

The Western Regions according to the *Hou Hanshu*

The *Xiyu juan*

“Chapter on the Western Regions”

from *Hou Hanshu* 88

Second Edition

(Extensively revised with additional notes and appendices)

Translated by John E. Hill

©

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Dedicated to my Mother and Father who taught me the joys of exploring new places, different cultures, and other times.

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Acknowledgements

I am continually awed and inspired by the masterful works of the great early scholars, Friedrich Hirth, Édouard Chavannes, and Sir Aurel Stein who did so much to bring this fascinating period of history to the attention of the western world, and make it accessible to us all. I can only hope that this present work provides a worthy development of their pioneering efforts.

I am also deeply grateful to the many people who have so generously shared their time and knowledge to make this project possible. Many I have never met in person and yet I owe them a great debt. I hope that making this translation freely available will in some measure repay their efforts. Special thanks must go to Professor Edwin G. Pulleyblank who, completely unasked, generously supplied copies of many key texts that first set my studies on a firm footing; to Professor Fida M. Hassnain who shared his boundless enthusiasm and knowledge of the rich history and traditions of his beloved Kashmir and Ladakh; to the late Fr. Yves Raguin whose patience with my endless queries on obscure Chinese terms and concepts was untiring even in illness; to Richard Wong, wise friend and mentor over many years; to Professor Daniel Waugh for encouraging me and making it possible to have my work available to all on the World Wide Web; and our Librarians at the Cook Centennial Library, Cooktown, Australia who have so patiently sought out obscure books and articles for me over the years. Finally, to the scores of others who have so generously contributed their time and their knowledge – this is your work as well as mine – I hope it fulfils your expectations.

“Research is a community business.”

Fr. Yves Raguin, S.J. (1912-2000)

Response to the draft version on the Silk Road Seattle website

I am deeply indebted to Professor Daniel Waugh of the University of Washington for encouraging me to begin making my translations available on the World Wide Web, even though they still needed some revision and the notes were incomplete, and seek input from readers before they are published in their final form. Special thanks also to Lance Jenott who patiently transcribed the document into HTML and prepared it for publication on the Web.

The first draft of this book was posted on the Silk Road Seattle website in May 2000 with a request for comments and suggestions from readers. The response has been beyond all expectations. I would like to thank all those who took the time to write – it is really encouraging to know that so many people appreciate and will use one's work. As well as the numerous congratulatory letters – I have received, and continue to receive much generous help, copies of articles, and much useful information which I have been able to include in this revised and expanded edition.

I have also revised and made a number of major and many minor additions and corrections to my earlier draft editions. In particular, I should note the changes I have made regarding the identification of a number of towns in Parthian territory which has led me to a completely revised itinerary for the travels of the Chinese envoy Gan Ying in 97 CE; notes on a probable dating of the introduction of sericulture to Khotan in the early 1st century CE; (somewhat tentative) identifications for all five Yuezhi *xihou* or 'princedoms' just prior to their unification into a Kushan state under Kujula Kadphises, some new proposals regarding the names and titles of the early Kushans and their dates, and a proposal that these Kushans under Kujula may have invaded eastern Parthia in 55 CE.

I should caution the reader that much of this new information is based on data that is extremely sparse, and that sometimes my interpretations differ from those of others. I have tried my best to muster all the evidence in the notes for my own interpretations as well as for any major contending theories. Some of these questions, however, will be unable to be definitively resolved until new historical or archaeological data becomes available.

The many helpful responses I received to the posting of the first draft have been invaluable providing a wide variety of expert comment and assistance and has put me in touch with interested colleagues around the world. I hope that more readers will take the time to contact me if they have anything they would like to add or see changed. Your suggestions could be incorporated in future revisions. My aim is to make this translation as accurate and useful as I can so that it is a reliable tool and provides a sound basis for future studies in the field.

Acknowledgements to the Second Edition (2003)

The wide-ranging feedback from scholars around the world has been far greater than I ever expected. Each person has contributed in a significant way. Each contribution has been of help, often opening new areas of research and providing invaluable links to further information.

Many of you have very kindly sent me copies of your own publications and notes as well as providing an amazing stream of correspondence filled with comments, suggestions and encouragement. Your contributions, and those of many of the people mentioned in the earlier acknowledgements, are far too many and varied for me to list here.

Your kind assistance has been far greater and more important to the success of this project than I could ever have imagined. Please excuse me for just listing your names here. However, most of you will also be found mentioned either in my Notes or the Bibliography. Please excuse me also if I have missed out on your titles (or given the wrong ones) or worst of all, I have missed you out altogether. I would be grateful if you would let me know if there are any omissions or mistakes so I can correct them in later editions.

Included in the long list of generous contributors to my research for this book are: Nettie K. Adams; Dr. Farhad Assar; Thomas Bartlett; Professor Christopher Beckwith; Dr. Craig Benjamin; Professor Alison Betts; Professor E. Bruce Brooks; Professor Mathew Ciolek; Professor Étienne de la Vaissière; Chris M. Dorn'eich; Professor Richard N. Frye; Douglas Gibbons; Dan Gibson; Gaston Giulliani; Dr. Irene L. Good; Dr. David T. Graf; Paul Greenhall; Chris Hopkins; Whalen Lai; Valérie Lefebvre-Aladwi; Lin Xiangqi; Renzo Lucherini; Pavel Lurje; Thomas K. Mallon McCorgray; Professor Daniel L. McKinley; Raoul McLaughlin; Felicitas Maeder; Professor Victor M. Mair; Josef Maier; Professor Irina Merzliakova; John Moffett; Khademi Nadooshan; Professor Giorgio Nebbia; Mark Passehl; Lic. Paola Raffetta; Joachim K. Rennstich; Janet Rizvi; Peter Rowland; Dr. Edmund Ryden; Orit Shamir; Professor Steven Sidebotham; Professor Nicholas Sims-Williams; Sören Stark; Dr. Sebastian Stride; Dr. Mehmet Tezcan; Professor Eric Uphill; Professor Donald B. Wagner.

Please know that I am deeply indebted and extremely grateful to you all. Any mistakes are mine.

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PREFACE

By about 6,000 years ago horses had been domesticated by the nomads of the vast Eurasian steppe-lands. This was soon followed by the domestication of the dromedary and the Bactrian camel. This resulted in vastly increased mobility and the capacity to carry heavy loads which, in turn, led to the development of rapidly expanding trade and cultural exchanges between widely separated populations.

Grasslands stretch like a vast highway just north of the main agricultural regions and urban centres from the shores of the Pacific all the way to Africa, and deep into the heart of Europe. This provided ideal conditions for movements of both mounted warriors and caravans. The joining together of a multitude of local routes led to the development of long-distance networks right across the vast Afro-Eurasian landmass by about 2,000 BCE.¹

The earliest long-distance road, the ‘Persian Royal Road,’ may have been in use as early as 3,500 BCE. By the time of Herodotus, (c. 475 BCE) it ran some 2,857 km from the city of Susa on the lower Tigris to Smyrna near the Aegean Sea. It was maintained and protected by the Achaemenian empire and had postal stations and relays at regular intervals. By having fresh horses and riders ready at each relay, royal couriers could carry messages the entire distance in 9 days, though normal travellers took about three months.

This ‘Royal Road’ linked in to many other routes – some of them, such as the routes to India and Central Asia, were also protected by the Achaemenids, ensuring regular contact between India, Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean.

Another very ancient series of routes linked Badakhshān in northeastern Afghanistan – the only known source of lapis lazuli in the ancient world – with Mesopotamia and Egypt by the second half of the fourth millennium BCE, and by the third millennium with the Harappan civilization in the Indus valley.²

By the second millennium nephrite jade was being traded from mines in the region of Yarkand and Khotan to China. Significantly, these mines were not very far from the lapis lazuli and spinel (‘Balas Ruby’) mines in Badakhshān and, although separated by the formidable Pamir, routes across them were, apparently, in use from very early times.

Alexander’s successors, the Ptolemies, inherited control of Egypt, and actively promoted trade with Mesopotamia, India, and East Africa through their ports on the Red Sea coast, as well as overland. Soon after the Roman conquest of Egypt in 30 BCE, regular communications and trade between China, Southeast Asia, India, Sri Lanka, the Middle East, Africa and Europe suddenly blossomed to a scale never seen before. A vast network of local overland and maritime trade routes were fully linked and novel products, technologies and ideas began to spread right across the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa.

Intercontinental trade and communications became regular, organised, and protected by the ‘Great Powers’ of the day. These exchanges were critical not only for the development and flowering of the great civilisations of Rome, China and India, but they laid the foundations of our modern world.

Several of the most important Chinese texts relating to the early development of the “Silk Routes” were never available in full in English translation. These include the ‘Chapter on the Western Regions’ plus several biographies of the main Chinese generals who expanded Chinese power to the west from the *Hou Hanshu* (covering the period from 25-220 CE), and a third century geographical text called the *Weilue*.

My aim has been to publish up-to-date, fully annotated translations of these texts, but the project has taken much longer than I had initially envisioned. This initial publication on the Web has proved to be a very valuable way of overcoming my isolation and lack of access to research facilities.

I do hope that you, the reader, will be able to share some of my wonder and delight at being able to look back almost 2,000 years upon a world containing so many remarkable parallels to our own. The hard-won lessons that the ancients have passed on to us can, I believe, help provide us with the knowledge we so desperately need to bridge the gaps between East and West, between the haves and have-nots, if we are to survive this new century.

Readers are encouraged to forward any comments or suggestions so they can be taken into account in future revisions. Please contact me directly – not through the Silk Road Seattle website. I will try to answer any questions – my contact details are:

John E. Hill
PO Box 467
Cooktown, Qld.,
AUSTRALIA 4871
Email: wynhill@bigpond.com

BACKGROUND

The portion of this chapter on the Western Regions dealing with Da Qin (the Roman Empire), was first published in English by Friedrich Hirth in 1875 and is available in his very useful book, *China and the Roman Orient*, republished recently by Ares Publishers in Chicago. This book contains many other texts of interest, and the Chinese originals of each, accompanied by excellent, though somewhat dated, notes.

The whole of the 'Chapter on the Western Regions,' other than the section on Da Qin, was translated into French and richly annotated by the famous sinologue, Édouard Chavannes, in "Les pays d'Occident d'après le *Heou Han chou*" in *T'oung pao* 8 (1907), pp. 149-221. He added to it three short biographies of Chinese generals and the Chinese text. Most of Chavannes' copious notes are still relevant but, of course, like Hirth's, many of them have needed updating.

Hirth's pioneering work on the texts relating to the 'Roman Orient' is supplemented by the recent and useful *The Roman Empire in Chinese Sources* by D. D. Leslie and K. H. J. Gardiner, Bardi Editore, Roma, 1996. This work contains translations of almost all of the relevant texts relating to the Roman Empire and copious notes but, unfortunately, is rather hard to find, and does not include the Chinese originals. It does, however, contain material unavailable elsewhere in English and is a useful reference.

As the Chinese text is quite ancient, there are some passages that are difficult, or even impossible, to translate with confidence. There are particular problems with the identification of many places and products, as terms have fallen out of use over time. Some of my identifications are fairly speculative and often differ from the suggestions of other scholars. Identifications that are generally accepted have been included with minimal comments and notes.

Readers looking for further information are referred to the works mentioned above and the excellent and indispensable annotated translation of Chapters 61 and 96 of the *Hanshu* by A. F. P. Hulsewé, and M. A. N. Lowe in their *China in Central Asia*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1979 (including detailed notes on the identification of many place-names also found in the *Hou Hanshu*), and the very readable *Records of the Grand Historian of China: Translated from the Shih chi of Ssu-ma Ch'ien* by Burton Watson, Columbia University Press, New York and London, 1961, especially Chapter 123: *The Account of Ta-yüan*, on pp. 264-289.

NOTES ON THE TEXT

The *Hou Hanshu*, the official history of the Later (or 'Eastern') Han Dynasty (25-221 CE), was compiled by Fan Ye, who died in 445 CE. Fan Ye used a number of earlier histories, including the *Shiji* by Sima Qian and the *Hanshu* by Ban Gu plus many others (including some that were also entitled *Hou Hanshu*), most of which have not survived intact.

Fan Ye, himself, briefly describes in the text his main sources for the Chapter on the Western Regions in his Commentary at the end of the chapter:

“Ban Gu has recorded in detail the local conditions and customs of each kingdom in the *Hanshu* [*History of the Former Han Dynasty*]. Now, the events of the *jianwu* period (25-55 CE) onward have been revised for this Section 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 CE).”

A quick examination of the texts will show that Fan Ye, as he indicates, has borrowed much from the accounts of the Western Regions in the *Hanshu*, but there is also a considerable amount of interesting additional material. Fan Ye specifies that much of his information comes from the account of General Ban Yong, presented to the Emperor in 125.

Ban Yong not only had his own extensive first-hand experiences in the west to draw on, but also those of his famous father, Ban Chao, who did so much to extend Chinese power to the west. These included the reports of his father's envoy, Gan Ying, who reached the shores of the Persian Gulf in 97 CE, and gathered what information he could on the Roman Empire.

Fan Ye has added a few updates for the period after 125 CE on the regions under direct Chinese control. The new information in this chapter on the Western Regions based, as it is, mainly on first-hand military reports, offers us a unique, and unusually accurate view of the countries, peoples, and events of the time.

NOTES TO THIS TRANSLATION

I have divided the text into numbered and headed sections to make it more accessible to the reader. Modern place-name equivalents are in rounded brackets after the Chinese names. Many are well-established and widely accepted. Those that are only tentatively identified are indicated with a question mark and the evidence is discussed in the notes.

It should be remembered that the modern place-names I have given might only refer to the general location of the ancient sites mentioned in the text. I have usually employed only the name of the nearest modern town, or the main town of an oasis. For example, the identification of Mulu as modern Merv only points to the oasis itself, not the specific location of the ancient town of Mulu. Likewise, the oasis of Kashgar (Shule) contained several towns, as it still does, and these are sometimes referred to individually. Literal translations of place-names and products have been placed within single inverted commas as: ‘Eastern Division.’

Some Chinese words have no exact equivalent in English. One such example is the word 城 *cheng*, which literally translates as ‘walled town,’ but it was also used for large towns that were not walled. It is sometimes rendered ‘city,’ but only a handful of the *cheng* mentioned in the *Hou Hanshu* would be large enough to be called a ‘city’ in our age of megalopolises. Most of them were what we would think of as country towns or provincial capitals. I have translated the word simply as ‘town’ and leave it to the reader to add the nuances according to the context.

Similarly, 國 *guo* is used to refer to entities ranging from tiny fiefdoms to entire empires and can be translated as ‘kingdom,’ ‘fief,’ ‘nation,’ ‘state,’ ‘country’ or ‘empire.’ I have usually translated it as ‘kingdom,’ unless the context specifically indicates otherwise, as most of these entities seem to have had a hereditary system of rulers.

For similar reasons, I have used “Western Regions” for the term 西域 *xiyu* rather than the usual translation as “Western Countries.” Also, I should emphasize that *xiyu* is sometimes used in the specific sense of the kingdoms actually controlled by China on the routes to the west of “China Proper” (the “Inner” region – that is, the land within the Wall), and sometimes in the far more general sense of all countries to the west of China.

Territories referred to as ‘Han,’ ‘Tianzhu’ (India), ‘Anxi’ (Parthia), or ‘Da Qin’ (Rome) were sometimes used very specifically for the home territory, but sometimes far more loosely for territories controlled by, or tributary to, the main seat of power. Thus, in the *Hou Hanshu*, we find references to the ‘King of Da Qin’ (that is, the king of Rome) and, at the same time, subject territories such as Egypt, or the ‘Roman Orient,’ are also referred to simply as Da Qin. A modern example of this process can be found in the use of ‘Mexico’ by Mexicans to refer to both their capital city and their country.

Because the older Wade-Giles system of Romanizing Chinese is still commonly used, the reader will find it in many of the quotes given in my notes. This is unfortunate, but unavoidable. I have, therefore, included Wade-Giles equivalents within square brackets and in italics after the Pinyin for many names and terms to assist the non-specialist reader.

As I have noted above, I have refrained from adding Chinese character to the translation itself to make it more accessible and readable for non-specialists. However, the Chinese character for all the major names and terms should be found in the appropriate notes.

For those wishing to check the reconstructed ancient pronunciations I highly recommend checking first Pulleyblank’s masterful *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese, and Early Mandarin* (1991). UBC Press, Vancouver. It is arranged alphabetically according to the Pinyin renderings and also contains references to the entries in Karlgren’s earlier, but still useful, *Grammata Serica*, and provides, probably, the easiest way of checking for characters in that work which is notoriously difficult to access.

I would like to add a word of caution to the reader here that the reconstructions are really only reliable back to the period of the *Qieyun* dictionary (completed in 601 CE), as Pulleyblank himself notes on p. 20 of his *Lexicon*. This means there was a gap of over 400 years between the Ban Yong’s report to the Emperor *c.* 125 CE and the best phonetic reconstructions for the characters we have at our disposal. It should also be noted that there were probably significant dialectal differences between the Chinese soldiers and settlers on the northwest frontiers and the inhabitants of the capital. So, although the reconstructions back to the late 6th century are frequently useful in helping to identify place names, it must be kept in mind that there were undoubtedly phonetic changes over the intervening centuries that we can only guess at. I have indicated such reconstructions in the text by the abbreviation “EMC” (for “Early Modern Chinese”). I have also frequently included the reconstructions of “Archaic Chinese” according to Karlgren’s earlier *Grammata Serica* in which he attempts to reconstruct pronunciations back to the Chou period (up to circa 220 BCE). These reconstructions of “Archaic Chinese” are indicated by the use of a preceding asterisk *. These are followed by Karlgren’s “Ancient Chinese” which are his reconstructions for the period equivalent to Pulleyblank’s EMC. Also, as entries are often difficult to find in

Karlgren's book I have included his numbering system preceded by "K.", so a typical entry from his work will look like this: K. 139s *g'ân / γân.

I have made a number of rather lengthy quotations in the notes. This is because I believe they are of importance, well-stated, and of particular interest. This material is not being used in any commercial way. However, if any of the authors have objections to my use of so much of their material I hope they will contact me and I will gladly make adjustments.

For the translation itself I have followed the Chinese text according to the *Zhonghua Shuju* edition of the *Hou Hanshu*, Shanghai, 1965; reprint 1973, *juan* 88 (*liejuan* 78), pp. 2909-2932, and checked critical passages against other, earlier, editions. I take full responsibility for all mistakes.

FONTS

I have avoided using Chinese characters and diacritics in the Text itself, so it should all be readable to practically everyone.

The Notes and Appendices of this document will require the enabling of "Unicode" Chinese characters. Most modern computer programs come with the ability to use Chinese characters but some readers may have to install or enable them in their browser to be able to read the Notes and Appendices properly.

Many characters with diacritics (or "accents") are difficult to reproduce in the WEB's HTML coding. For this reason I have used "Gentium" as it has a wide variety of diacritics and is available in forms designed for both Microsoft and Mac computers. It is freely available to download and use. However, most browsers – even without this font should reproduce most of the text (except some accented letters) well enough to follow.

The use of "Gentium" has allowed me accurately represent most diacritics employed in the quotes with the exception of the "d" and "t" with a curved accents over them, which I have indicated by a "đ", and a "t̃" respectively.

If you don't have the Gentium font already on your computer, it may be downloaded and installed from this site [[Windows](#) | [Mac](#)]. Fortunately, it is not a large file, and so should not take too long to download and install in your "Fonts" folder.

In spite of this, some readers may still experience difficulties. However, I believe that most of the notes will be meaningful even if the odd character is missed. If readers continue to have problems, or need help with a particular passage, please do not contact the Webmaster, but do feel free to contact the author at: wynhill@bigpond.com and I will try to help you.

MEASUREMENTS

The basic units of measurement employed in the *Hou Hanshu*, the 里 *li* and the 尺 *chi*, have varied considerably through the ages and, at times, from district to district. Fortunately, however, they remained stable over the Qin and Han periods and a bronze standard measure, dated 9 CE, has been preserved at the Imperial Palace in Beijing. This has allowed accurate conversions to modern measurements.

The *li* was calculated by Dubs to be 415.8 metres (1955): 160, n. 7. See also Chapter IV, Appendix I, Standard Weights and Measures of Han Times, *ibid.*, 276-280. In most cases, I have given the exact equivalents to the nearest kilometre based on this measurement, even when the number of *li* given is obviously an approximation (e.g. 8,000 or 10,000 *li*). For relatively short distances (less than 100 *li*), I have calculated to the nearest tenth of a kilometre.

Most, though not all, of the distances between places given in the *Hou Hanshu*, which I have been able to check have proved to be surprisingly accurate, especially in areas controlled by the Chinese. At other times, however, there are what seem to be obvious mistakes in the text. Sometimes this may be because it is not clear which of several alternative routes was used. Occasionally, especially over longer distances, and in the case of places far from China, the figures given are wildly out.

I have based all other conversions of Chinese measurements on the values calculated by Wan Kuo-ting for the Qin and Han periods as described by A. F. P. Hulswé, in *T'oung pao Archives*, Vol. XLIX, Livre 3, 1961: 206-207. The Han *chi*, or 'foot' is given here as equalling 0.231 metres (or 9.095 inches).

I have converted distances mentioned in quotes from Western Roman and Greek authors as follows: the Greek stadium as 201.5 metres, the Roman stadium as 185 metres, and the Roman mile as 1,482 metres.

The Western Regions according to the *Hou Hanshu*

Section 1 – Historical Background

In the period of Emperor Wu [140-87 BCE], the Western Regions¹ were under the control of the Interior [China].² They numbered thirty-six kingdoms. The Imperial Government established a Commandant of Imperial Envoys³ there to direct and protect these countries. Emperor Xuan [73-49 BCE] changed this title [in 59 BCE] to Protector General.⁴ Emperor Yuan [40-33 BCE] installed both a *Mao* and a *Ji* Commandant⁵ to take charge of the State Farms on the frontier of the king of Nearer Jushi (Turfan).⁶

During the time of Emperor Ai [6 BCE-1 CE] and Emperor Ping [1-5 CE], the principalities of the Western Regions split up and formed fifty-five kingdoms. Wang Mang, after he usurped the Throne [in 9 CE], 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 Xiongnu⁷ 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 CE], 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 CE], 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.

In the meantime, the Xiongnu became weaker. The king of Suoche (Yarkand),⁸ named Xian, wiped out several kingdoms. After Xian's death, they began to attack and fight each other. Xiao Yuan,⁹ Jingjue (Niya),¹⁰ Ronglu (south of Niya),¹¹ and Qiemo (Charchan)¹² were annexed by Shanshan (the region of Lop Nor, with the capital near modern Ruoqiang or Kharghalik).¹³ Qule (south of Keriya)¹⁴ and Pishan (modern Pishan or Guma)¹⁵ were conquered by Yutian (Khotan),¹⁶ which completely occupied them. Yuli,¹⁷ Danhuan,¹⁸ Guhu,¹⁹ and Wutanzili²⁰ (along the route north of the Tianshan mountains) were wiped out by Jushi (Turfan/Jimasa).²¹ Later these kingdoms were re-established.²²

During the *yongping* period [58-75 CE], the Northern Savages (i.e., the Northern Xiongnu)²³ forced several countries to help them plunder the commanderies and districts of Hexi.²⁴ The gates of the towns stayed shut in broad daylight.

In the sixteenth year [73 CE], Emperor Ming ordered his generals to lead an expedition north against the Xiongnu. They took the territory of Yiwulu (Hami)²⁵ and established a Commandant in Charge of Crops there to set up a State Farm.²⁶ Communications with the Western Regions followed these events. Yutian (Khotan) and the other kingdoms all sent sons to serve [the Emperor]. Relations with the Western Regions had been cut for sixty-five years [9-73 CE] before they were restored. A Protector General and *Mao* and *Ji* Commandants were established in the following year [74 CE].

When Emperor Ming died, Yanqi (Karashahr)²⁷ and Qiuci (Kucha)²⁸ attacked and killed the Protector General Chen Mu [75 CE] and all who were with him. The Xiongnu and Jushi (Turfan/Jimasa) besieged the *Mao* and *Ji* Commandants.

In the spring of the first *jianchu* year [76 CE], the Governor²⁹ of Jiuquan (one of the four commanderies of Hexi, centred near the modern town of the same name in the Gansu corridor), Duan Peng, soundly defeated Jushi (Turfan-Jimasa) near the town of Jiaohu (Yarkhoto, 20 *li* west of Turfan).³⁰

Emperor Zhang [76-88 CE], not wishing to exhaust and ruin the Middle Kingdom in the affairs of the Yi and

Di,³¹ sent for the *Mao* and *Ji* Commandants to return, and did not appoint another Protector General. In the second year [77 CE], he abolished the State Farms at Yiwu (Hami). After that, the Xiongnu sent soldiers to supervise Yiwu (Hami). At the same time Division Commander³² Ban Chao stayed at Yutian (Khotan), pacifying and reuniting all the kingdoms.

In the first *yongyuan* year [89 CE], during the reign of Emperor He, the General-in-Chief³³ Dou Xian had a great victory over the Xiongnu. In the second year [90 CE], (Dou) Xian sent Deputy Commandant³⁴ Yan Pan, at the head of more than 2,000 cavalry, on a surprise attack against Yiwu (Hami), which he conquered.

In the third year [91 CE], Ban Chao finally succeeded in pacifying the Western Regions. (Ban) Chao was then given the title of Protector General and stationed at Qiuci (Kucha). The *Mao* and *Ji* Commandants were re-established and, commanding five hundred soldiers, were stationed with the Nearer Jushi tribe within the walls of Gaochang (Karakhoja – 70 *li* or 29 km southeast of Turfan).³⁵ In addition, a *Mao* Troop Captain³⁶ was established and stationed with the Further Jushi (Jimasa). The Captain was 500 *li* (208 km) from the town [of Gaochang].³⁷

In the sixth year [94 CE], Ban Chao again attacked and defeated Yanqi (Karashahr). Following this, more than fifty kingdoms presented hostages, and submitted to the Empire. The kingdoms such as Tiaozhi (Characene and Susiana),³⁸ Anxi (Parthia),³⁹ and all the kingdoms as far as the shores of the sea more than 40,000 *li* (16,632 km) away, all offered tribute, using several successive interpreters to communicate.

In the ninth year [97 CE], Ban Chao sent his Subaltern⁴⁰ Gan Ying, who probed as far as the Western Sea, and then returned. Previous generations never reached these regions. The *Shanijing*⁴¹ gives no details on them. No doubt he prepared a report on their customs and investigated their precious and unusual [products]. After this, distant kingdoms [such as] Mengqi and Doule⁴² all came to submit, and sent envoys offering tribute.

Following the death of Emperor Xiaohe [in 105 CE], the Western Regions rebelled. In the first *yongchu* year [107 CE], of the reign of Emperor An, the Protectors General Ren Shang⁴³ and Duan Xi,⁴⁴ and others, were surrounded and attacked several times. The Imperial Government proclaimed that the post of Protector General should be abolished because these regions were remote, difficult, and dangerous to reach. From this time, therefore, the Western Regions were abandoned. The Northern Xiongnu immediately took control and united all the kingdoms again. They [the Northern Xiongnu] raided the frontier with their cooperation, for more than ten years. The Governor of Dunhuang,⁴⁵ Cao Zong, was concerned about their violence and killings.

Then, in the sixth *yuanchu* year [119 CE], the Emperor sent the Acting Aide⁴⁶ Suo Ban to take more than a thousand men with him to garrison and pacify Yiwu (Hami). After this, the king of Nearer Jushi (Turfan) and the king of Shanshan (Charkhlik) came to submit.

Several months later the Northern Xiongnu resumed control over the king of the tribe of Further Jushi. Together they attacked and killed (Suo) Ban and others. Then they attacked the king of the Nearer [Jushi], forcing him to flee. Shanshan (Charkhlik) sent an urgent request to Cao Zong for assistance. (Cao) Zong therefore requested that troops be sent to attack the Xiongnu, and avenge the outrage against Suo Ban. He wanted to keep forging ahead again in the Western Regions. However, the Dowager Empress Deng did not give her consent. She merely ordered the establishment of a Lieutenant Colonel at Dunhuang to protect the Western Regions. A camp of three hundred soldiers was re-established to keep them under control, and they then ended [their rampages].

Later, the Northern Savages (Northern Xiongnu) joined with the Jushi (Turfan/Jimasa) to invade Hexi (west of the Huang He). The Imperial Government was unable to prevent it. After discussions, it was decided to shut the Yumen and Yang frontier-passes⁴⁷ to prevent disasters.

In the second *yanguang* year [123 CE], the Governor of Dunhuang, Zhang Dang presented a report setting out three plans:

“I believe that the king of the Huyan [clan] of the Northern Savages (the Northern Xiongnu)

frequently circulates on inspection between Pulei (Barkol)⁴⁸ and Lake Qin.⁴⁹ He has imposed his rule on the Western Regions and united them to raid and pillage. We should assemble more than 2,000 officers and soldiers taken from Jiuquan (Suzhou) and its dependent kingdoms at the Gunlun frontier-pass.

They should immediately attack the Huyan [clan's] king, and cut him off from his base. Therefore, 5,000 soldiers should be sent from Shanshan (Charkhlik) to restrain the tribe of Further Jushi (Jimasa). This is the best plan.⁵⁰

If we cannot send an army, a Division Commander with five hundred officers and men supplied with farm draft cattle, grain, and provisions by the four commanderies [of Hexi], should occupy Liuzhong (Lukchun).⁵¹ This is the middle-ranking plan.

If even that can't be done, then the town of Jiaohe (Yarkhoto, 20 *li* west of Turfan) must be abandoned, and [the people of] Shanshan (Charkhlik), and other places, be gathered together and taken within the Barrier. This is the worst plan.”

The Imperial Government put this project under consideration. The Imperial Secretary⁵² Chen Zhong presented a memorial to the Emperor saying:

“Your subject has heard that, of all the ravages committed by the eight [groups of] southern barbarians, none are as bad as those of the Northern Savages (Northern Xiongnu).

When the Han came to power, Gaozi [206-195 BCE] was surrounded at Pingcheng, and put in great danger. Taizong [179-157 BCE] was forced to submit to the humiliation of presenting tribute.

Emperor Xiaowu [141-87 BCE] was indignant about this. He thought deeply to work out long-term strategies. He sent brave soldiers to navigate the (Yellow) River, and go right across the deserts, to destroy the Savages' (Xiongnu) court.

During this expedition, the Black Heads (Chinese) fell to the north of Langwang and treasure was destroyed in the ravines of Lu Mountain.⁵³ The treasury was exhausted. The shuttles and reeds of the looms were empty. Measures were taken to tax [at 2%] boats and wagons, and even the six types of domestic animals [horses, cattle, sheep, chickens, dogs, and pigs].

However, through these long-term strategies [the Emperor] managed to open the four commanderies west of the (Yellow) River which cut off the Southern Qiang,⁵⁴ and gathered in the thirty-six kingdoms [of the Western Regions], cutting off the right arm of the Xiongnu. The Chanyu (Khan)⁵⁵ had to scurry far away alone like a frightened rat.

Then, during the reigns of Emperors Xuan [73-49 BCE] and Yuan [48-33 BCE], (China) was successfully protected against the Fan vassals [Xiongnu],⁵⁶ the frontier-posts were not shut, and urgent war summons⁵⁷ no longer circulated.

Examination of these facts shows that the Rong and Di [peoples to the west and north of China]⁵⁸ can be subdued by force, but it is difficult to transform them.

The Western Regions have, in the course of time, come to make their submission. Humbly, they are looking to the east, knocking on our frontier gates until they shake. They do not like the Xiongnu and they admire and imitate the Han.

Now, the Northern Savages (Northern Xiongnu) have already defeated Jushi (Turfan-Jimasa). They will inevitably head south to attack Shanshan (Charkhlik). If we abandon the latter without help, all the kingdoms will follow them. If that happens, the wealth of the Savages (Xiongnu) will increase; their audacity and strength will be multiplied; their fearful reputation will cause the Southern Qiang to join them.

Then the four commanderies to the west of the (Yellow) River will definitely be endangered. Now, when the area west of the (Yellow) River is endangered; it will be very difficult to assist them. Expeditions will therefore increase a hundredfold and there will not be enough funds to pay for them.

In the discussions, only the extreme remoteness of the Western Regions and the numerous expenses involved have been considered. There has been no notice taken of the suggestions of earlier generations to follow their hearts and work hard.

In addition, the frontier regions are currently not very well prepared to guard and defend (themselves). In the interior commanderies military preparations have not been made. Dunhuang is isolated and in danger. It is a long way to send for help and return. If we do not help them, there will be nothing to console the officials and people of the interior.

In the external regions, we will be unable to make a show of our might before the many barbarian tribes. The Classics clearly forbid advocating the reduction of the Empire.

I, your humble servant, am of the opinion that we ought to install a Commandant at Dunhuang, as they did in former times, to reinforce the military colonies in the four commanderies [west of the Yellow River] and, by this means, to control all the kingdoms to the west, so as to smash the enemy's offensive over 10,000 *li*, and terrorize the Xiongnu.”

The Emperor accepted this advice. He then gave the title of Aide of the Western Regions to Ban Yong [in 123 CE] so that he could lead five hundred freed convicts west to garrison Liuzhong (Lukchun). (Ban) Yong then conquered and pacified Jushi (Turfan/Jimasa).

From the *jianwu* period [25-55 CE] to the *yanguang* period [122-125 CE], communications with the Western Regions were cut three times, and then restored.

In the second *yongjian* year [127 CE] of the reign of Emperor Shun, (Ban) Yong once again attacked and subdued Yanqi (Karashahr); and then Qiuci (Kucha), Shule (Kashgar),⁵⁹ Yutian (Khotan), Suoche (Yarkand),⁶⁰ and other kingdoms, seventeen altogether, came to submit. Following this, the Wusun (Issyk-kol and Semirechiye),⁶¹ and the countries of the Congling (Pamirs),⁶² put an end to their disruptions to communications to the west.

Because Yiwu (Hami) had since time immemorial provided fertile land bordering on the Western Regions which the Xiongnu were able to plunder for supplies, the Emperor, in the sixth year [131 CE], ordered the re-establishment of a State Farm like the one of the *yongyuan* period [89-105 CE], when a ‘Commander of Hami’⁶³ was installed.

Following the *yangjia* period [132-136 CE], the reputation of the Imperial Court gradually declined. The kingdoms [of the Western Regions] became arrogant and negligent. They oppressed and attacked each other.

In the second *yuanjia* year [152 CE], the Aide Wang Jing was put to death by Yutian (Khotan). In the first *yongxing* year [153 CE], the king of the tribe of Further Jushi (Jimasa) again launched a counterattack against the garrison of the military colony. Although their chiefs had submitted, they were not punished and made to reform, so they became negligent.

Ban Gu has recorded in detail the local conditions and customs of each kingdom in the former book [*Hanshu* or ‘*History of the Former Han Dynasty*’]. Now, the events of the *jianwu* period [25-56 CE] 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 CE].⁶⁴

Section 2 – Geographical Background

The kingdoms of the Western Regions subject to the Interior (China) stretch more than 6,000 *li* (2,495 km) from east to west, and more than 1,000 *li* (416 km) from south to north. At the extreme east are the Yumen and Yang frontier-passes. To the west, they stretch to the Congling (Pamirs). To the northeast, they border on the Xiongnu and Wusun (Issyk-kol and Semirechiye).

To the north and south are high mountains. In the centre is a river [the Tarim]. The Nanshan (the Qilianshan range)¹ runs east from Jincheng (Lanzhou fu), and joins the Han Nanshan (the Qinling shan range).²

As for the river [the Tarim], it has two sources: one of them flows east from the Congling (Pamirs). The other [the Khotan River] flows from the Yutian Nanshan [now known as the Karakax Shan]³ to the north. It joins with the river [the Yarkand] coming from the Congling (Pamirs), and they flow together to the east.⁴ They empty into Lake Puchang (Lop Nor).⁵ Lake Puchang (Lop Nor) is also called the ‘Salt Swamp,’ and is more than 300 *li* (125 km) from the Yumen frontier-pass.

Heading west from Dunhuang via the Yumen and Yang frontier-passes, you pass through Shanshan (the region of

Lop Nor).

[Alternatively, heading] north [from Dunhuang] leads to Yiwu (Hami) after more than 1,000 *li* (416 km). Leaving Yiwu (Hami), and going 1,200 *li* (499 km) north leads to the fortress of Gaochang (Turfan), in the territory of the Nearer Jushi.⁶ Departing from the fortress of Gaochang (Turfan) and going 500 *li* (208 km) north leads to the town of Jinman (near Guchen)⁷ of the Further [Jushi] Headquarters. These places are the doors of the Western Regions, which is why the *Mao* and *Ji* Commandants and their respective functionaries were garrisoned there.⁸

The region of Yiwu (Hami) is favourable for the five types of grain [rice, two kinds of millet, wheat and beans], mulberry trees, hemp, and grapes. Further north is Liuzhong (Lukchun). All these places are fertile. This is why the Han have constantly struggled with the Xiongnu over Jushi (Turfan/Jimasa) and Yiwu (Hami), for the control of the Western Regions.

How does one go from Shanshan (capital near modern Ruoqiang or Charklik) and across the Congling (Pamirs) to emerge in the kingdoms to the west? There are two routes:

[The one which runs] parallel to the northern slope of the southern mountains, from Hexi to Suoche (Yarkand) is the Southern Route.⁹ This Southern Route crosses west over the Congling (Pamirs), and emerges into the [territory of the] Da Yuezhi (Kushans),¹⁰ and Anxi (Parthia).

[The other route which runs] from the Royal Court of Nearer Jushi (Turfan) and, skirting the slopes of the northern mountains (the Tianshan), follows the river west to Shule (Kashgar), is the Northern Route.¹¹ This Northern Route crosses west over the Congling (Pamirs), and emerges into Dayuan (Ferghana),¹² Kangju (Tashkent plus the Chu, Talas, and middle Jaxartes basins),¹³ and Yancai (the Alans).¹⁴

Section 3 – The Kingdom of Jumi (modern Keriya or Yutian)

Leaving Yumen (frontier-pass), and passing through Shanshan (Charklik), Qiemo (Cherchen) and Jingjue (Niya), you reach Jumi (Keriya)¹ after more than 3,000 *li* (1,247 km).

The main centre of Jumi (the Keriya oasis) is Ningmi.² It is 4,900 *li* (2,037 km) from Liuzhong (Lukchun), the residence of the Aide [of the Western Regions], and 12,800 *li* (5,325 km) from Luoyang. It controls 2,173 households, 7,251 individuals, and 1,760 people able to bear arms.

During the reign of Emperor Shun, in the fourth *yongjian* year [129 CE], Fang Qian, the king of Yutian (Khotan), killed the king of Jumi (Keriya), Xing. He installed his son as the king of Jumi (Keriya). Then he sent an envoy to offer tribute to Han. However, the Governor of Dunhuang, Xu You, sent a report to the Throne to ask that he be punished. The Emperor pardoned the crime of [the king of] Yutian (Khotan), ordering him to hand back the kingdom of Jumi. Fang Qian refused.

In the first *yangjia* year [132 CE], Xu You sent the king of Shule (Kashgar), Chen Pan,³ who with 20,000 men, attacked and defeated Yutian (Khotan). He beheaded several hundred people, and released his soldiers to plunder freely. He replaced the king [of Jumi] by installing Cheng Guo from the family of [the previous king] Xing, and then he returned.

In the fourth *xiping* year [175 CE], during the reign of Emperor Ling, An Guo, the king of Yutian (Khotan), attacked Jumi, and defeated it soundly. He killed the king and many others. The *Maoji* Commandant and the Aide of the Western Regions, each sent soldiers to support Ding Xing, who was the son [of the king of Jumi] and had been a hostage with the Emperor, and place him on the throne. At that time, the population had been reduced to a thousand people. This kingdom borders on Yutian (Khotan), which is 390 *li* (162 km) to the west.

Section 4 – The Kingdom of Yutian (Khotan)

The main centre of the Kingdom of Yutian (Khotan)¹ is the town of Xicheng ('Western Town' = Yotkan).² It is 5,300 *li* (2,204 km) from the residence of the Aide [in Lukchun], and 11,700 *li* (4,865 km) from Luoyang. It controls 32,000 households, 83,000 individuals, and more than 30,000 men able to bear arms.

At the end of the *jianwu* period [25-56 CE], Xian, the powerful and prosperous king of Suoche (Yarkand), attacked and annexed Yutian (Khotan). He transferred Yu Lin, its king, to become the king of Ligui.³

During the *yongping* period [58-76 CE], in the reign of Emperor Ming, the usurper⁴ Xiu Mo, a Khotanese general, rebelled against Suoche (Yarkand), and made himself king of Yutian (Khotan). On the death of the usurper Xiu Mo, Guang De, son of his elder brother, assumed power and then [in 61 CE] defeated Suoche (Yarkand). His kingdom became very prosperous after this. From Jingjue (Niya) northwest, as far as Shule (Kashgar), thirteen kingdoms submitted to him. Meanwhile, the king of Shanshan (the Lop Nor region, capital Charklik) had also begun to prosper. From then on, these two kingdoms were the only major ones on the Southern Route in the whole region to the east of the Congling (Pamirs).

In the sixth *yongjian* year [131 CE], during the reign of Emperor Shun, Fang Qian, the king of Yutian (Khotan), sent one of his sons to serve and offer tribute at the Imperial Palace.

In the first *yuanjia* year [151 CE], the Chief Scribe Zhao Ping was in Yutian (Khotan) and died there from a carbuncle. (Zhao) Ping's son left to search for his body. On his way, he passed through Jumi (Keriya). Now, Cheng Guo, the king of Jumi (Keriya), had had disagreements for some time with Jian, the king of Yutian (Khotan). He said to (Zhao) Ping's son: "The king of Yutian (Khotan) ordered a Western (*hu*)⁵ doctor to put a poisonous drug in the wound, which caused [your father's] death." (Zhao) Ping's son believed this story. When he returned to the frontier region, he informed Ma Da, the Governor of Dunhuang.

The following year [152 CE], Wang Jing was named Chief Scribe in place [of the late Zhao Ping]. (Ma) Da ordered (Wang) Jing to make a thorough secret investigation into the affair. (Wang) Jing first passed through Jumi. Cheng Guo again said: "The people of Yutian (Khotan) want to have me as king. Now, you should kill Jian because of the crime he is guilty of. Yutian (Khotan) will certainly agree."

(Wang) Jing was eager to acquire merit and glory for himself and, besides, he believed what Cheng Guo had said to him. Before reaching Yutian (Khotan), he prepared to receive Jian, [then] invited him, and secretly made a plan. Someone had warned Jian of Wang Jing's plot. He didn't believe it and said: "I am innocent. Why would the Chief Scribe Wang (Jing) want to kill me?" The following morning Jian, with an escort of several tens of officials, came to pay a visit to (Wang) Jing. When this happened, Jian got up to serve the wine. (Wang) Jing then ordered his retinue in a menacing tone to seize him but, as none of the officers and soldiers wanted to kill Jian, all the officials suddenly fled.

At this point, Qin Mu, Cheng Guo's Registrar, following (Wang) Jing, drew his sword and said, "The main issue has already been decided. Why are we still hesitating?" He immediately advanced and beheaded Jian. Then the Khotanese Noble-General, Shu Po, and some others, joined up again with the soldiers and attacked (Wang) Jing who took Jian's head, climbed a tower, and proclaimed: "The Son of Heaven has assuredly sought out Jian and punished him!"

The Khotanese Commandant-Leader,⁶ Shu Po, then set the camp buildings on fire killing the officials and soldiers. He climbed the tower and beheaded (Wang) Jing and hung his head in the marketplace. Shu Po wanted to make himself king, but the people of the country killed him, and put An Guo, the son of Jian, on the throne.

When Ma Da was informed of what had happened, he wanted to put himself in charge of the troops of several commanderies, and head through the frontier regions to attack Yutian (Khotan), but Emperor Huan [147-167 CE] did not allow it. He recalled (Ma) Da and substituted Song Liang, the Governor of Dunhuang. When (Song) Liang arrived, he appealed to the people of Yutian (Khotan), asking them to behead Shu Po. By then, Shu Po had already been dead for more than a month, so they sent the head of a dead man to Dunhuang without saying what had really happened. (Song) Liang was informed of this trickery but, finally, he could not get the troops to go. Encouraged by

this, Yutian (Khotan) became arrogant.

Heading on from Yutian (Khotan), you pass through Pishan (modern Pishan or Guma) reaching Xiye (Karghalik), Zihe (Shahidulla), and Dere.

Section 5 – The Kingdom of Xiye (Karghalik)

The kingdom of Xiye (Karghalik)¹ is also called Piaosha (‘Drifting Sands’).² It is 14,400 *li* (5,988 km) from Luoyang. It has 2,500 households, more than 10,000 people, and 3,000 men able to bear arms. The region produces *baicao* (‘white grass’ – a species of aconite),³ which is poisonous. The inhabitants extract a drug from it that is used on arrow points and kills immediately. The *Hanshu* [*History of the Former Han Dynasty*] wrongly stated that Xiye (Karghalik) and Zihe (Shahidulla) was one kingdom.⁴ Each now has its own king.

Section 6 – The Kingdom of Zihe (Shahidulla)

The Kingdom of Zihe (Shahidulla)¹ is the Hujian Gorge,² 1,000 *li* (416 km) from Shule (Kashgar). It controls 350 households, 4,000 people, and 1,000 men able to bear arms.

Section 7 – The Kingdom of Dere

The Kingdom of Dere¹ controls more than 100 households, 670 individuals, and 350 men able to bear arms. On the east, it is 3,530 *li* (1,468 km) to the residence of the Chief Scribe [at Lukchun]. It is 12,150 *li* (5,052 km) from Luoyang. It borders on Zihe (Shahidulla), and their way of life is the same.

Section 8 – The Kingdom of Wuyishanli (Arachosia and Drangiana)

Southwest of Pishan (modern Pishan or Guma),¹ you pass through Wucha (Ghujak Bai),² cross over Xuandu (the ‘Hanging Passages’ = Hunza/Gilgit),³ cross Jibin (Kapisha-Peshawar)⁴ and, at the end of more than 60 days march, you arrive at the Kingdom of Wuyishanli (Arachosia and Drangiana).⁵ (Wuyishanli) extends for several thousand *li*. Now its name has changed to Paizhi [or Paite in some accounts].⁶ Going southwest more than a hundred days further on horseback, you reach Tiaozhi (Characene and Susiana):

Section 9 – The Kingdom of Tiaozhi (Characene and Susiana).

In the Kingdom of Tiaozhi (Characene and Susiana)¹ there is a town on the top of a hill that is more than 40 *li* (16.6 km) in circumference (Susa).² It borders on the Western Sea,³ and the seawater winds around it on the south, east, and north. Thus, access is blocked on three sides. It is only to the northwest that there is communication by road on firm ground.

This region is hot and humid. It produces lions, rhinoceroses, zebu cattle, peacocks, and giant birds [ostriches].⁴ The giant birds have eggs as big as water jars. If you turn north, and then towards the east, riding by horse for more than 60 days, you reach [the old capital of] Anxi (Parthia).⁵ Later on, (Anxi) conquered, and subjugated Tiaozhi (Characene and Susiana). They have, in fact, installed a Senior General there to supervise all the small towns.

Section 10 – The Kingdom of Anxi 安息 (the Parthian Empire)

The main centre of Anxi (Parthia)¹ is the town of Hedu (Hecatompylos)². It is 25,000 *li* (10,395 km) from Luoyang. On the north, it is bordered by Kangju (Tashkent plus the Chu, Talas, and middle Jaxartes basins),³ and on the south joins Wuyishanli (Kandahar). It is several thousand *li* across. There are several hundred small towns. The households, people, and men able to bear arms are extremely numerous. On its eastern frontier is the town of Mulu (Merv),⁴ which is also called Little Anxi, and is 20,000 *li* (8,316 km) from Luoyang.

In the first *zhanghe* year [87 CE], during the reign of Emperor Zhang, this kingdom sent an envoy to offer lions and *fuba* (Persian gazelle). The *fuba* looks like a female unicorn but it doesn't have a horn.⁵

In the ninth *yongyuan* year [97 CE], during the reign of Emperor He, the Protector General Ban Chao sent Gan Ying to Da Qin (the Roman Empire).⁶ He reached Tiaozi (Characene and Susiana) next to a large sea. He wanted to cross it, but the sailors of the western frontier of Anxi (Parthia) said to him:

“The ocean is huge. Those making the round trip can do it in three months if the winds are favourable. However, if you encounter winds that delay you, it can take two years. That is why all the men who go by sea take stores for three years. The vast ocean urges men to think of their country, and get homesick, and some of them die.”

When (Gan) Ying heard this, he gave up his plan.⁷

In the thirteenth year [101 CE], the king of Anxi (Parthia) named Manqu [= Manchihr I of Persis?]⁸ again offered lions, and some of the large birds of Tiaozi (Characene and Susiana), which people call ‘Anxi birds’ [ostriches].

From [the eastern frontier of] Anxi (Parthia), if you travel 3,400 *li* (1,414 km) west,⁹ you reach the Kingdom of Aman (Herat).¹⁰ Leaving Aman and travelling 3,600 *li* (1,497 km), you reach the Kingdom of Sibin (Susa).¹¹ Leaving Sibin (Susa) and travelling south you cross a river, then going southwest, you reach the Kingdom of Yuluo (Charax Spasinou) after 960 *li* (399 km).¹² This is the extreme western frontier of Anxi (Parthia). Leaving there, and heading south, you embark on the sea and then reach Da Qin (Roman territory). In these territories, there are many precious and marvellous things from Haixi (‘West of the Sea’ = Egypt).¹³

Section 11 – The Kingdom of Da Qin 大秦 (the Roman Empire)

The Kingdom of Da Qin (the Roman Empire)¹ is also called Lijian.² As it is found to the west of the sea, it is also called the Kingdom of Haixi (Egypt).³ Its territory extends for several thousands of *li*. It has more than four hundred walled towns. There are several tens of smaller dependent kingdoms. The walls of the towns are made of stone.

They have established postal relays at intervals, which are all plastered and whitewashed. There are pines and cypresses, as well as trees and plants of all kinds. The common people are farmers. They cultivate many grain crops and silkworm-mulberry trees.⁴ They shave their heads, and their clothes are embroidered. They have screened coaches (for the women) and small white-roofed one-horse carts.⁵ When carriages come and go, drums are beaten and flags and standards are raised.

The seat of government (Rome) is more than a hundred *li* (41.6 km) around. In this city are five palaces each ten *li* (4.2 km) from the other. Moreover, in the rooms of the palace the pillars and the tableware are really made of crystal. The king goes each day to one of the palaces to deal with business. After five days, he has visited all of them. A porter with a sack has the job of always following the royal carriage. When somebody wants to discuss something with the king, he throws a note in the sack. When the king arrives at the palace, he opens the bag, examines the contents, and judges if the plaintiff is right or wrong.

There is a government department of archives. [A group of] thirty-six leaders has been established to meet together to deliberate on affairs of state. Their kings are not permanent. They select and appoint the most worthy man. If there are unexpected calamities in the kingdom, such as frequent extraordinary winds or rains, he is

unceremoniously rejected and replaced. The one who has been dismissed quietly accepts his demotion, and is not angry.

The people of this country are all tall and honest. They resemble the people of the Middle Kingdom and that is why this kingdom is called Da Qin [literally, ‘Great China’].⁶

Section 12 – The Products of Da Qin (the Roman Empire)

This country produces plenty of gold, silver, and precious jewels, luminous jade,¹ ‘bright moon pearls,’² fighting cocks,³ rhinoceroses,⁴ coral,⁵ yellow amber,⁶ opaque glass,⁷ whitish chalcedony,⁸ red cinnabar,⁹ green gemstones,¹⁰ drawn gold-threaded and multi-coloured embroideries,¹¹ woven gold-threaded net,¹² delicate polychrome silks painted with gold,¹³ and asbestos cloth.¹⁴

They also have a fine cloth which some people say is made from the down of ‘water sheep,’ but which is made, in fact, from the cocoons of wild silkworms.¹⁵ They blend all sorts of fragrances, and by boiling the juice, make storax.¹⁶ [They have] all the precious and rare things that come from the various foreign kingdoms. They make gold and silver coins. Ten silver coins are worth one gold coin.¹⁷ They trade with Anxi (Parthia) and Tianzhu (Northwestern India) by sea. The profit margin is ten to one.

The people of this country are honest in business; they don’t have two prices. Grain and foodstuffs are always in good supply. The resources of the state are abundant. When envoys from a neighbouring kingdom arrive at their border, they use the courier stations to get to the royal capital, and when they arrive, they give them gold coins.

The king of this country always wanted to send envoys to the Han, but Anxi (Parthia), wishing to control the trade in multi-coloured Chinese silks, blocked the route to prevent [the Romans] getting through [to China].

In the ninth *yanxi* year [166 CE], during the reign of Emperor Huan, the king of Da Qin (the Roman Empire), Andun (Marcus Aurelius *Antoninus*), sent envoys from beyond the frontiers through Rinan (Commandery on the central Vietnamese coast),¹⁸ to offer elephant tusks, rhinoceros horn, and turtle shell. This was the very first time there was [direct] communication [between the two countries]. The tribute brought was neither precious nor rare, raising suspicion that the accounts [of the ‘envoys’] might be exaggerated.

It is said that to the west of this kingdom is Ruoshui (the ‘Weak River’) and Liusha (the ‘Shifting Sands’) which are close to the place where Xiwangmu (‘Spirit-Mother of the West’) lives, and which go almost as far as the place where the sun sets.¹⁹

The *Hanshu* says: “Leaving Tiaozi (Characene and Susiana), if you head west for more than two hundred days, you approach the place where the sun sets.” This does not agree with the books of today. [The reason is that] the Han envoys under the first [Han] dynasty all returned after reaching Wuyi (Arachosia and Drangiana),²⁰ and none of them went as far as Tiaozi (Characene and Susiana).

It is said, leaving Anxi (Parthia) by the land route, you circle through Haibei (‘North of the Sea’),²¹ and come into Haixi (Egypt), to reach Da Qin (Roman territory).²² The population there is dense. Each ten *li* (4.2 km) there is a postal stage, and each thirty *li* (12.5 km) a postal station.²³ Finally, there is no trouble with bandits, but there are many ferocious tigers and lions on the road that obstruct and kill travellers. If the caravans don’t have more than a hundred men carrying arms, they will be devoured.

Also, it is said that there is a raised bridge,²⁴ several hundred *li* long, which crosses over to Haibei (‘North of the Sea’). They [the vassal kingdoms of Da Qin] produce curious gems and so many other peculiar and bizarre things that I will not record what is reported.

Section 13 – The Kingdom of the Da Yuezhi 大月氏 (the Kushans)

The main centre of the Da Yuezhi (Kushan) kingdom¹ is the town of Lanshi (Bactra/Balkh).² To the west it borders Anxi (Parthia), which is 49 days march away. To the east, it is 6,537 *li* (2,718 km) from the seat of the Chief Scribe [in Lukchun], and 16,370 *li* (6,807 km) from Luoyang. There are 100,000 households, 400,000 individuals, and more than 100,000 men able to bear arms.

Formerly, the Yuezhi were defeated by the Xiongnu. They then moved to Daxia (Bactria)³ and divided up this kingdom between five *xihou* ('Allied Princes'),⁴ which were those of Xiumi (Western Wakhān and Zibak),⁵ Shuangmi (Shughnān),⁶ Guishuang (Badakhshān and the adjoining territories north of the Oxus),⁷ Xidun (the region of Balkh),⁸ and Dumi (the region of Termez).⁹

More than a hundred years later, the *xihou* ('Allied Prince') of Guishuang (Badakhshān and the adjoining territories north of the Oxus), named Qiujiu Que (Kujula Kadphises),¹⁰ attacked and exterminated the four other *xihou* ('Allied Princes'). He set himself up as king of a kingdom called Guishuang (Badakhshan).¹¹ He invaded Anxi (Parthia) and took the Gaofu (Kabul) region.¹² He also defeated the whole of the kingdoms of Puta (Parthuaia, 55 CE),¹³ and Jibin (Kapisha-Peshawar).¹⁴ Qiujiu Que (Kujula Kadphises) was more than eighty years old when he died.

His son, Yan Gaozhen (Vima Taktu),¹⁵ became king in his place. He returned and defeated Tianzhu (Northwestern India) and installed a General to supervise and lead it. The Yuezhi then became extremely rich. All the kingdoms call [their king] the Guishuang (Kushan) king, but the Han call them by their original name, Da Yuezhi.¹⁶

Section 14 – The Kingdom of Gaofu (Kabul)

The Kingdom of Gaofu (Kabul)¹ is southwest² of the Da Yuezhi (Kushans). It is also a large kingdom. Their way of life is similar to that of Tianzhu (Northwestern India), but they are weak and easy to subdue. They are excellent traders and are very wealthy. They have not always been ruled by the same masters. Whenever one of the three kingdoms of Tianzhu (Northwestern India), Jibin (Kapisha-Peshawar), or Anxi (Parthia) became powerful, they took control of it; when weakened, they lost it.³

Gaofu (Kabul) was never previously dependent on the Yuezhi. The *Hanshu* was wrong when it included it among the five *xihou* ('Allied Princes'). It was a dependency of Anxi (Parthia). It was only after the Yuezhi defeated Anxi (Parthia) that they took Gaofu.

Section 15 – The Kingdom of Tianzhu (Northwestern India)

The kingdom of Tianzhu (Northwestern) India is also called Juandu (India).¹ It is several thousand *li* southeast of the Yuezhi (Kushans).² Their way of life is similar to that of the Yuezhi (Kushans), but the country is low, humid, and hot. This kingdom is beside a great river [the Indus]. The people ride elephants into battle. They are weaker than the Yuezhi (Kushans). They practice the Buddhist Way, not to kill, or wage war.

From the Yuezhi (Kushan) and the kingdom of Gaofu (Kabul), and heading southwest, you reach the Western Sea.³ To the east, you reach the kingdom of Panqi (Vanga in Bengal),⁴ which is part of Juandu (India). Juandu (India) has several hundred other towns. A Chief is placed in each town.

There are scores of other kingdoms [in Juandu]. Each kingdom has its own king. Although the kingdoms differ slightly, they are all still called Juandu (India). Now they are all subject to the Yuezhi (Kushans). The Yuezhi (Kushans) killed their kings and installed Generals to govern them.

This region produces elephants, rhinoceroses, turtle shell, gold, silver, copper, iron, lead, and tin. To the west, it

communicates with Da Qin (the Roman Empire). Precious things from Da Qin can be found there, as well as fine cotton cloths,⁵ excellent wool carpets,⁶ perfumes of all sorts, sugar loaves,⁷ pepper, ginger, and black salt.⁸

During the reign of Emperor He [89-105 CE], they sent several envoys carrying tribute and offerings. Later, the Western Regions rebelled, and these relations were interrupted. Then, during the second and the fourth *yanxi* years in the reign of Emperor Huan [159 and 161 CE], and frequently since, foreigners have arrived at the frontiers of Rinan (Commandery south of Jiaozhi) to present offerings.

There is a current tradition that Emperor Ming dreamed that he saw a tall golden man the top of whose head was glowing. He questioned his group of advisors and one of them said: “In the West there is a god called Buddha. His body is sixteen *chi* high (3.7 metres or 12 feet),⁹ and is the colour of gold.”¹⁰ The Emperor, to discover the true doctrine,¹¹ sent an envoy to Tianzhu (Northwestern India) to inquire about the Buddha’s doctrine, after which paintings and statues [of the Buddha] appeared in the Middle Kingdom.

Then Ying, the king of Zhu [a dependent kingdom which he ruled 41-71 CE], began to believe in this path [c. 65 CE] and, because of this, the Middle Kingdom received it respectfully. Later on, Emperor Huan [147-167 CE] devoted himself to sacred things and often sacrificed to the Buddha and Laozi.¹² People gradually began to accept it [Buddhism] and, later, they became numerous.

Section 16 – The Kingdom of Dongli – The ‘Eastern Division’ (of the Kushan Empire)

The main centre of the kingdom of Dongli (‘Eastern Division’)¹ is the town of Shaqi (Śāketa).² It is more than 3,000 *li* (1,247 km) southeast of Tianzhu (Northwestern India). It is a big kingdom. Its products are similar to those of Tianzhu (Northwestern India). There are several dozen major towns whose rulers take the title of king. The Da Yuezhi attacked and subdued it. The men and women are all eight *chi* tall (about 1.85 metres or 6 feet), but are cowardly. They ride elephants and camels when travelling to neighbouring kingdoms. When invaded, they ride elephants to wage war.

Section 17 – The Kingdom of Liyi (Sogdiana)

The kingdom of Liyi (Sogdiana)¹ is a dependency of Kangju (Tashkent plus the Chu, Talas, and middle Jaxartes basins). It produces famous horses, cattle, sheep, grapes, and all sorts of fruit. The water and soil of this country are excellent, which is why its grape wine is so famous.

Section 18 – The Kingdom of Yan

The kingdom of Yan is to the north of Yancai (‘Vast Steppe’ – now ‘Alanliao’ – see Section 19 below) and is a dependency of Kangju (Tashkent plus the Chu, Talas, and middle Jaxartes basins). It produces small animal pelts, which it uses to pay its tribute to that country (Kangju).¹

Section 19 – The Kingdom of Alanliao (the Alans)

The Kingdom of Yancai (‘Vast Steppe’) has changed its name to the kingdom of Alanliao.¹ Its capital is the town of Di.² It is a dependency of Kangju (Tashkent plus the Chu, Talas, and middle Jaxartes basins). The climate is mild. Wax trees, pines, and ‘white grass’ (aconite)³ are plentiful. Their way of life and dress are the same as those of Kangju.

Section 20 – The Kingdom of Suoche (Yarkand)

Going west from the kingdom of Suoche (Yarkand),¹ and passing through the countries of Puli (Tashkurghan)² and Wulei (Sarhad),³ you arrive among the Da Yuezhi (Kushans). To the east, it is 10,950 *li* (4,553 km) from Luoyang.

The Chanyu (Khan) of the Xiongnu took advantage of the chaos in the Western Regions caused by Wang Mang [9-24 CE]. Only Yan, the king of Suoche (Yarkand), who was more powerful than the others, did not consent to being annexed. Previously, during the time of Emperor Yuan [48-33 BCE], he had excelled in the service of the Emperor in the capital. He admired and loved the Middle Kingdom and extended the rules of Chinese administration to his own country. He ordered all his sons to respectfully serve the Han dynasty throughout their lives, and to never turn their backs on it. Yan died in the fifth *tianfeng* year [18 CE]. He was awarded the posthumous title of 'Faithful and Martial King'. His son, Kang, succeeded him on the throne.

At the beginning of Emperor Guangwu's reign [25-57 CE], Kang led the neighbouring kingdoms to resist the Xiongnu. He escorted, and protected, more than a thousand people including the officers, the soldiers, the wife and children of the former Protector General.⁴ He sent a letter to Hexi (Chinese territory west of the Huang He) to inquire about the activities of the Middle Kingdom, and personally expressed his attachment to, and admiration for, the Han dynasty.

In the fifth *jianwu* year [29 CE] the General-in-Chief of Hexi, Dou Rong, following Imperial instructions, bestowed on Kang the titles of: "King of Chinese Suoche, Performer of Heroic Deeds Who Cherishes Virtue [and] Commandant-in-Chief of the Western Regions." The fifty-five kingdoms were all made dependencies [of China].

In the ninth year [33 CE] Kang died. He was awarded the posthumous title of "Fully Accomplished King." His younger brother, Xian, succeeded him on the throne. Xian attacked and conquered the kingdoms of Jumi (Keriya) and Xiye (Karghalik). He killed both their kings, and installed two sons of his elder brother, Kang, as the kings of Jumi and Xiye.

In the fourteenth year [38 CE], (Xian) together with An, the king of Shanshan (the Lop Nor region), sent envoys to the Imperial Palace to offer tribute. Following this, the Western Regions were (again) in communication with China. All the kingdoms to the east of the Congling (Pamirs) were dependent on Xian.

In the seventeenth year [41 CE], Xian again sent an envoy to present offerings [to the Emperor], and to ask that a Protector General be appointed. The Son of Heaven questioned the Grand Minister of Works Dou Rong about this. He was of the opinion that Xian, and his sons and brothers who had pledged to serve the Han were truly sincere. Therefore, [he suggested that] it would be appropriate to give him higher rank to maintain order and security.

The Emperor then, using the same envoy that Xian had sent to him, bestowed upon him the seal and ribbon of "Protector General of the Western Regions," and gave him chariots, standards, gold, brocades and embroideries.

Pei Zun, the Governor of Dunhuang,⁵ wrote saying that foreigners should not be allowed to employ such great authority and that these decrees would cause the kingdoms to despair. An Imperial decree then ordered that the seal and ribbons of "Protector General" be recovered, and replaced with the seal and ribbon of "Great Han General." Xian's envoy refused to make the exchange, and (Pei) Zun took them by force.

Consequently, Xian became resentful. Furthermore, he falsely named himself "Great Protector General," and sent letters to all the kingdoms. They all submitted to him, and bestowed the title of Chanyu⁶ on him. Xian gradually became arrogant making heavy demands for duties and taxes. Several times he attacked Qiuci (Kucha) and the other kingdoms. All the kingdoms were anxious and fearful.

In the winter of the twenty-first year [45 CE], eighteen kings, including the king of Nearer Jushi (Turfan), Shanshan (the Lop Nor region), Yanqi (Karashahr), and others, sent their sons to enter the service of the Emperor and offered treasure. As a result, they were granted audience when they circulated weeping, prostrating with their foreheads to the ground, in the hope of obtaining a Protector General. The Son of Heaven, considering that the Middle Kingdom was just beginning to return to peace and that the northern frontier regions were still unsettled, returned all the hostage princes with generous gifts.⁷

At the same time, Xian, infatuated with his military power, wanted to annex the Western Regions, and greatly increased his attacks. The kingdoms, informed that no Protector General would be sent, and that the hostage princes were all returning, were very worried and frightened. Therefore they sent a letter to the Governor of Dunhuang to ask him to detain their hostage sons with him, so that they could point this out to the [king of] Suoche (Yarkand), and tell him that their young hostage sons were detained because a Protector General was to be sent. Then he [the king of Yarkand] would stop his hostilities. Pei Zun sent an official report informing the Emperor [of this proposal], which he approved.

In the twenty-second year [46 CE] Xian, aware that no Protector General was coming, sent a letter to An, king of Shanshan (the Lop Nor region), ordering him to cut the route to the Han. An did not accept [this order], and killed the envoy. Xian was furious and sent soldiers to attack Shanshan. An gave battle but was defeated and fled into the mountains. Xian killed or captured more than a thousand men, and then withdrew.

That winter [46 CE], Xian returned and attacked Qiuci (Kucha), killed the king, and annexed the kingdom. The hostage princes of Shanshan, and then Yanqi (Karashahr) and the other kingdoms, were detained a long time at Dunhuang and became worried, so they fled and returned [to their kingdoms].

The king of Shanshan (the Lop Nor region) wrote a letter to the Emperor expressing his desire to return his son to enter the service of the Emperor, and again pleaded for a Protector General, saying that if a Protector General were not sent, he would be forced to obey the Xiongnu. The Son of Heaven replied:

“We are not able, at the moment, to send out envoys and Imperial troops so, in spite of their good wishes, each kingdom [should seek help], as they please, wherever they can, to the east, west, south, or north.”

Following this, Shanshan (Lop Nor region), and Jushi (Turfan/Jimasa) again submitted to the Xiongnu.

Meanwhile, Xian became increasingly violent. The king of Guisai,⁸ reckoning that his kingdom was far enough away, killed Xian’s envoy. Xian then attacked and killed him. He appointed a nobleman from that country, Si Jian, king of Guisai. Furthermore, Xian appointed his own son, Ze Luo, to be king of Qiuci (Kucha). Xian, taking account of the youth of Ze Luo, detached a part of the territory from Qiuci (Kucha) from which he made the kingdom of Wulei (Yengisar).⁹ He transferred Si Jian to the post of king of Wulei (Yengisar), and appointed another noble to the post of king of Guisai.

Several years later, the people of the kingdom of Qiuci (Kucha), killed Ze Luo and Si Jian, and sent envoys to the Xiongnu to ask them to appoint a king to replace them. The Xiongnu established a nobleman of Qiuci (Kucha), Shen Du, to be king of Qiuci (Kucha), making it dependent on the Xiongnu .

Because Dayuan (Ferghana) stopped paying tribute and taxes, Xian personally took command of several tens of thousands of men taken from several kingdoms, and attacked Dayuan (Ferghana). Yan Liu, the king of Dayuan (Ferghana), came before him to submit. Xian took advantage of this to take him back to his own kingdom. Then he transferred Qiao Saiti, the king of Jumi (Keriya), to the post of king of Dayuan (Ferghana). Then Kangju (Tashkent plus the Chu, Talas, and middle Jaxartes basins) attacked him there several times and Qiao Saiti fled home [to Keriya] more than a year later. Xian appointed him king of Jumi (Keriya) and sent Yan Liu back to Dayuan (Ferghana), ordering him to bring the customary tribute and offerings.

Xian also banished the king of Yutian (Khotan), Yu Lin, to be king of Ligui¹⁰ and set up his younger brother, Weishi,¹¹ as king of Khotan.

More than a year later Xian became suspicious that the kingdoms wanted to rebel against him. He summoned Weishi, and the kings of Jumi (Keriya), Gumo (Aksu),¹² and Zihe (Shahidulla), and killed them all. He didn’t set up any more kings, he just sent generals to maintain order and guard these kingdoms. Rong Wang, the son of Weishi, submitted to the Han, who named him: “Probationary Military Prince.”¹³ A general from Suoche (Yarkand), named Prince De, had been posted to Yutian (Khotan), and tyrannised the people there who became indignant.

In the third *yongping* year [60 CE], during the reign of Emperor Ming, a high official of this country, called Dumo, had left town when he saw a wild pig. He wanted to shoot it, but the pig said to him: “Do not shoot me, I will undertake to kill Prince De for you.” Following this, Dumo plotted with his brothers and killed Prince De. However, another high official, the usurper Xiu Mo, plotted, in his turn, with a Chinese man, Han Rong, and others, to kill Dumo and his brothers, then he named himself king of Yutian (Khotan). Together with men from the kingdom of Jumi (Keriya), he attacked and killed the Suoche (Yarkand) general who was at Pishan (modern Pishan or Guma). He then returned with the soldiers.

Then Xian sent his Heir Apparent, his Counselor-delegate,¹⁴ and generals, leading 20,000 soldiers from several kingdoms, to attack the usurper Xiu Mo. The usurper came to meet them and gave battle, defeating the soldiers of Suoche (Yarkand) who fled, and more than 10,000 of them were killed. Xian again fielded several tens of thousands of men from several kingdoms, and personally led them to attack the usurper Xiu Mo. The usurper was again victorious and beheaded more than half of the enemy. Xian escaped and fled, returning to his kingdom. The usurper Xiu Mo advanced and encircled Suoche (Yarkand), but he was hit and killed by an arrow, and his soldiers retreated to Yutian (Khotan).

Suo Yule, Counselor-delegate [of Khotan], appointed Guang De, the son of the usurper Xiu Mo’s elder brother, king. The Xiongnu, with Qiuci (Kucha) and the other kingdoms, attacked Suoche (Yarkand), but were unable to take it.

Later Guang De assumed responsibility for Suoche (Yarkand) in light of its exhaustion, and sent his younger brother, the Bulwark Marquis of State Ren,¹⁵ commanding an army to attack Xian. Xian sent a company of armoured troops as envoys to make peace with Guang De. Guang De’s father had previously been detained for several years in Suoche (Yarkand). Xian returned Guang De’s father and also gave his daughters in marriage to Guang De and his brother(s), who withdrew their soldiers and left.

In the following year [61 CE], Qie Yun, the Administrator¹⁶ of Suoche (Yarkand), and others, worried by Xian’s arrogance, plotted to get the town to submit to Yutian (Khotan). Guang De, the king of Yutian (Khotan), then led 30,000 men from several kingdoms to attack Suoche (Yarkand). Xian stayed in the town to defend it and sent a messenger to say to Guang De: “I have given you your father and a wife. Why are you attacking me?” Guang De replied to him: “O king, you are the father of my wife. It has been a long time since we met. I want us to meet, each of us escorted by only two men, outside the town wall to make an alliance.”

Xian consulted Qie Yun about this. Qie Yun said to him: “Guang De is your son-in-law, you should go out to see him to make a suitable alliance between the families.” Xian then rashly went out. Guang De advanced and captured him. In addition, Qie Yun and his colleagues let the soldiers of Yutian (Khotan) into the town to capture Xian’s wife and children. (Guang De) annexed his kingdom. He put Xian in chains, and took him home with him. More than a year later, he killed him.¹⁷

When the Xiongnu heard that Guang De had defeated Suoche (Yarkand), they sent five generals leading more than 30,000 men from fifteen kingdoms including Yanqi (Karashahr), Weili (Korla),¹⁸ and Qiuci (Kucha), to besiege Yutian (Khotan). Guang De asked to submit. He sent his Heir Apparent as a hostage and promised to give felt padding¹⁹ each year. In winter, the Xiongnu ordered soldiers to take Xian’s son, Bu Juzheng, who was a hostage with them, to appoint him king of Suoche (Yarkand). Guang De again attacked and killed [the new king], and put his own son, Qi Li, on the throne. It was then the third *yuanhe* year [86 CE] of Emperor Zhang.

While this was going on the Aide Ban Chao put the soldiers of several kingdoms on campaign to attack Suoche (Yarkand). He soundly defeated it. From this time on Suoche (Yarkand) was subject to the Han. These things have already been described in the biography of Ban Chao. Leaving Suoche (Yarkand) towards the northeast [should read ‘northwest’] you reach Shule (Kashgar).

Section 21 – The Kingdom of Shule (Kashgar)

The Kingdom of Shule (Kashgar)¹ is 5,000 *li* (2,079 km)² from the residence of the Aide (Lukchun), and 10,300 *li* (4,283 km) from Luoyang. It controls 21,000 households, and has more than 30,000 men able to bear arms.

In the sixteenth *yongping* year of Emperor Ming [73 CE], Jian, the king of Qiuci (Kucha), attacked and killed Cheng, the king of Shule (Kashgar). Then he appointed the Qiuci (Kucha) Marquis of the Left, Dou Ti, king of Shule (Kashgar).

In winter [73 CE], the Han sent the Division Commander Ban Chao who arrested Dou Ti, and tied him up. He appointed Zhong, the son of the elder brother of Cheng, to be king of Shule (Kashgar). Zhong later rebelled. (Ban) Chao attacked and beheaded him. These things have already been described in the biography of (Ban) Chao.

During the *yuanchu* period [114-120 CE] in the reign of Emperor An, An Guo, the king of Shule (Kashgar), exiled his maternal uncle Chen Pan to the Yuezhi (Kushans) for some offence. The king of the Yuezhi became very fond of him.³ Later, An Guo died without leaving a son. His mother directed the government of the kingdom. She agreed with the people of the country to put Yi Fu (literally, 'Posthumous Child'), who was the son of a younger brother of Chen Pan, and born of the same mother as him, on the throne as king of Shule (Kashgar). Chen Pan heard of this and appealed to the Yuezhi (Kushan) king, saying:

“An Guo had no son. The men of his mother’s family are young and weak. I am Yi Fu’s paternal uncle; it is I who should be king.”

The Yuezhi (Kushans) then sent soldiers to escort him back to Shule (Kashgar). The people had previously respected and been fond of Chen Pan. Besides, they dreaded the Yuezhi (Kushans). They immediately took the seal and ribbon from Yi Fu and went to Chen Pan, and made him king. Yi Fu was given the title of Marquis of the town of Pangao [90 *li* or 37 km from Shule].⁴

Then Suoche (Yarkand) continued to resist (Khotan), and put themselves under Shule (Kashgar). Shule (Kashgar) thus became very powerful and hostile to Qiuci (Kucha) and Yutian (Khotan), even attacking these kingdoms.

In the second *yongjian* year [127 CE], during Emperor Shun’s reign, Chen Pan sent an envoy to respectfully present offerings. The Emperor bestowed on Chen Pan the title of Great Commandant-in-Chief for the Han.⁵ Chen Xun, who was the son of his elder brother, was appointed Probationary Commander of the Kingdom.⁶

In the fifth year [130 CE], Chen Pan sent his son to serve the Emperor and, along with envoys from Dayuan (Ferghana) and Suoche (Yarkand), brought tribute and offerings. In the second *yangjia* year [133 CE], Chen Pan again made offerings (including) a lion and zebu cattle.

Then, during Emperor Ling’s reign, in the first *jianning* year [168 CE], the king of Shule (Kashgar) and Commandant-in-Chief for the Han (Chen Pan), was shot while hunting by the youngest of his paternal uncles, He De. He De named himself king.

In the third year [170 CE], Meng Tuo, the Regional Inspector⁷ of Liangzhou, sent the Retainer⁸ Ren She, commanding five hundred soldiers from Dunhuang, with the *Maoji* Commander⁹ Cao Kuan, and Aide of the Western Regions,¹⁰ Zhang Yen, and with troops from Yanqi (Karashahr), Qiuci (Kucha), and the Nearer and Further Tribes of Jushi (Turfan and Jimasa), altogether numbering more than 30,000, to punish Shule (Kashgar). They attacked the town of Zhenzhong but, having stayed for more than forty days without being able to subdue it, they withdrew.¹¹ Following this, the kings of Shule (Kashgar) killed one another repeatedly while the Imperial Government was unable to prevent it.

Northeast [from Shule] you pass through Weitou (Akqi),¹² Wensu (Wushi or Uch Turfan),¹³ Gumo (Aksu), Qiuci (Kucha), and arrive at Yanqi (Karashahr).

Section 22 – The Kingdom of Yanqi (Karashahr)

The king of the Kingdom of Yanqi (Karashahr)¹ lives in the town of Nanhe ('South River'),² which is 800 *li* (333

km)³ from the residence of the Aide (Lukchun), and is 8,200 *li* (3,410 km) east of Luoyang. It has 15,000 households, 52,000 individuals, and more than 20,000 men able to bear arms. It has high mountains on all four sides. There are hazardous passes on the route to Qiuci (Kucha) that are easy to defend. The water of a lake winds between the four mountains, and surrounds the town for more than 30 *li* (12.5 km).⁴

At the end of the *yongping* period [58-75 CE], Yanqi (Karashahr) and Qiuci (Kucha) attacked, and killed the Protector General Chen Mu and Vice Commandant⁵ Guo Xun, and more than 2,000 officers and soldiers.

In the sixth *yongyuan* year [94 CE] the Protector General Ban Chao put the soldiers of the various kingdoms on campaign to punish the kingdoms of Yanqi (Karashahr), Weixu (Hoxud),⁶ Weili (Korla),⁷ and Shanguo (in the western Kuruk mountains).⁸ He then sent the heads of the two kings of Yanqi (Karashahr) and Weili (Korla) to the capital where they were hung in front of the residences of the Man and Yi princes in the capital. (Ban) Chao then appointed Yuan Meng, who was the Yanqi (Karashahr) Marquis of the Left, king (of Kashgar). The kings of Weili (Korla), Weixu (Hoxud), and Shanguo (in the western Kuruk mountains) were all replaced. Then, during the reign of Emperor An [106-125 CE], the Western Regions rebelled.

During the *yanguang* period [122-126 CE] (Ban) Yong, (Ban) Chao's son, was appointed Chief Scribe of the Western Regions.⁹ He punished and pacified the various kingdoms once again. [Only] Yuan Meng, and [the kings of] Weili (Korla) and Weixu (Hoxud) refused to submit. In the second *yongjian* year [127 CE], (Ban) Yong, with Zhang Lang, the Governor of Dunhuang, attacked and defeated them. Yuan Meng sent his son then to the palace with offerings.

Section 23 – The Kingdom of Pulei (transported from Barkol)

The Kingdom of Pulei is west of the Tianshan Mountains,¹ in the Shuyu ('Scattered Elms') Valley. On the southeast, it is 1,290 *li* (536 km) from the residence of the Aide [in Lukchun].² It is 10,490 *li* (4,362 km) from Luoyang. It has more than 800 households, more than 2,000 individuals, and there are more than 700 men able to bear arms. The people of this country live in tents. They tend to move about in search of water and pasture and cultivate some fields. They have cattle, horses, camels, sheep, and other domestic animals. They know how to make bows and arrows. This country produces good horses.

Pulei was originally a large kingdom [near Lake Barkol] but when the Western Regions were subject to the Xiongnu, the king of Pulei offended the Chanyu. The Chanyu was angry and had more than 6,000 people from Pulei deported to a place called the Awu region of the right [or western] section of the Xiongnu. That is why this kingdom was called the kingdom of Awu. To the south it is more than 90 days ride by horse to the tribe of Further Jushi (Jimasa).³ It is said that [some of] the poor, miserable people fled into the mountain valleys where they settled and established a kingdom [here at Pulei].

Section 24 – The Kingdom of Yizhi (Barkol).

The Kingdom of Yizhi ('Transplanted Branch')¹ is in the Pulei (Lake Barkol) region.² It has more than 1,000 households, more than 3,000 individuals, and more than 1,000 men able to bear arms. These people are brave and hardy in combat. Robbery and pillage are their normal occupations. They all have dishevelled hair. They follow their flocks in search of water and pasture. They know nothing of agriculture. Their products are the same as those of Pulei (Lake Barkol region).

Section 25 – The Kingdom of Eastern Qiemi

To the east of the Kingdom of Eastern Qiemi, it is 800 *li* (333 km) to the residence of the Aide (Lukchun).¹ It is 9,250 *li* (3,846 km) from Luoyang. There are more than 3,000 households, more than 5,000 individuals, and more than 2,000 men able to bear arms. The people live in tents. They go in search of water and pasture. They farm a bit.

The produce is the same as Pulei. They are nomads.

Section 26 – The Kingdom of Nearer [i.e. Southern] Jushi (Turfan)

The king of Nearer Jushi (Turfan)¹ lives in the town of Jiaohe (Yarkhoto, 20 *li* west of Turfan).² A river divides into two and surrounds the town, which is why it is called Jiaohe (‘River Junction’). It is 80 *li* (33 km) from Liuzhong (Lukchun), the residence of the Chief Scribe. To the east it is 9,120 *li* (3,792 km) to Luoyang. He [the king] controls more than 1,500 households, more than 4,000 individuals, and 2,000 men able to bear arms.

Section 27 – The Kingdom of Further [i.e. Northern] Jushi (Jimasa)

The Further [Jushi] King lives in the Wutu Valley,¹ which is 500 *li* (208 km) from the seat of the Aide [in Lukchun], and 9,620 *li* (4,000 km) from Luoyang. He controls more than 4,000 households, more than 15,000 individuals, and more than 3,000 men able to bear arms.

The Nearer and Further Tribes (Turfan and Jimasa), with Eastern Qiemi, Beilu, Pulei, and Yizhi (‘Transplanted Branch’) make up the ‘Six Kingdoms of Jushi’.² They are bordered by the Xiongnu to the north. The Nearer Tribe (Turfan) communicates to the west with Yanqi (Karashahr) via the Northern Route. The Further Tribe (Jimasa) [also] communicates to the west with the Wusun (Issyk-kol and Semirechiye).³

In the twenty-first *jianwu* year [45 CE], [the king of Further Jushi] with [the kings of] Shanshan (Lop Nor region), and Yanqi (Karashahr), sent their sons to enter the service of the Emperor. Emperor Guangwu sent them back, and then [these kings] submitted to and joined the Xiongnu.

In the sixteenth *yongbing* year [73 CE] of Emperor Ming, the Han took Yiwu (Hami) so they could communicate with the Western Regions.

Jushi (Turfan/Jimasa) then began to be dependant on the Empire again but the Xiongnu sent soldiers to attack it, and it renewed its submission to the Northern Savages (Northern Xiongnu).

In the second *yongyuan* year of Emperor He [90 CE], the General-in-Chief, Dou Xian, conquered the Northern Xiongnu. Jushi (Turfan/Jimasa) trembled in terror. Both the Nearer and the Further kings sent one of their sons with tribute to enter into the service of the Emperor. Seals and ribbons, gold, and lengths of silk were bestowed on these two kings.

In the eighth year [96 CE], the *Maoji* Commandant,⁴ Suo Jun [or Suo Yun], was about to depose Zhuo Di, who was king of the Further Tribe, and put Xi Zhi, the ‘Conqueror of the Savages Marquis,’ on the throne. Zhuo Di was angry that the Nearer King had betrayed him, so he retaliated by taking the offensive against Wei Beida, king of the Nearer Tribe. He captured his wife and son(s).

The following year [97 CE], the Han ordered the Aide-Commander,⁵ Wang Lin, to put the soldiers of the six commanderies subject to Liangzhou on campaign, plus more than 20,000 Qiang and Hu to search for Zhuo Di. They killed more than a thousand Savages (Xiongnu). Zhuo Di sought refuge on the territory of the Northern Xiongnu, but the Han army followed, attacked, and beheaded him. Nong Qi, the younger brother of Zhuo Di was appointed king.

In the first *yongning* year [120 CE], Jun Jiu, the king of the Further Tribe, and his mother, Sha Ma, rebelled. They killed the Regional Commander⁶ who arrived to handle matters for Dunhuang. In the fourth *yenguang* year [125 CE], during Emperor An’s reign, the Aide Ban Yong, attacked Jun Jiu, defeated him soundly, and beheaded him.

In the first *yongjian* year [126 CE], during Emperor Shun’s reign, (Ban) Yong led the sons of Nong Qi, king of the Further Tribe, Jia Tenu, Ba Hua, and others on campaign with some elite troops to attack the king of the Huyan [clan] of the Northern Savages (Northern Xiongnu), and defeated him. (Ban) Yong installed Jia Tenu as the king of the Further Tribe. Ba Hua was named ‘Marquis of the Further Tribe Allied to the Han.’

In summer of the third *yangjia* year [134 CE], the Commander of the Further Tribe of Jushi (Jimasa) led Jia Tenu and 1,500 men to launch an attack against the Northern Xiongnu in the Changwulu Valley. He destroyed their dwellings and camps and beheaded several hundred [men]. He captured the mother and aunt [wife of his youngest paternal uncle] of the Chanyu and a hundred other women. He took more than 100,000 oxen and sheep, more than a thousand carts, and a huge number of arms and other things.

In spring of the fourth year [135 CE], the king of the Huyan [clan] of the Northern Xiongnu led troops to invade [the territory of] the Further Tribe (Jimasa). Because the Six Kingdoms of Jushi bordered on the Northern Savages (Northern Xiongnu), and protected the Western Regions, the Emperor ordered the Governor of Dunhuang to send out troops from all the kingdoms as well as the Captain of the Yumen frontier-pass, and the Commander of Yiwu (Hami), altogether 6,300 cavalymen, in a surprise attack on the Northern Savages near Leshan ('Le Mountain'). The Chinese army was not successful. That autumn, the king of the Huyan [clan] again led 2,000 men to attack the Further Tribe (Jimasa) and defeated them.⁷

In the first *yuanjia* year [151 CE], the king of the Huyan [clan] led more than 3,000 cavalymen to invade Yiwu (Hami). Mao Kai, the Commander of Yiwu (Hami), sent five hundred officers and soldiers to the east of Lake Pulei (Lake Barkol). They fought the king of the Huyan [clan], but were all killed there. Following this, the Huyan king attacked the garrison town of Yiwu (Hami).

In the summer, Commander Da, Governor of Dunhuang, was sent at the head of more than 4,000 officers and troops recruited from Jiuquan (Suzhou), Zhangye (Ganzhou), and the vassal kingdoms, to go to the aid of (Yiwu). He left the frontier regions and arrived at Lake Pulei (Lake Barkol), but the Huyan king, warned of his coming, had already retreated. The Chinese army could not attack him and returned.

In the first *yongxing* year [153 CE], Aluoduo, king of the Tribe of Further Jushi, and Yan Hao, Captain of the *Mao* Troop, had a disagreement. The king became angry and rebelled. He besieged and attacked the State Farm at the town of Qiegu, killing and wounding [some of] the officers and men. Tan Zhe, the Captain of the Further Tribe, led the rest of the people [of the Further Tribe who had stayed behind] to rebel against Aluoduo, and proceed to the Chinese officials to submit. Aluoduo hurriedly took his mother, wife, and children away with him and, with more than a hundred cavalymen, fled to the Northern Xiongnu. Song Liang, the Governor of Dunhuang, installed Bei Jun, the son of the former king of the Further Tribe (of Jushi), Jun Jiu, who had been a hostage at the Chinese Court, as king of the Further Tribe.

Later, Aluoduo returned from among the Xiongnu and struggled with Bei Jun for control of his kingdom. Quite a few of the people supported him. The *Mao* Commander Yan Xiang was worried that he would attract the Northern Savages (Northern Xiongnu) causing disturbances in the Western Regions. He, therefore, informed him that he would authorize him to be king again. Aluoduo therefore went to (Yan) Xiang to submit. He was given the seal and ribbon that had been bestowed on, and then taken away from, Bei Jun, and Aluoduo was made king.

As before, Bei Jun was taken to Dunhuang. Three hundred tents of people from the Further Tribe guarding the frontiers were put under his control to provide revenue for him, as is done in China with households.

Section 28 – Commentary

The Commentary [by Fan Ye, 398-445] says:

“The natural conditions and customs of the Western Regions were not known in ancient times. In the Han era, Zhang Qian conveyed (our) goodwill to remote regions – through his astuteness. Ban Chao deployed all his energy and earned a Marquisate – through his ambition. In the end, they were able to accomplish glorious deeds in the far West, restraining and subduing foreign kingdoms.

The reputation of our soldiers made them submit. Rich gifts were sent to win them over to us. None of them neglected to present the marvellous products of their countries in homage, and with sincere affection. With bared heads, they walked towards the east on their [knees and] elbows before the Imperial Court and the Son of Heaven. Therefore *mao* and *ji* officials were established to share responsibility for these affairs. The Protector General and an army corps were put in control to exercise authority.

Those who yielded early were rewarded with baskets of gold, and button seals in the form of tortoises and seal ribbons were granted to pacify them. Those who submitted late had their heads hung at the Northern Gate [of the Capital, Luoyang], which was rubbed with their blood.

State Farms were created in the fertile regions. Relay stations were established in strategic positions allowing orders to travel quickly between the main postal stations at all seasons. Hu ('Western') merchants coming to trade, and travellers, arrived at the frontier regions every day.

Later [in 97 CE], Gan Ying travelled to Tiaozhi (Characene and Susiana), crossing Anxi (Parthia), to the Western Sea (the Persian Gulf), observing Da Qin (the Roman Empire) from a distance. Beyond the Yumen and Yang frontier-passes, for more than 40,000 *li* (16,632 km), there is no country he did not cross.

As regards their territories, customs, temperaments, their excellent and vast wisdom; the sorts of things they produce; the obstructive narrows of the mountain torrents and rivers as far as their sources,¹ the differences of climate and temperature, the routes across the mountains by hanging footpaths and by rope [bridges] across the valleys, and across the sandy desert; the suffering from fevers, rheumatic aches, plagues, demons, and disasters as far as the frontiers [of China] – I have tried to record the true situation by examining authentic sources.

Regarding the Buddhist Way of transforming the soul – it arose in Juandu (India). Nevertheless, the two Han monographs [the *Hanshu* and *Hou Hanshu*] say nothing about it.

Zhang Qian noted only that: 'this country is hot and humid. The people ride elephants into battle.'² Although Ban Yong explained that they revere the Buddha, and neither kill nor fight, he has recorded nothing about the excellent texts, virtuous Law, and meritorious teachings and guidance.³

As for myself, here is what I have heard: This kingdom is even more flourishing than China. The seasons are in harmony.⁴ Saintly beings⁵ descend and congregate there. Great Worthies⁶ arise there. Strange and extraordinary marvels occur such that human reason is suspended.⁷ By examining and exposing the emotions, one can reach beyond the highest heavens.

Meanwhile, (Zhang) Qian and (Ban) Yong heard nothing of this. It is unfortunate that the Way was previously closed, only to be opened towards the end of the period, but that is how it was. Why make inflated and false claims?

It was from the time of [Liu] Ying, [the king] of Zhu, [c. 65 CE] during the Han, that fasting rather than killing and sacrificing animals became popular for the first time; and then Emperor Huan [147-167 CE] prepared a canopy to adorn [a statue of the Buddha]. Subtle concepts were not examined – only the folk deities.⁸

To examine and comment upon [the Buddhist texts] it is necessary to purify the heart and cultivate 'emptiness'⁹ while dismissing the [various] sects. The Taoist books follow the same line.¹⁰ Moreover, to cherish unselfish love and loathe killing, to purify oneself and honour virtue is the way the Superior Man demonstrates morality and really conveys the Dharma to others.

[However, the Buddhists] have become boastful without any foundation, and speak in endless monstrous parables. Even Zou Yan's discussions on heaven, and the dissertations of Zhuang Zhou on the tentacles of a snail, are not a ten-thousandth part [of the Buddhist extravagances].¹¹ Also, [the Buddhist doctrines on] the origin and extinction of souls, and the relationship between cause and effect are obscure and difficult to understand, which is why many people doubt them. It is really not the way to guide the common people. To reach everybody, one should take that which all the doctrines agree on, and thus deal with people's doubts. Then the Great Dao¹² will certainly be transmitted."

Section 29 – Epilogue¹

The Western Hu are far away.
They live in an outer zone.

Their countries' products are beautiful and precious,
But their character is debauched and frivolous.

They do not follow the rites of China.
Han has the canonical books.

They do not obey the Way of the Gods.²

How pitiful!
How obstinate!