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## ON THE NAMES OF CHINA.

BY M. KLAPROTH.\*

THE name of "China," which we give to the largest country in Eastern Asia, is not in general use there: we received it from the Malays, who call it چین *China*. The pilots and some of the seamen who navigated the first Portuguese vessels that visited China, being of Malay origin, it was natural enough that the Portuguese themselves should adopt the name which their guides gave to that country. The Malays had known the Chinese ever since the latter part of the third century before our era, when Tsin-che-hwang-te (their first supreme monarch) subjected the southern part of China, as well as Tonquin, and pushed his conquests as far as Cochin China. The natives of the Malay islands, having direct commercial relations with these countries, were consequently acquainted, from that period, with the Chinese, who then bore the name of *Tsin*: the Malays not having the aspirated *ts*, pronounced this word *China*, appending to it the *a*. It is equally well established, that the first intercourse of the Chinese with India bears date in the Tsin dynasty.† This name was converted by the Hindoos into चीन *China*, for the same reason as with the Malays, since the Devanagari alphabet and its derivatives are equally destitute of the aspirated consonant *ts*, for which when necessary the च *ch* is substituted. In the Bauddhist books, the name is also written *China*; it has even been adopted in the Chinese translations made from these books; and the Chinese themselves have affected the use of two characters (*Che-na*) which express the same sounds. It was from India, moreover, that the Arabians acquired the word جين *Jin*, as they were obliged to write it, not having the Persian چ *ch*. They speedily perceived, however, that this letter, چ was not exactly adapted to express the name Tsin; they accordingly exchanged the initial letter for ص and wrote صين *Sin*. Hence some German scholars, not very conversant with the subject, have concluded that we ought rather to write *Sina* than *China*; forgetting that in their mother tongue the letter *s* represents the *x* of the dialects derived from the Latin; and that it is much too soft to express the sound of the Chinese *ts*, which is the German *z* aspirated.

The Sanscrit name महचीन *Mahá China*, contracted in the Hindoo dialects into *Machin* ماچين, and adopted under this latter form by the Persians, is not very ancient; it seems not to be of an earlier date than the middle of the twelfth century, the period when the emperors of the Sung dynasty were forced to withdraw into the southern portion of their empire, and cede the northern provinces to the Kin or Jurjah, the ancestors of the Mandchūs of the present day. The northern part of China then received, amongst foreigners, the name of China or Chin; before that period it had also been called Cathay, from the name of the Khitans, a Tungouse-Mongol tribe, who ruled there.

Notwithstanding the monstrous configuration which Ptolemy has given to the

\* *Journal Asiatique*, n. 55 p. 53.

† Which ended B.C. 180.—Ed.

the south-eastern portion of Asia, we can easily recognize upon his charts the Ultra-Gangetic peninsula, the Gulf of Tonquin, and the southern coast of China. He calls the inhabitants of the latter, and those of Tonquin, *Sinae*, because they were then under Chinese dominion. Their capital, *Thinæ* (*ἡ μεταίεμελος Θίνα*) is most probably the present Canton, or at least a town which existed in its neighbourhood, for Canton has several times changed its place, as we find from the history of China. Ptolemy has prolonged the southern coast of China towards the south, although in fact it extends from west to east, so that his chart is completely twisted; but it is only necessary to turn it about in order to discover the site of Canton in *Thinæ*, and the Bocca Tigris, or estuary of the Tiger, in the *τὸν ἑνὸν εἰς ἄρκτον*, or *gulf of the Sinae*. Even the Ta-keang, or Se-keang (river), may be perceived, on the northern bank of which Canton, or the capital of the *Sinae*, is situated. The notions which Ptolemy entertained respecting this country were probably more ancient than his age; or, what is equally probable, the name of Tsin, given to China, was already common throughout India, beyond the Ganges, and amongst the inhabitants of the Sunda islands. Cosmas Indicopleustes, a Christian of the Latin church, who travelled over India in the early part of the sixth century, has left a very curious *Christian cosmography*, wherein he names China *Τζινίτζα*, *Tzinitzza*, compares it with India, Persia, and the Roman states, and asserts that there is no navigation beyond that country: he adds, in another part of his book, that *Tzinitzza* was washed by the sea to the eastward.

Although the ancients, the Arabian navigators, and the early Portuguese who visited India, had adopted the Sanscrit and Malay name of *China* for northern China; the southern part of this country, not bearing the same name amongst the neighbouring people, was differently denominated in the west. Under the Han dynasty, that is, in the two centuries before and after our era, the Chinese had subdued the whole of central Asia, as far as the banks of the Oxus and Jaxartes. They had established military colonies there, and their traders traversed those countries to barter their merchandize for the products of Persia and the Roman empire. They brought chiefly raw silk and silk stuffs, which met with an excellent market in Persia and Europe. According to the Greek authors, the word *ση* denoted the *silk-worm*, and the inhabitants of *Serica*, the country from whence silk was brought. This fact demonstrates that the name of *Seres* was given them from the precious commodity which the people of the west came to them in search of. In the Armenian language, the insect which produces silk is called *sheram*, a name which bears a strong resemblance to the *ση* of the Greeks. It is natural to believe that these two words were borrowed from people more eastern; this we are enabled to prove by means of the Mongol and Mandchū tongues. It results that the name of silk, amongst the ancients, really originated in eastern Asia. Silk is called *sirkek* by the Mongols, and *sirgha* by the Mandchūs: these two nations dwelt on the north and north-east of China. Can it be presumed that they received these denominations from the people of the west? On the other hand, the Chinese *σε*, which means *raw silk*, discovers not only some resemblance to *sirkek* and *sirgha*, but a remarkable similarity to the *ση* of the Greeks. The analogy will appear more striking still when it is known that in the Mandarin dialect the *r* is not pronounced, although it may probably be found in the old dialects of China. But the Korean word *str*, denoting *silk*, is completely identical with the Greek *ση*, which is pronounced *str*.\* Silk then gave its

name

\* It would be curious to ascertain when the word *silk* was introduced into the English language. It appears to be the same as the Russian *chelk*, which, I believe, is derived from the Mongol *sirkek*: a fact which is the more probable because Russia was long under the yoke of the Mongols.—K.

name to the people who manufactured it and sent it to the west. Thus the Seres are evidently the Chinese, whose empire was formerly separated by the Oxus from that of Persia, whatever those geographers may say, who are only capable of fixing the position of nations by means of compasses.

The first Chinese colonies which came from the north-west to people the countries along the Hwang-ho (or yellow river), found themselves in the midst of tribes almost in a savage state, at least much less civilized than themselves. They, therefore, gave to the state which they proceeded to found, the name of *Chung-kwō*, or the *middle kingdom* or *empire*. Some Chinese writers tell us that this denomination began in the time of Ching-wang, the second emperor of the Chow dynasty, who reigned towards the close of the twelfth century before our era. At this period China was divided into several principalities, all of which assumed the title of kingdoms. Chow-kung, uncle of that emperor, gave to the country of Lo-yang, in Ho-nan, where the Chinese monarch resided, the name of Chung-kwō, because it was situated in the midst of the other kingdoms of which China was then composed. Henceforward, add the same authors, the portion of the empire, or its aggregate, possessed by the emperors, has always borne this title.

The same denomination has been retained even to the present time; and the nations adjoining China have transmitted it in their respective languages. The Manchūs say *Dulimba-e-Gurun*; the Mongols *Dumda-en-ulus*; the Tonquinese *Juwa-kuok*; the Japanese *Tsiow-kokow*; and the Burmans *Alai-prai-dai*: all these appellations signify the *middle kingdom*.

This epithet given to China may, however, be explained in a different manner. Chung, in Chinese, signifies also "the perfect moral medium, which in no wise deviates from rectitude." In this acceptation of the word, Chung-kwō will mean the perfectly well-governed kingdom. I need not here refute the absurd idea of those who pretend that the Chinese believe their country to be situated in the centre of the world, and that it is on that account they call it Chung-kwō. A sailor or a coolie of Canton may, indeed, give such an explanation, but it is for the understanding of those who interrogate him to adopt or reject it.\*

Another name by which the Chinese frequently designate their country is that of Sze-hae, or the *four seas*. This may be termed a poetical appellation, for it supposes four great masses of water surrounding China, whilst it is washed by the sea only on the east and the south. Some vague notions respecting the Caspian Sea, lake Baikal, and even the Frozen Ocean, may have given rise to this denomination in early times.†

The term *T'een-hea*, that which is under heaven, the world (in a limited sense), in Mandchū, *Abkai-fejexghi*, and in Mongol, *Tegri-en-dozihn*, is commonly applied to China, by amplification, as the word *orbis* by the Romans to their empire. The Japanese pronounce Tenka for T'een-hea, and apply this name to their own country.

Another denomination of China is *Shin-tan*, that is, the *Eastern Aurora*.‡ It is found in the Buddhist books, and is principally used by the Japanese, who translate it by *Moru-kossi*. Other Chinese names of China are *Chung-hwa*, or the *flower of the middle*; *T'een-chaou*, or the *celestial empire*; *Chung-yāng*, or the *vast middle platform*.§

The Mahomedans of China apply to the country the name of *Tung-too*, or *eastern land*, and give that of *Chung-kwō* to Arabia, the native country of the founder of their religion.||

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\* See note (a) at the end. † See note (b). ‡ See note (c). § See note (d). || See note (e).

The Chinese commonly call their empire after the name of the reigning dynasty. It is thus that, in the most remote times, they gave it the names of *Tsang*, of *Yu*, and of *Hoa*. The great deeds of the emperors of the Han dynasty recommended this name to common use, and subsequently the Chinese bore the name of *Han-jin*, or *men of Han*; it is even at present very common: the Japanese pronounce it *Kan*. The dynasty of the *Tangs* being rendered still more illustrious by conquest than that of Han, the name *Tsang-jin*, or *men of Tang*, was for some centuries in use as a designation of the Chinese: it is yet employed in Japan, but there it is translated *Kara*, which, like *Tang*, in Chinese, signifies *vain-glorious, boastful*, and is written with the same character.

China, at the present period, being governed by the Mandchū dynasty, which adopted the title of *Tring*, or *Ta-tsing*, the Chinese call themselves *Tring-jin*, or *men of Tring*, as they bore the name of *Ming-jin* under the Ming dynasty.

The Mongols call the Chinese *Kitat* and *Nanghat*. The Mandchūs give them the name of *Nekan*. The Tonquinese and the inhabitants of Cochina China call them, by way of contempt, *Ngo*, and their kingdom *Noo-ock-aga*. The Tibetians give to China the appellation of *Youlbow*, and to its inhabitants that of *Janag*, or *Gheanag*, which signifies white *Jas*, or *Gheas*, in contradistinction to the *Jagar* or *Gheagar*, that is, black *Jas* or *Gheas*, who are the *Hindoos*.

#### NOTES.

(a) This passage seems to contain a sneer against Dr. Morrison, who certainly implies, if he does not expressly declare, that the Chinese understand by *Chung-kwō* that their nation is situated in the midst of the terrestrial world. The absurdity of the supposition that such is their notion is not very apparent. On the contrary, there is a very strong presumption, even from M. Klapproth's subsequent statements, that the Chinese do so understand it. But let us first examine this writer's hypothesis. He says that *Chung*, in Chinese, signifies "the perfect moral medium which never deviates from rectitude." This is not correct: the character *chung*, in which the radical *kwān*, a perpendicular line, intersects a square, signifies the middle, the centre, equi-distant from two extremes. The phrase M. Klapproth gives as the meaning of the character, is in fact the meaning of a sentence quoted in the dictionaries to illustrate the signification of *chung*, viz. "Ta chung che ching," or "Holding the perfect medium, without the least deviation from rectitude." (Morrison, I, 1, 25; I, 2, 110.) It is true, an ancient commentator on the *Chung-yung*, one of the four books of Confucius, says that the word there implies "neither excess nor defect, not leaning to one side or the other." But it is plain that even this amplification is no authority for M. Klapproth's definition of the term, which is forced and inaccurate. His idea that *Chung-kwō* means "the kingdom perfectly well-governed," seems, to use his own phrase, absurd.

(b) The notion that the Chinese suppose their empire to be surrounded by the sea, and especially by the waters specified by M. Klapproth, is, in our opinion, infinitely more absurd than that respecting the central position of their empire. The notion is, besides, perfectly gratuitous, and without authority. Dr. Morrison tells us that, according to the Chinese, the four seas (*Sze-hae*) surround the world; hence "all within the four seas denotes all within the world." We were not aware that the phrase was ever used by the Chinese as an appellation of their own empire; but if it has been so used, it seems to supply an additional proof that the meaning ascribed to the phrase *Chung-kwō*, which M. Klapproth thinks so absurd, is the true one.

(c) Without commenting upon the absurd pleonasm of "eastern Aurora," M. Klapproth here seems completely misled. Morrison says that "*Chin-tan* is a name given to China in the western regions. The character of *Chin* is not plainly printed in his dic-

tionary, but it appears to us that it should be *shin*, and *shin-tan* would then signify "the earliest dawn." Now it is apparent that this denomination could only have been used by the people who employed it, as we use the word "east," in speaking of Asia; that is to say, a people situated more to the west than the Chinese referred to the latter in this poetical phrase. It is idle to class this amongst the names of China.

(d) *Chung-yāng*, which M. Klaproth translates "*le vaste plateau du milieu*," signifies no more than "the midst, the very centre of any thing, as appears uncontestedly from some verses in the *She-king* quoted by Dr. Morrison (1, 1, 585). This furnishes another striking evidence that the Chinese, in calling their empire *Chung-kwō*, do not intend "the moral medium," the "point of rectitude," but its physical position.

(e) M. Klaproth appears to have taken this part of his argument from Dr. Morrison (Part III, p. 68), and to have misunderstood the lexicographer. "China's name," says Dr. M., "*Chung-kwō*, or middle nation, is claimed for Arabia by some of the Mahomedan writers in China: they say 'China should only be called the eastern land; Arabia (the heavenly mansion) is in the midst of the four extreme points, and the progenitor of mankind was produced there.'" By the *progenitor of mankind*, M. Klaproth has understood *Mahomed*; and he has, moreover, overlooked this further proof of the accuracy of the opinion which he pronounces absurd.

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### MEMOIR OF MAJOR-GENERAL SIR J. M. CHALMERS.

Major General Sir John Mary Chalmers was an officer of great gallantry and talents. For two and forty years he gave his entire and undivided exertions to the service of his employers. During this period, almost unparalleled in the military annals of the Company, he never, except on duty, quitted the Indian territories. If not actively engaged, he was ever at his post ready to devote himself upon the first emergency to the public service.

The active services of General Chalmers commenced in the year 1776, when he was engaged in the successful attack of the British troops upon the French fort of Mahé. He was subsequently concerned in five other sieges, *viz.* that of Chilumbraum, in 1781; that of Coimbatore, in 1790; that of Pondicherry, in 1792; and those of Ahmednuggur and Gawull Ghur, in 1803; at the latter place he headed one of the storming parties. At the siege of Coimbatore, in the first instance, the fort was invested and carried by General Meadows, who, upon quitting it, left General (then Lieutenant) Chalmers in command. Whilst thus held, it was besieged by an army raised by Tippoo Sultaun, which consisted of 6,000 men with artillery. The enemy commenced an attack with vigour, and continued to batter the place for four and twenty days. Having at length effected a practicable breach, they made preparations for a storm, which was commenced at four o'clock on the morning of the twenty-fifth day. The contest was obstinately maintained for a long period with doubtful success; but the assailants were ultimately repulsed. The loss on both sides was considerable.

A report having gained ground that reinforcements were approaching to relieve the garrison, the enemy prepared for a retreat: which Lieutenant Chalmers perceiving, he sallied forth, stormed and carried a battery, and captured two guns. This gallantry was rewarded with the thanks of Lord Cornwallis and of the Governor of Fort St. George. The reinforcement subsequently arrived but soon returned to the main army leaving only one company behind.

In the mean time the garrison was employed in repairing the defences of the fortress, and in making such other preparations as their means allowed, to repel