to Jiao-zhi. The Grand Administrator of Jiao-zhi, Wu Miao sent him to visit Sun Quan, who asked him about the land and its customs. Qin Lun gave a detailed reply.[287]

Chinese sources provide us such two general sea routes to Da-qin from China or opposite: South China↔Fu-nan, Rinan, Jiao-zhi (all of them located in Southeast

[284] Xi-rong-zhuan, *WL*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 281; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 106.

[285] *KTWGZ*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 290; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 153.

[286] Vol. 3, *JS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 305; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 114.

[287] Vol. 54, *LS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 306; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 119-120.

Asia)↔Shen-du (India)↔Da-qin; Yizhou (Chengdu, in Southwest China)↔Shan state (Northeast of Burma)↔Shen-du (India)↔Da-qin

These routes were the main means of communication between China and Da-qin through India. These are most likely the ways in which people from Da-qin came to China. The first route was the most described and possibly the most used one. The following trips to China most probably occurred through this route: in the year 166, Da-qin envoys came to China through Ri-nan; in 226, Da-qin merchants Qin Lun came to Jiao-zhi and later to the court of Wu in South China; in 281, a tribute of Da-qin to China through Guangzhou; in 285, a tribute of Da-qin to China together with the tribute of Lin-yi (present central Vietnam). The second route was probably used by the envoys of the Shan state with whom the so-called Da-qin magicians and jugglers came in the year 120.

Although many Western sources and much archaeological evidence have proved that the Mediterranean world had communications with the East, in particular with India since a very early time,[288] frequent Roman trade activities with India were only traced back to the first century.[289] Almost at the same time, in *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, China, with the name Thinae, was first mentioned by ancient Greco-Roman writers, whose knowledge of China was obtained through sea travel. The same work also records the trade routes connecting India and Thinae: Kashi of China↔Bactria↔Taxila↔Barbaricon/Barigaza; Sichuan (Yizhou is inside this region)/ Yunnan (another region in the southwest of China bordering with Burma)↔Ganga↔Limurice.[290] It is believed the second route here is the same one

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[288] G. F. Hourani (1951), pp. 7-9; M. S. Pandey (1973), p.23; George Coedes (1987), p. 13; Xu-shan Zhang (2001), p. 87.

[289] G. F. Hourani (1951), pp. 28-29; M. Kordosis (1991b), pp. 255-256; Xu-shan Zhang (2001), p. 88.

[290] The text recorded the route from Thinae to India in *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* is as follows: After this region under the very north, the sea outside ending in a land called This, there is a very great inland city called Thinae, from which raw silk and silk yarn and silk cloth are brought on foot through Bactria to Barygaza, and are also exported to Damirica by way of the river Ganges. But the land of this is not easy of access; few men come from there and seldom, in *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea,* 64.

mentioned in Chinese sources.[291]

All the above sea routes lead towards Da-qin from Southeast Asia or India, and so did not cross the Parthian empire. Therefore, they have no relation with the Western Sea in *Hou-han-shu* and other sources. The journey to Da-qin was accomplished through the Indian Ocean until the Erythraean Sea. Hence, they are purely sea routes. In general, through the description of the sea routes, it can be seen that they were actively used at least from 120 to 285, while no information about Da-qin was mentioned to have been gained through land routes during this period. Hence, as believed by many scholars, this is in accordance with the prevailing condition on the Eurasian Steppe: the Persian empire (first Parthia, later on the Sassanian empire) had almost completely stopped the Roman empire's communication with the East,[292] though they also limited the Roman Empire's trade activities with the Far East on the sea route, whereas they could not control completely the sea routes.[293]

In conclusion, the Chinese texts record the general geography of Da-qin, including its relative location to its neighbors, basic characteristics, and the routes towards there from the East. The information on the routes is abundant, and they include land routes

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[291] Xu-shan Zhang (2001), p. 88.

[292] This view is based on the political influence of the Persian empire on the Eurasian Steppe from the first century to the seven century before the conquest of the Arabs, besides, *HHS* and other sources also mention the obstacle of the Parthia between Da-qin and China, "The King of this state always wanted to enter into diplomatic relations with the Han. But the An-xi wanted to trade with them in Han silk and so put obstacles in their way, so that they could never have direct relations [with Han]", in vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 272; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 72-73.

[293] The author of *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* provides us valuable information on the trade between the Roman and the Indians, besides Pliny the Elder also mentioned the blooming view of the trade of the empire with the Indian, hence much Western evidences proved the free communication through the sea route from the West to the East; meanwhile, *HHS* and other Chinese sources also provides information on the formal communications among Da-qin, Parthia, and India on sea, "[Da-qin trades by sea with An-xi and Tian-zhu, the profit is tenfold.…Until the ninth year of the Yanxi reign-period of Emperor (166), An Dun, King of Da-qin, sent an envoy from beyond the frontier of Ri-nan who offered elephant tusk, rhinoceros horn, and tortoise shell. It was only then that for the first time communication was established [between the two states]", in vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 272; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 72-73.

and sea routes, with details on the routes mainly near Parthia. The land routes mentioned cover the remaining part of the Silk Road on land (through Parthia). The sea routes from the Far East to Da-qin have no relation with Parthia, but go through the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. Both land and sea routes were often used by envoys and merchants, most importantly for trade. It is observed that the term Da-qin and more other information in Chinese sources came firstly from the land routes of the Silk Road rather than from the sea routes, which is understandable, since Chinese had relations with Central Asia much earlier, from the time of the Western Han (second century BCE).

4.2.2 People

In Chinese literature, the descriptions of the Da-qin people are scattered throughout different works, so it is necessary to collect them from different places. These pieces of information are always repeated either exactly or with slight modifications in different works. This phenomenon reflects the tradition of ancient Chinese historiography that later works always copy or imitate the information of earlier ones. In the following discussion, the early sources will be the quoted, while the later sources will be occasionally referred to. According to the content of the descriptions of the Da-qin people, the image of the people will be presented from the following angles: their appearance, clothing, agricultural life, business activities, and the performances of magicians and jugglers.

The appearance of the people

In the sources which contain the information of Da-qin, a description of the general appearance of the Da-qin people quoted quite often records that "the people of this state are tall and strong, and well-proportioned" (*Wei-lue*, *Hou-han-ji*, *Hou-han-shu*, *Wei-shu*, *Bei-shi*, *Jin-shu*, *Tong-dian*), "resembling Chinese" (*Wei-lue*, *Hou-han-ji*, *Hou-han-shu*, *Jin-shu*, *Bei-shi*, *Tong-dian*). This description is always followed either by the name of Da-qin, "whence it is called Da-qin" (*Hou-han-shu*, *Wei-shu*, *Bei-shi*) by the phrase "they say that they used to be a branch of China" (*Wei-lue*), or by both of these two parts together (*Hou-han-ji*, *Tong-dian*). This is the first impression of the Da-qin people recorded in the sources. A geographical work written in the period of the Eastern Han (25-220) provides a description of the height of the Da-qin people:

"the men and women are all of height 1 *zhang*[294], and well-proportioned." A similar description also appears in a Daoist text of the fourth century, "white, tall and strong, some of them are of height 1 *zhang*".[295]

The above-mentioned information provides us with the following impression of Da-qin people: they are tall and strong, well-proportioned, resembling Chinese. The state is called Great Qin either because of the people's appearance, because they say that they are a branch of China, or because of both. Indeed, nothing special can be found in these descriptions, and they are in accordance with the general characteristics of the people from the West: tall and strong. The most debated issue is the credibility of the statement that the Da-qin people resemble Chinese or are a branch of China. Since the Romans and Chinese belong to different races, it is impossible for them to share any similarity in appearance. Some scholar believes it is a puerile perversion,[296] or a utopian imagination.

Clothing

The clothing of the Da-qin people is treated briefly in Chinese sources. A piece of general information first appeared in *Wei-lue*. It states that Da-qin people wear the clothing of *Hu*.[297] In ancient China, *Hu* (胡) was a Chinese term used to refer to "barbarian" groups who were the minorities on the northern and western frontiers of China; later on, its meaning covered all the foreign elements appearing in China.[298] From the meaning of *Hu*, it is very likely that this information came from the Silk

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[294] *Zhang*, the length unit of ancient China, during the first century to sixth century, especially in the period of Han, 1 zhang ≈2.31 m, see Denis Twitchett & John K. Fairbank (2008), vol.1, p. xxxviii. The description here is sure to be exaggerated; in some Chinese sources, such height appears very often in describing mythical people.

[295] *TQJYSDJ*, Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 196.

[296] Henry Yule (2009), p. lvi.

[297] "Like Chinese but in *Hu* clothing", Xi-rong-zhuan, *WL*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 279; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 91-92.

[298] Hill (2009, p. 129) believes that "It was commonly used for people of Persian, Sogdian, Turkish, Xianbi, Indian and Kushan origin and, occasionally, for the Xiongnu (probably because of their connections with the Tonghu or Eastern *Hu* – a separate tribe conquered by the Xiongnu)". The explanation of Hill is obviously based on his research of *Hou-han-shu*, actually, the history and range of the use of *Hu* in China much extends his definition, see Thomas J. Barfield (1989), p. 32. Nicola Di Cosmo (2002), pp. 127-130.

Road on land. Thus, it can be found that ancient Chinese regarded the Da-qin clothing as being the same of that of the "barbarians" who lived in the northern and western frontier of China.

Another specific description of the clothing of the Da-qin people is kept in *Wu-shi-wai-guo-zhuan,* which was written in the same period as *Wei-lue* (the third century). It is known from history that the author of this work, Kang Tai, had traveled to Southeast Asia as an ambassador of the Wu kingdom in the middle of the third century. Hence, it can be deduced that the information on Da-qin presented by him was very likely obtained from South China or Southeast Asia. This text records that "Da-qin people all wear *Kuzhe* (袴褶) with belts".[299] What is *Kuzhe*? Chinese scholars have found that *Kuzhe* is a kind of Chinese styled clothing which consists of a short coat and a pair of trousers. This style originated from the northern tribes of China. Compared with the older clothing styles, this pattern is the most comfortable for horse riding and working. The style was popular during the period between the Han and the Tang (206 BCE to 907 CE), and in particular was the most common type of daily clothing in the time of the Northern Dynasties (386-581).[300] Compared with the first record on the Da-qin clothing, this second record provides more specific information on that, while the clothing of this time still belongs to the *Hu* style. Through these two descriptions, it can be seen that, never mind this impression is the reflection of the reality or not, at least it implies that ancient Chinese in mind regarded the Da-qin people similar to the barbarians in clothing.

Agricultural life

The accounts on Da-qin mention that Da-qin people engaged in agriculture: "the customs are that they plant *Wugu*, and raise the silkworms with mulberry",[301] and "they also plant a number of trees"[302], such as "pine trees, cypresses, locust trees, catalpas, bamboos, willows, parasol trees", the animals of transportation include

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[299] *WSWGZ*, Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 154.

[300] Guo-wei Wang (1961), pp. 1069-1113; Chang-zhu Chen (1997), pp. 81-82.

[301] Xi-rong-zhuan, *WL*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 279; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 91-92. The same information also appears in *WS* and *BS*.

[302] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 271; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 66-67. The same information also appears in *HHJ*.

"horses, mules, donkeys, camels"[303].

These accounts demonstrate a vivid and rich agricultural life of the Da-qin people. The same practices also existed in the eastern part of the Roman empire. Based on the works of Western Classical writers, the agricultural richness of the Roman Orient is well known to us. The fourth-century *Expositio totius mundi et gentium* pictures Syria as a land "overflowing with grain, wine and oil."[304] In his article *Commercial Syria under the Roman Empire*, Louis C. West examines the economic condition of Syria from the beginning of the empire to the end of the fifth century. Through tables, he shows us the abundant agricultural products in Syria written in the works of the Classical writers, e. g. Strabo, Pliny Elder, Dio etc.[305] Meanwhile another scholar, F. M. Heichelheim, reminds us that, in Syria, wheat, rice, millet, hemp and many other kinds of grain were planted, and that the breeding of horses, donkeys, mules and camels was also an important part of their life. Apamea and Arabia were famous for their horses, Babylonia for its mules, and Petra and the region of Gaugamela for their camels.[306] In the details, it is said that cypress (mentioned in the plants of Da-qin) was common in the territory of Antioch and that its exploitation was even regulated by Roman law[307]; and that Pine trees were easily found in Asia Minor, especially the timber of Mount Ida[308].

Nonetheless, apart from the same things found in the Roman Orient, some Chinese elements in the description should be cleared up. The term *Wugu* is a typical Chinese term which means five kinds of cereals. They are a group of five farmed crops that were all important in ancient China. Sometimes the crops themselves were regarded as sacred; other times, their cultivation was regarded as a sacred boon from a mythological or supernatural source. More generally, *Wugu* can be employed in Chinese as a synecdoche referring to all grains or staple crops of which the end produce is of a granular nature. In ancient China, the planting of *Wugu* was always

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[303] Xi-rong-zhuan, *WL*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 279; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 91-92.

[304] See Louis C. West (1924), p. 161.

[305] See Louis C. West (1924), pp. 159-189.

[306] F. M. Heichelheim (1938), pp. 127-130.

[307] "De cupressis ex luco Daphnensi vel Perseis per Aegyptum non excidendis vel vendendis", Codex Justinianus, 11.78.0, see Krisztina Hoppál (2011), p. 286.

[308] T. R. S. Broughton (1938), p. 617, refers to Krisztina Hoppál (2011), p. 286.

regarded as the symbol of a happy and peaceful life, which was difficult to realize.

The part that has attracted the most attention is the one about silkworm breeding and silk-making. Many scholars have debated whether "there existed silkworms and sericulture in the Roman empire" for a long time. The Chinese description shows that raising silkworms with mulberry was a custom in Da-qin. However, in another place, it also records that Da-qin people buy Chinese silk from An-xi (Parthia) and reweave it. If sericulture existed in Da-qin, why did they still need to buy the silk from their neighbor? It seems that these two descriptions are in contradiction. Shiratori believes that this contradiction is due to the mixture of real facts with pure figments of imagination by Chinese writers.[309] The idea of is mainly based on the Chinese sources. Meanwhile, some other scholars provide us with valuable information in Western sources which should be given attention. It is found that both the writings of Aristotle and Pliny the Elder record that wild silkworms were raised on the island of Cos.[310] These records strongly support the existence of silk-making in the Roman empire. Based on this, the contradiction in the Chinese sources can be given a logical explanation: the fabric made in Da-qin was inferior, being made from wild silkworms, while the Chinese silk was of better quality; consequently, Da-qin people bought the Chinese silk and re-weaved it with local silk from wild silkworms.[311] Even if one accepts this view, the question remains of why the way of raising wild silk-worms and silk-making in the writings of Aristotle and Pliny the Elder does not agree with the Chinese description. Some scholars put forth a very interesting suggestion that the Chinese authors idealized the way silk worms were raised in Da-qin with the Chinese mode.[312]

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[309] "As we have already seen, they began depicting the Da-Ch'in people as an offshoot of the Chinese race; conferring upon them, therefore, the honourable title, Da-Ch'in; and represented them as enjoying ideal political systems worthy of the imaginary ancient emperors of China, symbolising Chinese political ideals, a variety of material blessings enviable in Chinese eyes, natural vegetation associated with ideas of health, vigour and pleasure to Chinese taste. Now it would have been hard for them to refrain from letting them also participate in the precious art of sericulture, the knowledge of which the Chinese must have held as their own privilege", see Shiratori (1956), pp. 67-68.

[310] Aristotle, *History of Animals*, 5, 19 551, b 10; Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, xi 75-78.

[311] Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 219.

[312] Hudson (1931), pp. 120-121; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 219.

Business activities

Business activities are an important component in the Chinese accounts on Da-qin. The Chinese sources mention that Da-qin people were actively engaged in business. They "trade by sea with An-xi (Parthia) and Tian-zhu (India), the profit is tenfold. The people are honest and frank; there are no two different prices on the market".[313] Another source records that Da-qin merchants often went to trade in Southeast Asia. In 226, one of them even came to the Chinese court of Wu in South China through Vietnam:

> The people of the state are traders and often visit Fu-nan, Ri-nan, and Jiao-zhi…In the fifth year of the Huangwu reign-period of Sun Quan (226), a merchant of Da-qin named Qin Lun came to Jiao-zhi. The prefect of Jiao-zhi Wu Miao sent him to visit Sun Quan. Sun Quan asked him questions about this native state and its people's customs, and Qin Lun replied in great detail.[314]

Apart from these clear descriptions of the business activities of the Da-qin people, there are also records of several Da-qin envoys, who brought abundant tributes to China (the years 166, 281, and 284):

> In the ninth year of Yanxi period of the Emperor Huan (166), the King of Da-qin, An Dun (Marcus Aurelius Antoninus), sent an embassy, who came through Ri-nan, outside of our frontier to offer ivory, rhinoceros's horns and tortoise shells, which was the first time they communicated with us.[315]

> In the second year of Taikang (太康, the year 281), the Da-qin State offered their gems to our court. They passed through Zhou (Guangzhou, 广州).[316]

> In the second year of Taikang (the year 281), when Lord Teng garrisoned the south as General of Pacifying the South and Governor of Guang (Guangzhou)…

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[313] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 272; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 72-73.

[314] Vol. 54, *LS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 306; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 119-120.

[315] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 272; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 72-73.

[316] Vol. 3, *JS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 305.

the Da-qin State came to offer tribute of their treasures passing through the province.[317]

In the fifth year of Taikang reign-period (the year 284), in the 12th month, on the day Gengwu (庚午), Lin-yi and Da-qin states sent respectively an envoy with a tribute.[318]

First of all, these records provide us with these basic facts: The Da-qin people engaged in business through the Indian Ocean; their customers and fellow businessmen were people from An-xi (Parthia), Tian-zhu (India), Fu-nan, Ri-nan, Jiao-zhi (Southeast Asia), and even from China. Da-qin envoys had been to China with tribute which could not have originated in Da-Qin.

Among the information given above, the most debated issue is the identity of the so-called Da-Qin envoys. Firstly, it is known that all these envoys came through South Asia and Southeast Asia, possibly all by sea.[319] The identity of the envoys is suspect, but most researchers are inclined to believe that they are Da-qin merchants.[320] Since the tributes offered by them were common products which could easily be found in South Asia and Southeast Asia, also the author of *Hou-han-shu*, on the records of the envoys in 166, believed that "the list of their tributes contained no jewels or special things whatsoever, something that makes us suspect that the people who brought the information of Da-qin exaggerated".[321] The possible explanation for them pretending to be envoys is that: Chinese authority had a tradition offering gifts and trading privileges to envoys coming for paying tribute from surroundings states, which was

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[317] *QBF*, Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 169.

[318] Vol. 3, *JS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 305; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 114.

[319] The envoys of 166 came from Ri-nan which is modern-day Vietnam. It is clear that the envoys came through the sea route; The envoys of 281 came through Guangzhou, which is in South China connecting with South Asia, hence, this envoys should be also came by sea; the envoys of 284 came to offer tribute together with another state Lin-yi which is in modern-day middle of Vietnam, accordingly, this envoys came from the same way.

[320] H. Yule (1915), p. 52; Hirth (1885), p. 176. Leslie and Gardiner (1996, p. 154) hold a different view that "it is likely that these travelers, whether merchant or envoys coming like the Indians via the Chinese outposts in Vietnam, had replenished their stock on the way, in India or South-east Asia."

[321] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 272; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 72-73.

regarded as a return for their reverence or obedience. So, for the sake of profits, it is likely that the merchants of Da-qin also pretended to be envoys coming to China.

At this point, it is relevant to focus on the Roman empire's commercial exchanges with the East. The highly developed commercial activities of the Roman empire can be seen in the writings of ancient Western writers, in particular its trade with the East, such as India. Strabo mentioned that, by the time of Augustus, up to 120 ships were setting sail every year from Myos Hormos to India.[322] The author of the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* tells us the bulk of the commodities sold by the Greco—Roman merchants in Barbaricum of India[323]:

> Thin clothing, figured linens, topaz, coral, storax, frankincense, vessels of glass, silver and gold plate, and a little wine in exchange for costus, bdellium, lycium, nard, turquoise, lapis lazuli, Seric skins, cotton cloth, silk yarn, and indigo. (Trans. by W. H. Schoff)[324]

The commercial communications with India also went on through the Indian harbour Barygaza, as well as through other harbors in the western, southern, and eastern side of the Indian Peninsula, such as Myziris:

> It is a village in plain sight by the sea. Muziris, of the same Kingdom, abounds in ships sent there with cargoes from Arabia, and by the Greeks; it is located on a river, distant from Tyndis by river and sea five hundred *stadia*, and up the river from the shore twenty *stadia*. (Trans. by W. H. Schoff)[325]

Pliny Elder mentions that almost one hundred million sesterces were sent from the Roman Empire to the Orient for commerce every year.[326] There is still more written evidence for the frequent and blooming trade activities between the Roman empire

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[322] *The Geography of Strabo*, vol. 1, 2.5.12.

[323] Barbaricum or Barbarikon (Βαρβαρικόν) was the name of a sea port near the modern-day city of Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, important in the Hellenistic era in Indian Ocean trade.

[324] *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, 49.

[325] *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea,* 54.

[326] Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, 12.41.84.

and the East in other classical writers. On the other side, archaeological evidence also provides us valuable testimonies about their communications. Hoards of Roman coins have been found in southern India from the period of Roman-Indian trade. Roman objects have been found in India in the seaside port city of Arikamedu[327], which was a center of trade during this era.[328] Meanwhile, a few Roman coins seem to have been carried further east, and the contexts of these finds are not very clear. They include the well-known second century medallions of Marcus Aurelius and Antoninus Pius found at Óc Eo[329], a third-century copper coin of Victorinus from U-Thong in Thailand, and another Roman coin, too worn to be properly identified, found at Khuan Lukpad in Peninsular Thailand [330] etc. Much archaeological evidence to support their commercial relations has also been found in China.[331]

Taking together the Chinese descriptions of the trade activities of Da-qin merchants, the reality of the commercial activities of Roman merchants in the East, and the abundant archaeological evidences, it is certain that Da-qin merchants were the merchants from the Roman empire, mainly Greeks, Syrians, and Egyptians. From the first century on, they started from Egypt, sailed through the Indian Ocean, and arrived in the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia, in particular the region of modern-day Vietnam, which played an important role in the connection between Da-qin and China similar to that of Tokaristan on the land route or of Ethiopia in the commerce with India. These Merchants, sometimes even pretended to be envoys (or real envoys), came to China alone or together with other people from these regions. Accordingly,

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[327] Arikamedu is an archaeological site in Kakkayanthope, Ariyankuppam Commune, Puducherry, India. It was a trading port in the 1st century CE, and many Roman artifacts have been excavated there.

[328] John Haywood (2000), p.46.

[329] It used to be a harbour and trade center in southwest of modern-day Vietnam, where lots of products from the Greco-Roman world arrived at. According to the views of some scholars, it is believed to be the harbour known to the Romans as Kattigara, see W.J. van der Meulen (1975), p. 17.

[330] Bérénice Bellina and Ian Glover (2004), p. 71.

[331] The archaeological excavations from China have found many Roman glass wares and coins (the coins were in particular from the later Roman period). Though it is not sure if they were brought to China by the Roman merchants or other intermediaries, at least they can be regarded as evidence of the influence of the Roman commerce in China, see Yun-yan Guo (2005); Ying Lin (2006); Xu-shan Zhang (2012).

the information of Da-qin was brought to China by them and kept in Chinese sources.[332] In Greek texts we have information for the commerce of the West beyond of India, for example, arrival of some Alexander at Kattigara, according to Ptolemy[333], and also from Cosmas Indicopleustes, when he wrote that some businessmen went till Tzinista (China) for commerce of silk.[334] The information is of especial significance, because it's clear and it does not leave any adoubt for the arrival of Byzantines in China to buy silk. Surely this kind of businessmen could not have been many, since the danger of such travelling was great. Further more, it is unknown how the Byzantines carried back the silk to the West. The most probable is to carry by the local transportation not only by land but also by sea, using the Indian and Ethiopian ships till the Adoulis of Ethiopia. The profit of this kind of business was great. The danger involved in this kind of travelling and the time needed for it made Cosmas describe it as a "pitiful trade", namely, miserable trade.[335]

Performances of magicians and jugglers

The magic and juggling performances are sometimes discussed together in Chinese sources. The people coming to China from the Western Regions who played the magic and juggling performances have been mentioned in plenty of Chinese sources, and somehow, in the ancient history of China, it seems to be a tradition for the states in the Western Regions to offer such performances to China. The earliest record of a foreign magic and juggling performance appeared in the first Chinese official work *Shi-j*i. It records that "the people of Tiao-zhi are good at magic and juggling"; "they offered to the Chinese court huge bird-eggs, and jugglers from Li-kan".[336] Both Tiao-zhi (Seleucid empire or Charakene Messene, or Babylonia) and Li-kan (Alexandria or Seleucid empire) are recorded as located to the west of An-xi, which is today the Near East. It is the farthest region mentioned so early in Chinese sources. Yan Shi-gu (581-

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[332] It is also possible that some people from the Indian subcontinent or Southeast Asia pretended to be the Da-qin merchants or envoys to come to China, though it is difficult. If this could have been the case, these people should have got the knowledge from the real Roman people about this state; hence, there is no need to suspect the authenticity of the information on Da-qin which was coming from sea route.

[333] Ptolemy (1991), p. 30.

[334] M. Kordosis (1996), p. 327.

[335] Cosmas Indicopleustes (2010), p. 48.

[336] Vol. 123, *SJ*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 268; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 46.

645), a historian from the Chinese Tang empire (618-907) explained that the magic and juggling performances in the Chinese texts refer to the following performances: "swallowing swords, spiting fire, planting melons and trees, killing persons, and cutting horses etc".[337] After the first record of the tribute of the magicians and jugglers, such tribute from Tiao-zhi, Li-xuan, An-xi (Parthian empire), Tian-zhu (India), Shan (an ancient kingdom in the region of the nowadays Shan state in Burma) etc. in later periods was recorded very often. Among them, the magicians and jugglers from Da-qin were also mentioned, and were described for the first time in the year 120 with the envoys of the Shan state:

> Their customs are endowed with magic. They can spit fire from mouths, bind and release themselves, juggle 12 (20) balls with their feet in a very smart way.[338]

> When in the middle of the Yuanchu period of Emperor An (the years 114-120), the state of Shan in Ri-nan from beyond the southern frontier of China offered magicians and jugglers who could perform transformations, spit fire, release themselves and also were skilled in juggling with up to ten balls. They said: 'We are people of the west of the sea.' That is Da-qin.[339]

> There are magicians and jugglers who can let fire burn on their foreheads, make water in their hands, lift up their feet and have pearls and jades fall from them, open their mouth and have banners and tufts of feathers come out at random.[340]

> San-yue, or juggler, and tz'a-hsi, or conjuring, are mostly combined with the skill of magic. They were introduced from the western countries, and this started with the coming of conjurers to China.[341]

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[337] Zhang-Qian-zhuan in *HS*, annotated by Yan Shi-gu, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 310; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 241.

[338] Xi-rong-zhuan, *WL*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 279; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 91-92.

[339] Vol. 15, *HHJ*, Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 137.

[340] Vol. 146, *TD*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 31; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 144-145..

[341] Vol. 146, *TD*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 320.

The subject of Da-qin magicians and jugglers is an interesting issue which has long attracted scholars' attention.[342] Due to different descriptions in the sources, different theories have been put forth. The outstanding French sinologist Pelliot puts forward the most popular view that the magicians were from Alexandria, Egypt. He points out first that Chinese sources mention that the magicians and jugglers were from Li-xuan and Hai-xi-guo, which can be identified with Alexandria through their pronunciation and location in Chinese sources. Secondly, there were active magicians living in Alexandria. On the basis of these two conditions, he asserts that the magicians are from Alexandria in Egypt.[343] However, there are also minor voices. Japanese scholar Miyazaki Ichisada mentions that juggling balls is one of the Roman arts. An image of Romans juggling balls is found on a diptych in the museum of Verona. He therefore proposes that the magicians were from the Italian peninsula.[344] D. D. Leslie and K. H. J. Gardiner partly agree with the idea of Pelliot: since "the offer of Shan" is from the sea route, it would be difficult for the jugglers to be from Syria, but easier from Egypt. Nevertheless, they still keep a cautious attitude, as they believe that the Da-qin magicians and jugglers in *Wei-lue* possibly came by land route.[345] In consideration of all the research which has been done until now, though it is difficult to make a conclusion on the subject, it appears that the records on Da-qin magicians and jugglers most likely point to the Roman empire, and most probably, to people from the Roman Orient.

With the aforesaid information, the full image of the Da-qin people is as follows:
Da-qin people are tall and strong, well-proportioned; they wear the clothing of *Hu*, to be specific, *Kuzhe*; they live on agriculture, planting five cereals and raising silkworms; some of them engage in trade activities with the people of An-xi (Parthia), Tian-zhu (India), Fu-nan and Ri-nan (the region of Southeast Asia); some of them came through Ri-nan and Jiao-zhi to China in the second and third centuries; they have people skilled in magician performances and juggling.

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[342] A group of scholars have contributed to this subject, see Pelliot (1915), pp. 690-691, (1926), pp. 21-22; Duyvendak (1949), pp. 7-8; Dubs (1957), pp. 2-3, 28; D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner (1996), p. 222.

[343] Pelliot (1915), pp. 690-691. Yu Tai-shan Yu (2013, p. 20) holds the same view.

[344] Miyazaki Ichisada (1939), pp. 55-86.

[345] D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner (1996), p. 222.

Based on the aforesaid Chinese information, discussions, and analyses, it can be concluded that the basic features of the Da-qin people's image in Chinese literature is a mixture of reality and non-reality. On the one hand, it shows real elements matching with the Romans in the eastern part of the empire, especially Syria and Egypt, such as their height, their agricultural life, business activities, and magician-juggling performances. However, on the other hand, several features in the image do not belong to Romans but are are typical of China, such as the clothing, silk-worms raised with mulberry trees, and many trees such as cypresses, locust trees, catalpas, and bamboos. Furthermore, several elements in the image of Da-qin are believed to originate from Chinese myths and ideals, such as Xi Wangmu (Queen Mother of the West), Ruoshui (Weak Water), and Liusha (Moving Sands)[346]. Henry Yule has expressed a similar viewpoint in his work: "a variety of what read to us as vague or puerile notices of the constitution and productions of the state, including, however, a detailed and apparently correct enough account of the coral fisheries of the Mediterranean".[347]

Because of the fanciful elements and typical Chinese elements, some scholars, whose representative is Shiratori, hold the theory that Da-qin is a utopia or suspect its accuracy.[348] Later on, many scholars believed that the utopia theory acquired still more strength due to information concerning Da-qin found in a Daoist text, in which Da-qin appears to be a product of imagination and full of myths. This Daoist text is called *Tai-qing-jin-ye-shen-dan-jing*[349]. Through the study of the distinguished

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[346] Lin Ying (2004, p. 338) mentions that "Most literature in the Han Dynasties refers the Weak Water to the fairy world where the immortals live… The Moving Sands seems lie between the human world and fairyland… In the fairy world lives Xi Wangmu, the goddess of west, who holds the medicine for immortality".

[347] Henry Yule (2009), p. lvii.

[348] M. Raschke (1978, pp. 645, 845, 849) points out that the precise meaning of Da-qin is open to question and reproaches Hirth for a rational explanation of all the details given by Chinese texts, quoted in M. Kordosis (1991a), p. 162.

[349] The English texts can be found in D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner (1996), pp. 116-118; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 193-196. The discussions about the Daoist and Utopian aspects are in Maspero (1950); Stein (1963), pp. 8-21; Shiratori (1956), pp. 33 ff, 49 ff; M. Kordosis (1991a), pp. 162-164; D. D. Leslie and K. H. Gardiner (1996), p. 116.

researcher on *Dao-zang*[350] Chen Guo-fu, the text was probably compiled in the period from the end of the Western Han to the beginning of the Eastern Han, between the first century BCE and the first century CE[351]. The text narrates that the state is the largest state and is situated to the west. The customs of the inhabitants in the state of Da-qin are similar to those of the men in Chang'an (the capital of China in the period of Han). The King himself cultivates the field and his wife herself gathers the leaves of the mulberry-trees and weaves cloth. The King governs, making use of the moral law, and the inhabitants obey. They are white and tall. Their ideas are very elevated, their relations perfect etc. At the end of the text, the author expresses his purpose: he praises the inhabitants of Da-qin for their prudence and reproaches the Chinese for their desire to become wealthy.[352] Maspero, Stein and D. D. Leslie- K. H. Gardiner all agree that the text contains quite a number of utopian elements. However, D. D. Leslie- K. H. Gardiner do not accept the extrapolation by Shiratori based on the utopian elements of the Standard Histories and Encyclopedia, and they also do not believe there is a link between the Daoist texts and the other mentioned sources, save for the historical passages in the Daoist texts.[353]

Indeed, M. Kordosis has good reason to oppose the utopian theory. He claims that the scholars supporting it emphasized the mythical material of the sources beyond necessity.[354] This has resulted in ongoing exaggerations in favor of the theory,

[350] The definition of *Dao-zang* in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism* is "What has popularly come to be known as the *Dao-zang* (Daoist Canon) is indisputably the foremost body of texts for research in the field of Daoist studies. The Ming Canon of 1445, or so-called *Zhengtong daozang* (Daoist Canon of the Zhengtong Reign Period), lies at the heart of all modern editions of the Canon. Its origins are closely linked to catalogues of Daoist writings prepared more than a millennium earlier. Canonic collections to which the Ming Canon is heir were produced under Tang, Song, Jurchen, and Mongol rulerships", see Judith M. Boltz (2008), p. 28.

[351] The view of Chen Guo-fu is popular among the experts on *Dao-zang*, Guo-fu Chen (1983), p. 291. Another main view for its compiling time is mainly from sinologists, and it is fixed generallyin the period from the Eastern Jin to the Liang (317-557), see Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 197.

[352] This summary of the text is given by M. Kordosis (1991a, p. 163-164).

[353] D. D. Leslie and K. H. Gardiner (1996), p. 116. Stein (1963, p. 15) believes that the descriptions on Da-qin from the texts of *WL* and T*QJYSDJ* are much similar.

[354] M. Kordosis (1991a), p. 166. Wolter (1967, pp. 33, 98) puts forward that "A more than romantic acquaintance with ta-ch'in vegetation developed…the Chinese, like the Greeks

transforming Da-qin into a mere utopia or a void shell without real substance woven into Chinese literature. Chinese scholar Yu Tai-shan also supports that, even though there is fanciful information, the image of the Roman Empire conceived by the Chinese can at any rate be seen.[355] Therefore, one should remain prudent when interpreting the knowledge of Chinese on Da-qin.

As to the Daoist text on Da-qin, I believe that it needs much more consideration. The first issue that needs to be addressed is the time of compilation. It has been mentioned that the experts on *Dao-zang* fix it on the period from the end of Western Han to the beginning of the Eastern Han, and it can be noticed that this view is mainly based on the examination of the Daoist terms used in the text.[356] Another well-known view fixes the compiling time in the period from the Eastern Jin to the Liang (317-557), and this view relies on the passage of Da-qin inside it.[357] Which position is correct? I trust both of them. Yet I believe there is a compromise between them: that the original text was written in the period from the end of the Western Han to the beginning of the Eastern Han, but later on, when it was inherited by later generations, new information was added; for instance, the passage on Da-qin[358]. I believe that this is the most reasonable explanation. For the information on Da-qin in the Daoist text, Maspero believes that it was taken from the third-century work *Nan-zhou-yi-wu-zhi,* which is on the curiosities of South Sea.[359] Stein discusses the possibility that Ge Hong (283-

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and Romans, were capable of writing matter-of-fact accounts of foreign parts"; D. D. Leslie-K. H. J. Gardiner (1996, p. xxv) also express that the earlier texts, *HHS* and *WL* in particular, are the most convincing sources.

[355] Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 30.

[356] Guo-fu Chen (1983), pp. 289-292.

[357] Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 197.

[358] The view of the new addition in the text on Da-qin is supported by Stein (1963), pp. 15-16, and Maspero (1950), pp. 98-99. In addition, another evidence for the new addition of the text is the record of the Jin people in the text, "Now, the various barbarian peoples sometimes call the Chinese men of Han, sometimes men of Jin. Da-qin being the furthest state from China, there are no travelers", Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 196-197.

[359] "L'auteur (du chapitre 3) dit lui-meme que son oeuvre est une addition aux deux premiers chapitres: si ceux-ci ont pris comme je l'ai dit ci-dessus leur forme definitive au Ve siecle, le troisieme chapitre est posterieur a cette date… En somme, le troisieme chapitre du T'ai-ts'ing Kin-yi chen-tan King, avec le petit conte qui a pris la place de la notice du Ta-ts'in du Nan-tcheou yi-wu tche de Wan Tchen, a ete vraisemblablement compose vers le milieu ou dans la seconde moitie du VIIe siecle de notre ere.", Maspero (1950), pp. 98-99, also

343[360]), who quoted the Daoist text in his work, got the information on Da-qin from the people coming from Da-qin.[361] Through comparing the information of the texts with other sources on Da-qin in the third and fourth centuries, it is clear that there are many elements in common, and the Daoist text no doubt is closely related to these sources. Besides, through the comparison, it can also be found that much information on Da-qin was exaggerated and made mythical, such as the diligent and kind behavior of the King and Queen and the myth of Lao Zi going to the West. Nevertheless, considering that Daoism is a traditional Chinese religion and the Daoist writings always reflect fanciful and mythical elements, it is understandable for the utopian characteristics of the Da-qin image in the text. It is possible that the author who changed the text found the grandeur of Da-qin, which was recorded as great state in the extreme west, and it was the only state could compete with the scale of China, since the legend mentions that the founder of Daoism Lao Zi went to the West without returning, hence, he borrowed Da-qin into their writing and regarded it as the state taught by Lao Zi, in which way to show the greatness of their faith.

4.2.3 Cities, vassal states, and capital

In the ancient Chinese sources related to Da-qin, more than 400 cities, as well as several vassal states, are mentioned in the territory of Da-qin. Among the cities, very few are mentioned by name. The identification of these cities and vassal states has constituted a continuous object of research for scholars, and a number of valuable conclusions have been drawn. However, the identities of the cities are still debated. In this part, the texts concerning the cities and vassal states will be listed; afterward, attention will be given to the previous research on them, in order to conclude a general impression of the cities.

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quoted in M. Kordosis (1991a), p. 163, note 20.

[360] Hui-xian Peng (2000), p. 171.

[361] According to the background of Ge Hong, it is known that his family lived in the kingdom of Wu during the Three Kingdoms period. His grandfather used to be an official in the Wu court; later on he was also an official in the Jin court. Hence, his background made him access to the affairs of the court. Stein (1963, pp. 15-16) mentions that in 166, 226, 281, and 284, there were recorded Da-qin envoys and merchants coming for tribute, and presenting the information of Da-qin to the King of Wu, in consideration of this, it is likely for Ge Hong to get the same knowledge and compile it in the Daoist text.

Cities, vassal states, and capital

It has over 400 walled cities. Small states which can be numbered in the tens are subject to it. The outer wall of the cities is made of stone... The city where he resides is more than 100 *li* in circumference. In this city are five palaces which are ten li apart from one another. In all the rooms of these palaces, the columns are made of crystal glass, as are the eating utensils in them.[362]

There is a river which comes out from this state. To the west, there is also a Great Sea. To the west of the sea is the town of Chi-san. From below the state going due north one reaches the town of Wu-dan. To the southwest again crossing a river, only after traveling for one day by boat does one cross over. To the southwest, again crossing a river, only after one day does one cross over. There are in all three large capital cities ... There are in the state in all over 400 small towns and settlements. Its territory stretches from east to west and from north to south over several thousand *li*. The King's capital lies on the banks of a river and by the sea. The defenses of the cities are made of stone...This state has established petty Kings which can be numbered in the tens. The city where the King has his seat of government is over 100 *li* in circumference, with officials and archives. The King has five palaces, ten *li* apart from one another... The feudatory vassal kingdoms are: Ze-san, Lü-fen, Qie-lan, Xian-du, Si-fu, Yu-luo. The remaining petty Kingdoms are so numerous that we cannot enumerate them individually. The king[dom] of Ze-san: It is subject to Da-qin. The seat of the king's government is right in the middle of the sea. To the north one reaches Lü-fen, going by water for half a year, [but] with favorable winds you arrive after one month. It is nearest to the town of An-gu in An-xi. To the southwest, one reaches the capital of Da-qin, how many li distant we do not know. The king[dom] of Lü-fen: It is subject to Da-qin. His seat of government is distant 2,000 *li* from the capital of Da-qin. From the town of Lü-fen going west to Da-qin one crosses over a flying sea-bridge 230 *li* long. The route across the sea goes southwest; if one goes round the sea, it is due west. The king[dom] of Qie-lan: It is subject to Da-qin. From the state of Si-tao, one goes due south crossing

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[362] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 271; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 66-67.

a river, then goes due west to Qie-lan, 3,000 *li*. When the route leads out to the south of the river, one goes west. From Qie-lan, one continues on due west to arrive at the state of Si-fu, 600 *li*. After the southern route meets Si-fu, one goes southwest to get to the state of Xian-du. Going due south from Qie-lan and Si-fu, [one comes to] Ji-shi (Accumulated Rocks). To the south of Ji-shi is the Great Sea which produces corals and true pearls. To the north of Qie-lan, Si-fu, Si-bin and A-man is a mountain running east–west. To the west and the east of the sea of Da-qin, each has mountains running north–south. The king[dom] of Xian-du: It is subject to Da-qin. His seat of government is distant by 600 *li* from Sifu to the northeast. The king[dom] of Si-fu: It is subject to Da-qin. His seat of government is distant by 340 *li* from Yu-luo to the northeast across the sea. [The state] of Yu-luo: It is subject to Da-qin. The seat of the king's government is northeast of Si-fu across a river. From Yu-luo to the northeast, again crossing a river [is An-xi]. From Si-luo to the northeast, again crossing a river [is also An-xi].[363]

The state of Da-qin is also called Li-xuan, with its capital, the city of An-du.[364]

Based on the listed sources, we can see that the main information on the cities, vassal states and capital of Da-qin appears in *Hou-han-shu* and *Wei-lue*, while a small amount of new information appears in other texts. Though the same information also exists in other texts, they are just duplication from *Hou-han-shu* and *Wei-lue*. The basic information on these cities and vassal states is as follows: in the state of Da-qin there are more than 400 cities, with Chi-san and Wu-dan the most prominent; the capital is overlooking a river and by the sea, and in *Wei-shu* its name is An-du[365]; There are several vassal states, and only a few of their names are given: they are Ze-san, Lü-fen, Qie-lan, Xian-du, Si-fu, and Yu-luo.

Actually, because of the ambiguities contained in the Chinese sources, it is quite

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[363] Xi-rong-zhuan, *WL*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), pp. 281-282; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 107-108.

[364] Vol. 102, Xi-yu-zhuan, *WS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 299; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 121-122.

[365] Vol. 102, *WS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 298; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 121-122.

difficult to identify the exact counterparts of the cities and the vassal states of Da-qin, and many scholars have made their own attempts. Hirth, based on his theory that Da-qin is the Roman Orient and the Western Sea is the Persian Gulf, proposes that Chi-san is Alexandria in Egypt, Ze-san is the Charax Spasinu, Lü-fen is Nicephorium, Qie-lan is Palmyra, Si-tao is Sittake, Xian-du is Damascus, Si-fu is Emesa (on the west bank of the Orontes), Yu-luo is the Hira in the Chaldean Lake, and An-du is Antioch.[366] Shiratori has also carefully examined these places' names. Though he agrees with Hirth on the identification of Si-tao and Qie-lan, he has different views on other cities: Lu-fen is Edessa, Si-fu is Damascus, Xian-du is Jerusalem and Yu-luo is Ura. M. Kordosis does not agree with Hirth's identifications, since he considers the Western Sea to be the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. Through examinations of linguistics, topography, and history, he believes that the vassal states of Da-qin should be the Armenian satrapies of the upper course of the Tigris: Ze-san is the modern-day town Djezireh on a small inland of Tigris, Lü-fen is Martyropolis (modern name Nefer), Qie-lan is Akilesene or Asthiniane, Xian-du is Anjit-Antitene, Si-fu is sof-Sophene, and Yu-luo is Egil-Iggilene. With these identifications, he is confident to identify An-du with Antioch.[367] D. D. Leslie and K. H. J. Gardiner, who concluded that Da-qin is the Roman empire with the capital in Rome, have the following identifications of the Da-qin cities and vassal states: Ze-san is Cyprus, Lü-fen is Cilicia (in Asia Minor), Qie-lan is Palmyra, Si-tao is Seleucia, Xian-du is Alexandria or Sidon or Jerusalem, Si-fu is Damascus, Yu-luo is towards Greece or in Mesopotamia, and Chi-san is Alexandria of Egypt; for An-du, since they do not believe that it could be the capital of the Roman empire, they do not give any identification, but reject all other identifications.[368] Chen Zhi-qiang, in his translations of the Chinese sources, agrees with the identification of Hirth, except that he believes that Si-fu is Hierapolis.[369] Yu Tai-shan's identifications give more attention to the pronunciation, and thus most of his identifications are different from Hirth's: Ze-san is Alexandria in Egypt, Lü-fen is Propontis, Xian-du is Jerusalem, Si-fu is Damascus, Yu-luo is Hatra.[370] In the newest translations of *Hou-han-shu* and

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[366] Hirth (1885), pp. 189-198, 207-214.
[367] M. Kordosis (1991a), pp. 186-192.
[368] D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner (1996), pp. 187, 189-198.
[369] Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 283.
[370] Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 124,

Wei-lue, all of Hill's identifications are different except for Chi-san: Ze-san is Azania, Lü-fen is Leukê Komê or modern Al Wajh, Qie-lan is Wadi Sirhan, Si-tao is Istakhr or Stakhr, Xian-du is Aynūnah= = Leukos Limên, Si-fu is Petra, Yu-luo is Karak.[371]

The above constitute scholars' main identifications of the cities, vassal states, and capital of Da-qin. Though major differences exist in each view, the hundreds of cities nevertheless reflect the large-scale urbanization of Da-qin. Their studies show us that, though much evidence can be found, such as from written sources, historical sources in different languages, geographical and topographical information, and archaeological findings, which have been widely examined and debated, there is still no final agreement. This is in part due to the long history of an empire living through frequent political changes, the rarity of the sources from the middle regions between Da-qin and China, and the ambiguity of the Chinese sources. It is hoped that a more intensive international and multi-disciplinary cooperation will promote this subject in the future.[372]

Despite this, we can make still some comments: the more than 400 cities which the Chinese sources say Da-qin had is much less than the real number in the Roman empire. However, if the number points to the eastern cities of Da-qin, which are identified as Syria, Palestine, and even Egypt, it is not a small number. This view was put forward by Hirth.[373] It deserves to be kept in mind that, in the list of the Byzantine cities which is kept in the sixth-century work *Synekdemos* by Hierocles[374], over 400 cities were said to be in the regions of Syria, Palestine, and the major part of

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[371] Roman Dependencies, http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/weilue/weilue.html#section14, 14-12-2014.

[372] The project of the *China and the Mediterranean World: Archaeological Materials and Literature* is such an international program going on, some of their achievements have been published, see http://www.mq.edu.au/research/centres_and_groups/ancient_cultures_research_centre/research/cultural_ex_silkroad/serica/publications/, 02-01-2015.

[373] Hirth (1885), pp. 218-219.

[374] The *Synekdemos* is one of the most invaluable monuments, which we have, for studying the political geography of the Roman Orient in the sixth century. The content of the text refers to E. Honigmann ed., *Le Synekdemos d'Hiérocles et l'Opuscule géographique de Georges de Chypre*, Editions de l'institut de philologie et d'histoire orientales et slaves, Bruxelles 1939.

Egypt. Hence, this correspondence strengthens the view that Da-qin in Chinese sources should be identified with the eastern part of the Roman empire. The three capitals as mentioned in the Chinese sources have also been well identified. Chi-san seems to be Alexandria, which in *Wei-lue* was located to the west of another sea (this sea is likely to be the Mediterranean Sea) and a river (likely Nile River)[375]. An-du is likely Antioch[376], exactly as Hirth described it (Tetrapolis and the palace on the River of Orontes).[377] Concerning the city Wu-dan, the viewpoint for its identity is the inland *Ιωτάβη*, which is in today the bay of Aqaba of the Red Sea, on the route to Da-qin. The identity of it is of interest, since that the position of the inland is of significance on the route from India to Palestine and Syria; yet, I believe that it is still not the final conclusion.[378] For the other recordings, since the length of the flying sea-bridge was recorded (230 *li*), M. Kordosis suspects that it could not have been on a real sea, but went over the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.[379] He supports that an underway on Tigris[380] could have existed. He believes that the vassal states of Da-qin should be located to the north of Mesopotamia (not to the south, as believed by Hirth),

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[375] Hirth (1885), p. 181.

[376] Apart from the popular identity of An-du to be Antioch, there are also some other views: Shiratori (1956, p. 102) believes that it is an invention of Chinese, "suggested by the legendary name An-i (Town of Peace), where Chinese tradition placed the residence of the antique model Emperors Shun and Yu, and certainly it had nothing whatever to do with the real name of the Ta-ch'in capital… No doubt, it was supplied by the author in order to give more substantiality to the Ta'ch'in account, which had hitherto lacked the specific name of the city. So, whatever phonetic affinity may be assumed between An-tu and Antioch is merely a coincidence". Raschke (1978, p. 854, note 849) points out that "subsequent excavations in Antioch have revealed that all of Hirth's speculations about the topography of the site, on the basis of the 'Hou-han-shu' were wrong".

[377] Hirth (1885), p. 210; M. Kordosis (1991a), p. 171.

[378] Kordosis (1991a), p. 192. Hirth (1885, p. 181) identifies it with the harbour of Erythraean Sea, Myros Hormos.

[379] This view is also held by Hirth and Shiratori, however, they believe that the "flying bridge" is a real one at the city of Zeugma, see Hirth (1885), p. 192; Shiratori (1956), pp. 104-105.

[380] M. Kordosis (1991a), pp. 187-191: "it is for a tunnel, where nowadays the water of the Blykalen su (the upper course of the Zibene Tigris) flows…This tunnel must be the flying bridge…although its length is much shorter than the 230 *li* or 240 given in the Chinese sources, it must be observed , therefore, that in Chinese sources there is a confused mixture of two elements: the existence of the tunnel and the length of the subterranean course of the Tigris."

and in the vast southern Armenia. This would reasonably explain the direction of the routes from China towards the capital of Da-qin, as recorded by the Chinese sources, as well as the distance between Da-qin and China. Although this proposition seems convincing, I believe that it is still necessary to find more proofs from sources to support it. In addition, the topography of the capital, which was near to a river and next to the sea, if we identify it with Antioch (it was not far away from the sea, and located on the wide Orontes River), also reflects the reality. The construction of the cities in Da-qin with stones was also the reality in the eastern part of the Roman empire.

4.2.4 King, administration, postal system and security

In the description of Da-qin, the basic structure of the state takes up a significant portion. It includes the duty of king and his selection, the administrative system, the services of the post and public security, the used languages, and the monetary system. All the information will be listed separately in the following discussion and then compared with the realities in the empire.

King's affairs, his selection and dethronement

> The king travels each day to one of these palaces to hear cases. At the end of five days, he has thus completed a circuit [of these five palaces]. A man carrying a bag is constantly charged with following the royal chariot. When anyone has anything to say to the King, his document is thrown into the bag. Having arrived at the palace, the King opens the bag, examines the contents [of the document], and decides if the petitioner is right or wrong. For each [of the palaces] there is a body of divisional officials and written archives… As for the king, he is not a permanent figure, but is chosen as being the most worthy. When a calamity or uncanny event or winds or rains out of season occur in the state, then he is deposed immediately and someone else is put in his place. The one who is thus deposed accepts mildly his dismissal and does not get angry at it.[381]

> Every three years the king goes out to see how the people are behaving. If there

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[381] Vol. 88, Xi-yu-zhuan, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 271; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 68-69.

is a complaint to the king about wrongdoing, the responsible official of the quarterly region is admonished, if it is a small matter, but if it is a serious matter, he is degraded and dismissed, with an order to appoint a worthy man in his place.[382]

First and foremost, these detailed descriptions show how the King of Da-qin deals with petitions, and then give information on the method of his selection. In analyzing the Chinese literature on Da-qin, Shiratori shares the view that there is a tendency in Chinese texts to idealize Da-qin, and he assumes that, among these descriptions, the rule for the selection of kings of Da-qin were taken from the myth of the three mythical Chinese Kings Yao, Shun, and Yu[383], who gave their throne, not to their own sons, but to able collaborators. His research leads to his conclusion of the utopia theory of Da-qin, which was popular among scholars half a century ago and is still referred to by modern scholars.

In consideration of the description in the texts and the extreme similarity between them, it is understandable that the view of the king's behavior and selection reminds us of the ancient Chinese historical image of the mythical Kings. I would therefore not deny that these descriptions were probably influenced by the Chinese myths. Even though, to be more important that, after examining Roman history, much similar descriptions about the Roman empire concerning the first and the second centuries CE and the early Byzantine period were found.

Firstly, following the text's arrangement, the treatment on petition by king attracted our attention. In *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* petition is defined as "a written instrument directed to some individual, official, legislative body, or court in order to redress a grievance or to request the granting of a favor".[384] Some scholars provide us a more comprehensive definition that petitions "are demands for a favor, or for the

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[382] Vol. 102, Xi-rong-zhuan, *WS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 299; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 121-122.

[383] Three mythical Kings belong to the second period of Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors, who were a group of mythological rulers and deities from ancient China during the period circa 2852 to 2070 BCE, see Charles Hucker (1995), p. 22.

[384] *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. "petition", accessed March 03, 2015, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/454043/petition.

redressing of an injustice, directed to some established authority. As the distribution of justice and largesse are important elements of ruling, rulers can hardly deny their subjects the right to approach them to implore them to exercise justice, or to grant a favor", and that petitions "seem to be a global phenomenon, stretching back in time almost as far as writing".[385] Based on the foregoing comprehensive definitions, it can be understood that petitions are a popular way for people to express their own opinions or complaints to the rulers. Since they had existed for such a long time, it surely wasn't an unusual or non-existent phenomenon in the Roman empire.

According to the records of the extant Roman historical sources on the history of the Roman empire, especially in the early period, the Roman emperors spent a major part of their time and energy keeping in touch with the public by way of speeches, receiving embassies, traveling around the empire, and above all answering letters and petitions.[386] Furthermore, in his research, Fergus Millar concludes that there was relative accessibility to the emperor from Augustus onward, which supports the reality of petitions directly addressed to the emperors[387]. Based on the above two advantages, petitions were apparently very freely used by all inhabitants of the empire in the first and the second centuries CE[388]. Through the testimony of original sources, Suetonius' vivid narration of the life of Emperor Titus provides us with his attitude toward petitions coming directly from the people.

> Titus was naturally kind-hearted… He also had a rule never to dismiss any petitioner without leaving him some hope that his request would be favorably considered. Even when warned by his staff how impossible it would be to make good such promises. Titus maintained that no one ought to go away disappointed from an audience with the emperor. One evening at dinner, realizing that he had done nobody any favour throughout the entire day, he spoke these memorable words: 'My friends, I have wasted a day'. (Trans. by J.C. Rolfe)[389]

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[385] Lex Heerma van Voss (2002), pp. 1-2.
[386] Tor Hauken (1998), p. i.
[387] Fergus Millar (1992), pp. 465-477.
[388] Tor Hauken (1998), p. 301.
[389] Suetonius, *Lives of Caesars*, Titus, 8.

In the writing of Cassius Dio, a description of the daily life of the Roman Emperor Septimius Severus (ruled from 193 to 211) is provided, which includes the way he dealt with the people's affairs:

> The following is the manner of life that Severus followed in time of peace. He was sure to be doing something before dawn, and afterwards he would take a walk, telling and hearing of the interest of the empire. Then he would hold court, unless there were some great festivals. Moreover, he used to do this most excellently; for he allowed the litigants plenty of time and he gave us, his advisers, full liberty to speak; He used to hear cases until noon. (Trans. by Earnest Cary)[390]

This text offers us a vivid view of the daily activity of the Roman Emperor Septimius Severus in times of peace: he walked on the street to listen to people; he deals with litigants for justice; he listened to the opinions of his advisers. Dealing with petitions from people was obviously an important part of his daily life. Compared with the way that Titus and Septimius Severus handling petitions, the Chinese description of Da-qin's king shows us that they are almost in perfect agreement: both of them listened to the complaints of people and returned to the place to solve the problems.

As to the Chinese description of the selection of the king in Da-qin, some historical evidence in the Roman empire could find an echo. As mentioned before, the history recorded in this period could belong to the period between the year 97 and 180, which was the period of the "five good emperors" of the Roman empire. Because of the productive governance of the five wise and beneficent rulers, the period is consistently regarded as the time when "Roman civilization is at its best, at its highest stage of development."[391] According to the Roman writers, among the five emperors, four were adopted by the former emperors and were later on accepted by the senate as emperors. There was only one exception: Emperor Nerva, who was chosen only by the senate after the death of Domitian. Furthermore, the chosen ones all had high

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[390] Dio Cassius, LXXVII, 17, 1-2.
[391] William C. Morey (1901), p. 259.

prestige and a good reputation among the army and the people. It is evident that the system of succession in the Roman empire was quite open and just, in which the king was chosen by the people through the acceptance of their representative, the senate. In praising the good rule of the five Emperors, Machiavelli writes that "Titus, Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus, and Marcus had neither need of praetorian cohorts nor countless legions to guard them, but were defended by their own good lives, the good-will of their subjects, and the attachment of the senate".[392] Obviously, the historical reality coincides with the Chinese description that "The King is not permanent ruler but appointed men of merit." The method of the king's dethronement did not find an equivalent in Western sources from the period of the first century to the second century. Though Shiratori assumes its origin is in the tale of the three mythical Kings, no such evidence can be found. Yu Tai-shan[393] believes that the dethronement of the king could not possibly be a Chinese custom. Nevertheless, he did not give us any suggestion of what it could be.[394]

The treatment of the officials who were failing to fulfill their duty is included in the Chinese texts. Similar events are recorded by Roman authors. Christopher J. Fuhrmann points out that, because of the provincial roots of many emperors and senators, from the second century onward, governance of the provinces was improved. And with more regular and widespread negotiations, political petitions, embassies and official speeches, justice in the provinces was cared for more[395]. The result of this fact is that Domitian "took such care to exercise restraint over the city officials and the governors of the provinces, that at no time they were more honest or just, whereas

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[392] Machiavelli (1883), p. 47.

[393] Tai-shan Yu (2012), footnote 102, p. 59.

[394] Since there is no such rule in China or the Roman empire, in my view, it could be a fabrication of the people who brought the information on Da-qin. But, where is the origin? As far as I know, the mythology of Oedipus is such an example in accordance with the description. Oedipus was the mythical King of Thebes in Greece. Though Oedipus was a potent hero, when he was King of Thebes, the city suffered all kinds of disasters. After knowing his misfortune, he voluntarily gave up the throne without any complaint but only regrets. In consideration of Zhang Xu-shan's research on Greek mythical Sirens which could be the one told to Gan Ying by the sailors of Parthia (Xu-shan Zhang 2008, pp. 253-259), maybe, we can assume that a similar influence could be existing in the description of the political system.

[395] Christopher J. Fuhrmann (2011), pp. 147-148.

after his time we have seen many of them charged with all manner of offences" (Trans. by J.C. Rolfe),[396] and as Hadrian "went about the provinces he punished procurators and governors as their actions demanded, and indeed with such severity that it was believed that he incited those who brought the accusations." (Trans. by David Magie)[397] Comparing these records of Roman sources with the Chinese descriptions, they contain obvious similarities.

In the next centuries, especially after the acceptance of Christianity as the official religion of the empire, the emperor was limited by justice and ethics, as well as the teaching of the new religion. There were spiritual and ethical barriers which had their origin in Hellenistic tradition and Christian teaching. Justice and charity were the main features of the Byzantine emperors. The complaints of the world were put forward to the emperor in the hippodrome or in the churches in Constantinople when the emperor visited them during festivals. Everything was done to create a feeling of confidence and safety in the inhabitants.[398] Those customs concerning king mentioned in Chinese sources are similar to those meetings between the emperor and the common people in which complaints about the roads of Constantinople were heard, and are shadows of an early period of the empire.

Administration

They have appointed 36 generals who all meet together to discuss affairs of state.[399]

They have appointed 36 generals who discuss everything together. If one general does not come, then no discussion takes place.[400]

Each city has eight officials to rule over the four quarters [of the state]; but in the royal city there are also established 8 high officials to rule over the four quarters [of the state]. The royal city has also established 8 officials who divide

[396] Suetonius, *Lives of Caesars*, Domitian, 8.2.

[397] *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Hadrian, 13.10.

[398] Αικατερίνη Χριστοφιλοπούλου (2012), pp. 402-403.

[399] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 271; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 68.

[400] Xi-rong-zhuan, *WL*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 280; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 92.

up the rule of the four cities. If a discussion of affairs of state or of the four quarters [of the state] does not produce a decision, then the officials of the four cities meet at the King's residence to discuss [the matter]. Only after the King himself has heard the matter is any action taken.[401]

The above texts mention that there were 36 (8+8 in the second description) generals in the state who helped the king manage the state and held council to deliberate national affairs. The second text even mentions that if some of the generals were absent, the council would not be held. From this description, it can be seen that the main officials of the state were the generals who advised the king in his decision-making. In the early period of the Roman empire, the main rulers of the empire were the emperor and the provincial governors. The emperor led the whole empire and made all important decisions. Under him, the governors dealt with the affairs of the provinces, which were the main structural units of the empire. The number of the provinces was in flux since the time of Augustus. Only in the period of Nero did there exist 36 provinces, the same number written in the Chinese description. However, since 36 is regarded as a lucky number in Chinese culture, it is very possible that this number was used for Da-qin in order to idealize the state. The four quarters of Da-qin must be the four Eparches of the empire: Oriens; Illyricium; Italy and Africa; and Galliae. This administrative system was set up by Diocletian and Constantine the Great[402]. The 16 officials (8+8) are possibly the administrators of these four Eparchies[403]. While there were actually 13 officials, it is likely that the Chinese sources include the administrators of the capital and the vassal states.

Postal system and public security

They set up postal stations all covered with plaster.…When the envoys of a neighboring state arrives at the border, they ride yi (驿) to reach the royal capital, and when they arrive they are immediately given golden coins… The people are dense, and every ten *li* there is a *Ting* (亭) and thirty *li* there is a *Zhi*

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[401] Vol. 102, Xi-yu-zhuan, *WS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 299; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 121-122.

[402] The details of the "Tetrarchy" refers to Alan. K. Bowman (2008), pp. 74-88.

[403] M. Kordosis (1996), pp. 183-187.

(置), hence, there are no warnings of robbers and thieves.[404]

They have public and private palaces and houses, with multiple storeys. Their flags and drums, with canopies over small chariots, and *Youyi* (邮驿) and *Ting* and *Zhi* just like those in China.[405]

These two pieces of information describe the systems of postal stations or relay stations in Da-qin. The systems described were quite advanced and organized. It has to be admitted that, during this same period in which Da-qin is being described, only the Roman empire and the Parthian empire were implementing these systems in the West.

As to the postal system in the Roman empire, it was almost always traced back to Augustus, who was believed to have set up the prototype of the first public postal system, *Cursus Publicus*. It is said that, in the period of *Res Publica Romana,* there was no systematic public postal system. However, at the end of the *Res Publica Romana,* following the rapid expansion of the state and the inclusion of the Mediterranean Sea as *Mare Nostrum*, the Roman empire urgently needed to set up such a public system for effective dominion of the large territory. This work fell on Augustus, who was regarded as the first emperor of the Roman empire. The Roman writer Suetonius shows us why the prototype of *Cursus Publicus* was created and how it worked:

To enable what was going on in each of the provinces to be reported and known more speedily and promptly, he at first stationed young men at short intervals along the military roads, and afterwards post-chaises. The latter has seemed the more convenient arrangement, since the same men who bring the dispatches from any place can, if occasion demands, be questioned as well. (Trans. by J.C. Rolfe)[406]

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[404] Vol. 88, Xi-yu-zhuan, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), pp. 271-272; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 66-67, 72, 74-75.

[405] Xi-rong-zhuan, *WL*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 279; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 91-92.

[406] Suetonius, *Lives of Caesars*, Divus Augustus, Liber II, 49.

Later on the system was inherited, continued and extended in the empire until the final appearance of the *Cursus Publicus*. Some scholar believes that the name *Cursus Publicus* first appeared as a legal term in a law from 315 in *Codex Theodosianus*[407] while others mark its first appearance in all kinds of sources no later than the year 300[408]. In the sixth century, the Byzantine writer Procopius gives us a much more vivid image of how the *Cursus Publicus* system was set up and operated in earlier periods:

And as to the question whether Justinian had any consideration for the welfare of the State, the things he did to the public post and to the spies will be illuminating. For the Roman Emperors of earlier times, by way of making provision that everything should be reported to them speedily and be subject to no delay, — such as the damage inflicted by the enemy upon each several states, whatever befell the cities in the course of civil conflict or of some unforeseen calamity, the acts of the magistrates and of all others in every part of the Roman empire — and also, to the end that those who conveyed the annual taxes might reach the capital safely and without either delay or risk, had created a swift public post extending everywhere, in the following manner. Within the distance included in each day's journey for an unencumbered traveler they established stations, sometimes eight, sometimes less, but as a general thing not less than five. And horses to the number of forty stood ready at each station. And grooms in proportion to the number of horses were detailed to all stations. And always traveling with frequent changes of the horses, which were of the most approved breeds, those to whom this duty was assigned covered, on occasion, a ten-days' journey in a single day, and accomplished all those things which have just been mentioned; and furthermore, the owners of the land everywhere, and particularly if their lands happened to lie in the interior, were exceedingly prosperous because of this system. For every year they sold the surplus of their crops to the Government for the maintenance of horses and grooms, and thus earned much money. And the result of all this was that while the treasury regularly received the taxes assessed upon each man, yet those who paid the

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[407] Yu-ling Wang (2012), p. 4.

[408] Lucas Lemcke (2013), p. 11.

taxes received their money but also again immediately, and there was the further advantage that the State business has been accomplished. (Trans. by H. B. Dewing)[409]

As is evident in the text, the public postal system was quite organized and efficient for centuries. Considering the description of the well-organized postal systems of Da-qin, Hirth argues that it is the same as the Roman empire's system[410]. However, divisions in *Ting* and *Zhi* are a Chinese system, and from the period of Augustus, there was no such division with ten and thirty in the Roman empire; therefore, the descriptions do not agree. This contradiction may reflect that the Chinese did not really know the system, but tried to use the Chinese system to describe the Da-qin one. However, in discussing the postal system of Da-qin, Hirth also found a correspondence between *li* and *stadium*. He found that, in the ancient units of distance, only *parasang* can correspond to the setting of *Zhi* with 30 *li*. *Parasang* was an ancient Persian unit of distance equal to 30 *stadia*. Since *parasang* and *stadium* were both used widely in the ancient Greek world, and ancient Greek historians sometimes used both, Hirth assumes that *li* corresponds to *stadium*. He also provides a credible table of the journeys in Central Asia in *Wei-lue* to support his viewpoint.[411] M. Kordosis also found evidence which strengthens this viewpoint of Hirth[412]. But the problem is that the distance unit of *li* was not equal to *stadium*. In the period of Qin-Han (BCE 221 to 220 CE), 1 *li* was equal to 415 meters[413], while 1 *stadium* was equal to 600 Greek or 625 Roman feet, or 505 feet 9 inches=154 meters,[414] depending on the period. Their equating of *li* with *stadium* is perplexing and raises some questions. The evidence points to the following possibility: on describing the geography of the extreme west region, the *li* in *Wei-lue*, *Hou-han-shu* and other ancient Chinese sources was equal to *stadium*, which probably shows that the sources of the Chinese writings on the region were from Central Asia, or from Persia and the Middle East.[415] This again shows that ancient Chinese sources could draw information from foreign sources, in particular

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[409] Procopius, *Anecdota* XXX 1-7.

[410] Hirth (1885), pp. 221-222.

[411] Hirth (1885), pp. 222-225.

[412] M. Kordosis (1991a), p. 182.

[413] Denis Twitchett & John K. Fairbank (2008), p. xxxviii.

[414] William Smith (1843), pp. 908-909.

[415] M. Kordosis (1991a), p. 182 ff.

from the West, and the value of them should be ascertained.

4.2.5 Writing and currency

Writing

Their custom is that they use the writing of *Hu* (Barbarian).[416]

This record is from the *Wei-lue* (written in around 239-265), and also the earliest record of Da-qin writing[417]. It tells us that Da-qin is written in the way of *Hu*. *Hu*, in the ancient Chinese cultural context, points to the foreigners who lived in the north of China, and sometimes extends to all foreign people. The term has the semantic connotation of contempt and discrimination, just as the term "barbarian" used in Middle Ages[418]. Hence, it is possible that their usage of the term reflects their impression of Da-qin before the fourth century: their way of writing was similar to the barbarians' that was unfamiliar to the Chinese. Actually, the Chinese of the early period did not know exactly the details of the languages from far-away countries. The first clear record of the Da-qin language (Da-qin shu, 大秦书) appeared in a Chinese-translated Buddhist sculpture *Lalitavistara* (Pu-yao-jing, 普曜经) in the period from 266 to 308/313.[419] The name of the language of Da-qin is the Chinese translation of the original name *Yavani* used on the Eurasian Steppe.[420] Since *Yavani* is Greek, it can be easily deduced that Da-qin writing is Greek.

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[416] Xi-rong-zhuan, *WL*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 279; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 91-92.

[417] The second record on the Da-qin writing is from *TD*, "The royal city has officials and secretaries, and the writing system was learned from the *Hu*", see Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 315; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 141.

[418] Hirth (1885, p. 271) proposes that "when *Hu* is connected with the information on the extreme west, it denotes the inhabitants of the coast of the Persian Gulf, especially those of the Euphrates and Tigris states, or traveling Arabs". As pointed above, "Hu" is a Chinese term as "barbarian" for the foreigners living in the northern and western regions outside of China. Hirth just tried to match its meaning with the people which he believed should be, it is not reasonable and also difficult to be accepted.

[419] Nai-xi Mei (1996), pp. 49-52.

[420] Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 207, 233.

Currency

> They struck coins with gold and silver, ten silver coins being equal to one gold coin.[421]

The above information on the currency of Da-qan firstly appeared in *Hou-han-shu* and *Wei-lue*. As a frequently mentioned piece of information on Da-qin, it is kept in different texts. Compared to the Chinese descriptions of the currency of other states located in Xi-yu (Western Regions), especially of An-xi (Parthia), Ji-bin[422], and Wu-yi-shan-li (Alexandria Ariana)[423], which have been discussed by scholars[424], the description on Da-qin's currency is very simple. Nevertheless, the following valuable information can be summarized: the coins of Da-qin are made of gold and silver, and its basic exchange rate is one gold coin to ten silver coins. This description matches the situation in the Roman Empire in that gold and silver were the materials of its currency. Though the monetary system from the Roman Republic to the end of the empire went through changes, gold and silver were always the main numismatic materials. As to the exchange rate between gold and silver coins, it fluctuated in the Roman empire, especially in the periods in which major reforms were implemented by Augustus, Diocletian and Constantine the Great, but the basic ratio was 1:12 throughout this whole period[425]; furthermore, according to the writings of Pliny Elder, the exchange rate in the time of Nero was even 1:11. It is clear that the exchange rate in Da-qin mentioned by the Chinese sources is very close to the rate in the Roman empire.[426]

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[421] Xi-rong-zhuan, *WL*, Vol. 88, Xi-yu-zhuan, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), pp. 271-272; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 72.

[422] Ji-bin was recorded in Chinese sources as ancient state existed for centuries in South Asia. Generally it is identified with Kasmir and Uddiyana. As to its territory, there has been a considerable disputation in the academic circles. See Chong-feng Li (2005), p. 985.

[423] Wu-yi-shan-li is generally identified with Alexandria Ariana (or called Alexandria Arachosia), see Daffinà (1982), p 319; Chavannes (1905), p. 555, note. 6; Pelliot (1959), p. 29; Pulleyblank (1963), pp. 116, 128; J. Hill (2004), Section 8-The Kingdom of Wuyishanli, note. 5; Lucas Christopoulos (2012), p. 4 etc.

[424] D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner (1996), pp. 224-225.

[425] Dominic Rathbone (2009), p. 302.

[426] On discussing the exchange rate, Hill quotes the discussion of Prasad, "in Plato's and Xenophon's time and more than 100 years after the death of Alexander 10 : 1…The relative value of silver and gold was 10: 1 which continued for a long time. It was an international

Though there is no exact evidence supporting the equivalence on the exchange rate of the gold and silver coins between the Chinese information on them and the reality in the Roman empire, it does not affect the reality of the appearance and use of the Roman coins especially the coins of the eastern Roman (Byzantine) empire in China. The earliest recorded discovery of Roman coins in China was published in 1885. It is said that 16 Roman coins from the reign of Tiberius to the reign of Gallienus were found in the Shan-xi Province of China[427]. However, taking in consideration the place of the discovery and the details of the coins, the Chinese archaeologist Xia Nai thought that they could have been a collection brought to China by some foreigner in modern times instead of the result of ancient trade.[428] Afterwards, another Roman coin, which was an imitation of the solidus of Constantine V (741-775), was discovered through excavation and published in 1897.[429] This event is generally regarded as the beginning of the discovery of Roman coins in China. In the following decades, especially in the beginning of the twentieth century with the arrivals of the Western explorers Sven Hedin, Aurel Stein et al., more Roman coins and their imitations were discovered through archaeological excavations. After the large-scale Chinese organized excavations of the 1950s, the number of unearthed Roman coins quickly increased. According to the data, there had been around 100 pieces of Roman coins and their imitations found in China by 2005, 97 of which had been published.[430]

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relative value. Ancient India by establishing the Mana standard of exchange currency internationalised the relative value at 10: 1", with this viewpoint, he believes that "This, apparently, continued for some time, probably into the period covered by the *Wei-lue*". I have to say that Hill did not provide any reliable evidence to support his viewpoint, see John Hill, Notes to *Wei-lue*, 12.2, https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/weilue/notes11_30.html#12_2, 22-01-2015; Prasad (1977), p. 174.

[427] S. W. Bushell (1886), pp. 17-28.

[428] Nai Xia (1959), pp. 71-72.

[429] E. Zeimal (1991-1992), p. 169.

[430] In this data, since no clear evidence supporting the discovery of the 16 Roman coins in China, they were not included in Yun-yan Guo, *Research on the Discovery of Byzantine Coins and Their Imitations Found in China* [Zhongguo faxian de baizhant jinbi jiqi fangzhipin yanjiu], PhD Dissertation, Tianjin: Nankai University 2006, pp. 19, 230. After the defense of the dissertation, it is reported that another two Roman *solidi* and three Roman silver coins were unearthed in China in 2012 and 2013, see Unearthed A Gold Coin of Ancient Roman in the Family Grave of Zhang of Northern Zhou in Xi'an [Xi'an beizhou

The Chinese standard history "Shi-huo-zhi *of Sui-shu*", recorded in the period of the Northern Zhou (557-580), relates that "in the prefectures of Hexi region (in nowadays Gansu Province of China), gold and silver coins from the Western Regions were accepted, and that the government did not prohibit this activity".[431] According to the historical records, during that period, the Chinese government did not mint gold and silver coins; in addition, the Hexi region is located on the main route of the Silk Road, and different foreigners always lived here or crossed the region; furthermore, plenty of Sassanian coins were found in China and certified as currency circulating in the Northwest of China.[432] Therefore, in view of the above evidence, many scholars believe that the aforementioned gold coins were Roman coins, whereas the silver ones were Sassanian coins, circulating in China.[433] The international Roman numismatists François Thierry and Cécile Morrisson also accept this view.[434] A recent study by Zhang Xu-shan strongly argues for this view of circulation. Apart from the foregoing evidence, he noticed that the majority of Roman coins discovered in China show wear and tear, a characteristic which points to circulation; and some other texts and ancient Turfan documents also support the circulation of gold coins, which are probably of Roman origin. Furthermore, he suggests that Roman coins could have circulated in western China because of the special status of its regions, which did not have a complete currency system, and also given the settlements of Sogdians and other businessmen from the West there.[435] Even so, given the small quantity of Roman coins and some of them being circulated, some scholars are still cautious[436] or do not support the view of circulation.[437]

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zhangshi jiazumu chutu guluoma jinbi], http://news.96hq.com/a/20130301/217505.html, 11-11-2013; 'A Byzantine Coins unearthed in the Grave which is suspected to belong to Yuan Gong Emperor Jie min of Northern Wei' [Yi beizhou jiemindi yuangongmu xian Luoyang chutu baizhanting jinbi], http://www.chinanews.com/cul/2013/10-24/5418607.shtml, 11-11-2013; Tie-sheng Li, Li-feng Huo, & Run-feng Xia (2006), pp. 63-65.

[431] Shi-huo-zhi in *SSh*, http://www.xysa.net/a200/h350/15suishu/t-024.htm, 26-01-2015.

[432] Liu-shuo Kang (2010), pp. 464-474.

[433] Nai Xia (1959), p. 70.

[434] F. Thierry, & C. Morrison (1994), pp. 109-145.

[435] Xu-shan Zhang (2012), pp. 225-226.

[436] Yun-yan Guo (2005), pp. 109-111.

[437] Feng Luo (2004), pp. 75-78.

According to my view, in consideration of the circulation of the Sassanian coins in China and the fact that many foreign merchants lived in China, in particular along the Silk Road, I accept the view of the circulation of the Roman coins in China, or at least limited circulation among the foreign merchants in China, in particular the Sogdians[438]. Besides, the archaeological evidence proves us that decoration and keeping as treasures are .also the main use of the Roman coins in China.

4.2.6 Products

In the Chinese sources on Da-qin, information on the products of Da-qin occupies a large portion. They list different kinds of products, including nearly all of the precious products that could be found there. This shows the image of Da-qin as a state full of treasures.

The products of Da-qin were found in many different sources. They were in the sources containing rich information on Da-qin, especially in *Hou-han-shu* and *Wei-lue*. Each of the two sources has a long list of Da-qin products, and the list in *Wei-lue* contains more kinds of products than the one in *Hou-han-shu*. Apart from these two main sources, the products of Da-qin also abound in other kinds of sources. According to the statistics of D. D. Leslie and K. H. J. Gardiner, there are approximately 90 kinds of Da-qin products recorded in Chinese sources[439]. They classified the products into seven types with few commentaries on them: Animals and animal products; plants; perfumes and spices; minerals and chemicals; jewels; glass and crystal; textiles. Through their work, it can be noticed that their discussions are intermingled with ambiguities and confusions.

D. D. Leslie and K. H. J. Gardiner list all the products found in the sources which are

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[438] The Sogdian merchants were the main intermediary on the eastern part of the Silk Road, and many archaeological evidences have proved the presence of Sogdian merchant communities in the main cities of the west of China, as well as in inner China since the third century, see Etienne de la Vaissiere, "Sogdian Trade, The people of Sogdiana were the main caravan merchants of Central Asia from the 5th to the 8th century", http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sogdian-trade, 15-02-2015.

[439] D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner (1996), p. 201.

referred to in their work. All the products are arranged in the same order in which they appear in the Chinese sources, and most of the identified ones are given with their Latin or English names and their Chinese characters in parenthesis, while the group of products which have not been identified have been mentioned with their Pinyin spellings and Chinese characters.

Animals and animal products:
mulberry silk-worm (桑蚕), horse (马), donkey (驴), mule (骡), camel (骆驼), divine tortoise (神龟), white horses with red manes (白马朱鬣), rhino horn of frightening chickens (骇鸡犀), tortoise shell (瑇瑁), black bear (玄熊), red hornless (or immature) dragons (赤螭), poison-avoiding rats (辟毒鼠), large conche (大贝), tridacninae (车渠), ivory (象牙).

Plants and products made of them:
pine (松), cypress (柏), pagoda-tree (槐), catalpa (梓), bamboo (竹), reed (苇), poplar (杨柳), parasol tree (梧桐), hundreds of grass, five kinds of cereals, Henna flower (指甲花), Schizostachyum (思劳竹), date (枣), hazelnut (榛), carambola (桃), lotus root (藕), Nutmeg (肉豆蔻), Sensitive plant (无风独摇), turnip (芜荑), Mi-xiang paper (蜜香纸, paper made of the bark of the Mi-xiang tree), Bao-xiang-lv (抱木履, shoes made of the Bao tree).

Perfumes and spices:
Storax (苏合), Diospyrus ebenum (微木), Aloe perryi (狄提), Rosmarinus officinalis (迷迷), Commiphora molmol (兜納), Aconitum carmichaelii (白附子), Boswellia carteri (薰陸), Curcuma aromatica (鬱金), Ruta graveolens (芸膠), Balsamodendron Africanum, Aucklandia Costus (木香), Hovenia dulcis, incense of Wisteria (降真香), Frankincene (乳香), citron (钩缘子), fan-hun-xiang (返魂香, incense for returning the soul).

Minerals and chemicals:
gold (金), silver (银), copper (铜), iron (铁), lead (铅), tin (锡), southern copper

(南金), diamond (金刚), alum (白矾), big golden-ring (大金镮), amber (虎珀), mica (玫瑰), realgar (雄黄), orpiment (雌黄).

Jewels:

carnelian (玛瑙), cui-jue-yu-ge (翠爵羽翮, a kind of treasure), coloured veined jade (符采玉), 'bright moon' pearls (明月珠), night-shining 'pearls' (夜光珠), genuine white pearls (真白珠), ten varieties of veluriyam: red, white, black, green, yellow, blue-green, dark blue, light blue, fiery red, purple (赤白黑绿黄青绀缥红紫十种流離), a veluriyam (璆琳), blue-green jade (琅玕), nephrite (碧), multicoloured jade (五色玉), mu-nan (木难).

Glass and crystal:

crystal (水精), coral(珊瑚), veluriyam (琉璃), po-li (颇黎), glass with five colors (五色玻璃), bai-he (白和), pu-ying (朴英).

Textiles:

ten sorts of wool rugs: yellow, white, black, green, purple, fiery red, deep red, dark blue, golden yellow, light blue and back to yellow (黄白黑绿紫红绛绀金黄缥留黄十种氍毹), finely patterned multicoloured wool carpets (五色氍[登毛]), five colours and nine colours of multicoloured lower quality wool carpets (五色九色首下氍[登毛]), gold threaded embroidery (金縷繡), polychrome (warp twill) fine silk or chiffon (杂色绫), woven gold cloth (金塗布), fei-chi cloth (绯持布), fa-lu cloth (發陸布), fei-chi-qu cloth (绯持渠布), a-luo-de cloth (阿羅得布), ba-ze cloth (巴则布), du-dai cloth (度代布), wen-su cloth (温宿布), five-coloured peach cloth (五色桃布), crimson curtains woven with gold (绛地金織帳), multicoloured covered-bucket curtains (五色斗帐).

Based on the foregoing lists, generally, it can be noticed that the products recorded concern nearly every aspect of the production of the state, and the description of some products is highly detailed. This fact shows the high interest of the Chinese for the extreme west state, and also reflects their image of Da-qin as a treasure state.

It is well known that, as the largest empire for a long period in European history, the Roman empire owned a vast territory and produced a large array of products, and its eastern part was once the trading center of the whole empire. The writings of the ancient Western authors discuss at length the wealth of the Roman empire, in particular the great wealth of the Roman Orient. However, are all the products in the lists located in the Roman empire, specifically in the Roman Orient? Though the Roman empire had a great territory and was rich in treasures, the answer to the question is still negative. Compared with the Chinese description of other states on the Eurasian Steppe, D. D. Leslie and K. H. J Gardiner believe that "There can be little doubt that some of our products from Da-Ch'in came from elsewhere, some perhaps from Persia or India, not from the Roman empire."[440] According to the calculation of Thos W. Kingsmill, there were 62 kinds of the products ascribed to Da-qin in *Wei-lue* that comply with the products in Syria.[441] In discussing the economy of Da-qin, Krisztina carefully compared the products in the lists with the products in Syria mentioned by Pliny the Elder and Libanius. Though few products could not possibly have been in Syria, her conclusion is still positive. [442] As a pioneer, Hirth did much work on the products in the lists and retrieved valuable conclusions which constitute the basis of our study. In his study, through comparing the Chinese description of the Da-qin products with the ancient Western writings on the Roman empire, with emphasis on the Roman Orient, he found that many products from the lists could accord with the local products there, the most known of which are liu-li and bo-li (琉璃, 玻璃, glass)[443], suhe (苏合, storax)[444], Zhi-jia-hua (指甲花, finger-

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[440] D. D. Leslie and K. H. J Gardiner (1996), p. 218.

[441] Thos W. Kingsmill (1891), pp. 258-259.

[442] Krisztina Hoppál (2011), 285.

[443] It is well known that the cities on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea were experts on glass ware. Based on this fact, Hirth (1885, pp. 228-234) assumes that merchants transported the glass ware with little trouble to Aelana, and then for shipment to the Persian Gulf, connecting with the ancient overland route through Parthia, or later on to Ceylon for transshipment to China or Anamneses. Hirth's view can be proved by the Chinese excavation of the earliest Roman glass in China which came from an early 1st-century BC tomb at Guangzhou, see Jia-yao An (2002), pp. 83-84. D. D. Leslie and K. H. J Gardiner (1996, p. 218) mention that Tyre, Sidon and Beirut in Phoenicia were noted for glass ware.

[444] See Hirth (1885), pp. 263-266. It has been the most attracted product from Da-qin, and will be given special discussion in the following parts.

nail flower)[445] etc. Actually, Hirth did not admit that all the products from the lists were located in Syria, such as Xun-lu (薰陆, Olibanum or Frankicense)[446], Mi-xiang-zhi (蜜香纸, honey-fragrance paper)[447]. In the study, he found plausible explanations for the non-local products that appeared in the lists. In consideration of Egypt and Syria's special position in trade in the Roman empire, he believed the prosperous trade in the Roman Orient also enriched the number and kinds of the products in the Roman empire[448]; for example, he mentions that "Syria occupied a central position amongst the principal production districts in Asia Minor, Cyprus, Egypt, Armenia, Media etc., and possessed from remote antiquity all the facilities for monopolizing the trade for emeralds, rubies, opals, sapphires, carbuncles, jaspers, lapis lazuli, swards, agates, topazes, etc.; and the city of Alexandria which, under the Romans, had inherited the commercial grandeur of the Phoenicians and Syrians, had become the chief factory for all the industries connected with the cutting and polishing of precious stones."[449]

The most discussed product from Da-qin is storax, which was named su-he (苏合) in Chinese. This storax was recorded very often in Chinese sources as a kind of medicine with a special aroma. In *Hou-han-shou*, its ingredients and procedure of production are even described: "They mix all sorts of fragrances and boil the mixture

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[445] Hirth (1885, pp. 268-272) points out that this finger-nail flower is the Henna of Levant, and 'in Western Asia and Northern Africa, henna is extensively used as a dye for the finger-nails of Women and children, and in some places, it is also used by men ,and applied to the hands, feet, hair and beard, and also to the manes and tails of horses'.

[446] Hirth (1885, pp. 266-268) identifies Xun-lu with Olibanum or Frankicense, however, he finds that this product was not the local product of Syria, but had been imported from remote antiquity by the Phoenicians from Arabia and the neighborhood of Cape Guardafui for the sue of their temples. His explanation for the inclusion of this product in the list of the Da-qin products is that Phoenicians, Syrians and Indians traders had no doubt supplies of it among other cargoes, and may thus have come to be credited with being the producers.

[447] In discussing Mi-xiang-zhi, based on the high development of Chinese paper production, Hirth (1885, pp. 272-275) firstly does not accept that they were tributes by the Roman envoys, then through another record in Chinese sources, he believes that this kind of paper came from Jiao-zhi (Vietnam) by the merchants from Syria or Alexandria.

[448] D. D. Lesie and K. H. J. Gardiner (1996, p. 218) do not agree with Hirth on this view.

[449] Hirth (1885), p. 235.

to make su-he."[450] The description of storax in *Liang-shu* is much more detailed: "Suhe is made by mixing various fragrances and boiling them; it is not a single natural product. It is also said that the people of Da-qin gather su-he and only after squeezing its juice out to make a fragrant balm do they sell its dregs to the traders of other countries. It thus goes through several hands to reach the Middle Kingdom and is not very fragrant."[451] Storax is still used as a medicine nowadays. In discussing the storax, Hirth found that there are two kinds of su-he: solid storax and liquid storax, and it is difficult to judge which kind is su-he in Chinese sources. However, the conclusions of Mr. Daniel Hanbury gave Hirth evidence that the places of origin for them were both in the Roman Orient: "the solid storax was produced in certain localities in Syria, in the south-east of Asia Minor, in Cyprus and Creta; the liquid storax is now produced in certain localities in the south-west of Asia Minor."[452] Laufer also paid much attention to the su-he mentioned in Chinese sources from different periods. Firstly, he reminds us that it was first mentioned by Herodotus as imported into Hellas (Greece) by Phoenicians. On the basis of the description of Chinese sources, the evidence of the Chinese-Sanskrit dictionaries, and the conclusion from Mr. Hanbury, he further strengthened the view that the su-he in Chinese sources is the same as the ancient one in the West; he also mentioned that su-he was a tribute coming to China from Fu-nan (Cambodia) and was recorded as product in Sassanian Persia.[453] Hence, the studies on su-he almost can make us sure that its origin from the Roman Orient or places near there, and it is understandable for its connection with Da-qin.

Nevertheless, the lists contain quit a number of products which have no corresponding products in the Roman empire. In his article "Chinese Ideas Reflected in the Ta-

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[450] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 271; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 70.

[451] Vol. 54, *LS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), pp. 305-306; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 118. In another earlier source *Guang-zhi* there is a similar description. There are two possibilities: they have the same origins, or the later one copied the earlier one. (*Guang-zhi* is an ancient Chinese encyclopedia, and its writing time is in debate. The most popular time is in the beginning of Jin, however, there are different viewpoints, Japanese scholar Sujimoto Nooziro set it on 420-520, and the newest one is set on the early period of North Wei by Wang Li-hua, see Li-huan Wang [1999, pp. 143-154]).

[452] Hirth (1885), p. 266.

[453] Laufer (1919), pp. 456-458.

ch'in's Accounts"[454], Shiratori gives much attention to such products. Firstly, in consideration of the nature of the products, he rejects the claim that all the products were indigenous to Da-qin. Then, through studying the names of the products in *Wei-lue*, he believes that it is possible that the author of *Wei-lue* enumerated all the valuable products then known to be of Western origin. For example, the fei-chi cloth could be from the state of Wu-yi-shan-li: Wu-yi-shan-li was named Pai-chi (排持) in Chinese sources, and the Chinese characters of the fei-chi cloth's name (绯持) are similar to the name of Pai-chi (排持). Another example is the wen-se cloth which could be from the state of Wen-su, since characters of wen-se (温色) could be the variant of Wen-su (温宿). He also found similar examples from the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* to support his view. In the following paragraphs, Shiratori found some typical Chinese products in the lists. He noticed that the bright-moon pearls and night-shining 'pearls' were mentioned in Chinese classics before the earliest Chinese knowledge of Da-qin; although the tortoise can be found in different countries, the idea of the divine tortoise, as well as some other products, mean fortune to the Chinese, and hence are of special significance to them. In particular, he noticed that the fabulous red hornless (or immature) creature, the dragon, existed in the Chinese imagination as a symbol of majesty. He also found some typical Chinese plants in the list of Da-qin products. The list of the plants of *Wei-lue* contains pine, cypress, pagoda-tree, catalpa, bamboo, reed, poplar, parasol tree etc. According to Shiratori, these plants are all indigenous to China, while only some of them, such as bamboo, were foreign to the Roman empire, especially to the Roman Orient. In addition, all these plants in Chinese philosophy stand for fortune and longevity of life. In brief, these points are used by Shiratori to argue for a utopian image of Da-qin in the Chinese mind.[455] However, even after taking his findings into account, there is still room for disagreement with his view. His judgment that not all the products in the lists were indigenous to Da-qin or the Roman empire, in particular to the Roman Orient, is correct; however, his utopia theory seems exaggerated the non-realities but neglected the majority of the realities[456]. In addition, even the utopian and fanciful

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[454] Shiratori (1956), pp. 24-72.

[455] Shiratori (1956), pp. 63-66

[456] M. Kordosis does not accept this utopia theory, and he (1991a, pp. 143-144) believes that "the materials given by Chinese sources are not fanciful but contain real elements, some of

elements in the image of Da-qin also can be given reasonable explanation.

4.3 Summaries

The duration of the image's existence in the Chinese sources is the key for us to understand Da-qin and its relations with China. As mentioned before, Da-qin first appeared in Chinese sources in the year 97 when Gan Ying, the first Chinese envoy, traveled closer to Da-qin than any Chinese before him, and got detailed information from the sailors on the border of the Parthian empire and possibly from others as well[457]. However, it is likely that Da-qin was known to Chinese or Gan Ying much earlier than this date. The author of *Hou-han-shu* clearly writes that Gan Ying was sent by Ban Chao for Da-qin,[458] which means that Da-qin, the destination of Gan Ying, was known to him before his mission. On this basis it can be deduced that, before leaving for Da-qin, Gan Ying had some knowledge of this state. In consideration of the relations of China with the states in the Western Regions and the frequent Chinese activities there, Gan Ying could have obtained this knowledge from different people in the Western Regions when he was on expedition with Ban Chao there[459]. But the most credible theory is that the knowledge came from Tiao-zhi and An-xi, since the author of *Hou-han-shu* also records that Tiao-zhi (Charax) and An-xi (Parthia) had sent tribute to the Eastern Han court not long before the embassy of Gan

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which were altered by the great distance and the passing of time… I think that the 'utopia theory must not play such great a role in the future".

[457] Xi-yu-zhuan of *the HHS* records that "In the ninth year (in 97), Ban Chao dispatched his adjutant Gan Ying to reach as far as the Western Sea, and he returned later. Former generations have never reached any of these places, nor has the *Classic of the Mountains* given any details of them." The translation of Chen Zhi-qiang missed the second sentence which is more important, see Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 277; Yu Tai-shan (2013, pp. 57-58) has given all the two sentences of translation.

[458] "The Protector General, Ban Chao, sent Gan Ying as an envoy to Da-qin", vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 274; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 63-64.

[459] Yu Tai-shan (2013, p. 25) holds similar view: "It is not possible to state when the Chinese began to hear about the Roman empire, but it is certain that it could not be later than the year that Ban Chao was sent to the Western Regions. Down to the Yongyuan reign period of Emperor He, during which Ban Chao ordered Gan Ying to go to Da Qin, the Chinese must have had a fair understanding of the Roman empire, and were deeply interested in knowing more about it".

Ying.[460]

This theory inspires me to think further: if Tiao-zhi and An-xi actually had diplomatic relations with China just after the embassy of Zhang Qian in the second century BCE, why did they not mention Da-qin to the Chinese at that time, but instead at the much later time of Gan Ying? I assume that the political situation in the regions of Asian Minor, Syria and Mesopotamia caused the intermediaries to bring knowledge of Da-qin to China at a later time. Though since the beginning of the second century BCE the Roman Republic made attempts to extend its Asian part, it met with strong opposition from the Parthian empire. By 65 BCE, with the successful conquest of Syria by Pompey, the state had achieved much progress in Asia, and the Euphrates River came to symbolize a boundary between Roman and Parthian interests in the Near East.[461] Later on, with the establishment of the Roman empire by Augustus, it strengthened its governance in Asia and had to face much more conflict and struggle with the Parthian empire in the Orient. However, the pressure from the Roman empire on the Parthian empire was never reduced. In 117, during the time of Emperor Trajan, the boundary of the Roman empire was even beyond the Tigris River.[462] The Roman empire in the first century without a doubt became the biggest enemy of the Parthian empire. However, during the long period of disturbance between the end of the Western Han and the beginning of the Eastern Han, the states from the Western Regions were not communicating with China[463]. They only recommenced their

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[460] "In the sixth year (94 CE), Ban Chao attacked again and defeated Yan-qi. Thereupon, more than 50 states all offered hostages and entered [the Han empire] as subjects. States such as Tiao-zhi and An-xi, and those right up to the edge of the sea, more than 40,000 *li* distant, all presented tribute via multiple interpreters.", vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 277; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 57-58. Apart from this embassy of 94, D. D. Leslie and K. H. J. Gardiner also remind us that there are Chinese records of the embassies from Parthia to China in 87 CE, 101 CE; besides, they also assume that "these embassies may well have brought information about the new power in the west, thus stimulating the Protector-General Pan Ch'ao to send Kan Ying on his voyage in the year 97", see D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner (1996), p. 140.

[461] Peter Edwell (2007), p. 7, note. 1.

[462] Peter Edwell (2007), p. 7.

[463] The following quotation records the relations between China and the states in the Western Regions, since the time of Zhang Qian. It describes the time and reasons of the discontinued relations between them. "In the period of Emperor Wu [140-87 BCE], the

contact with China after the explorations of General Protector Ban Chao (in the period of 73-101). Only then could the envoys of Tiao-zhi and An-xi have come to China, bringing the information about this great state to Gan Ying.[464] In all, it can be concluded that the earliest information about Da-qin was most likely received before Gan Ying's mission and was about this state in the first century.

This study of Da-qin will end with sources from the seventh century, when Fu-lin was widely used as a substitute term in the sources. The latest information on Da-qin concerns it during the sixth century. While it is known that the later sources also use the name of Da-qin, and sometimes use both Da-qin and Fu-lin, it can be found that the information in these sources is copied from the earlier sources, with much new information regarding Fu-lin, which is identified with the later Roman empire. From this time onward, a new, different image of Da-qin appears. Although we know the relation between the two names, it is nevertheless difficult to distinguish which entity the information refers to. It is therefore better to treat the sources from the seventh

Western Regions were under the control of the Interior [China]. They numbered thirty-six Kingdoms. The Imperial Government established a Commandant of Imperial Envoys there to direct and protect these countries. Emperor Xuan [73-49 BCE] changed this title [in 59 BCE] to Protector General. Emperor Yuan [40-33 BCE] installed both a Mao and a Ji Commandant to take charge of the State Farms on the frontier of the King of Nearer Jushi (Turfan). During the time of Emperor Ai [6 BCE-1 CE] and Emperor Ping [1-5], the principalities of the Western Regions split up and formed fifty-five Kingdoms. Wang Mang, after he usurped the Throne [in 9], demoted their Kings to marquesses. Following this, the Western Regions became resentful, and rebelled. They, therefore, broke off all relations with the Middle Kingdom and, all together, submitted to the Xiongnu again. The Xiongnu collected oppressively heavy taxes. The Kingdoms were not able to support their demands. In the middle of the Jianwu period [25-55], they each sent envoys to ask if they could submit to the Middle Kingdom, and to express their desire for a Protector General. Emperor Guangwu [25-57], deciding that they had not really come for the sake of the security of the empire, and that he had no time for outside affairs, flatly refused his consent",vol.88,*HHS*,Historical-Background, https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/hhshu/hou_han_shu.html#sec1, 14-01-2015. Also see the analysis of Lin Ying (2013, p. 295).

[464] "In the sixth year (94), Ban Chao attacked again and defeated Yan-qi. Thereupon, more than 50 states all offered hostages and entered [the Han empire] as subjects. States such as Tiao-zhi and An-xi, and those right up to the edge of the sea, more than 40,000 *li* distant, all presented tribute via multiple interpreters.", vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 277; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 57-58.

century onward as dealing with Fu-lin, or the later Roman empire. The image of Da-qin in this study, then, will span from the first century to the sixth century.

Through the above discussions, a general image of Da-qin can be roughly given. In the extant Chinese sources mainly compiled from the third century to the seventh century, an image of the extreme west state Da-qin in the period of the first century to the sixth century can be constructed.[465] It is found that the first impression of Da-qin is a "state to the west of sea". This saying appears in many sources and constitutes the basis of the Da-qin image in general (*Hou-han-shu*, *Wei-lue*, *Hou-han-ji*, *Jin-shu*, *Song-shu*, *Tong-dian*). On this basis, some texts even connect it with the mythical Ruishui (Weak Water), Liusha (Moving Sands), and the home of Queen Mother of the West which are believed to locate in the regions to far west of China[466]. "State of treasure" is the second image of Da-qin. Most of the sources on Da-qin record its abundant natural resources and precious products. Shiratori even assumes that all the valuable products then known to be of Western origin were listed in the *Wei-lue* as being present in Da-qin.[467] Though the assumption of Shiratori is suspicion, it is difficult to deny the brilliance of Da-qin in the sources. The image of "state of treasure" was first found in the sources of the third century[468], and afterwards, the

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[465] Since most of the sources on Da-qin did not mention the origins of their information (got from whom, or referred to which sources. *HHJ* and *HHS* are exceptions, they mention that its information on the Western Regions after the period of 25-56, which is different from earlier sources, is from the writing of Ban Yong), it is difficult to distinguish the time of each piece of new information. Hence the image here will be a synthetic one in the period of the first century to the sixth century.

[466] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 272; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 74.

[467] Shiratori (1956), pp. 63-66.

[468] *WSWGZ*: "Foreigners say that there are three numerous things in the world. The Middle Kingdom has numerous people. Da-qin has numerous treasures. Yue-zhi has numerous horses", Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 289; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 154. The same saying also appeared in the Buddhist work *Shi-er-you-jing* which was translated in the same time in Chinese: "There is the Son of Heaven of Jin in the east, and the people are flourishing. There is the Son of Heaven of the state of Tian-zhu in the south, and there are many famous elephants in the land. There is the Son of Heaven of the state of Da-qin in the west, and there is much gold, silver, and jade in the land. There is the Son of Heaven of the Yue-zhi in the north, and there are many fine horses in the land", Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 293; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 204.

same saying was used to describe Fu-lin.[469] The third prominent image of Da-qin is a state "resembling China." This expression was originally for the people, clothes, and sometimes also for their customs. Later on, Da-qin was said to resemble China in its plants, the people's daily life, its political systems etc. In all, just as the name Da-qin indicates, to them it was another China. The last influential image is "the largest state". In *Wei-lue*, it states that Da-qin was the largest state to the west of Cong-ling (葱岭) and had many vassal states.[470] The descriptions of its vast territory, more than 400 cities and abundance of treasure all lead to this impression.

Through these four main images of Da-qin – "state to the west of sea", "state of treasure", "resembling China", and "the largest state"-- the Chinese sources present the following image of Da-qin: it is located to the west of An-xi, Tiao-zhi, and west of the sea, maybe also connected with mythical elements from China, such as Xi Wangmu, Ruoshui, and Liusha; the land produces many kinds of resources and products, many of which are legendary; the state resembles China and the people resemble the Chinese, and they lead the kind of life which the ancient Chinese believe is ideal; it is the largest state to the west of Cong-ling, with a vast territory and flourishing civilization. In general, this image corresponds to the Roman empire in many ways, and only it can be identified with Da-qin. Yet the image in Chinese sources mixes real elements with fanciful and legendary ones, which made it more difficult to pursue its real image and relations with China, and this mixture is also the reason of the creation of the utopian theory on the image.

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[469] See the detailed study in Ying Lin (2006), pp. 3-10.

[470] Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 281; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 273.

CHAPTER 5

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE IMAGE
AND FACTORS INFLUENCED ITS CONSTRUCTION

Given that the image of Da-qin was reconstructed according to the information recorded in the Chinese sources, it is necessary to seek the characteristics of the image and the factors which determined its final form.

5.1 Characteristics of the image

Through the aforementioned discussions and commentaries, it can be seen that the Da-qin image is never a simple or clear one. Generally to say, this impression is unfolded in four aspects of characteristics: synthesis of realities and non-realities; idealization; "divinization"; sinicization.

5.1.1 Synthesis of realities and non-realities

In analyzing the different characteristics of Da-qin recorded in Chinese sources, we have discussed and compared them with the Roman empire. Through this comparison we see that, in every category, the reality of the Roman empire, or least its shadow, is present, e. g., the recorded location of Da-qin matches that of the Roman Orient (to the west of Parthia, Mesopotamia, and Western Sea); plenty of the products match the local or transported products in the Roman Orient, in particular the special product of glass; the business activities of Da-qin are the same as those of the Roman merchants: the trading activities with India recorded are exactly the same as those of the merchants from Egypt who traded with Indians through the Red Sea, as recorded by Pliny the Elder[471] and other Roman writers. On the other side, there are also a good number of elements that do not match the Roman empire, e. g., some plants, such as bamboo, are not indigenous to the Roman Orient; *Kuzhe* (it is believed to be the

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[471] Pliny the Elder (*The Natural History*, 6.26) provides us a detailed description of the voyage from Alexandria to South India and also the high expenses of Rome on the Indian products which proves the frequent trade activities between the Roman world and India.

clothing of Da-qin people in Chinese sources[472]) has no counterpart in the Roman empire. Apart from these clear realities and non-realities, there are still some descriptions. While appearing inaccurate, possess some traces of the Roman reality, e.g., "all the animals are born from water"[473]. In the Chinese text, an example of these is the "water sheep"[474]. The Chinese text mentions that Da-qin people "weave cloth" using the "down of water sheep" and make clothes named "Hai-xi cloth".[475] The scholar E. Bretschneider was the first to write that "this is, perhaps, the byssus, a cloth-stuff woven up to the present time by the inhabitants of the Mediterranean coast, especially in southern Italy from the thread-like excrescences of several shells (especially 'pinna squamosa')".[476] Furthermore, B. Laufer connected pinna with water sheep,[477] while, Alciphron (second century) was the first who mentioned the name "wool of the sea".[478] The same expression was used by Procopius and some Arabian writers.[479] Base on the view of Laufer, M. Kordosis presents his own theory:

...it is not necessary for the human mind to arrive from the 'sea wool' to the 'water sheep'. Laufer himself mentions that the Italians still call these fibres 'pinna wool' and 'fish wool'. The last term (fish wool) is, of course, more reasonable. On the contrary, the term 'water sheep' shows that those who created it, Chinese or other peoples of Central Asia were far away from reality. Proof of this view, I think, is the continuity of the story in *Wei-lio* (*Wei-lue*): 'in this country', is added, 'all the domestic animals come out of the water'. At first glance, it becomes obvious that a second step, bolder than the first, is taken and this time, most probably, it was the Chinese themselves who were responsible.[480]

Apart from the examples above, still some other such descriptions about Da-qin

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[472] *WSWGZ*, Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 154.

[473] Xi-rong-zhuan, *WL*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 280; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 96.

[474] Ibid.

[475] Ibid.

[476] E. Bretschneider (1871), p. 24, note. 4; M. Kordosis (1991a), p. 172.

[477] B. Laufer (1915a), p. 107.

[478] Ibid, p. 109.

[479] M. Kordosis (1991a), p.173.

[480] Ibid, p. 174.

which seem absurd but can be explained reasonably. Because of the nature of the information, we can induce that the ancient Chinese writers had some access to ancient Western writings, most probably through writings from Central Asia or the Middle East. Hence, on the basis of the above analysis, the image of Da-qin has elements that clearly reflect reality and elements that do not at all, as well as some elements which, while appearing false, seem to have their origin in reality.

5.1.2 Idealization

Idealization is a prominent feature in the Da-qin image. It is seen in the many utopian elements in the Chinese sources on Da-qin.

The long description of Da-qin in *Tai-qing-jing-ye-shen-dan-jing* is full of idealizations:

> They do not have slaves; even the celestial king himself cultivates the fields and his wife gathers the mulberry leaves and weaves the material herself. The king employs common people by the Great Dao and persuades people to do things to conform with justice. There is no punishment using instruments of torture and decapitation. The people are harmonious, many of them living to a very old age.[481]

This text describes the behavior of the king and queen, the punishment of the state, and the general condition of the life of the people. It presents the peaceful and happy life of this state: without slaves, a hard-working king and queen, harmonious relations between people, and longevity. Here the state is described by the author as a paradise, and he intends the image to reflect the ultimate ideal of Daoism: a society with a small population that avoided technological advances in preference for simple living and was self-contained, uninterested in other small countries nearby.[482] The description here has similarities with Western writings on Seres (Chinese), who "lived

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[481] *TQJYSDJ*, Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 193.
[482] Maspero (1950), p. 98 ff; M. Kordosis (1991a), p. 163.

in a peaceful life", without wars, keeping away from the rest of the world.[483] The people of Camarini in the work *Expositio totius mundi et gentium*, written anonymously in the year 359[484], also lived a similar life. The country of Camarini is the same as Eden in the Far East where the four rivers of the Old Testament were (Geon, Phison, Tigris, and Euphrates). They are happy, and their drink is composed of honey and pepper; they put on only the cloth "asbestos" (thrown into fire for cleaning).[485] They do not sow nor mow. They have many precious stones, they do not suffer and never fall ill, and they know the day of their death.[486] Because the texts of each civilization idealize the other, it seems that the texts of one influenced the texts of the other, but it is not clear which influenced and which was influenced.

The record on the selection and dethronement of the king also reflects the same idealization:

> As for the king, he is not a permanent figure, but is chosen as being the most worthy. When a calamity or uncanny event or winds or rains out of season occur in the state, then he is deposed immediately and someone else is put in his place. One who is thus deposed accepts mildly his dismissal and does not get angry at it.[487]

Although a similar situation is found in the history of the Roman empire, and this description is still mixed with idealization, it is in accordance with the Confucius thought of "Da Tong" (Great Union). Da Tong is believed to be a utopian vision of the world in which everyone and everything is at peace. The origin of this thought was

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[483] Ammianus Marcellinus XXIII, 6, 67-68: "The Seres themselves live a peaceful life, forever acquainted with arms and warfare; … The Seres themselves are frugal beyond all others, live a quiet life, and avoid intercourse with the rest of mortals."

[484] Richard Stoneman (2011), p. xxi.

[485] M. Kordosis (1991a), p. 175: "The Chinese dynastic histories mention asbestos many times, regarding it as a product of the Far West". Details in B. Laufer (1915b), p. 313-314, 331-332.

[486] Anonymi (1966), p. 142 ff. Cf. M. Kordosis (1991a), p. 167: "The similarity between the Chinese and Byzantine texts is clear and many scholars have written about it. The frugality and temperance of the Seres, referred to by Ammianus, reminds us the prudence of the inhabitants of Ta-Ch'in, found in the above mentioned taoist text."

[487] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 271; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 68-69.

traced back to *Li-ji*[488]:

> When the Grand course was pursued, a public and common spirit ruled all under
> the sky; they chose men of talents, virtue, and ability; their words were sincere,
> and what they cultivated was harmony. Thus men did not love their parents only,
> not treat as children only their own sons. A competent provision was secured for
> the aged till their death, employment for the able-bodied, and the means of
> growing up to the young. They showed kindness and compassion to widows,
> orphans, childless men, and those who were disabled by disease, so that they
> were all sufficiently maintained. Males had their proper work, and females had
> their homes. (They accumulated) articles (of value), disliking that they should
> be thrown away upon the ground, but not wishing to keep them for their own
> gratification. (They labored) with their strength, disliking that it should not be
> exerted, but not exerting it (only) with a view to their own advantage. In this
> (selfish) schemings were repressed and found no development. Robbers, filches,
> and rebellious traitors did not show themselves, and hence the outer doors
> remained open, and were not shut. This was (the period of) what we call the
> Grand Union.[489]

Confucius thought was the main philosophy in Chinese society and was supported by
its rulers since the second century BCE in the Western Han. It has fused into our daily
life and still influences contemporary Chinese civilization. This detailed description
of the "Da-Tong" society, which was believed to have existed during the reign of the
Three Legendary Kings, is an ideal society and was the best example for later rulers.

Comparing Daoism and Confucianism, we can find great similarity and consistency.
Their goal is for society to be a utopia. Some scholars even believe that "Da Tong" is
from Daoism or developed from Daoist thought. Since the compilers and writers of
the Da-qin passages were followers of Daoism and Confucianism, it is understandable

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[488] *Li-ji* is a collection of texts describing the social forms, administration, and ceremonial
rites of the Zhou dynasties as they were understood in the Warring States and the early Han
periods. It is generally regarded as a core text of the Confucian canon. The compiling time
of it is still in debate. The details see Jeffrey K. Riegel (1993), pp. 293-297.
[489] Book VII, The Li Yun, in James Legge (1885), pp. 364-366.

that the idealization of Da-qin in Chinese sources reflects the thought of Daoism and Confucianism.

5.1.3 "Divinization"

The divine qualities of Da-qin make the image less believable to scholars. The first of these lies in the location of Da-qin. Chinese sources mention that "Some say: To the west of this state (Da-qin) are the Weak Water and the Flowing Sands, which are near to the place where the Queen Mother of the West lives, and which are almost where the sun sets."[490] As pointed out by Lin Ying, the location of Da-qin was believed to be in the extreme-west of China and near the end of the present world, beyond which was the realm of the gods, such as the Queen Mother of the West. Generally it is believed that the goddess lived high in the sky. It was previously believed that she lived on the "White Jade Hill" (Baiyushan, 白玉山), which is identified with Mount Kunlun. As Hirth observes, "the Xi wangmu legends moved farther west in the imagination of Chinese in the same degree in which geographical discovery opened up new countries in that direction of the compass".[491] The Weak Water and Moving Sands were the geographical obstacles between the present world and the gods' realm.[492] This both shows their geographical understanding and makes Da-qin divine, a state next to the gods.

5.1.4 Sinicization

Another prominent feature of the image is sinicization. From the Chinese records, Da-qin is clearly presented as an exaggerated version of China. Except for its location, nearly every aspect of Da-qin appears to be the prototype of, or the counterpart to, China. From the beginning, the state was stamped with the name Da-qin (Great Qin)

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[490] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 272; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 74.

[491] Hirth (1885), p. 293. See also M. Kordosis (1991a), pp. 171-172: where the parallel problem of the sunset: The same transportation is observed with the sunset. The authors of the chronicles Hou-Han-shu, Wei-shu and Wei-lio don't accept the information that going over 100 or 200 days west of T'iao-chih one arrives near the place where the sun sets. Especially Wei-lio corrects the mistaken information, replacing T'iao-chih nu Ta-Ch'in; 'now', is written, 'one comes near the place where the sun sets by going west of Ta-ts'in'.

[492] Ying Lin (2009), p. 58.

which means Great China. It is clear that the sinicization of Da-qin began with its name. It was strengthened later on when it was recorded that "the people of this state resemble Chinese"; and some texts (*Wei-lue, Hou-han-ji, Tong-dian*) even directly comment that the Da-qin people were a branch of Chinese or were Chinese. These sayings seem to have set the pattern for following descriptions of Da-qin. In a text in *Hou-han-shu*, we can see that the unites of *You* and *Ting* were used in ancient China for postal services and security; raising silkworms with mulberry leaves was typical ancient Chinese practice; the description on the selection and dethronement of the king mirrors those in ancient Chinese political philosophy and myths; some plants and products mentioned were traditional Chinese ones, and even appeared in Chinese myth.[493] From these facts, it is obvious that the Da-qin image in Chinese sources has China as its prototype, in which Da-qin is a state with a close relationship to China.

To conclude, the above four characteristics (synthesis of reality and non-reality; idealization; "divinization"; sinicization) are the basic components of the Da-qin image. The interweaving of realities and non-realities makes it difficult to distinguish the two; idealization and "divinization" make the image quite fanciful and colorful; and sinicization makes the image familiar to Chinese, but not to Europeans.

5.2 Origins of the Da-qin information
and factors influenced its image's construction

The image of Da-qin in Chinese sources is very complex, and it possesses the characteristics summarized in the above section. This part will deal with the origins of the information on Da-qin and the factors that influenced the construction of the image.

5.2.1 Origins of the Da-qin information

In the second chapter, we mentioned that the Chinese sources recording Da-qin are comprised of different types of writings, e. g., official histories, private writings, and religious works. These sources have different origins, however, as evident from the

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[493] For the details of the appearance of the Chinese elements in the Da-qin image see Shiratori (1956), pp. 25-74.

Chinese sources. The majority of them are most likely from people who came from Da-qin or had knowledge of it through other means. Generally, through the threads given in these sources, it can be identified that the information itself came from three different kinds of sources: Chinese envoys, so-called Da-qin envoys and merchants, and other foreign peoples. Another possible origin of the information is written materials from Central Asia and the West, which were provided by Chinese who were familiar with Western languages or by foreigners who were familiar with both Western languages and Chinese.

Chinese envoys

Based on the Chinese sources on Da-qin and the places surrounding it, the Chinese missions are the first group who brought the news of the West back to China. Zhang Qian was no doubt the first one to get in touch with the West.[494] After the Qin Dynasty (221-207 BCE), the Western Han (202 BCE-8 CE) was the second united dynasty in China. Though it was always praised as the first peak of Chinese civilization, at the beginning it was always threatened and disturbed by other nomadic groups around it, the most serious of which was the Xiongnu. In order to resist the sporadic attacks and harassment of the Xiongnu,[495] which lived in the northwest of modern-day China, Zhang Qian was sent by the Emperor Wu to the Western Regions on a mission that lasted from 138 to 126 BCE in order to attempt to set up a military alliance with the Darouzhi (大月氏), a nomadic group that was defeated by the Xiongnu and at that time lived in Central Asia. It is the first mission from the Chinese government to the West recorded in Chinese written sources. Though Zhang Qian did not fulfill his mission of making an alliance with the Darouzhi, he and his retinues got in touch with the other states nearby and for first time learned and brought back abundant information on Central Asia to China, which was put down in its first official history, *Shi-ji*[496].

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[494] Although according to archaeological evidence, before the first westward mission of Zhang Qian and his retinues, there already existed frequent communications between the states from the Western Regions (or further) and China, no any written source could be found in China to that.

[495] The detailed history of Hun and its relations with the Han China can be referred to Ying-shih Yü (2008), pp. 383-405.

[496] It is said that the sources on the Western Regions in *Shi-ji* was written based on the reports

From 119 to 115 BCE, Zhan Qian was on his second mission to the Western Regions. This time he also sent his retinues for many states there. It is said that one or more of them went to An-xi (Parthia) and were welcomed by its king. After learning of the greatness of China, the king of An-xi decided to send his envoys with the one from China back to the Chinese court in order to give a tribute.[497] This is also the first time envoys from An-xi to China are recorded in Chinese sources. Thus Zhang Qian and his retinues got more information about the Western Regions, made friendly relations with the states there, and inspired them to have close communication with China. Through the two missions of Zhang Qian, the well-known Silk Road was officially opened and guaranteed by the powerful Western Han. Accordingly, the merchants and envoys from China and the Western Regions safely traveled on this road and exchanged products and culture with each other. It is said that, after Zhang Qian, Emperor Wu sent many envoys to the Western states every year, especially to Da-yuan for horses: "after listening to the words of Zhang Qian, Emperor did want to get in touch with Da-yuan (Ferghana, 大宛) and others; the envoys meet each other on the way, and in a year there are more than ten times of missions."[498] However, no details about later envoys were recorded in Chinese literature.

Thanks to Zhang Qian's opening of the Silk Road, more and more envoys, merchants and others on the Eurasian Steppe traveled safely on the network of the Silk Road. However, this prosperity did not last for long. "At the beginning of the Eastern Han Dynasty, partly because of his preoccupation with internal affairs of China and partly because of the tremendous costs involved, Kuang-wu-ti (Emperor Guang Wu, reign between 25-57) resisted the temptation of resuming tributary relations with the Western Regions. He rejected the request of some of the states to reestablish the office of protector-general, the nerve center of the Han tributary system. The northern Hsiung-nu (Xiongnu) was thus able to reassert control over this area, and they

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and records of Zhang Qian and his missions, "the information of Da-yuan (Ferghana) was originated from Bowang Hou (Zhang Qian)", Da-yuan-lie-zhuan in *SJ,* http://www.guoxue.com/shibu/24shi/shiji/sj_123.htm, 19-03-2015.

[497] The embassies from An-xi will be discussed in detail in the part on the other foreigners coming to China of this dissertation.

[498] Vol.96, first part, *HS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 270; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 54-55.

maintained such control until the renewal of Chinese intervention in the year 73."[499] In this period, because of the obstacle of the Xiongnu and the turbulence in China, communication with the Western Regions on the Silk Road was temporarily cut off.

After the internal affairs of China were solved, in order to defeat the Xiongnu and reconstruct relationship with the Western Regions, another well-known General, Ban Chao, was designated to manage there between 73-101. In almost thirty years' governance, Ban Chao reconstructed steady relationship between the court of the Eastern Han in China and the kingdoms in the Western Regions. During this time, an envoy named Gan Ying was sent by him further into the Western Regions to seek relations with the extreme west state of Da-qin. History will surely always remember this year:

> In the ninth year of the Yongyuan reign-period of Emperor He (in 97), the Protector General, Ban Chao, sent Gan Ying as an envoy to Da-qin. He arrived at Tiao-zhi, overlooking the Great Sea. When he was about to take his passage across the sea, the sailors of the western frontier of An-xi told [Gan] Ying: "The sea is vast. With favorable winds it is still only possible for travelers to cross in three months. But if one meets with unfavorable winds, it may even take two years. It is for this reason that those who go to sea always take on board three years' provisions. There is something in the sea which is apt to make men homesick, and several have thus lost their lives." It was when he heard this that [Gan] Ying gave up.[500]

This story about Gan Ying's mission to Da-qin, as the key of the Chinese sources on Da-qin, has been discussed times in different parts of the study; it is regarded as the first appearance of the state of Da-qin in extant Chinese sources. The story was told by Gan Ying based on his own experience. He also recorded much more detailed information about the state of Da-qin in notes or a report that would be submitted to Ban Chao. Even though it is lost in history, part of it, especially on Da-qin, was kept in *Hou-han-shu* by Fan Ye, who also did not see the writing of Gan Ying, but gained

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[499] Ying-shih Yü (2008), p. 413.

[500] Vol. 88. *HHS*, (2004), p. 274; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 63-64.

from the writing of Ban Yong. Ban Yong was the youngest son of Ban Chao[501]. When Ban Chao was managing the Western Regions and sent Gan Ying for Da-qin, Ban Yong was also there. Later on, he was sent back together with the envoys from Parthia to the court of the Eastern Han in 101[502]. Hence, we believe that the records of Ban Yong are creditable which were probably directly from Gan Ying.

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Gan Ying, through his mission, obtained information about the extreme west of China which was not known before him, as it is declared at the beginning of Xi-yu-zhuan in *Hou-han-shu:* "In the ninth year (in 97), Ban Chao sent his Subaltern Gan Ying, who probed as far as the Western Sea, and then returned. Previous generations never reached these regions. The *Shan-jing* gives no details on them. No doubt he prepared a report on their customs and investigated their precious and unusual [products]."[503] In the story of Gan Ying's mission, it is clear that Gan Ying did not arrived at the land of Da-qin, since he did not cross the last obstacle, the Great Sea, but gave up and returned upon the warning of the sailors on the border of Parthia. Accordingly, the information on Da-qin by Gan Ying should be mainly from the sailors on the border of Parthia and the places that were near there, such as Tiao-zhi and Wu-yi-shan-li[504].

The next well-known Chinese diplomatic mission that possibly got access to information on Da-qin is the embassy of Zhu Ying and Kang Tai around 245-251[505]. The event was recorded firstly in *Liang-shu*.

Until the time of Sun Quan in the State of Wu, the officials Zhu Ying of

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[501] "Ban Gu has recorded in detail the local conditions and customs of each Kingdom in the former book [Han-shu or 'History of the Former Han Dynasties']. Now, the events of the Jianwu period (25-56) onward have been revised for this Chapter on the Western Regions, using those that differ from earlier records as reported by Ban Yong at the end of the reign of Emperor An (107-125)", in the vol. 88 of the *HHS,* refer to http://www.guoxue.com/shibu/24shi/hhansu/hhsu_098.htm, 19-03-2015.

[502] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Ying Lin (2013), p.296.

[503] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 57-58.

[504] Lin Ying (2014, pp. 296-297) emphasizes the influence of the merchants from Tiao-zhi and Wu-yi-shan-li to Gan Ying.

[505] There are controversies about the exact time of this embassy, such as 226-231, 245-250 etc. Through reviewing all of them, Chen Jia-rong (2002, pp. 255-259) makes the time between 245-251 which seems much reasonable.

Xuanhua and Kang Tai were sent (there), and the communication was set up. The states that they had passed and heard are more than a hundred, accordingly, they recorded them.[506]

In extant Chinese literature, this is also the first time that Chinese envoys are recorded as actively communicating with states in the South Sea.[507] This source, as well as others, tells us that, in the period of Sun Quan (200-252), Zhu Ying and Kang Tai, who were officials from the State of Wu, were sent as envoys to states in the South Sea (nowadays the countries in Southeast Asia). After they returned, they wrote down their knowledge of these states and their surroundings in the works *Records on the exotics in Fu-nan* and *Records of the foreign states in the period of Wu*. Though the original works are lost in history, some excerpts were quoted by later sources, which provide us with the valuable, earliest knowledge of Southeast Asia obtained by the Chinese themselves. In the excerpts, plenty information on Da-qin is found. Some modern scholars have studied the states or regions that they had arrived in, and while some states are easily identifiable, some others as Da-qin are not because of the mixture of experience and hearsay in their descriptions. Considering the exaggerated information on Da-qin and other states in the extreme west described in their works, it is impossible for us to believe that Zhu Ying and Kang Tai had been there, but obtained the knowledge of them from the people in Southeast Asia.[508]

So-called Da-qin people: magicians and jugglers, envoys, and merchants

In Chinese sources, people with different identities from Da-qin are recorded as having come to the land of China: they were magicians and jugglers, envoys and merchants. It is reasonable to believe that they are the key origins of the information on Da-qin in Chinese literature. Although the following texts for the so-called Da-qin people have been listed in the construction of the Da-qin image, for understanding the likely information of Da-qin provided by them, it is in need to review them again.

In the first year of the Yongning reign-period (in 120), the King of the state of Shan, Yong youdiao, again sent an envoy to the palace to pay respect, bringing

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[506] Vol. 54, *LS*, http://www.guoxue.com/shibu/24shi/liangsu/ls_054.htm, 27-03-2015.

[507] Jia-rong Chen (2002), p. 253.

[508] Yong-Zhang Xu (2004), pp. 27-28.

music performers and magicians who could transform, puff out fire, dissect themselves, change the heads of the ox and the horse, and juggle — they could catch the balls up to a thousand times. They said that they were from the West of the Sea. "The West of the Sea" refers to Da-qin, which could be reached from the southwest of the state of Dan.[509]

This text records the first time of the so-called Da-qin people coming to China, who were with the identity of magicians or jugglers, sent as tribute by the state of Shan in 120. The state of Shan was an ancient state, located to the southwest of China, which sent tribute to the Eastern Han court of China three times: in 97, 120, and 131. All the information about the three tributes is recorded in *Hou-han-shu*, and some pieces of this information are copied in other sources. The location of this state is generally identified with the Region of Shan in Burma and its surroundings[510]. According to the sources, magicians and jugglers came to China in 120 through South Asia and claimed that they were from the state of Hai-xi, which was also called Da-qin. Thus they probably provided abundant information about Da-qin to Chinese. This is also the earliest record of so-called Da-qin people's presence in China.

> Until the ninth year of the Yanxi reign-period of Emperor Huan (in166), An Dun, King of Da-qin, sent an envoy from beyond the frontier of Ri-nan who offered elephant tusk, rhinoceros horn, and tortoise shell. It was only then that for the first time communication was established [between the two states]. The document listing their tribute had nothing at all precious or rare. Thus one suspects that those who have written about it (Da-qin) have erred.[511]

This second text records once so-called Da-qin envoys to China. It provides us much abundant information: the time of their arrival (in 166), the route of travel (from Ri-nan, in the middle of modern-day Vietnam), and the king who sent them (An Dun),

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[509] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 276; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 56-57.

[510] Xu-jin Chen (1962), pp. 34-43; Qi-xiang Tan (1982), pp. 55, 56; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 56. There are also other different viewpoints on the location of Shan, which I believe are not creditable, and the very new view is the identification of Shan with the Roman empire, refers to Zi-chang Lou (2005), pp. 340-344.

[511] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 272; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 72-73.

and the tributes offered. Although many scholars suspect the credibility of the identity of the envoys,[512] seen from the information, it is obvious that they were a key source for information about Da-qin for China.

The next important source is about a so-called Da-qin merchant who was sent to the Wu court during the Three Kingdoms (San guo) period.

> In the fifth year of the Huangwu reign-period of Sun Quan (in 226), a merchant of Da-qin named Qin Lun came to Jiao-zhi. The Grand Administrator of Jiao-zhi Wu Miao sent him to visit [Sun] Quan, who asked him about the land and its customs. [Qin] Lun gave a detailed reply.[513]

This passage states that a Da-qin merchant named Qin Lun came to China in 226, and that his journey was through Jiao-zhi (in modern-day Vietnam). The source also mentions that the king of the Wu court in South China, Sun Quan, asked Qin Lun about Da-qin's land and customs, and that Qin Lun answered in detail. This event was neither kept in detail nor appeared in different forms in any other source. According to the tradition of ancient Chinese historiography that later sources always quote the information from earlier sources, I propose that this event is likely to be first recorded in official notes *Qi-ju-zhu* (起居注)[514] and later was copied by the author of *Liang-shu* directly or indirectly. Based on this event, One scholar assumes that the mission of Zhu Ying and Kang Tai (245-251), which was dispatched by the same king and happened a little later than the event, should be promoted and affected by this event.[515]

The last two recorded visits of Da-qin people, which happened within three years of each other, took place at the end of the third century.

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[512] H. Yule (1915), p. 52; Hirth (1885), p. 176. D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner (1996), p. 154 etc. Most scholars accept that their identity is merchant but not envoy.

[513] Vol. 54, *LS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 306; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 119-120.

[514] *Qi-ju-zhu* is a kind of records on daily life of emperors, in particular on what they talked and what they did. It was written down by the secretaries in the imperial court. The earliest *Qi-ju-zhu* was possibly traced back to the Emperor Wu (157-87 BCE) of the Western Han.

[515] Yong Zhang Xu (1998), p. 54.

In the second year of Taikang reign-period (281), Da-qin State offered their gems to our court, they passed through Zhou (Zhou means Guangzhou 广州, an important city in Southeast China, through which foreigners from Southeast Asia came to China in ancient time). All the gems were beautiful and the asbestos cloth was especially marvelous.In the fifth year of Taikang reign-period (in 284), in the 12th month, on the day Gengwu (庚午), Lin-yi and Da-qin states sent respectively an envoy with tribute."[516]

According to this source, these envoys also came through Southeast Asia. The first envoys came alone (in 281), but the second (in 284) envoys came together with the envoys from the state of Lin-yi (in the middle of modern-day Vietnam). On the basis of the above information, the topic can be summarized thus: first, the well-known envoys and merchants from Da-qin (the Roman empire) in the first two centuries CE arrived to China by sea. This communication did not happen only in the first two centuries, but also after the decline of Roman commerce, i.e., in the third and fourth centuries. In this period, the communication between Da-qin and China arose again with the recovery of Roman commercial activities with the Indian Ocean.[517] Second, it seems that the region of modern Vietnam (where Roman articles have been found through archaeology, mostly in the southern edge) functioned as the connection between Da-qin and China, just as the Ethiopians did between the Roman empire and India.

Other foreign peoples

Although Chinese civilization was more advanced than its neighbors for a long period in ancient times, because of natural obstacles and other reasons, it did not have frequent direct communications (active or negative) with the rest of the world[518]. At

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[516] Vol. 3, *JS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 305; Tai-shan Yu (2013), p. 114.

[517] M. Kordosis (1991), pp. 255-273.

[518] In many Chinese sources, there are abundant descriptions on foreign land, most of which are full of myths and mixed with imaginations, such as the *Biography of Mu who is the son of Heaven* (Mu-tian-zi-zhuan, 穆天子传) which records the King Mu of Zhou's (976-922 BCE, based on the Timeline of the Xia–Shang–Zhou Chronology Project) legend for long-distance romance with the Queen Mother of the West (Xi Wangmu).

the beginning of the Qin-Han period, with the subjugation of the rulers, China for the first time became a united empire. Especially in the Western Han period (202 BCE to 8 CE), through active territorial expansion under the strong leadership of Emperor Wu (141-87 BCE), China not only enlarged its territory in different directions but also began to be able to communicate with the neighboring states or tribes around China and even further. To the west, through two missions of Zhang Qian (139-115 BCE) and Chinese wars with the Xiongnu, the Western Han court of China effectively controlled the He-xi Corridor and set up direct, close relations with the states in the Western Regions until An-xi (Parthia), which signified the official opening of the Silk Road which acted as a great passage connecting China, Central Asia, until Europe in world history. As mentioned in chapter two, the envoys from An-xi in the period of Emperor Wu came together with the Chinese envoys (who were sent to An-xi) to see the splendors of China with a tribute of large birds eggs and magicians from Li-xuan.[519] This is the beginning of Chinese relations with An-xi. Later on, envoys from An-xi to China were mentioned many more times. In consideration of the role played by An-xi in the relations between the Roman empire and China, it is believed that An-xi laid the first stone for the transmission of the information about Da-qin or other parts of the Western Regions to China, a good example of which is Gan Ying's mission. In the same direction, Lin Ying also reminds us of the influence of the state Wu-yi-shan-li (Alexandria Ariana), which possibly presented information about places further west to Gan Ying.[520]

Also in the time of Emperor Wu, to the southeast, China conquered the kingdoms in Vietnam and set up nine commedaries, such as Ri-nan and Jiao-zhi, and made Han China known to South Asia and Southeast Asia. The first recorded diplomatic mission from the states in Southeast Asia happened in 84: "In the Spring of the first year of Yuanhe (in 84), the foreigners from outside of Ri-nan came to pay tribute of live rhinoceros and white wild chickens". Later diplomatic missions from the states in

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[519] The information of the envoys first appeared in Da-yuan-lie-zhuan of *SJ*, and it did not connect with Emperor Wu; when it secondly appeared in the first part of the vol. 96 of *HS*, it made the envoys to the time of Emperor Wu.

[520] Ying Lin (2014), pp. 296-297.
Vol. 3, *HHS*. many scholars doubt that these so-called Da-qin envoys were merchants (Syrians, Greeks, Egyptians, and Jews) or even envoys coming like India or Southeast Asia.

Southeast Asia were recorded, such as the states that have been mentioned above: the state of Shan and state of Lin-yi. Since "the people of this state (Da-qin) are on trade, always come to Fu-nan, Ri-nan and Jiao-zhi, but the people from the states to the south China rarely go there"[521], and Da-qin envoys came to China with envoys from Shan and Lin-yi. Through the above information, it is reasonable to believe that the people from the states in Southeast Asia had knowledge of Da-qin and brought it to China. Their knowledge of Da-qin and possibly of regions further west, may have been obtained from the merchants coming from Da-qin.

India, southwest of China, a main destination of merchants from the Mediterranean world and the regions near it (Greeks, Egyptians, Syrians, Ethiopians, Arabs, Persians), also had early and close relationship with China. Zhang Qian (122 BCE), who went to the Western Regions, brought back the knowledge that Chinese products were being sold to Bactria by Indians; also it is him who brought for the first time information on the state of India and called it in its Chinese name, Shen-du.[522] For this reason, he was also dispatched by Emperor Wu to open the way to India, although he did not succeed.[523] It is said that, in the period of Emperor He (89-105), India sent several tributes to the court of China,[524] which inaugurated its official relations with it. From this information, we can be sure that information about Da-qin also came to China through India.

Western sources

There is evidence that some Da-qin information in Chinese sources was probably taken from Western sources. We have discussed the close relationship between the Chinese term "water sheep" and the sea-shell "pinna" and "wool of the sea" in the Mediterranean world. It is very likely that this Western information was not taken by

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See D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner (1996), p.154.

[521] Vol. 54, *LS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 306; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 119-120.

[522] Yü Ying-shih (2005, p. 127) points out, that the knowledge of Zhang Qian on the products of Southwest China by India to Central Asia implies that before him era there should exist non-governmental contact between India and China.

[523] The information about Zhang Qian's knowledge about India and his mission towards there was recorded in vol. 116 and vol. 123 of *SJ*. The discussions on this see H. Yule (1915), p. 65; Bo-zan Jian (2003), p. 193.

[524] H. Yule (1915), p. 66.

travelers, but drawn from written sources, which Laufer implies in his careful study on the topic[525], when he discusses the reasons Greek traditions arrived in China[526]. As we have mentioned, the agreement of Chinese sources on the distance from China to the Western Sea and Da-qin (30,000 +10,000 *li*) with the distance provided by Strabo from the eastern edge of the world to the Caspian Sea and the Roman empire (30,000 +10,000 *stadia*) led M. Kordosis to believe that the writing of Strabo and the Chinese sources have the same sources, which are probably from Syria or Persia.[527] A sharing of sources by Western and Chinese texts also appears to have taken place with the description about the flying-bridge over the Western Sea, if we compare the length of the flying-bridge with the length given by Strabo and Pliny the Elder for the underground passage of the Tigris River. The Chinese *li* agreeing with *stadium* clearly shows us the duplication of Chinese information from Western sources, directly or indirectly.

All the information above provided by M. Kordosis (especially the distance of 30,000+10,000 *li* or *stadia*) presents strong evidence that certain information kept in Chinese sources was from Western sources (mainly from Central Asia). However, in order to strengthen this view and to find out how the Western sources were taken to the Far East (such as through translated texts in other languages), more such examples need to be provided.

In the previous part, we discussed the possible origins of the information on Da-qin. The origin of some information is easy to trace, while others can only be sought

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[525] Laufer (1915a), pp. 103-128.

[526] M. Kordosis (1991), p. 173: "Laufer notices that the sheep was the principal animal in ancient times which furnished wool and so 'the term used by Alciphron is either the index of a brief existing at that time in a marine sheep that furnished the wool of pinna, or directly responsible for the formation of such a notion'. He also states that the Chinese terms 'water-sheep' and 'cloth from the west of sea' present 'the outflow of that Hellenistic tradition which inspired their statements' and are not a Chinese invention, 'but the spontaneous reproduction of a popular term current in the Hellenistic Orient'; also p. 175: Very interesting is Laufer's view that the Chinese as well as the Arabic traditions 'must be reducible to a Hellenistic tradition; and it is obvious alike that the Chinese notion which first appears in the 'Wei-lio' of the third century is not due to the Arab, but received a direct impetus from Hellenism'".

[527] M. Kordosis (1991), pp. 182-183, 189, 193.

through minor clues. Through the above analyses, we can conclude that there were two paths through which the information on Da-qin came to China: by land from the Western Regions, and by sea from South Asia and Southeast Asia. The earliest information on land is traced back to Gan Ying in 97 (maybe even earlier than the year 97, since in this year Gan Ying was sent for Da-qin; if there was no knowledge of it, Gan Ying could not have been sent there); the earliest information coming by sea is traced back to the year 120. All of this information is based on the analysis of Chinese sources. It is possible for the dates to be pushed back based on new evidence.

5.2.2 Factors influenced the image's construction

Taking into account the possible origins of the information on Da-qin in Chinese sources, the characteristics of the image, the tradition of Chinese historiography, and the theories of Imagology on "hetero image" or "alien image", the factors that influenced the image's construction will be analyzed from the following perspectives: geographical obstacles, the impact of the information providers, and the Chinese historians.

Geographical obstacles and artificial block

According to the records, from the first century to the sixth century, Da-qin was located to the extreme west of China, bordered with An-xi and Tiao-zhi, at the place where the sun set and where the mythical Queen Mother of the West lived. In reality, at the same period, the Roman empire controlled the Mediterranean Sea and its surroundings, and its Asian territory bordered the Persian empire (Parthian and Sassanian empire). Hence, it can be seen that there was a long distance between Da-qin (Roman empire) and China. In ancient times, where the only means of transportation were one's feet or animal-powered transport (horses, camels, donkeys etc.), it is hard to imagine how difficult communication was by land. An example of how difficult travel was is that the father and uncle of Marco Polo spent two years on the way from Constantinople to China and, on a separate trip, spent four years traveling from Venice to China with Marco Polo.[528] Furthermore, it also needs to be

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[528] The story of Marco Polo has been well-known to the world, and the travels to the Far East of him, his father and uncle are kept in *The Travels of Marco Polo.* There are kinds of

kept in mind that their journeys happened in the period of the *Pax Mongolica*[529]*,* when the whole Eurasian Steppe was guaranteed to be safe and peaceful[530]. Other than the distance, the natural geographical obstacles between the East and West were also a great problem. Gan Ying was hindered by the Western Sea and returned to China without having traveled beyond it. His journey is also likely to be the farthest one done by Chinese during this period.

As to the sea route, the commercial relations of the Roman empire with the Far East started in the period of Augustus, in which he conquered Egypt (30 BCE) and the monsoon was discovered. Strabo wrote about the frequent sailings to India from Egypt during the period of Augustus, and Florus mentioned the embassies of India, Seres etc., coming to Augustus.[531] Later on, commercial activities over the Indian Ocean blossomed in the first and second centuries, and this is known through the images provided by the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* and the commentary of Pliny Elder on the huge expenses of the Romans on products from East. However, a direct relationship between the Roman world and China at this period is not supported: "After this region under the very north, the sea outside ending in a land called This, there is a very great inland city called Thinae, from which raw silk and silk yarn and silk cloth are brought on foot through Bactria to Barygaza, and are also exported to Damirica by way of the river Ganges. But the land of this is not easy of access; few

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modern language versions for this work, the best known English ones are H. Yule (1903); A.C. Moule & P. Pelliot (1938); R.E. Latham (1958).

[529] This term is used for describing the stabilizing effects through the conquests of the Mongol empire, on the social, cultural, and economic life of the inhabitants, who lived on the vast Eurasian territory conquered by the Mongols in the 13th and 14th centuries.

[530] The Mongol law stipulates that no traveler could be harmed while in Mongol land, under penalty of death.

[531] "Even the rest of the nations of the world which were not subject to the imperial sway were sensible of its grandeur, and looked with reverence to the Roman people, the great conqueror of nations. Thus even Scythians and Sarmatians sent envoys to seek the friendship of Rome. Nay, the Seres came likewise, and the Indians who dwelt beneath the vertical sun, bringing presents of precious stones and pearls and elephants, but thinking all of less moment than the vastness of the journey which they had undertaken, and which they said had occupied four years. In truth it needed but to look at their complexion to see that they were people of another world than ours", see Henry Yule (1915), p. 18.

men come from there, and seldom." (Trans. By W. H. Shoff)[532] In terms of China's relations, as was mentioned before, though China may had relations with India and Southeast Asia since a very early time (second century BCE), direct and official relations did not begin earlier than the end of the first century, partly due to the obstacle of natural environment.

Artificial hindrance between the Roman empire and China was also prominent in this period.[533] As one of the greatest barriers to communication, the information about An-xi has been discussed; however, here it is necessary to review it again in order to better understand its impact. As mentioned in Chinese sources, "The king of this state (Da-qin) always wanted to enter into diplomatic relations with the Han. But the An-xi wanted to trade with them in silk of Han and so put obstacles in their way, so that they could never have direct relations [with Han]."[534] This text states that the An-xi, identified with Parthian empire, blocked direct communication between the Roman empire and China for profits of silk. Following this information, it is recorded that the embassy of An Dun in 166 came to China from Southeast Asia. On the basis of the Chinese information, Zhang Xu-shan believes that the Romans managed to open the sea route to the Far East because of Parthians' block on land. They successfully opened the sea route to India and South China and reached the origin of Chinese silk, thus breaking the monopoly on silk by the Persians to some extent in the first two centuries CE.[535] However, this view of their block is not supported by all. Raschke found much evidence to support his view that, in the first and second centuries, the Parthian empire could not have deliberately monopolized the silk trade and derived enormous profit from their role as middlemen between Roman and China.[536] Yü Ying shih's view provides us with a middle way which seems to be more reasonable. He

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[532] *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, p. 48.

[533] F. J. Teggart (1939, p. 120) puts forward that the treasure of Parthians came from their control and exploration of the Silk Road, and the wars and conflicts in the Western Regions always led to the interruption of the transportation of the Silk Road.

[534] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 272; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 72-73.

[535] Xu-shan Zhang (2012), p. 266.

[536] Raschke (1978, pp. 641-642) also points out that, according to the anachronisms in the description of the Western Regions in *HHS*, if existed the blocking of the Parthian empire, it is only possible to happen in the fourth and fifth centuries onward, when the Sassanians restricted Roman movement from across their frontiers.

accepts the real existence of the block by Parthia to direct communication between the Roman empire and China in order to monopolize the silk trade; however, he also states that there is no final conclusion on the temporal duration nor extent of this monopoly. In addition, he points out that there is evidence that, from the second century on, especially after the Roman-Parthian wars which took place from 162 to165, more and more quantities of Chinese silk were transported through the sea route to the Roman world by Indians, and in this way, expensive transportation through Parthia was avoided.[537]

To be simply summarized, the geographical obstacle and the artificial block are the external and objective factors which affect the direct and in-depth communications of the Roman empire and China, consequently, partly leading to the result of the image mixing of the realities and the non-realities.

The information bearers

Francois-Bernard Huyghe says that the truth will not be traveling in the luggage of the merchants and passengers.[538] According to my understanding, it means that it is difficult for the travelers to get the real knowledge on their way, and also the knowledge provided by them was always misinterpreted or recreated for their special purpose or because of long-way transmission. In this study, as provided by the sources, it is known that the image of Da-qin kept in Chinese sources was mainly based on the information provided by different bearers: envoys, merchants, religious persons, and accordingly, these bearers became the first constructors of the image.

The first noticing group of information bearers for the Western Regions and Da-qin as we discussed before, should be Zhang Qian and Gan Ying. They are believed to be the main origins of the Chinese sources on the West. According to Chinese sources, Zhang Qian and Gan Ying are the earliest Chinese who went to the far west of China and arrived in the regions near to Da-qin. Since they did not succeed in arriving there, the knowledge on Li-Xuan and Da-qin was mainly from second hand. Hence, the information is in suspicion, for example, the source mentions that the sailors on the

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[537] Ying-shih Yü (2005), p. 131.

[538] Francois-Bernard Huyghe (1993), p. 14.

western borders of An-xi (Parthian empire) told Gan Ying that it was impossible to crossover the Great Sea to Da-qin, becasue "The sea is vast and great; it is impossible for a traveler to cross it within three months with favorable wind; but if one meets with slow wind, it may also take him two years." Hence, "It is for this reason that those who go to sea all take on board a supply of three years' provisions. Life at sea is apt to make home-sick, and several passengers have thus lost their lives".[539] Obviously the information told by the sailors was much exaggerated, but why these sailors on the western borders of An-xi lied to Gan Ying? There is another record providing us a reasonable explanation: "their kings (the kings of Da-qin) had always desired to send embassies to the Han empire, but An-xi wished to continue trade with them in Chinese silks, and it is for this reason that they were cut off from communication and could not reach China".[540] Though the reliability of the information is suspected by some scholar[541], and also it is not sure if the sailors on the western borders of An-xi were Parthians or not,[542] based on this information, we can deduce that, possibly for commercial profits, many middlemen as the sailors did not hope there would be a direct communication between Da-qin and China, hence, they tied all the best to stop the direct relation and even lied to the envoys as Gan Ying about the journey and the state.[543] On the basis of those, I believe that what happened to Gan Ying could also happen to other Chinese people who went outside to the West Regions and to Southeast Asia and South Asia.

The knowledge brought by the so-called Da-qin envoys and merchants is the second main way of the Da-qin access to China. As in many places having been discussed, it is possible that the identity of these Da-qin people is merchant, but not official envoy,

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[539] Vol. 88. *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 274; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 63-64.

[540] Vol. 88, *HHS*, Zhi-qiang Chen (2004), p. 272; Tai-shan Yu (2013), pp. 72-73.

[541] Raschke (1978), pp. 641-642.

[542] W. H. Schoff (1913, pp. 56-58) assumes that the so-called sailors on the borders of An-xi should be the Nabataeans, who got great profits from the silk trade. Hirth (1885, p. 165) assumes their identity as the employees of Syrian shipowners engaged in the carriage of Chinese goods from Parthia to Syria for Roman market and *vise versa*.

[543] Hirth (1885, pp. 164-165) assumes that the sailors on the border of the Parthian empire were inspired by the spirit of the ancient Phoenician merchants in that they would not help anyone to collect information which might possibly created competition in trade and became ruinous to their own business.

however, why they pretended to be the envoys from Da-qin? The answer is: for commercial privilege and gifts from the Chinese rulers. This purpose and behavior can be explained in Chinese tradition: granting privilege, official titles, and presenting valuable gifts to foreign people was a traditional way for Chinese authority to get or keep relationship with them. On discussing the foreign relations of Han court, Yü Ying-shih mentions that in order to set up good relations with the states in the Western Regions, Han court always gave them kinds of treasures as gift. Under such condition, many states sent embassies to Han court. A writer from Han period mentioned the commercial purpose of a far-away state Ji-bin who always sent the merchants with the name of embassy but not the advanced officials.[544] Based on this and the operations of Han in the Western Regions, he concludes that the tributes from the states in the Western Regions "were important to the Han court chiefly as a symbol of political submission, rather than for its intrinsic value. On the other hand, tributes meant little more to the western states than an official cloak for trade."[545] Hence, in the same way, the Da-qin merchants also came to China for commercial activities. Together with other mentioned so-called Da-qin people (Magicians in 120, Qin Lun in 166), how much of the information from them is deserved to be trusted? Fan Ye told us that the tributes from the embassy in 166 were not special, and scholars have found them in Vietnam, hence, at least the products of Da-qin should be in suspicion, and it is also needed to be deliberated further.

The authors of the Da-qin sources

Needless to say, the most important influencing factor to the construction of the Da-qin image is from the authors of the Chinese sources on Da-qin, and we can proclaim that the information bearer decide the basic construction of the image; nevertheless, its final image was the reconstruction of the Chinese writers.

On discussing the values of the Chinese Standard Histories, Michael Loewe also detected the influence of the Chinese writers on the descriptions of the foreign relations in their works that "This is the treatment of foreign relations, which are presented in these works through Chinese eyes, and colored by the attitudes,

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[544] Ying-shih Yü (2005), p. 116.
[545] Ying-shih Yü (2008), p. 416.

prejudices, and records of Chinese officials. The peoples[546] with whom the imperial officials were in contact at this time left no written records that would give their own account of these relations and their own view of their Chinese neighbors."[547] This viewpoint of Michael Loewe shows that the basic characteristic of Chinese treating the foreign relations is "colored by the attitudes, prejudices, and records of Chinese officials." From this, we can understand that under the condition of no written records left by the information bearer, the Chinese Standard Histories access to us mostly reflect the will and ideology of the writers who compiled them. Actually this is the traditional Chinese historiography suitable to all the Chinese sources,

In the Imagological theories on alien image, the image of alien is always not the true reflection of alien's realities, but a work-piece recreated by the writers in their own understanding and customs, reflecting their local emotion and perception. As to the alien image in China, a Chinese scholar points out that "Alien image, never mind the Chinese image in the West or West image in China, both are not only the real reflections for the alien civilization. The alien image is always the creature of native culture which was regrouped and rewritten according to its own traditional mode with the penetration of native passion and conception."[548]

In the study "China ideas reflected in Ta-ch'in Accounts", Shiratori through examining the details of the sources shows us the influence from the writers that based on the actual observation, Chinese writers utilized Chinese own elements and thought creating an idealized state of Da-qin which shows their most desirable to their own nation.[549] Besides, at the end of the same study, he further summarizes that "In the descriptions of Ta-ch'in in the Han and Wei chronicles are mixed the facts actually seen or heard of the country by the contemporary Chinese and the fiction of the Chinese idealizing this country. The Chinese ideas, as reflected in the fictions, appear to show something of Daoistic characteristics, but they are essentially Confucian, since the ideas of institutions and other cultural aspects are chiefly taken from the

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[546] These people were possibly foreign envoys, merchants, even foreign writers from Middle East.

[547] Denis Twitchett & John K. Fairbank (2008), p. 5.

[548] Ning Zhou (1999), p. 1.

[549] Shiratori (1956), pp. 48-49, 72.

legends of Yao, Shun and Yu."[550] Hence, the study of Shiratori not only points out the existence of the vital influence from the writers but also the characteristics of the influence: desirable to their own nation, Daoist and Confucian elements.

In the above discussion, we emphasize, on the basis of the realities, the existence of the inevitable influence by the Chinese writers to the Chinese image of Da-qin and its performances; next, we will explain what the reasons of the influence are.

Traditionally, Chinese literature was always made in the purpose for reference to the rulers or later generations, for making better-ordered society and government. A majority of such works were composed under the order of the emperors, such as the official historical collection *Er-shi-si-shi* which was used by the emperors as bible for rule. Meanwhile, the writers of private works also wished their works would be useful and praised by the rulers, and they also can be remembered in history for their contributions. Hence, the image of Da-qin, as analyzed by Shiratori, mixed with the idealized elements that show the mythical perfect society and governance of the Chinese predecessors. These elements accord to the Chinese leading philosophy in governance: Confucianism; meanwhile, the popular philosophy of the third-fourth century Daoism was also reflected inside. Both of the philosophies advocate peaceful and perfect governed society. Some scholar has proclaims that the Chinese scholar was a Confucian when in office and a Daoist out office.[551] Though we are not sure how many of the writers who wrote down the information on Da-qin accord to this phenomenon, it is sure that the Chinese elements in the texts on Da-qin prove us the high impact of the two philosophies to their writings. In such context, Robert Andre Lafleur believes that "Da-qin accounts are not merely a collection of factual statements concerning far-away lands, but a model of a distant reality. It is, though exceedingly terse, a strategy, a model for perfect rule".[552] Even though, we still must keep in mind that the information on Da-qin provided by the Chinese sources, to a great extent,

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[550] Shiratori (1956), p. 72. Robert André LaFleur (1998, p. 49) also supports this view, "What the above Utopian imagery provides, then, are mirrors of Three Dynasties social and political ideals mixed with data drawn from travelers' accounts from China's northwestern frontier".

[551] John. K. Fairbank (1992), p. 53.

[552] Robert Andre Lafleur (1998), p. 45.

reflects the reality, and not be misled by the influence of the Chinese philosophies etc.

After the sixth century, through frequent comings of the embassies, merchants, and Nestorians from the West, more detailed information on the Roman empire was brought to China and written down in Chinese literature under the name of Fu-lin, whose original form is believed to be Rome. Combining with the earlier information on Da-qin, the image of the Roman empire (now mainly the eastern Roman empire) in Chinese literature was more clear and close to the reality.

CHAPTER 6

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DA-QIN IMAGE
IN CHINESE SOURCES

6.1 Providing valued evidence from Chinese sources
for the study on Roman history

No need to say, first of all, its great value lies on its significance to the study of the Roman history. It is notorious that, both in the history of Roman historiography and now, the subject of Roman studies has been always the strength of the Western scholars, who own abundant Classical and Roman sources and have priority in ancient Greek and Latin. We have to admit that this Roman history on the basis of the Western sources has presented us an immense and spectacular image of the Roman world[553]. Yet, as is well known, the Roman empire in its history created a vast world empire which made the Mediterranean Sea as its *Mare Nostrum*, and its eastern frontier even arrived at the Tigris River; under its governance lived different peoples; Christianity, which was first recognized as official religion by empire spread world widely; its law is the origin of the world civil law; its merchants went to the Fat East, arrived in India, Southeast Asia, and even in China. In a word, the influence of the Roman world arrived at different corners of the world.[554]

All of the achievements and influence of the Roman empire prove that the writing of the Roman history should not be restricted in the Western historiography, but in worldwide historiography. The Chinese sources on Da-qin or the Roman empire, though very few, are such valuable materials which will supply and improve the knowledge on the Roman history, especially its situation in the eastern territory, its borders, its relations with other Eastern people, its commercial activities with the Far East etc. As a matter of fact, Western scholars have been noticing and understanding

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[553] The examples of such works include *The History of Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* by Edward Gibbon, *The Roman History* by Theodor Mommsen etc.

[554] See Mortimer Wheeler (1955).

the significance of the Chinese sources to the study of the Roman history,[555] and it is believed that more and more Chinese sources and the studies by Chinese scholars will be included in the international study on the Roman history, and will promote it for further development. This kind of ascertainment is also for the sources concerning the Roman empire from other regions (Persian, Indian and Arabian etc.). As M. Kordosis believes, "the materials that Chinese sources provide can be compared and completed by that of the Western sources, open large chapters in the field of Greco-Chinese (or Greco-Roman and Chinese) studies".[556] Considering the information provided by Chinese sources, the following fields of research can be proposed: 1) History; 2) Philosophy; 3) Geography-topography; 4) Finances (products, commerce); 5) Terminology; 6) Art. We still can add different mythological elements, some of which reveal the truth; additionally, the parallel of the descriptions on Da-qin and its government in Chinese sources and the Greek-Roman sources on China is also of value.

6.2 Reflecting Sinocentrism
## and the approach China treating others under Sinocentrism

China was acknowledged as one of the great civilizations in the world for its long history, splendid culture, vast territory etc. As every great civilization experienced, ancient China also had its own ego-centricity: Sinocentrism or Sinocentric system. This system is shown in two-fold: in geography, ancient Chinese regarded their state was the center of the world, all the other people were around them; second, in culture, they believed that China was a high civilized state, and the rest peoples were barbarians (it is shown by the theory of Sino-barbarian dichotomy, *Huayi zhibian*, 華夷之辨)[557].

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[555] As early as the time of Edward Gibbon, he had already used the sources from Chinese annals to support his study on the Roman and relative history (mainly from the compilations of M. De Guignes and Visdelou). As more and more Chinese sources being translated into Western languages, the use of Chinese sources in the Roman history shows a upward trend (see M. Kordosis 1994c, there is a long bibliography on the study), however, the international attention to the Chinese study on the subject is still not enough.

[556] M. Kordosis (1991a), p. 211.

[557] The Sino-barbarian dichotomy is an ancient Chinese conception that differentiated a

The Sinocentrism was expressed by two Chinese theories: *Tianxia* and *Wufu*. Both of them, combining together with the geography and culture formed a Chinese world order.
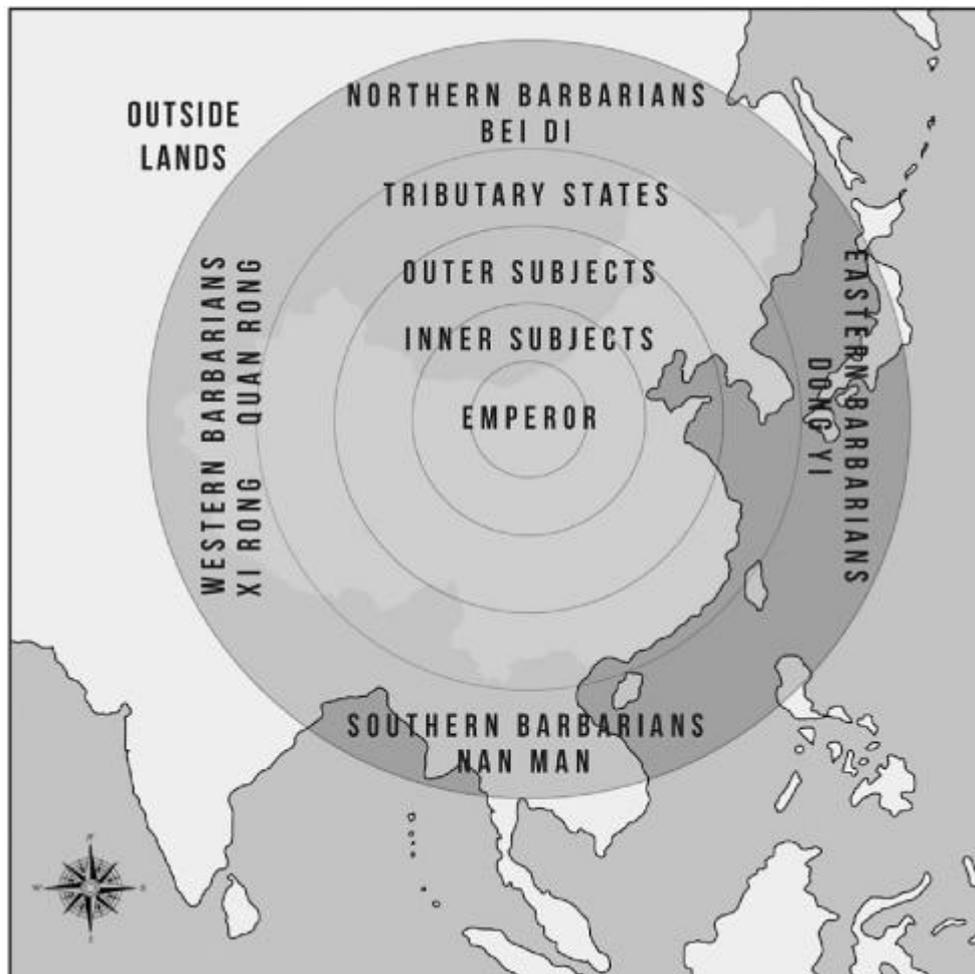
Map 1: World order of *Tianxia* (Tan Koon San, *Dynastic China: An Elementary History*, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: The Other Press 2014, p. 480.)

The map 1 is made on the basis of the Chinese world order *Tianxia* (under the heaven). The concept of *Tianxia* is central to the Chinese conception of political order and territorial boundaries.[558] In this conception, Han Chinese are in the center, the other people according to their distance to China were arranged in order, the extreme

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culturally defined "China" from cultural or ethnic outsiders. See Yuri Pines (2005), pp. 59-102.

[558] Joseph Chan (2008), pp. 67-68.

outside circle is the people who were named *Man* (蛮), *Yi* (夷), *Rong* (戎), *Di* (狄) regarding as the people beyond the pale (Huawaizhimin, 化外之民). Da-qin is just such a state regarding in the group by the pale.

Similar to to *Tianxia* conception, the Han world order is also shown in so-called five-Zones (*Wu-fu*, see map 2) theory.[559]
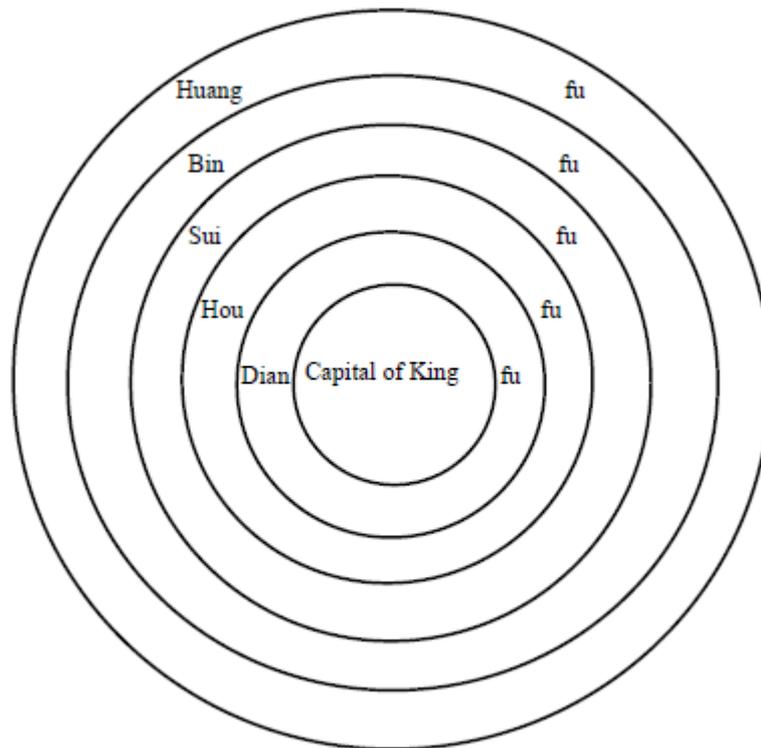
Map 2: Wufu (five zones)

"According to this theory, China since the Xia Dynasty had been divided into five concentric and hierarchical zones or areas. The central zone (*tien fu, or dianfu*) was the royal domain, under the direct rule of the king. The royal domain was immediately as the lords' zone (*hou-fu*). Beyond the *hou-fu* were Chinese states conquered by the reigning dynasty, which constituted the so-called pacified zone (*sui-fu* or *pin-fu*, guest zone). The last two zones were reserved for the barbarians. The *Man* and *Yi* barbarians lived outside the *sui-fu*

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[559] Probably the earliest reference to the *Wu-fu* will be found in the *Shu-jing,* see Bernhard Karlgren (1950), pp. 11-12; James Legge (1893), p. 74; see also John. K. Fairbank (1968), pp. 20, 292, note. 1.

or *pin-fu* in the controlled zone (*yao-fu*), which was so called because the Man and I were supposedly subject to Chinese control, albeit control of a rather loose kind. Finally, beyond the controlled zone lay the Jung (*Rong*) and Ti (*Di*) barbarians, who were basically their own masters in the wild zone (*huang-fu*) where the Sinocentric world order reached its natural end."[560]

The reflection of the *Tianxia* and *Wufu* theories in institution is the tributary system.[561] For example, in the *Wufu* system, "in principle, tribute was offered by the five groups of people in descending order from the royal domain to the wild zone. Thus, the king received tribute from the central zone on a daily basis, from the lords' zone monthly, from the pacified zone trimonthly, from the controlled zone annually, and from the wild zone only once".[562]

Through the theories, it seems that the Chinese world order is a perfect system: Chinese put the entire world known to them under the influence of their civilization with China as the center. Accordingly, Chinese emperors dealt relations with the other peoples in order. Following this order, all the states and peoples－the barbarians (Chinese use *Yi*, *Di*, *Man*, *Rong*, also in a term *Hu* to describe the barbarians)－pay tribute to Chinese central authority, meanwhile, Chinese central authority gives them gifts, privileges or titles for keeping the normal order. Indeed, it is only an idealized standard and mode, in practice, it was not always followed strictly,[563] in particular in the first six centuries of the Common Era when the system was just formed and also the barbarians around China were powerful.

As to Da-qin, it was located in the fifth zone of the theory of Five Zones and regarded as a civilized state. Hence, the control or influence of this Chinese world order is much weak. In Chinese sources, we have only few descriptions on the embassies from

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[560]   Ying-shih Yü (2008), pp. 379-380; M. Kordosis (2008a), p. 341 etc.

[561]   Yü Ying shih (2008, p. 382) believes that the tributary was formed in the period the Han: "It is true that certain prototypical tributary practices can be traced back even to the Shang period. But there can be little doubt that the institutionalization of such practices and their systematic application in the realm of foreign relations was a unique Han contribution".

[562]   Ibid, p. 380.

[563]   John. K. Fairbank (2005), pp. 2, 11.

Da-qin to China, yet, much more information on the embassies from Fu-lin — the synonym of Da-qin mainly adopted from the seventh century on — to China were recorded intensively in the seventh and eighth centuries. It seems that, apart from some special times of embassies sent by Fu-lin to China when it was in difficulties (cooperation with China for confrontation with the dangers made by the Arabs), every Roman emperor sent once or more than once embassies to China for informing their enthronement (also for cooperation) in this period.[564] The Byzantines also made similar things in their relations with the Turks in Central Asia, the embassies from Constantinople arriving at the heart of Central Asia.[565]
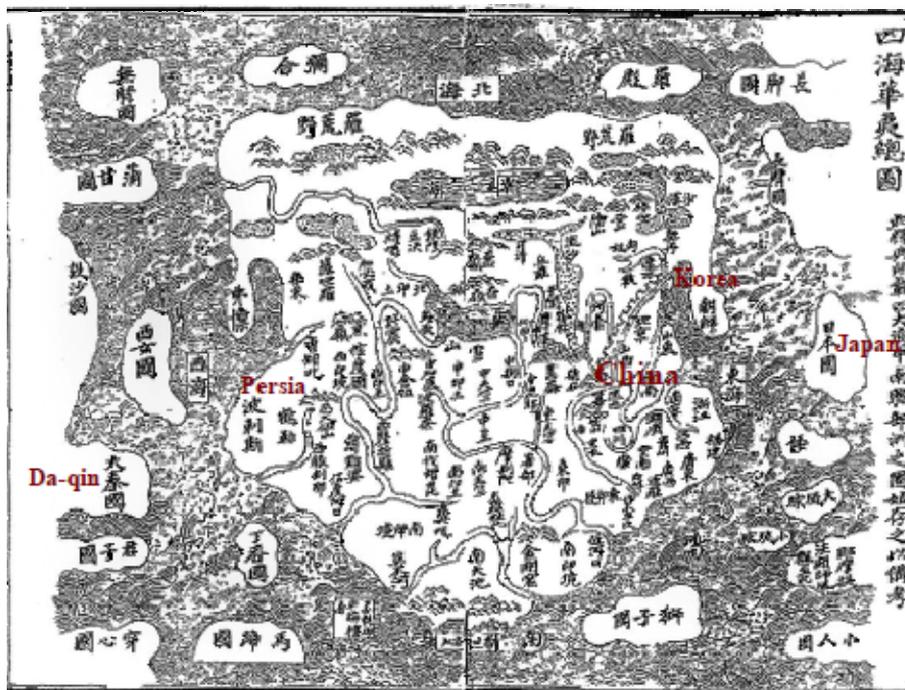
Map 3: World Diagram of China and the Barbarians (Zhang Huang, *Collections of Books* **[Tu-shu-bian]**, vol. 29, 1613, p.51)

The map 3 is a world map made by ancient Chinese on the basis of sources from

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[564] M. Kordosis (2008a), p. 344: "Conclusively, find out of the seven or eight delegations departed at a time when a new emperor assumed the leadership of the Byzantine state, because every new emperor had to make his ascent to the throne and his commitment to any treaties, known to other, foreign and - particularly - allied leaders."

[565] M. Kordosis (2008b), p. 342.

different periods[566]. It shows Sinocentrism in geography: China is in the center of the map, and its neighboring states as *Yi* (barbarians) are around it. Da-qin, Persia, Korea, and Japan all are in the group of *Yi* located on the edge of the map, as well as some other legendary states.

Considering Da-qin's location in the Chinese map, its image and Chinese treatment to it in the sources, it can be concluded that:

Even though Da-qin was far away from the Chinese cultural circle, Chinese authors intended to put it in the Chinese world order with their discourse system, showing the greatness and influence of China. Since Da-qin was truly another great civilization, hence, they further used the way of sinicization to describe it, so as to again emphasize the greatness of China. This view is also supported by some other scholars. The agreement is that China realized the great civilization of the Roman Empire. Yang Lian-Sheng proclaims that it should not be considered that ancient China did not recognize other peoples in the world, in reality, the sources of Han gave high remark to Da-qin, and also in the Middle Ages (as to China), India was also high respected by Chinese, meanwhile, in some periods of Chinese history, the neighbors were often treated as equal opponent countries.[567] Yü Ying-shih puts forward that "as the geographical knowledge of the world grew with time, the Han Chinese even came to the realization that China was not necessarily the only civilized country in the world. This is clearly shown in the fact that the later Han Chinese gave the Roman Empire (or rather, the Roman Orient) the name of Great Ch'in (Ta Ch'in). According to the Hou-Han shu, the Roman empire was so named precisely because its people and civilization were comparable to those of China."[568] Besides, another Chinese young scholar Zhao Li-yun also supports that, the name of Da-qin reflects that ancient Chinese accepted the Roman empire as another civilization center in the world, which shows ancient Chinese did not obtain the conception which only regards itself as the center but regard others as barbarians (*Yidi*, 夷狄).[569]

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[566] According to the states mentioned in the map and the centered position of India, it can be detected that the sources referred to by the author of the map are mainly from the Chinese Buddhist books of seventh century and before.

[567] John. K. Fairbank (2005), p. 18.

[568] Ying-shih Yü (2008), p. 379.

[569] Li-yun Zhao (2014), p. 124.

In all, through discussing the Chinese world order and the way China treated Da-qin, we can understand that Da-qin was regarded as a great state or civilization, albeit for the consciousness or vanity of Chinese, it was put in the system of Chinese world order as a barbarian people. This approach is part of the Chinese political philosophy treating their relations with other, hence, there is no exception to Da-qin, and however, it does not reduce the grandeur of Da-qin which can be seen from the great image of it.

6.3 Making sound significance to the relations between Europe and China

The Chinese sources provide us a vivid image of the Roman empire (Da-qin) and also their many-sided relations in the first six centuries of the Common Era. However, we should notice that the relations between of them later continued, but then Da-qin was named Fu-lin by Chinese. This Fu-lin refers to the eastern Roman empire. Particularly, In the time of the Tang Dynasty, the relations were well developed through the frequent diplomatic missions from Fu-lin and the history of Fu-lin was recorded much clearly in Chinese sources.[570] After the Tang period, the information on Fu-lin in Chinese sources much reduced, until the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127), Fu-lin appeared again, however, considering the history, it is not sure that the Fu-lin of this time is the eastern Roman empire or the regime of Seljuk Turks, who had conquered the Asian territory of the empire.[571] Another period for the frequent appearances of Fu-lin should be in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). In this period, Fu-lin's meaning gradually extended from the eastern Roman empire (after the fall of Constantinople in 1453) to Europe. Later on also in the same dynasties, this word Fu-lin was instead by

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[570] Fu-lin has been researched in a great scale, for the Chinese sources containing Fu-lin see Hirth (1885), Zhi-qiang Chen (2004). For the main research on the name of Fu-lin see Hirth (1909), pp. 1-31, (1913), pp. 193-208; Shiratori (1956), pp. 165-329; M. Kordosis (1994a). Chen Zhi-qiang (1994a) in his dissertation has given a general view of the Fu-lin-Chinese relations in the Tang Dynasties; M. Kordosis (2008a) also provides detailed research the relations between Fu-lin and the Tang China.

[571] Hirth (1885, p. 297), Kordosis (1995, pp. 187-202, 242-243), Xu Jia-ling (2009, pp. 63-67), and Zhang Xu-shan (2010, pp. 107-112) are inclined to support this Fu-lin to be the Seljuk empire or part of that, which seems to be more convincing; meanwhile, Pauthier (1859, p. 22), Bretschneider (1871, p. 25), Yule (1915, p. 56), Chen Zhi-qiang (1994a, p. 187), Wu Peng (2014, p. 141) all support the view of Byzantium or the eastern Roman empire.

another term *Xiyang* (Western Ocean, 西洋) or *Taixi* (Extreme West, 泰西), which is pointing to the countries where the Christian priests, who spread Christianity in China, came from (the most famous one is Italian Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci[572]). Almost at the same time or even a little earlier, some other European countries were also mentioned in Chinese sources. Through them, we can get the following facts that in history the predecessors of modern Europeans had frequent relations with Chinese. Second, at that time, the relations between Europeans and Chinese were shaped by two major factors: the first is the tyranny of distance, when the travelers needed months or years to arrive in China,[573] which has been partially overcome by modern technology and transportation. The second is the primacy of trade as the main conduit for and substance of their relationship.[574] Third, the descriptions on Da-qin make us understand that how ancient Chinese regarded and treated far-away states or civilizations: putting it under Chinese's conception of world order with itself as the center, treating them as barbarians (calling them in Chinese terms *Hu*, *Yi* etc which were adopted for barbarians, and accepting their tribute). This approach in most time of the early Chinese history was just on the surface or nominal, when the central authority by Han people was not so powerful to realize actual controlling. Here, it should be noticed that this world order treating oneself as center of the world either in politics or culture and treating other people as barbarians is not exclusively held by Chinese, but also ancient Greek people (they called the foreign people as *Barbarians*), as well as ancient Indians who called foreign people as *Mleccha* (or *Melchchhas*).[575]

Though China had an impoverished period when was behind of Europe, in nowadays, China has been again growing up to be the world wide superpower, especially in economics. Its global role and influence has again attracted the attention of the world. As the representative of Europe, how to deal its contemporary relations with China is becoming a core subject to the EU. We believe that the ancient relations between the

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[572] He is the first Christian priest who was successfully accepted by Chinese and allowed to spread Christianity in China, for his history, see Vincent Cronin (1955).

[573] For the distance and the long time which were needed for traveling, see M. Kordosis (1996), pp. 143ff.

[574] Michael Yahuda (2008), p. 13.

[575] Kashinath Trimbak Telang (1884), p. 12: "The Indians referred to all alien cultures that were less civilized in ancient times as 'Mlechcha'"; Romila Thapar (1971), pp. 409-410.

Roman empire and China can provide significant information to the development of the relations between the EU and China, through which, the two important international powers will find better methods to deal with each other and the intermediaries between of them.

CONCLUSION

Da-qin is believed to have had relations with China because its culture can be compared with the one of China and its name originated from the name of ancient China. Even though there have been many different theories concerning the name Da-qin, the only certainty is that it originated from the name of the Qin Dynasty and has the adjective Da (Great). The name was most likely heard by Gan Ying, who was the first Chinese to arrive at the Western Sea, which was on the frontier between Parthia and Da-qin. The crooked Western Sea, through which one arrives to Da-qin, cannot be identified with the Caspian Sea or the Mediterranean Sea. Its identity is most probability the Persian Gulf or the river system of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which was called "Sea" in Western and Middle East sources.

Of the two routes through which the Roman empire and China communicated, the sea route was flourishing between 120 and 285 (according to the Chinese sources). While the route was used extensively during the first part of this period, in which the Roman empire was witnessing great development, it was used to a lesser extent in the third century crisis, when the empire was in turmoil and disorder. We have more detailed information on the land route, which passed through the territory of the Parthia-Sassanian empires, in particular through the regions of the vassal states of Da-qin. The sea route did not pass through the region of Persia (specifically, not through the Persian Gulf, after which one would travel to Da-qin by land), but through the Indian Ocean to the Erythraean Sea.

The characteristics of the Da-qin people, as described by the Chinese sources, included realistic and non-realistic elements, in which most of the latter are Chinese elements. Their clothing is described as *Hu*; the place of the state is set in the region of *Yi*. *Hu* and *Yi* are the terms ancient Chinese used for neighboring peoples which were believed to be uncivilized; that is to say, the Chinese put Da-qin and Da-qin people in the category of "barbarians". The products belonging to Da-qin, to a large extent, are those in the Roman Orient, while some of them listed show Chinese elements. The Da-qin people were experienced merchants and had commercial

relations not only with Persia, but also with the regions of Indochina (mainly modern-day Vietnam), as well as with South China. This information is very important and agrees with the archaeological evidence found in the southern regions of Vietnam, where many artifacts from the Roman empire were found.

Among the information from the Chinese sources on Da-qin which have been discussed, it is clear that some information is mythical and utopian; however, we should not take this kind of information to be the rule, as some scholars have believed it is, of whom Shiratori is the representative. There are not a small amount of realities in this image of Da-qin, and even where some descriptions seem mythical and fanciful, they contain clues reflecting the reality. As an important example of this, the descriptions of the cities of Da-qin and its capital have much accurate information, as well as some mythical elements which contain seeds of truth. Another example of this mixture is the description of the behavior of the king of Da-qin, which, while containing exaggerations, contains many truths. In addition, there is much truth in the description of Da-qin's postal system, which probably came from the Parthian system that was also popular in the ancient Greek world. The Parthian system of measurement had international influence at least in the first centuries of the Common Era. It is natural that Chinese knowledge of the Da-qin monetary system was also reliable, since coins of the Roman empire (mainly belonging to the eastern Roman empire) were found in China, which were taken there by foreign merchants, and also probably by the people of the Roman empire.

Through all the study above, we can conclude that:

Chinese sources on the Roman Empire (mainly from the first century to the seventh century), which had been given the name Da-qin, refers to the empire from the first century to the six century. In the sources, Da-qin is described as a great state, with a thriving civilization and much treasure, located to the extreme west of China, etc. Under this general image, it was discussed with respect to its territory, people, products, culture, politics, and relations with the Far East (mainly China). The image which the texts present shows four main characteristics: synthesis of realities and non-realities, idealization, "divinization", and sinicization. On the basis of these characteristics and the analysis of the sources, we believe that the construction of such an image was affected by the information bearers, the sources possibly from Central

Asia, and more importantly, by the Chinese authors who compiled or wrote the sources. More importantly, through Chinese authors, it reflects Chinese thought on the order of the world (Sinocentrism) and Chinese vanity: even though the Roman empire was a great civilized state, in Chinese world order, it was still counted among the barbarians. In order to cover the contradiction in the image presented by the sources between its flourishing civilization and barbarian status, Chinese authors used sinicization to describe the state, or declared it as a branch of the Chinese.

The way that China envisioned Da-qin within their world order and dealt with it was not limited to Da-qin, but was also applied to other peoples and states. It forms part of the basic method that ancient China used in its relations with the rest of the world (in modern terms, Chinese international relations). This Chinese world order system was continuously developing and improving until the Ming-Qing period (from the 14th to the 17th century) when it arrived at its peak. In the twentieth century, with the rise and coming of Western powers, it was challenged and finally substituted by the Western system of international relations.[576]

In the 21st century, with the quick development of globalization and the increasingly close relations between Europe and China, how to strengthen the mutual relationship between them has attracted a lot of attention. Benedetto Croce proclaimed that "All history is contemporary history"[577], hence, in this study, the history of the relations between the Roman empire and China, in particular the image of the Roman empire constructed by the Chinese, will be valuable for modern international relations.

As to the study itself, it was conducted mainly on the basis of Chinese sources concerning Da-qin; in addition, Western sources and the materials from archaeological findings also provided significant evidence to support the study. However, considering the complexity of the issues recorded in the sources and ancient history's vast distance from us, this dissertation cannot be an end to the study of the subject, but can just provide a relatively new perspective on it, and more importantly, introduce Chinese contributions on the subject to the international academic circle.

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[576] Joseph Chan (2008), p. 78.
[577] Benedetto Croce (1914), pp. 19-22.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Αντικείμενο της παρούσας διατριβής είναι η μελέτη των σχέσεων της Ρωμαϊκής αυτοκρατορίας και της Κίνας, οι οποίες βρίσκονται στις δύο άκρες της ευρασιατικής στέπας. Η μελέτη επικεντρώνεται στην εικόνα της πρώτης, όπως αυτή αποτυπώνεται στις κινεζικές πηγές από τον 1ο μέχρι τον 7ο αιώνα μ. Χ. σε σύγκριση και με ορισμένες ελληνολατινικές πηγές. Η διατριβή αποτελείται από εισαγωγή και έξι κεφάλαια.

Στην εισαγωγή εξετάζεται η γενικότερη κατάσταση της Ρωμαϊκής αυτοκρατορίας, η οποία στις κινεζικές πηγές αναφέρεται με το όνομα Da-qin, καθώς και οι έρευνες που έχουν γίνει για τις σχέσεις της με την Κίνα. Το όνομα Da-qin εμφανίζεται από τον 1ο αιώνα μ. Χ. Οι περισσότεροι ερευνητές πιστεύουν ότι η πρώτη εμφάνιση του ονόματος αυτού στις κινεζικές πηγές θα πρέπει να συνδεθεί με τον Κινέζο Gan Ying, ο οποίος είχε σταλεί το έτος 97 μ. Χ. στην μακρινή δυτική χώρα Da-qin από τον Κινέζο στρατηγό των Δυτικών Περιοχών (Western Regions, δηλαδή των εδαφών δυτικά Κίνας) Ban Chao και επέστρεψε με πληροφορίες για την χώρα αυτή μολονότι δεν έφτασε πιο πέρα από την παρθορωμαϊκή μεθόριο. Όσο οι σχέσεις μεταξύ των Δυτικών Περιοχών και της Κίνας γίνονταν στενότερες καταγράφονταν περισσότερες πληροφορίες για το Da-qin στις κινεζικές πηγές, πληροφορίες που αφορούσαν τη γεωργία, τη ζωή, τά υποτελή κράτη, τα προϊόντα, τους δρόμους από τα ανατολικά προς αυτές τις περιοχές, καθώς και τις σχέσεις με τις χώρες στα ανατολικά. Το όνομα Da-qin αντικαταστάθηκε από τον 7ο αιώνα και μετά από το Fu-lin. Ορισμένες φορές συνυπήρχαν και τα δύο ονόματα σε ένα κείμενο.

Οι μελέτες για τις σχέσεις της Ρωμαϊκής αυτοκρατορίας και της Κίνας μπορούν να αναχθούν στον 17ο αιώνα μ. Χ. με την ανακάλυψη μίας Νεστοριανής στήλης στην Σι'αν (Xi'an) της Κίνας που εγέρθηκε το 781 μ. Χ., από τους Νεστοριανούς που από το 635 είχαν ιδρύσει Εκκλησία στην Κίνα νόμιμα. Οι Ιησουίτες χριστιανοί της Κίνας άρχισαν αργότερα να μελετούν την επιγραφή της στήλης για να υποστηρίξουν την ύπαρξη χριστιανικού στοιχείου στην Κίνα, νωρίτερα, στην ιστορία. Το όνομα Da-qin βρέθηκε στην επιγραφή να μνημονεύεται ως τόπος γέννησης του Ιησού, ως χώρα

174

απ'όπου προέρχεται ο χριστιανισμός αλλά και στον τίτλο της επιγραφής. Σύντομα έγιναν σημαντικές μελέτες για το όνομα αυτό από Δυτικούς που ενδιαφέρονταν για τις σχέσεις της Κίνας και Δύσης στην αρχαιότητα. Έκτοτε και ως την ευρεία διάδοση της επιγραφής, οι περισσότερες μελέτες έγιναν από λόγιους της Ευρώπης και της Ιαπωνίας, καθώς και της Κίνας, αργότερα. Οι μελέτες για τον όρο Da-qin, την ταύτισή του με την Ρωμαϊκή αυτοκρατορία ή τα ανατολικά εδάφη της και τις σχέσεις με την αρχαία Κίνα έχουν διαρκέσει σχεδόν τετρακόσια χρόνια και έχει σημειωθεί μεγάλη πρόοδος. Διατυπώνονται διαφωνίες για την ταυτότητα του Da-qin, ωστόσο οι περισσότεροι ερευνητές δέχονται ότι πρόκειται για την Ρωμαϊκή αυτοκρατορία ή έστω το ανατολικό της μέρος. Μολαταύτα, πολλά είναι τα ζητήματα που δεν έχουν λυθεί ακόμα και οι μελέτες για το Da-qin συνεχίζονται.

Σύμφωνα με το διάγραμμα της εργασίας, το πρώτο κεφάλαιο περιέχει μία κριτική για τις παλαιότερες έρευνες και τα αποτελέσματα που αφορούν το θέμα μας. Μεγαλύτερη έμφαση δίνεται στα έργα που άσκησαν μεγάλη επιρροή για την προώθηση της μελέτης του θέματος. Πέραν τούτου, εξηγούνται οι βασικοί όροι που βοηθούν στην καλύτερη κατανόηση της μελέτης. Επίσης, γίνεται αναφορά στην μεθοδολογία που ακολουθήθηκε στην μελέτη. Στην μεθοδολογία περιλαμβάνεται η συγκριτική μέθοδος και η γλωσσική ανάλυση παράλληλα με την Εικονολογία (Imagology).

Στο α΄ μισό του κεφαλαίου παρουσιάζονται με χρονολογική σειρά και σχολιάζονται οι προηγούμενες μελέτες από το εξωτερικό και την Κίνα για την Ρωμαϊκή αυτοκρατορία και τις σχέσεις της με την Κίνα, όπως αυτές αποτυπώνονται στις κινεζικές πηγές. Οι έρευνες για το υπό εξέτασιν θέμα και οι μελέτες που έχουν γίνει είναι ιδιαίτερα αξιόλογες. Από το εξωτερικό, γίνεται κυρίως αναφορά και σχολιασμός στις μελέτες των H. Yule, F. Hirth, É. Chavannes, P. Pelliot, K. Shiratori, G. F. Hudson, Μ. Κορδώση, F. J. Teggart και D. D. Leslie & K. H. J. Gardiner. Οι ανωτέρω, ως κύριοι ερευνητές για την Ρωμαϊκή αυτοκρατορία και τις σχέσεις της με την Κίνα, κατέβαλαν μεγάλη προσπάθεια και έθεσαν τις βάσεις για την μελέτη του εν λόγω θέματος. Από την Κίνα, οι ερευνητές άρχισαν να ασχολούνται με το θέμα σχετικά αργά περί τον 20ό αιώνα. Ωστόσο, οι Κινέζοι ερευνητές έκαναν επίσης πρόοδο στο αντικείμενο αυτό καθώς είχαν καλύτερη γνώση των κινεζικών πηγών. Ιδιαίτερη προσοχή δίνεται στις μελέτες των Zhang Xing-lang, Xiang Da, Feng Cheng-jun, Yang Xian-yi, Cen Zhong-mian, Fang Hao, Xing I-tien, Yu Tai-shan. Οι

ερευνητές αυτοί είναι οι πιο γνωστοί ειδικοί στο ζήτημα των σχέσεων της Κίνας με τη Δύση. Παράλληλα, και οι βυζαντινολόγοι Xu Jia-ling, Chen Zhi-qiang, Zhang Xu-shan, και Lin Ying έχουν κάνει, επίσης, ορισμένες σημαντικές ή πολύ σημαντικές μελέτες για το θέμα. Ταυτόχρονα, υπάρχουν και κάποιες δευτερεύουσες μελέτες που χρήζουν της προσοχής μας και συνέβαλαν στην προώθηση του θέματος.

Η σημασία ορισμένων βασικών όρων, όπως η Ρωμαϊκή αυτοκρατορία και οι Δυτικές Περιοχές, που εμφανίζονται στη διατριβή, είναι αναγκαία για την κατανόηση της μελέτης και για τον λόγο αυτό δίνεται η εξήγησή τους. Η δομή της διατριβής και η μεθοδολογία και ιδιαιτέρως οι θεωρίες της Εικονολογίας (Imagology) εξηγούνται αρκούντως.

Το ιστορικό πλαίσιο μπορεί να βοηθήσει τους αναγνώστες στην κατανόηση του υπόβαθρου της μελέτης και για τον λόγο αυτό το δεύτερο κεφάλαιο καταγίνεται με την ιστορία της Ρωμαϊκής αυτοκρατορίας, της Κίνας, αλλά και της Περσίας, η οποία λειτουργούσε ως μεσάζων τους κατά την περίοδο των πρώτων έξι μεταχριστιανικών αιώνων. Καθώς η μελέτη αυτή επιχειρεί να ανακατασκευάσει και να αναλύσει την εικόνα του Da-qin μέσα από τις κινεζικές πηγές από τον 1ο μέχρι τον 7ο αιώνα μ. Χ., στις οποίες καταγράφεται η ιστορία από τον 1ο έως τον 6ο αιώνα μ. Χ., είναι αναγκαία στοιχειώδης αναφορά στην κατάσταση των τριών αυτών αυτοκρατοριών κατά τους αντίστοιχους αιώνες.

Η περίοδος αυτή ήταν μία περίοδος μετασχηματισμού της Ρωμαϊκής αυτοκρατορίας και της Κίνας. Η Ρώμη, στα πλαίσια της προσπάθειας και των μεταρρυθμίσεων του Αυγούστου και των λεγόμενων «πέντε καλών αυτοκρατόρων», έγινε μία τεράστια αυτοκρατορία στην θέση της παλαιάς *Res Publica*. Ο 3ος αιώνας ήταν ένας αιώνας μεγάλης κρίσης. Οι μεταρρυθμίσεις, όμως, του Διοκλητιανού και του Κωνσταντίνου Α΄ μετέφεραν το κέντρο βάρους στην Ανατολή και η ανατολική Ρωμαϊκή αυτοκρατορία άκμασε και έφτασε στο απόγειό της υπό την βασιλεία του Ιουστινιανού. Σε τρία σημεία εντοπίζονται οι σημαντικότερες μεταβολές για το Ρωμαϊκό κράτος: στην εδαφική επέκταση, στην μετατροπή του πολιτισμού από τον καθαρά Ρωμαϊκό σε ένα μείγμα Ρωμαϊκού, Ελληνικού και Ανατολικού πολιτισμού, και τέλος στην αποδοχή του χριστιανισμού.

Τα εδάφη του Ρωμαϊκού κράτους δεν ήταν στάσιμα και επεκτείνονταν διαρκώς από την ίδρυσή του. Εδαφικά το κράτος έφτασε στην μέγιστη επέκτασή του μέχρι την περίοδο του 1ου και 2ου αιώνα μ. Χ. Περιελάμβανε όλα τα εδάφη που βρέχονταν από την Μεσόγειο θάλασσα και έφτανε μέχρι τη σημερινή βόρεια Ευρώπη και την Εγγύς Ανατολή. Στα ανατολικά, η Ρώμη κατείχε το σύνολο της Μικράς Ασίας (Βιθυνία, Γαλατία, Πόντος, Καππαδοκία, Κιλικία κλπ), καθώς και την επαρχία της Συρίας (ο Αδριανός είχε παραιτηθεί από τα εδάφη σε Αρμενία και Ιράκ), της Παλαιστίνης και νοτιότερα της Αιγύπτου).

Η Ρωμαϊκή επιρροή επεκτάθηκε και πέραν των συνόρων της αυτοκρατορίας: έγινε διάνοιξη μεγάλων εμπορικών οδών, κυρίως στην Ανατολή, και τα Ρωμαϊκά εμπορεύματα βρέθηκαν σε έναν γεωγραφικό χώρο που εκτείνεται από την Ιρλανδία στη Δύση μέχρι την Ινδία και την Κίνα στην Άπω Ανατολή. Η επέκταση του Ρωμαϊκού κράτους στα ανατολικά και η ίδρυση της Κωνσταντινούπολης ως νέας πρωτεύουσας οδήγησε στην μετατόπιση του πολιτιστικού κέντρου της Ρωμαϊκής αυτοκρατορίας προς την Ανατολή.

Παράλληλα, και η Κίνα βρισκόταν σε μία περίοδο με διάφορες πολιτικές αλλαγές. Σε μία πρώτη φάση, η περίοδος της Δυναστείας των Ανατολικών Χαν (25-220 μ. Χ.) ήταν μία ειρηνική περίοδος για την Κίνα, όπως και στη Ρωμαϊκή αυτοκρατορία. Οι αυτοκράτορές της προσπάθησαν να παλινορθώσουν την ευημερία των Δυτικών Χαν (220 π. Χ.-8 μ. Χ.). Ωστόσο, οι εισβολές των βαρβάρων και η αντάρσια του Χυάνγκ Τσιν (Huang Jin), που ήταν ένα παρακλάδι του ταοϊσμού (μια κλασσική κινεζική θρησκεία), οδήγησαν στο τέλος της δυναστείας. Ακολούθως, η χώρα χωρίστηκε σε τρία βασίλεια: το Wei, το Shu, και το Wu (220-280 μ. Χ.). Αργότερα, ενοποιήθηκε από τη Δυναστεία των Δυτικών Jin (266-316 μ. Χ.), όμως η ενοποίηση αυτή δεν είχε μεγάλη χρονική διάρκεια, αφού πολλοί βάρβαροι από τα δυτικά και βόρεια της Κίνας πήραν την εξουσία και ιδρύθηκαν μερικά μικρά βασιλεία στην κεντρική Κίνα. Οι διάδοχοι των Δυτικών Jin διέφυγαν στη νότια Κίνα και συνέχισαν την δυναστεία, που ονομαζόταν Ανατολικοί Jin (317-420 μ. Χ.). Κατά την περίοδο από το 420 ως το 589 μ. Χ. ανατράπηκε στο νότο από μία ομάδα ισχυρών στρατηγών το καθεστώς των Ανατολικών Jin και δημιουργήθηκαν τέσσερα διάδοχα καθεστώτα. Εν τω μεταξύ, στα βόρεια, ένα «βάρβαρο» φύλο, οι Xianbei, έγινε ισχυρό. Το βόρειο τμήμα της Κίνας χωρίστηκε μετά τη Δυναστεία Wei σε διάφορα καθεστώτα. Μέχρι την ενοποίηση από

τη Δυναστεία Sui (581-618) το 589, η Κίνα ενοποιήθηκε και πάλι και οδηγήθηκε σε μία περίοδο ταχείας ανάπτυξης και ευημερίας του πολιτισμού της.

Εκτός από τις συχνές αλλαγές των καθεστώτων και των αρχόντων, η περίοδος αυτή ήταν μια σημαντική φάση για την ίδρυση του κινεζικού πολιτισμού. Αν και πολλοί βάρβαροι ήρθαν στην κεντρική Κίνα και δημιουργήθηκαν πολλά μικρά βασίλεια, τούτα δεν διήρκεσαν για μεγάλο χρονικό διάστημα, και σύντομα ο πολιτισμός τους και οι ίδιοι είχαν, επίσης, κινεζοποιηθεί. Η «κινεζοποίηση» των διαφόρων βαρβάρων και η συνύπαρξη του κομφουκιανισμού, του βουδισμού και του ταοϊσμού στην Κίνα δείχνουν την ανεκτικότητα και την ποικιλομορφία του κινεζικού πολιτισμού. Ταυτόχρονα, ο «σινοκεντρισμός» που υπήρχε στην Κίνα από παλιά, εμφανίστηκε στα κινεζικά έργα, όμως η αίσθησή του δεν ήταν τόσο ισχυρή στις αναφορές για μη κινεζικούς πολιτισμούς λόγω της αδυναμίας της κινεζικής διακυβέρνησης σε αυτή την περίοδο.

Στην διάρκεια των πρώτων έξι αιώνων μ. Χ. στην ευρασιατική ήπειρο υπήρχαν διάφοροι δραστήριοι λαοί, όπως για παράδειγμα οι Άραβες, οι Πέρσες, οι Σκύθες, οι Κουσάν, οι Τούρκοι και οι Ινδοί. Ωστόσο, η Περσία ήταν η μεγαλύτερη δύναμη στην ευρασιατική στέπα εκείνη την περίοδο. Ως ο κύριος μεσάζων ανάμεσα στην Ανατολή και τη Δύση, οι ενέργειές της διαδραμάτισαν σημαντικό ρόλο στην πορεία των λαών στην ευρασιατική στέπα. Στην υπό εξέτασιν περίοδο, δύο ήταν οι μεγάλες δυναστείες της Περσίας. Η πρώτη δυναστεία ήταν η Δυναστεία των Αρσακιδών και διήρκεσε σχεδόν 500 χρόνια. Από τον 2ο αιώνα π. Χ. μέχρι την πτώση της, είχε στενές σχέσεις, πολιτικές, πολεμικές, εμπορικές, πολιτιστικές με το Ρωμαϊκό κράτος αλλά και την Κίνα. Την περίοδο από το 224 μέχρι το 651 μ. Χ. επικρατεί η Δυναστεία των Σασσανιδών της Περσίας. Η περίοδος των Σασσανιδών έφτασε στην ακμή του αρχαίου Περσικού πολιτισμού. Εκείνη την εποχή, η Περσία επηρέασε σε μεγάλο βαθμό τον Ρωμαϊκό πολιτισμό. Είναι χαρακτηριστικό ότι η πολιτιστική επιρροή των Σασσανιδών εκτεινόταν πολύ πέρα από τα γεωγραφικά σύνορα της αυτοκρατορίας, μέχρι και τη δυτική Ευρώπη, την Αφρική, την Κίνα και την Ινδία και διαδραμάτισε σημαντικό ρόλο στο σχηματισμό τόσο της ασιατικής, όσο και της ευρωπαϊκής πολιτιστικής παραγωγής των Μέσων Χρόνων.

Στο τρίτο κεφάλαιο γίνεται συγκέντρωση, συλλογή και ανάλυση των κινεζικών πηγών, καθώς και των δυτικών πηγών, που χρησιμοποιούνται στην διατριβή. Όπως είπαμε, αντικείμενο της διατριβής είναι η μελέτη της εικόνας της Ρωμαϊκής αυτοκρατορίας στις κινεζικές πηγές. Συνεπώς, οι κινεζικές πηγές είναι ο κεντρικός πυρήνας του υλικού. Ανάλογα με τα είδη τους, οι πηγές ταξινομούνται σε τέσσερις ομάδες. Η πρώτη ομάδα αποτελείται, κυρίως, από έργα των *Hou-han-shu*, *Jin-shu*, *Song-shu*, *Liang-shu*, *Wei-shu*, και *Bei-sh*i. Αυτά τα βιβλία γράφτηκαν από ιστορικούς με εντολή των αυτοκρατόρων ή προορίζονταν για τους αυτοκράτορες. Όλα αυτά τα βιβλία έχουν αναφορές του Da-qin, και η περίοδος που καλύπτουν είναι από τον 1ο μέχρι τον 6ο αιώνα μ. Χ.

Τα ιδιωτικά έργα είναι μια μεγάλη παράδοση στην αρχαία Κίνα, και εντοπίζονται αρκετές πληροφορίες για το Da-qin σε αυτά: *Wei-lue, Hou-han-ji, Nan-fang-cao-mu-zhuang, Wu-shi-wai-guo-zhuan, Qi-bu-fu, Guang-zhi, Bo-wu-ji, Xuan-zhong-ji, Nan-zhong-yi-wu-zhi*, και *Tong-dian*. Αυτά τα έργα είναι έργα διαφορετικών αιώνων και συγγραφέων, παρ' όλα αυτά, το Da-qin ως ένα μεγάλο και ευήμερο κράτος περιέχεται σε αυτά τα έργα με πλούσια στοιχεία. Το Da-qin, επίσης, εμφανίστηκε σε πολλά θρησκευτικά έργα στα κινέζικα: *Tai-qing-jin-ye-shen-dan-jing, Na-xian-bi-qiu-jing, Fo-shi-bi-qiu-jia-dan-yan-shuo-fa-mo-jin-xie-jing, Fo-shuo-shi-er-you-ji, Pu-yao-jing, Fo-ben-xing-ji-jing, Luo-yang-jia-lan-ji, Da-qin-jing-jiao-liu-xing-zhong-guo-bei*. Αυτά τα έργα είναι βουδιστικά, χριστιανικά και ταοϊστικά. Αν και πολλές πληροφορίες τους είναι ύποπτες, είναι χρήσιμες για να συμπληρώσουν την εικόνα της Ρωμαϊκής αυτοκρατορίας στις κινεζικές πηγές. Υπάρχει, επιπρόσθετα, ένα πορτραίτο και ένας χάρτης από ένα έργο του 16ου αιώνα μ. Χ. για τον Da-qin άνθρωπο και την χώρα του, που μας δίνουν οπτικά την εικόνα που είχαν οι αρχαίοι Κινέζοι για το Da-qin.

Παρ' όλο που οι δυτικές πηγές δεν είναι πρωτευούσης σημασίας για τη διατριβή, μπορούν να βοηθήσουν στην τεκμηρίωση της ορθότητας των κινεζικών πηγών για την Ρωμαϊκή αυτοκρατορία. Σύμφωνα με τις πληροφορίες, η εικόνα που δίνεται για το Da-qin από τις κινεζικές πηγές ταιριάζει σε ορισμένες περιπτώσεις με την Ρωμαϊκή αυτοκρατορία, ενώ υπάρχουν αρκετά σημεία που είναι φανταστικά και ουτοπικά. Μέσω της σύγκρισης με τις δυτικές πηγές, που καταγράφουν την ιστορία της Ρωμαϊκής αυτοκρατορίας, μπορούμε να προσεγγίσουμε την αλήθεια, τουλάχιστο για

ορισμένες περιπτώσεις, που είναι κρυμμένη πίσω από αυτές τις πληροφορίες. Στη διατριβή χρησιμοποιούνται, κυρίως, τα έργα του Πλίνιου του Πρεσβύτερου, του Σουητώνιου, του Δίωνος Κασσίου, του Στράβωνος, του Πτολεμαίου, του Αμμιανού Μαρκελλίνου, του Κοσμά Ινδικοπλεύστη, του Ιεροκλή, του Προκοπίου, και του Μενάνδρου Προτήκτωρος, καθώς και τα έργα «*Περίπλους της Ερυθράς Θαλάσσης*» (= Ινδικού) και «*Expositio totius mundi et gentium*», ανώνυμων συγγραφέων. Αυτά τα έργα παρέχουν πλούσιες πληροφορίες για την γεωγραφία, τη ζωή, το εμπόριο στο ανατολικό μέρος της Ρωμαϊκής αυτοκρατορίας από τον 1ο μέχρι τον 6ο αιώνα μ. Χ., ιδιαίτερα για τις σχέσεις της με την ανατολή έως την Κίνα κλπ. Η σύγκριση των δύο κατηγοριών των πηγών μας έλυσε πολλά θέματα για τις κινεζικές περιγραφές της Ρωμαϊκής αυτοκρατορίας, και αποδεικνύει την στενή επικοινωνία μεταξύ της Ρωμαϊκής αυτοκρατορίας και της Κίνας στους πρώτους έξι αιώνες μ. Χ.

Το τέταρτο κεφάλαιο είναι το κεντρικό της διατριβής και σχετίζεται αποκλειστικά με την εικόνα του Da-qin. Καθώς δεν υπάρχει συμφωνία για το ακριβές νόημα και την προέλευση του ονόματος Da-qin μεταξύ των ερευνητών, είναι απαραίτητο να καταστεί σαφές το πιθανό νόημά, του για την καλύτερη κατανόηση της εικόνας του στις κινεζικές πηγές. Μέσω της ανάλυσης των πηγών σχετικά με το όνομα Da-qin (Μεγάλοι Qin) και όλων των απόψεων για αυτό (είναι όμοιοι με τους Κινέζους αλλά πιο ψηλοί, ήταν ισχυρό κράτος απ'όπου προέρχεται το επίθετο μεγάλος, παράγεται από το όνομα της Συρίας, «Dasina», «Daksinapatha», έχει σχέση μέ τους Yonaka-Yovana=Έλληνες της Ινδίας), πιστεύω ότι αυτή η χώρα ονομαζόταν έτσι λόγω της θεωρούμενης ομοιότητά της με την Κίνα και της πίστης ότι οι άνθρωποί της ήταν μεγαλύτεροι από τους Κινέζους. Θα αναλύσω περαιτέρω την άποψη αυτή για τις κινεζικές πηγές. Θεωρώ ότι η άποψη αυτή είναι πιθανό να προέρχεται από τον Gan Ying, Κινέζο αξιωματούχο ο οποίος έφτασε στα σύνορα του Da-qin και της Παρθίας το 97 μ. Χ. Έτσι, μπορεί να άκουσε ο Gan Ying στην περιοχή που έχει φτάσει το όνομα ή να το έδωσε από μόνος του. Αναμφίβολα, η άποψη για το όνομα Da-qin περιέχει την ισχυρή αίσθηση του «σινοκεντρισμού», βάσει του οποίου σχηματίσθηκε μια γενική εντύπωση για την εικόνα του Da-qin, ως κράτος που είχε κοινά στοιχεία με την Κίνα.

Το κύριο μέρος του παρόντος κεφαλαίου αναλύει έξι πτυχές της εικόνας του: 1. την γεωγραφία, 2. τους ανθρώπους, 3. τις πόλεις, τα υποτελή κράτη και την πρωτεύουσα

του, 4. τον βασιλιά, την διοίκηση, το ταχυδρομικό σύστημα και την ασφάλεια, 5. τη γραπτή γλώσσα και τα νομίσματα, 6. τα προϊόντα του. Σε αυτό το τμήμα, αρχικά, συγκέντρωσα τις πληροφορίες σχετικά με αυτές τις έξι πτυχές από τις κινεζικές πηγές. Εν συνεχεία, επανεξέτασα τις απόψεις σχετικά με τις πληροφορίες και στο τέλος παρέθεσα την άποψη μου. Έτσι, αναφέρεται το γεγονός ότι οι κινεζικές πηγές τοποθετούν το Da-qin μετά την Παρθία (An-xi) και γίνεται μακρύς λόγος για την ταύτιση της Δυτικής Θάλασσας από οποία κανείς πάει στο Da-qin, αφού περάσει την Παρθία. Απορρίπτεται η Κασπία θάλασσα, αλλά και η Μεσόγειος, αφού η παρθική μεθόριος δεν έφτασε σ'αυτήν. Έτσι μένει ο Περσικός κόλπος και, πιθανότερα το σύστημα των ποταμών Τίγρη και Ευφράτη που συναντιέται ως θάλασσα και σε δυτικές πηγές. Η κατεύθυνση των δρόμων πρός το Da-qin εξάλλου, υποδεικνύει το Τίγρη και Ευφράτη. Οι κάτοικοι του Da-qin κατατάσσονται στους βαρβαρικούς λαούς ως πρός την ενδυμασία και άλλα γνωρίσματα και θεωρούνται καλοί έμποροι που φθάνουν ώς την Ινδοκίνα ή την ίδια την Κίνα, μέσω κυρίως του σημερινού Βιετνάμ, πού, όπως δείχνουν και αρχαιολογικά τεκμήρια αποτελούσε εμπορική βάση τους. Η γενική αντίληψη γιά τους κατοίκους του Da-qin είναι ρεαλιστική αλλά σε πολλά σημεία και μυθική-ουτοπική, παραπέμποντας στα χαρακτηριστικά των ίδιων των Κινέζων. Σχετικά με τον αριθμό των πόλεων, πιστεύουμε, βάσει και του Συνεκδήμου του Ιεροκλέους, ότι οι κινεζικές πηγές αναφέρονται στις πόλεις του ανατολικού τμήματος του κράτους, το οποίο εξάλλου φαίνεται πως μόνο γνώριζαν. Μυθικά στοιχεία, άλλα και ρεαλιστικά περιέχονται στα όσα αναγράφονται στις κινεζικές πηγές για την εκλογή ή την εκθρόνιση ενός βασιλιά για τον αριθμό των κρατικών αξιωματούχων και γιά τα προϊόντα που προέρχονται από το Da-qin. Πιο ρεαλιστικές είναι οι ειδήσεις για το ταχυδρομικό σύστημα του Da-qin, πού είναι το ίδιο με το περσικό-παρθικό, με μικρότερη μονάδα το στάδιο (το οποίο τώρα προσαρμόστηκε το κινεζικό *li*) και τα ρωμαϊκά νομίσματα, για τα οποία οι Κινέζοι είχαν δική τους πείρα, αφού έφταναν ώς την Κίνα και μάλιστα της δυτικές της περιοχές.

Στο τέλος του κεφαλαίου, γίνεται η σύνοψη της εικόνας του Da-qin. Το Da-qin είναι μια χώρα που βρίσκεται στην απώτερη δυτική περιοχή της Κίνας. Συγκεκριμένα, βρίσκεται στα δυτικά της Παρθίας (An-xi) και της Αντιόχειας=Charax (Tiao-zhi), και της Μεγάλης θαλάσσης. Στην περιοχή αυτή μένει η «Θεά Βασίλισσα μητέρα στα δυτικά» (Xi Wangmu), και υπάρχει το «αδύνατο νερό» (Ruoshui), και η «κινούμενη

άμμος» (Liusha). Η χώρα έχει πολλούς πόρους και παράγει προϊόντα, πολλά από τα όποια είναι μυθικά. Η κατάσταση μοιάζει με την Κίνα και οι άνθρωποι μοιάζουν με τους Κινέζους και ακολουθούν τον τρόπο ζωής που οι αρχαίοι Κινέζοι πιστεύουν ότι είναι ιδανικός. Είναι το μεγαλύτερο κράτος στα δυτικά του Παμίρ (Cong-ling), με μια μεγάλη επικράτεια και με μία αξιόλογη άνθηση του πολιτισμού. Σε γενικές γραμμές, αυτή η εικόνα αντιστοιχεί στη Ρωμαϊκή αυτοκρατορία σε πολλά σημεία, τη μόνη που μπορεί να ταυτιστεί με το Da-qin. Ωστόσο, η εικόνα στις κινεζικές πηγές αναμιγνύει πραγματικά και θρυλικά στοιχεία με τρόπο ευφάνταστο, καθιστώντας πιο δύσκολο να ανακαλυφθεί η πραγματική της εικόνα και οι σχέσεις της με την Κίνα. Το μίγμα αυτό είναι πολλές φορές και ο λόγος της δημιουργίας μιας ουτοπικής θεωρίας για την εικόνα του Da-qin.

Το πέμπτο κεφάλαιο σχετίζεται με την ανάλυση της εικόνας του Da-qin και χωρίζεται σε δύο μέρη. Το πρώτο μέρος αναλύει τα χαρακτηριστικά της εικόνας. Μέσω των εξεταζόμενων στο προηγούμενο κεφάλαιο πληροφοριών από τις κινεζικές πηγές διαφαίνονται τέσσερα σαφή χαρακτηριστικά της εικόνας του Da-qin: η σύνθεση των πραγματικοτήτων και μη πραγματικοτήτων, η εξιδανίκευση, η «θεοποίηση», και η «κινεζοποίηση» (sinicization). Το πρώτο χαρακτηριστικό είναι το πιο προφανές. Από τις πληροφορίες για το Da-qin είναι εμφανές ότι συμφωνούν με αντικειμενικές πληροφορίες που γνωρίζουμε για τη Ρωμαϊκή αυτοκρατορία (όπως η τοποθεσία, πολλά προϊόντα, το σύστημα των δρόμων, τα νομίσματα και άλλα). Υπάρχουν, ωστόσο, πολλά στοιχεία τα οποία δεν ταιριάζουν με την Ρωμαϊκή αυτοκρατορία (για παράδειγμα τα τυπικά κινεζικά φυτά, κινεζικά ρούχα). Ταυτόχρονα, υπάρχουν αρκετά στοιχεία που εμφανίστηκαν με τα χαρακτηριστικά της εξιδανίκευσης, της θεοποίησης και της «κινεζοποίησης», τα οποία όμως δεν είναι ακριβώς μη πραγματικά. Από αυτές τις πληροφορίες, μπορούμε να βρούμε και ρεαλιστικά στοιχεία της Ρωμαϊκής αυτοκρατορίας όπως για παράδειγμα η περιγραφή για την παραγωγή του μεταξιού, το πρόβατο από το νερό, που σημαίνει τον θαλασσινό πίννο (το θαλασσινό έριον), η εκλογή του βασιλιά, η επίλυση από το βασιλιά ζητημάτων του λαού και πολλά άλλα.

Με βάση την ανάλυση των ανωτέρω, στο δεύτερο μέρος γίνεται λόγος για τους παράγοντες που επηρέασαν την κατασκευή της εικόνας. Για να καταστούν σαφείς οι λόγοι της κατασκευής της εικόνας εντοπίστηκε η προέλευση των πληροφοριών για το Da-qin σε κινεζικές πηγές. Μέσω των ενδείξεων στους Κινέζους συγγραφείς έχουμε

επισημάνει τις ακόλουθες πηγές για την προέλευση των πληροφοριών του Da-qin: οι πρέσβεις και έμποροι από την Κίνα (όπως ο Gan Ying κ.α.), οι λεγόμενοι πρέσβεις και έμποροι από το Da-qin (όπως οι πρέσβεις των ετών 166, 281 και 284, ο έμπορος Τσιν-λούν [Qin Lun] το 226), οι πρέσβεις και έμποροι από τις χώρες στις λογόμενες Δυτικές Περιοχές, στην Ινδία, στο Βιετνάμ και στις γύρω περιοχές, καθώς και πληροφορίες που προέρχονται από αντιγραφές ή μεταφράσεις από δυτικές πηγές.

Όσον αφορά τους λόγους για την διαμόρφωση της εικόνας του Da-qin, εκτός από τον φυσικό παράγοντα της μεγάλης απόστασης και των δυσκολιών του δρόμου, θεωρούμε ότι ο πρώτος λόγος είναι η προέλευση των πληροφοριών, η οποία καθιέρωσε τη δομή της εικόνας και τη βασική της μορφή, όπως στοιχεία πραγματικά και μη (για παράδειγμα προβληματισμός υπάρχει για τις πληροφορίες του Gan Ying, ο οποίος φοβήθηκε από τους ναύτες στα σύνορα της αυτοκρατορίας των Πάρθων και επέστρεψε όμως με πληροφορίες από εκείνη την περιοχή). Όμως, η κατασκευή της εικόνας αυτής πρέπει να οφείλεται κυρίως στους Κινέζους ιστορικούς των πηγών. Σύμφωνα με την παράδοση της αρχαίας κινεζικής ιστοριογραφίας, οι αρχαίοι ιστορικοί έγραφαν τα έργα τους μέσα στα πλαίσια του «σινοκεντρισμού». Κατ' αυτούς όλοι οι ξένοι θεωρούνταν βάρβαροι ή λιγότερο ανεπτυγμένοι από την αρχαία Κίνα. Η θεωρία της Εικονολογίας, επίσης, μας αποδεικνύει ότι η εικόνα του ξένου δεν μπορεί να είναι πάντα η πραγματική αντανάκλαση της πραγματικότητας του ξένου. Στην μελέτη μας, η εικόνα του Da-qin δίνει σχεδόν την εντύπωση ότι η χώρα Da-qin βρισκόταν στο δυτικό άκρο της Κίνας, και παρ' όλο που ήταν μια πλούσια χώρα και αρκετά πολιτισμένη απέτεινε φόρο τιμής στην Κίνα, τα ρούχα και η γλώσσα ήταν όπως των βαρβάρων, και δεν υπήρχε το σύστημα της κινεζικής τελετουργίας, ούτε οι ίδιοι νόμοι και θεσμοί. Είναι σαφές ότι αυτή η εικόνα ανακατασκευάστηκε από τους Κινέζους ιστορικούς με τις πληροφορίες από την Δύση. Αυτή η περιγραφή για το Da-qin δεν είναι μοναδική. Εμφανίζεται, επίσης, και σε άλλους ξένους ιστορικούς.

Στο έκτο κεφάλαιο εξετάζεται η σημασία της εικόνας του Da-qin. Πρώτα, δίνεται προσοχή στην σημασία της για την Ρωμαϊκή ιστορία. Όπως έδειξαν οι μελέτες, το Da-qin όπως είπαμε είναι η Ρωμαϊκή αυτοκρατορία, πιθανότατα το ανατολικό μέρος της. Ως εκ τούτου, οι πληροφορίες που διατηρούνται σε κινεζικές πηγές πρέπει να προέρχονται από το ανατολικό μέρος της Ρωμαϊκής αυτοκρατορίας. Με άλλα λόγια,

οι πληροφορίες των κινεζικών πηγών για το Da-qin μπορούν να συμπληρώσουν έστω και σε μικρό βαθμό την ιστορία και γεωγραφία της Ρωμαϊκής επικράτειας, ειδικά για το ανατολικό μέρος της αυτοκρατορίας. Συγκεκριμένα, οι κινεζικές πηγές παρέχουν συμπληρωματικές πληροφορίες των έξι πρώτων αιώνων μ. Χ. στους εξής τομείς: γενική ιστορία, φιλοσοφία, θρησκεία, γεωγραφία-τοπογραφία, οικονομικά (προϊόντα, εμπορικά), ορολογία, και τέχνη, πέρα από τις «παράλληλες» αφηγήσεις των δυτικών και κινεζικών πηγών, που σημαίνουν κάποιον έμμεσο εφρρεασμό.

Ένα δεύτερο καίριο σημείο που πρέπει να τονιστεί και πάλι είναι ότι η περιγραφή του Da-qin και των σχέσεων του με την Κίνα φανερώνει το «σινοκεντρισμό», σύμφωνα με τον οποίο η Κίνα ήταν το πολιτιστικό κέντρο του κόσμου, καθώς και ο τρόπος που η αρχαία Κίνα αντιμετώπισε το Da-qin, δηλαδή, ουσιαστικά, ως μια βάρβαρη χώρα. Πρόκειται για τη γνωστή κινεζική φιλοσοφία που συνεχίστηκε ως πρόσφατα και αντικαταστάθηκε από τον δυτικό τρόπο σκέψης. Στην θεωρία του «σινοκεντρισμού», η Κίνα βρίσκεται στο κέντρο και το Da-qin στην άκρη του κινεζικού κόσμου. Μέσω αυτής της εικόνας μπορούμε να καταλάβουμε πώς οι αρχαίοι Κινέζοι έβλεπαν τον κόσμο και πώς όριζαν τον εαυτό τους σε αυτόν τον κόσμο. Καθώς λέγει ο Μπενεντέτο Κρότσε (Benedetto Croce, 1866-1952), «όλη η ιστορία είναι η σύγχρονη ιστορία». Έτσι, εντοπίζεται και μία τρίτη σημασία της εικόνας του Da-qin. Πρόκειται για έναν υπαινιγμό για την σύγχρονη σχέση ανάμεσα στην Κίνα και την Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση: η αρχαία Κίνα είχε στενές σχέσεις με τη Δύση, ιδιαίτερα με την Ρωμαϊκή αυτοκρατορία από τον 1ο αιώνα μ. Χ., μέσω του δρόμου του μεταξιού. Οι σχέσεις αφορούσαν πολλά θέματα, κυρίως το εμπόριο. Αργότερα, οι σχέσεις τους αναπτύχθηκαν πολύ στην Μεσαιωνική περίοδο. Πρόκειται ουσιαστικά για σχέσεις με την Ευρώπη, είτε λεγόταν Da-qin είτε, πολύ περισσότερο Fu-lin, όνομα που φαίνεται πως εκάλυπτε, ιδιαίτερα τους τελευταίους αιώνες του μεσαίωνα και τους πρώτους αιώνες της νεότερης εποχής, όχι μόνο το Βυζάντιο αλλά και όλη σχεδόν την Ευρώπη.

Ακολουθώντας αυτή την παράδοση, οι σχέσεις της Κίνας με την Δύση συνεχίστηκαν και αργότερα, κυρίως σε θέματα εμπορίου και θρησκειών. Ως προς τις σύγχρονες σχέσεις της Κίνας με την εκπρόσωπο της Δύσης, την Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση, υπάρχει η δυνατότητα, έχοντας ως οδηγό τις μεταξύ τους ιστορικές επαφές, να αναπτύξουν νέες σχέσεις με έναν τρόπο ισότιμο. Πριν λίγο καιρό, η κινεζική κυβέρνηση πρότεινε μία καινούρια στρατηγική πολιτική, «μια ζώνη και μια οδό», η οποία αποβλέπει στην

δημιουργία οικονομικών σχέσεων με την Ευρώπη, μέσω του ιστορικού δρόμου του μεταξιού. Αυτή την φορά, η Κίνα είναι ενεργή, και δίνεται μια καλή ευκαιρία για την ανάπτυξη των σχέσεών τους σε πολλά επίπεδα. Είναι σημαντικό να υπάρξουν αυτές οι σχέσεις για την δημιουργία ενός κόσμου ειρηνικού και αρμονικού.

ΣΥΜΠΕΡΑΣΜΑΤΑ

Απ'όσα αναφέρουμε παραπάνω,συμπεραίνουμε ότι το Da-qin συνδέεται με την Κίνα, διότι η κουλτούρα του παρουσιάζει ομοιότητες με αυτή της Κίνας και επίσης η ονομασία του προέρχεται από την ίδια ρίζα με το αρχαίο όνομα της Κίνας. Παρ' όλο που υπάρχουν πολλές και διαφορετικές θεωρίες σχετικά με το όνομα Da-qin, είναι βέβαιο πως προέρχεται από το όνομα των Δυναστειών Qin, προσθέτοντας το επίθετο Da (μεγάλο). Θεωρείται πολύ πιθανό πως αυτή η ονομασία χρησιμοποιήθηκε πρώτη φορά από τον Gan Ying, που ήταν ο πρώτος Κινέζος που έφτασε στη Δυτική Θάλασσα, στα σύνορα μεταξύ της Παρθίας και του Da-qin. Η επικίνδυνη Δυτική Θάλασσα, διαμέσου της οποίας έφτανε κανείς στο Da-qin, δεν μπορεί να ταυτισθεί με την Κασπία ή ακόμη την Μεσόγειο θάλασσα. Το πιθανότερο ενδεχόμενο είναι πως πρόκειται, για τον Περσικό κόλπο, είτε ακόμη πιο πιθανό για το σύστημα των ποταμών του Τίγρη και του Ευφράτη, το οποίο μάλιστα αποκαλούνταν «Θάλασσα» στις δυτικές και τις μεσανατολικές πηγές, εκείνης της εποχής.

Από τους δύο δρόμους μέσω των οποίων η Κίνα και η Ρωμαϊκή αυτοκρατορία επικοινωνούσαν, ο θαλάσσιος ήταν ο πλέον χρησιμοποιούμενος τόσο κατά τα έτη 120-285 μ. Χ. που ήταν η περίοδος ακμής της Ρωμαϊκής αυτοκρατορίας, σύμφωνα και με έμμεσες μαρτυρίες καταγεγραμμένες σε κινεζικές πηγές, όσο και κρίσης που γνωρίζουμε ότι επήλθε τον 3ο αιώνα μ. Χ., όταν η αυτοκρατορία βρισκόταν σε αναταραχή. Ο δρόμος, ωστόσο, για τον οποίο έχουμε περισσότερες πληροφορίες είναι ο χερσαίος, ο οποίος περνούσε μέσα από τα εδάφη της Παρθικής-Σασσανιδικής αυτοκρατορίας, και από τις περιοχές των υποτελών κρατών του Da-qin. Η θαλάσσια οδός δεν περνούσε από την Περσία, ή για να ακριβολογούμε, δεν περνούσε από τον Περσικό κόλπο (για να φτάσει στα εδάφη του Da-qin) αλλά από τον Ινδικό ωκεανό και στην συνέχεια από την Ερυθρά Θάλασσα.

Τα χαρακτηριστικά του Da-qin, όπως περιγράφονται στις κινέζικες πηγές, είναι ένα κράμα από ρεαλιστικά και μη ρεαλιστικά στοιχεία, αλλά περιέχουν και πολλά κινέζικα στοιχεία. Τα ρούχα τους περιγράφονται ως *Hu*, όταν *Hu* ονομαζόταν ένα μέρος της εδαφικής περιοχής *Yi*. Οι όροι *Hu* και *Yi* χρησιμοποιούνταν στην αρχαία Κίνα για τους απολίτιστους ανθρώπους. Αυτό μας οδηγεί στο συμπέρασμα ότι οι Κινέζοι θεωρούσαν τους Da-qin βάρβαρους. Τα υπάρχοντα των Da-qin σε μεγάλο βαθμό είναι ρωμαϊκής προέλευσης, ωστόσο δεν λείπουν και κάποια κινεζικής. Οι Da-qin ήταν πεπειραμένοι έμποροι και είχαν συναλλαγές όχι μόνο με τους Πέρσες και τους Ινδούς, αλλά και με περιοχές της Ινδοκίνας (κυρίως το σημερινό Βιετνάμ) καθώς και την νότια Κίνα. Αυτή η πληροφορία είναι πολύ σημαντική και τεκμηριώνεται με βάση αρχαιολογικά ευρήματα σε θέσεις στις νοτιότερες περιοχές του Βιετνάμ, τα οποία χρονολογούνται στην περίοδο της Ρωμαϊκής αυτοκρατορίας.

Είναι προφανές πως από τις παραπάνω πληροφορίες, που έχουν αντληθεί από κινεζικές πηγές σχετικά με το Da-qin, μερικές ανήκουν στη σφαίρα του μύθου και της ουτοπίας, σύμφωνα με μια ομάδα ερευνητών, με πιο εξέχοντα τον Shiratori. Θα πρέπει όμως να τις αποδεχτούμε, γιατί τα ρεαλιστικά στοιχεία που εμπεριέχουν δεν είναι αμελητέα και επίσης, ενώ ορισμένες περιγραφές φαίνονται μυθώδεις και εξωπραγματικές μπορούμε να βρούμε στοιχεία που ανήκουν την πραγματικότητα. Η πιο σημαντική από αυτές αφορά τις πόλεις του Da-qin και κυρίως την πρωτεύουσά του, οι οποίες αντανακλούν την πραγματικότητα, περιέχοντας ωστόσο και μυθικά στοιχεία που επισκιάζουν την αλήθεια. Παραδείγματα τέτοιων φαινομένων μπορούμε να προσθέσουμε και άλλα, όπως λόγου χάριν οι περιγραφές της συμπεριφοράς του βασιλιά των Da-qin που είναι, όμως, πολύ υπερβολικές. Επί πλέον μπορούμε να βρούμε πολλά πραγματικά στοιχεία για το ταχυδρομικό σύστημα των Da-qin, το οποίο ακολούθησε τα πρότυπα αυτού των Πάρθων, που ήταν πολύ δημοφιλές στον αρχαίο Ελληνικό κόσμο. Το σύστημα μέτρησης των Πάρθων, επίσης, είχε διεθνή επιρροή τουλάχιστον κατά τους πρώτους αιώνες μ. Χ. Είναι, φυσικό επίσης να συμπεράνουμε πως οι περιγραφές των Κινέζων και για το νομισματικό σύστημα των Da-qin είναι αξιόπιστες και αυτό γιατί οι αρχαιολογικά ευρήματα πιστοποιούν ότι νομίσματα της Ρωμαϊκής αυτοκρατορίας βρέθηκαν στην Κίνα και έφτασαν εκεί από ξένους εμπόρους ή ακόμα και από πολίτες της αυτοκρατορίας.

Μετά την μελέτη όλων των προαναφερθέντων εξάγονται ορισμένα γενικότερα συμπεράσματα. Στις κινεζικές πηγές (που χρονολογούνται από τον 1ο έως τον 7ο αιώνα) χρησιμοποιείται το όνομα Da-qin για την Ρωμαϊκή αυτοκρατορία και αναφέρεται σε αυτήν για την περίοδο από τον 1ο μέχρι και τον 6ο αιώνα. Στις πηγές περιγράφεται ως ένα εξέχον κράτος με έναν ιδιαίτερα αναπτυγμένο πολιτισμό και πολύ πλούτο, τοποθετημένο εδαφικά στις δυτικές εσχατιές της Κίνας. Πέραν τούτων, περιγράφονται πτυχές της γεωγραφίας του κράτους, των ανθρώπων, των προϊόντων, της κουλτούρας, της πολιτικής, καθώς και οι σχέσεις του με την Άπω Ανατολή και κυρίως με την Κίνα. Εξετάζοντας προσεκτικά τις πληροφορίες, διαπιστώνουμε τέσσερα βασικά χαρακτηριστικά αυτών:

συνδυασμός πραγματικοτήτων και μη πραγματικοτήτων στοιχείων, εξιδανίκευση, «θεοποίηση», «κινεζοποίηση».

Κρίνοντας με βάση αυτά τα χαρακτηριστικά και αναλύοντας τις πηγές, πιστεύουμε ότι η κατασκευή μιας τέτοιας εικόνας επηρεάστηκε από αυτούς που μετέδωσαν τις δικές τους πληροφορίες, τις πηγές πιθανόν από την κεντρική Ασία, αλλά κυριότερα από τους ίδιους τους Κινέζους συγγραφείς. Η εικόνα αντικατοπτρίζει τόσο την κινεζική φιλοσοφία όσο και τις προθέσεις του κάθε συγγραφέα. Η αντίφαση που παρουσιάζεται στις πηγές μεταξύ του «ανεπτυγμένου πολιτισμού» και της «βαρβαρικής κατάστασης» διαμορφώθηκε συνειδητά από τους Κινέζους συγγραφείς. Καθρεφτίζει τον τρόπο που ένας Κινέζος αντιλαμβάνεται τον κόσμο («σινοκεντρισμός») καθώς και την κινεζική ματαιοδοξία. Παρά το γεγονός ότι η Ρωμαϊκή αυτοκρατορία είχε «ανεπτυγμένο πολιτισμό», σύμφωνα με την κινεζική θεώρηση των πραγμάτων, ανήκε στην κατηγορία των βαρβάρων. Για να μην γίνει αντιληπτή αυτή η αντίφαση, οι Κινέζοι συγγραφείς κατέφευγαν στην «κινεζοποίηση» για να περιγράψουν την Ρωμαϊκή αυτοκρατορία ή απλά δήλωναν πως η Ρωμαϊκή αυτοκρατορία ήταν ένα παρακλάδι της κινεζικής.

Αυτή η θεώρηση των πραγμάτων δεν περιοριζόταν μόνο στους Da-qin αλλά αφορούσε και άλλους λαούς και περιοχές. Ήταν η βασική μέθοδος συμπεριφοράς της Κίνας προς τον υπόλοιπο κόσμο (ή για να χρησιμοποιήσουμε ένα σύγχρονο όρο, ήταν ο βασικός οδηγός για τις «διεθνείς κινεζικές σχέσεις»). Η κινεζική αντίληψη περί της παγκόσμιας τάξης συνεχώς αναπτυσσόταν και βελτιωνόταν και κατά την διάρκεια της περιόδου Μινγκ-Τσινγκ (Ming-Qing, από τον 14ο έως τον 18ο αιώνα) έφτασε

στην μέγιστη ακμή της. Τον 20ο αιώνα, όμως, με την άνοδο και τον άφιξη των δυτικών δυνάμεων, αυτή η αντίληψη αμφισβητήθηκε και τελικά αντικαταστάθηκε από το δυτικό σύστημα διεθνών σχέσεων.

Τον 21ο αιώνα με την ραγδαία αύξηση της παγκοσμιοποίησης και τις αναπτυσσόμενες σχέσεις μεταξύ Ευρώπης και Κίνας, η ανάγκη για σύσφιξη των αμοιβαίων σχέσεων καθίσταται επιτακτική, γι' αυτό και η μελέτη αναφορικά με τις σχέσεις Κίνας και Ρωμαϊκής αυτοκρατορίας, και ιδιαίτερα η εικόνα που κατασκεύασαν οι Κινέζοι για την Ρωμαϊκή αυτοκρατορία, μπορεί να μας παρέχει χρήσιμες ενδείξεις για τις σύγχρονες διεθνείς σχέσεις.

Όσο για την παρούσα έρευνα αυτή καθαυτή, στηρίχθηκε όπως είπαμε κυρίως πάνω στις κινεζικές πηγές που είχαν ως περιεχόμενο τους Da-qin και ως επιπρόσθετα τεκμήρια χρησιμοποιήθηκαν δυτικές πηγές και αρχαιολογικά ευρήματα. Ωστόσο, λαμβάνοντας υπ' όψιν το πόσο πολυδιάστατες και πολύπλοκες είναι οι πηγές καθώς και το γεγονός ότι έχει μεσολαβήσει μεγάλο χρονικό διάστημα από τα γεγονότα, δεν μπορούμε να ισχυριστούμε πως η συγκεκριμένη μελέτη επισφραγίζει οριστικά και δια παντός το ζήτημα (σχέσεις Ρωμαϊκής αυτοκρατορίας και Κίνας), παρά μόνο ότι προσφέρει μια σχετικά νέα προοπτική, και το πιο σημαντικό, προσφέρει στο διεθνές ακαδημαϊκό στερέωμα μια κινεζική ματιά πάνω στο αντικείμενο.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Journals:

AAS	*Acta Archaeologica Sinica*
AJP	*American Journal of Philology*
AM	*Academic Monthly*
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der Romanischen Welt*
BMFEA	*Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*
BEFEO	*Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
CHBJ	*Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal*
CSSH	*Comparative Studies in Society and History*
EAH	*Eastern Asian History*
GZSS	*Guizhou Social Science*
HJAS	*Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*
JA	*Journal Asiatique*
JAF	*The Journal of American Folklore*
JAC	*The Journal of Ancient Civilizations*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBRS	*Journal of the Bihar Research Society*
JHS	*Journal of Historical Science*
JLH	*Journal of Literature and History*

JNCBRAS	*Journal of North-China Branch of Royal Asiatic Studies*
JPU	*Journal of Peking University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*
JPOS	*Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*
JRA	*Journal of Roman Archaeology*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*
JSHZU	*Journal of Shihezi University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*
JTHU	*Journal of Tsinghua University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*
JWH	*Journal of World History*
MRDTB	*Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*
OZ	*Ostasiatische Zeitschr*
PER	*Pacific Economic Review*
SA	*Southeast Asia*
SPP	*SINO-PLATONIC PAPERS*
SIH	*Study on Image History*
SST	*Social Science Front*
TP	*T'oung Pao*
TRRHC	*Trends of Recent Researches on the History of China*
WH	*World History*
WRS	*The Western Regions Studies*

Chinese primary sources:

BGDMJ	*Bei-guo-dong-ming-ji*
BS	*Bei-shi*
HHJ	*Hou-han-ji*
HHS	*Hou-han-shu*
HS	*Han-shu*
JS	*Jin-shu*
LYJLJ	*Luo-yang-jia-lan-ji*
LS	*Liang-shu*
QBF	*Qi-bu-fu*
SEYJ	*Shi-er-you-jing*
SJ	*Shi-ji*
SS	*Song-shu*
SSH	*Sui-shu*
TD	*Tong-dian*
TQJYSDJ	*Tai-qing-jin-ye-shen-dan-jing*
WL	*Wei-lue*
WSWGZ	*Wu-shi-wai-guo-zhuan*
WS	*Wei-shu*

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APPENDIX

Roman emperors before the seventh century CE (27-565)

Augustus	27 B.C.-14 A.D.	Aurelian	270-275
Tiberius	14-37	Tacitus	275-276
Caligula	37-41	Florian	276
Claudius	41-54	Probus	276-282
Nero	54-68	Carus	282-283
Galba	68-69	Carinus	283-285
Otho	69	Diocletian	284-305
Vitellius	69	Maximian	286-305
Vespasian	69-79	Constantine, Licinius	307-324
Titus	79-81	Constantine	324-337
Domitian	81-96	Julian the Apostate	360-363
Nerva	96-98	Valentinian I	364-375
Trajan	98-117	Valens	364-378
Hadrian	117-138	Theodosius I	378-395
Antoninus Pius	138-161	Honorius	395-423
Marcus Aurelius	161-180	Arcadius (E)	395-408
Lucius Verus	161-169	Theodosius II (E)	408-450
Commodus	180-192	Valentinian III	425-455
Pertinax	193	Marcian (E)	450-457
Didius Julianus	193	Maximus	455
Septimius Severus	193-211	Avitus	455-456
Caracalla	211-217	Leo I (E)	457-474
Geta	211-212	Majorian	457-461
Macrinus	217-218	Severus	461-465
Elagabalus	218-222	Anthemius	467-472
Severus Alexander	222-235	Olybrius	472
Maximinus	235-238	Glycerius	473-474
Gordians I, II, III	238-244	Nepos	474-475
Philip the Arab	244-249	Zeno (E)	474-491
Decius	249-251	Romulus Augustulus	475-476
Valerian	253-260	Anastatius (E)	491-518
Gallienus	253-268	Justin I (E)	518-527
Claudius Gothicus	268-270	Justinian (E)	527-565

Justin II	**565-578**
Tiberius II	**578-582**
Maurice	**582-602**

Parthian rulers

247-211   Arsaces I

211-185   Arsaces II

185-170   Arsaces III Phriapatius

170-168   Arsaces IV

168-165   Arsaces V, Phraates

165-132   Arsaces VI, Mithradates I

132-126   Arsaces VII, Phraates II

126   Arsaces VIII, Bagasis

126-122   Arsaces IX, Artabanus I

122-121   Arsaces X

121-91   Arsaces XI, Mithradates II

93/92-70/69   Arsaces XII, Sinatruces

91-87   Arsaces XIII, Gotarzes I

87-80/79   Arsaces XIV, Mithradates III

80-75   Arsaces XV, Orodes I

75-62/61   Arsaces XVI

70/69-58/57   Arsaces XVII, Phraates III

58/57-54   Arsaces XVIII, Mithradates IV

54-38   Arsaces XIX, Orodes II

41-38   Pacorus I

38-2   Phraates IV

29-27   Tiradates I

2 BCE-4 CE Phraataces

c.6   Orodes III

8-12   Vonones I

10-38   Artabanus II

35   Phraates V

36-37   Tiridates II

39?-47?   Vardanes I

39?-51   Gotarzes II

50-56   Sanabares

51   Vonones II

51-78   Vologases I

55-58   Vardanes II

77-80   Vologases II

78-105   Pacorus II

80-90   Artabanus III

105-147   Vologases III

108-129   Osroes I

116   Parthamaspates

c.140   Mithradates V

147-191   Vologases IV

c.190   Osroes II

191-208   Vologases V

208-218   Vologases VI

216-224   Artabanus IV

NOTE:

This table is based on E.J. Bickermann, Chronology of the Ancient World (1980); on information from Parthia.com; and on the researches by F. Assar as published on Iranica-L. (http://www.livius.org/pan-paz/parthia/kings.html, 22-06-2015)

Sasanian Rulers

224?-241　Ardašir I

241-272　Shapur I

272-273　Hormizd I (Ardašir II)

273-276　Bahram I

276-293　Bahram II

293　Bahram III

293-303　Narseh, 'the Sakan king'

303-309　Hormizd II

309-379　Shapur II

379-383　Ardašir III

383-388　Shapur III

388-399　Bahram IV

399-420　Yazdgard I "the sinner"

420-438　Bahram V

438-457　Yazdgard II

457-459　Hormizd III

457-484　Peroz

484-488　Valkaš

488-496　Kavad I (first reign)

496-498/499　Zamasp

498-530　Kavad I (second reign)

531-579　Khusrau I "deathless soul"

579-590　Hormizd IV "the Turk"

590-spring 628　Khusrau II

590-591　Bahram VI

591/592-597　Bistam

c.593?　Hormizd V

spring 628-late 628　Kavad II

late 628-630　Ardašir IV

629-629　Shahrbaraz

629-629　Peroz II

629-631　Khusrau III

629-631　Buran

631-631　Azarmedukht

631-632　Hormizd VI

631-637　Khusrau IV

632-651　Yazdgard III

(http://www.livius.org/sao-sd/sassanids/sassanid_kings.html, 20-06-2015)

Chinese dynasties till the beginning of the seventh century (206 BCE-618 CE)

Western Han Dynasty	**206 BCE-8 CE**
Xin	**8-25**
Eastern Han Dynasty	**25-220**
Three Kingdoms	**220-280**
Western Jin Dynasty	**266-316**
Eastern Jin Dynasty	**317-420**
Southern and Northern Dynasties	**420-589**
Sui Dynasty	**589-618**

15th-century manuscript copy of the Ptolemy world map

The states in the Western regions during the Han period
## (206 BCE-220 CE)
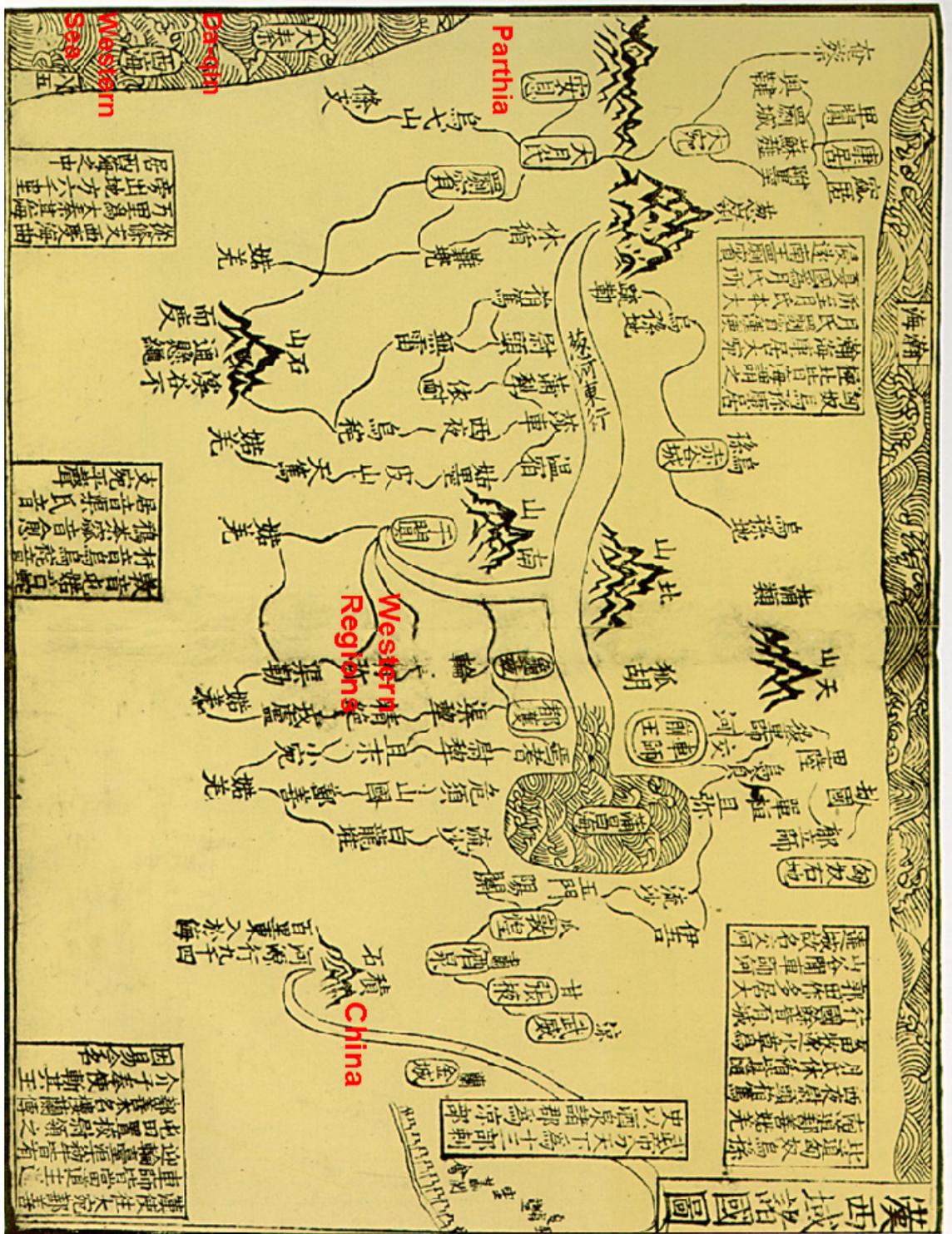
(Zhi Pan, *The Deeds of the Buddhist Masters* [Fo-zu-tong-ji], vol. 32, 1269)

The powers on Eurasian Steppe in 200 CE
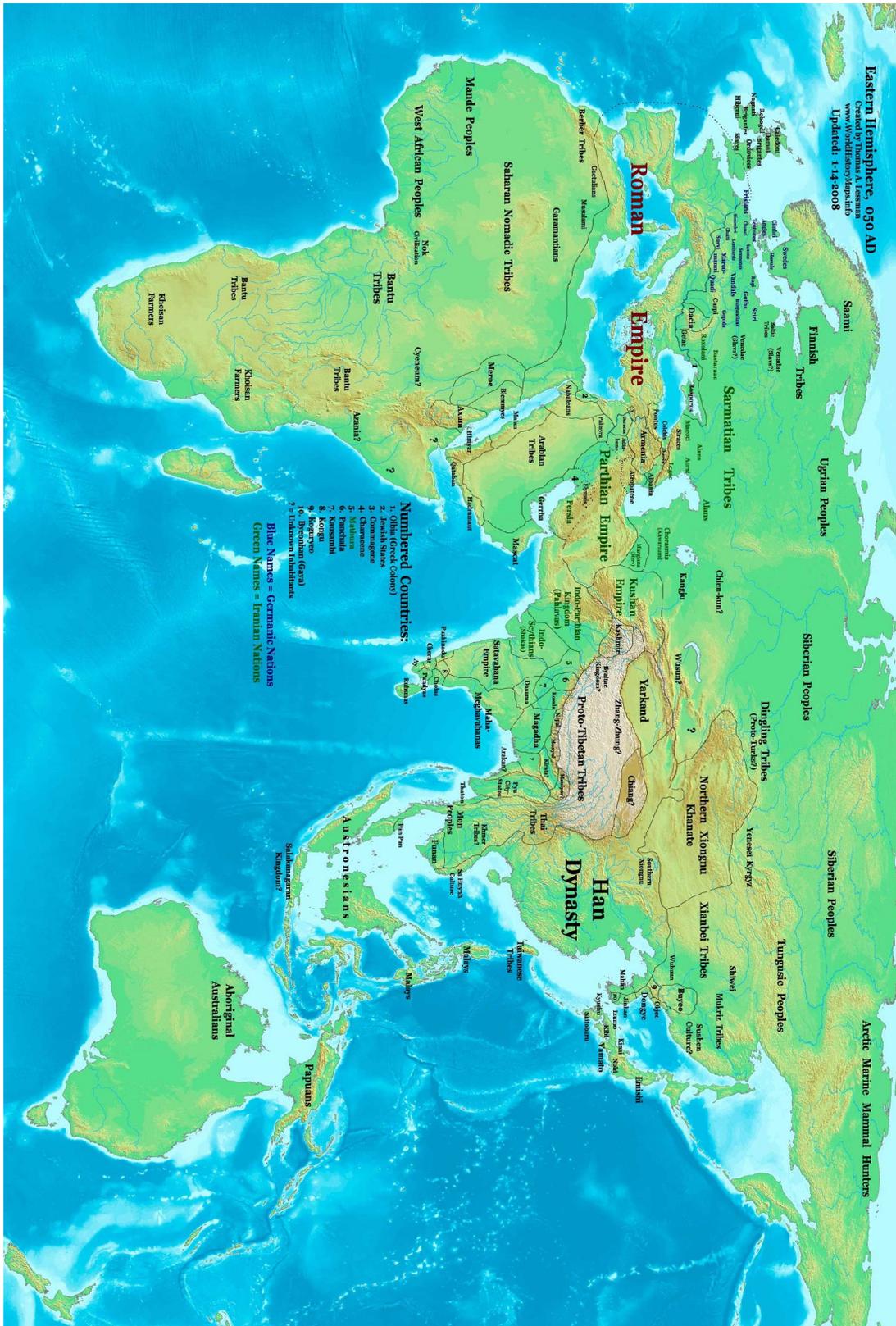
(http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Part_of_East_Hem_200_AD.jpg, 08-05-2015)

Network of the Silk Road
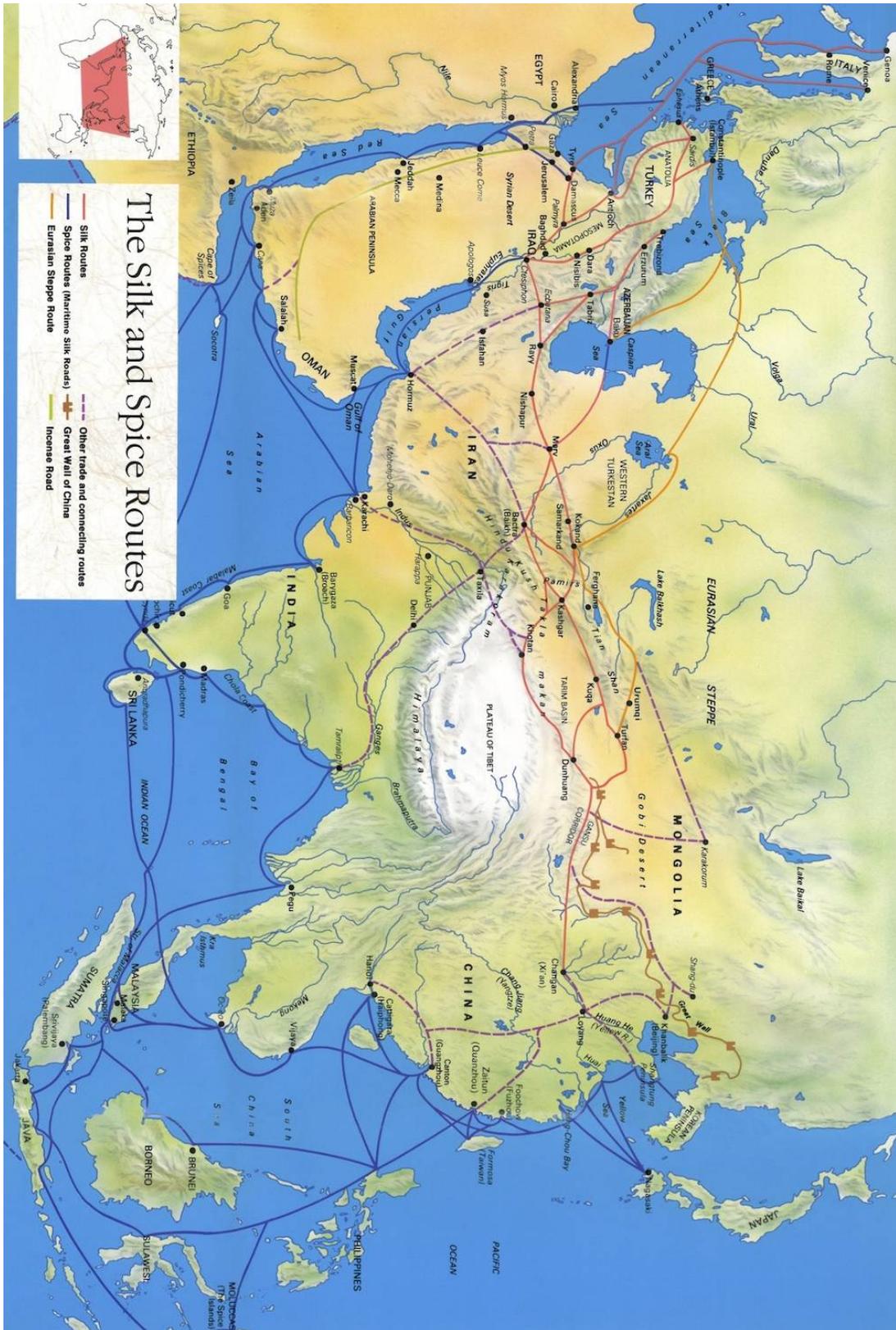
(https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/about-silk-road, 27-04-2015)

The traditional Chinese clothes Kuzhe, which was originated from the Northern barbarians of China in early Middle Ages
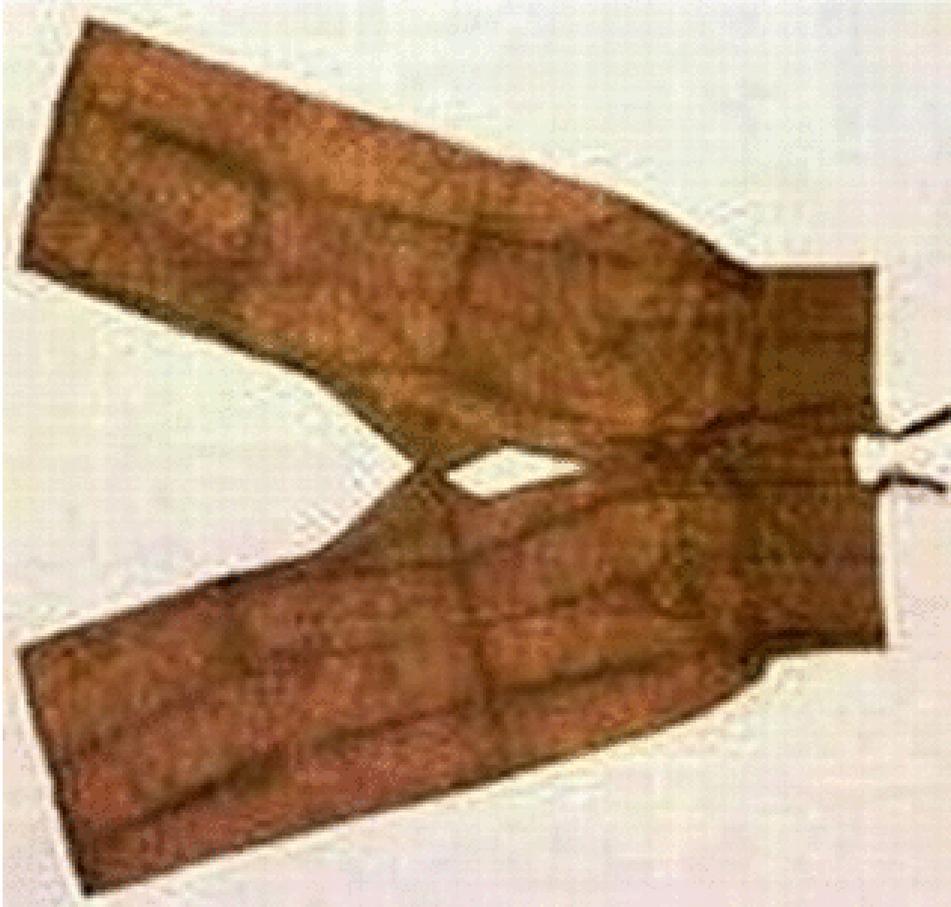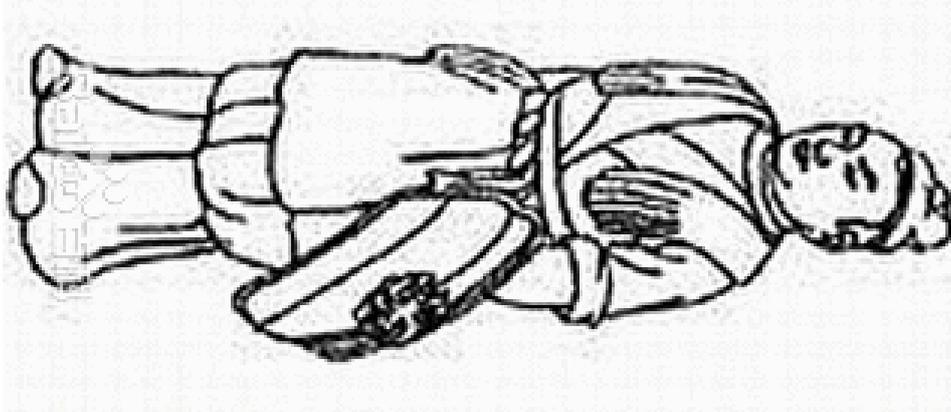
A portrait of Da-qin people kept in *Sai-cai-tu-hui*, 17th century

coral

大秦國西方番商萃此其王以布帛織出金
宇纏頭地產珊瑚生金花錦縵布珍珠等物

(http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%A4%A7%E7%A7%A6#/media/File:Daqin_in_Sa
ncai_Tuhui.jpg, 14-05-2015)

222

Nestorian Stele

(Memorial of the Propagation in China of the Luminous Religion from Daqin)

("Nestorian Stele" by Dirrival - Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 2.5 via Wikimedia Commons - http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nestorian_Stele.JPG#/media/File:Nestorian_Stele.JPG, 14-05-2015)

Roman (Byzantine) coin found in China

This is a Solidus of Anastasius I (491-518), found in a tomb in 2013, which belongs to the period of North Wei (386-534) of Chinese dynasties.


(http://cn.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/977255/luo-yang-fa-xian-bai-zhan-ting-jin-bi, 12-05-2015)

Distribution map of the Roman (Byzantine) coins found in China

(Yun-yan Guo, A General Overview of Byzantine Coins & Their Imitations Found in China, *Eirene (Studia Graeca et Latina)*, XLI, p. 102)

Map with the Chinese "One belt, One Road" Strategy and Policy

(https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E4%B8%80%E5%B8%B6%E4%B8%80%E8%B7%
AF#/media/File:OBAOR.jpg, 19-06-2015)