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Armenia in Chinese Sources

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Abstract

This paper discusses several toponyms in Chinese sources, which may possibly be identified with Armenia. First, *Aman country*, which can be found in the “History of the Later Han” (compiled 3rd–5th centuries) and in the “Account of the Wei Dynasty” (compiled between 239 and 265), is discussed, and it is suggested that there are reasons for an identification, though doubts remain. Armenia was well known by the Mongols and the “Korean Worldmap”, which originates in Chinese geographical scholarship during the Mongol period and depicts possibly even Greater and Lesser Armenia. Another source of that period that mentions Armenia is “Muslim Prescriptions” (*Huihui yaofang*), which names Armenian *materia medica* known in China. Finally, two other Chinese geographical texts of the 16th and early 18th century that deal with Armenia and the Caucasus region are discussed. This paper shows that Armenia was described in Chinese texts since at least the Mongol period, and that China had a profound knowledge of the geographical situation in Western Asia.

Keywords

China, Armenia, Chinese Geography, Chinese Cartography, West Asia, Relations China and Armenia.

China had already been mentioned in the famous Armenian history of Moses of Khorene (Movsēs Xorenac’i), where some Armenian families are even attributed a Chinese descent; from these and other early references—even if we neglect “Western” sources—it may be safely concluded that a fairly regular communication existed between China and Armenia since at least the beginning of the Common Era.¹ In later times,

¹ Henry Yule (trans., ed.), Henri Cordier (rev.), *Cathay and the Way Thither. Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1914, 1915), I: 92-5;

Armenians figure prominently in the interchange between the two sides of the continent. The itinerary of Het'um I, king of Lesser Armenia, to Möngke Khaqan (1254–1255) deserves special mention.² As Armenian merchants contributed to a church in Quanzhou 泉州 during the same period, thus it can be presumed that an intensive exchange existed also in the Mongol period; merchants of Armenia must have been a common feature on Asian roads during that time.³ Some centuries later, the companion of one of the last travellers on the Silk Road, Benedict of Goës, was the Armenian Isaac, citizen of Lahore. He accompanied Benedict through large parts of Asia, exploring the interrelation between Khitāy⁴ and Chīn, which were still considered to be possibly two separate kingdoms, and related the report of their journey to Benedict's Jesuit brethren after the priest had died in the border town of Suzhou 蘇州.⁵ Furthermore, Armenian merchants were also active in colonial centres as, for example, Macao.⁶

The long-lasting knowledge of Armenians on China and the relations between the two countries or cultures thus ascertained, we may ask what the Chinese knew about Armenia. In the course of this preliminary study, we will first scrutinise the early Chinese sources, which might mention Armenia, and then discuss some later ones, especially the so-called “Korean World-Map”, the *Honil gangni yeokdae gukdo* 混一疆理歷代國都之圖 (“Map of the Territories of the One World and the Capitals of the Countries in Successive Ages”).⁷ The Chinese sources, which could possibly mention Armenia—especially from the later periods—have not been exhaustingly reappraised by any means, therefore, only a selection will be given. The first Chinese texts that deal with foreign countries

Zhang Xinglang 張星娘 (ed.), Zhu Jieqin 朱杰勤 (rev.), *Zhong-Xi jiaotong shiliao hubian* 中西交通史料彙編 (Collection of Historical Material on Chinese-Western Relations), 4 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), II: 959ff.

² Hohn Andrew Boyle, “The Journey of Het'um I, King of Little Armenia, to the Court of the Great Khan Möngke”, *Central Asiatic Journal* 9 (1964): 175-189; Emil Bretschneider, *Mediaeval Researches from Eastern Asiatic Sources*, 2 vols., London, 1910, I: 164-172.

³ Cf. Liu Yingsheng 劉迎勝, “Qianlong nianjian Aomen de Yameiniya shangren” 乾隆年間澳門的亞美尼亞商人 (Armenian Merchants in Macao in the Qianlong Period [1735–96]), *Wenhua zazhi* 文化雜誌, *Revista de cultura* 2002: 39-42.

⁴ For a detailed analysis of this term, see Paul Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, Paris, 1959, I: 216-229, s.v. Catai.

⁵ Today Jiuquan 酒泉 in Gansu 甘肅 province (Yule, op. cit., IV: 169ff).

⁶ Liu Yingsheng, *ibid.*

⁷ For an introduction to this map, see Joseph Needham et al., *Science and Civilisation in China*, Cambridge, 1954, 1971, III: 551-6, and IV/ 3: 499-501, plate CDXII.

have, however, a limited spectrum, and it is thus rather improbable that allusions to Armenia can be found in early texts other than those mentioned below.

The importance of Chinese sources for the early historical geography of Asia will not be discussed here; historical texts starting with the *Shiji* ("Records of the Historian" 史記, compiled by Sima Qian 司馬遷 145–186 BCE) present a wealth of specific material on the so-called "Western Regions" (Xiyu 西域), which basically extend to the most westerly part of Asia and even Europe.⁸ The term "Western Regions" represented the Chinese perception and perspective on the vast area stretching from China to the west; they must thus have included Armenia.⁹ According to the Chinese dictionary on the Western Regions' toponyms *Xiyu diming* 西域地名 under the entry "Armenia" the following three mentions can be found:¹⁰

1) History of the Later Han (*Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, compiled by Fan Ye 范曄 who died 445, covering the period 25–220 CE): Aman country 阿蠻國;

2) Encyclopaedic History of Institutions (*Tongdian* 通典, compiled 801, covered the period until 755): Yamei country 亞梅國;

3) New History of the Tang (*Xin Tangshu* 新唐書, compiled 1043–60, covered the period 618–906): Amo country 阿沒國 / 阿昧. The last entry, however, probably refers to Āmol in Tabaristān, because the whole paragraph deals with that region.¹¹

⁸ Mallory and Mair give a good example how Chinese historiography can be integrated in a broader context (see J. P. Mallory, Victor H. Mair, *The Tarim Mummies. Ancient China and the Mystery of the Earliest Peoples from the West*, London, 2000: 53–63). Friedrich Hirth was one of the first Western scholars who made use of these sources when looking for Rome in Chinese sources (see his *China and the Roman Orient: Researches into their Ancient and Medieval Relations as Represented in Old Chinese Records*, Shanghai and Hong Kong, 1885).

⁹ For a concise explanation of the term "Western Regions", see Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual, Revised and Enlarged*, Cambridge (Mass.): 734.

¹⁰ Feng Chengjun 馮承鈞 (ed.), *Xiyu diming* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982): 6.

¹¹ Edouard Chavannes' identification of Amo as Āmol is also cited in the *Xiyu diming*; the respective paragraph reads in his translation: "Le K'i-lan 岐蘭 (Gilan) est, vers le Sud-Est, à vingt jours de marche du A-mo 阿沒 (Āmol) qu'on appelle aussi A-mei 阿昧; vers le Sud-Est, il est à quinze jours de marche du T'o-pa-se 陀拔斯 (Tabaristân)..." ("Notes additionnelles sur les Tou-kiue (Turcs) occidentaux", *T'oung Pao* 5 (1904): 78, n. 1).

THE HAN DYNASTY AND THE THREE KINGDOMS

The most important sources for the early period dealt with here, viz. the time at the beginning of the Common Era, are the above mentioned *Shiji*, the two Han Histories and the *Weilüe* (魏略 “Account of the Wei Dynasty”, compiled between 239 and 265) by Yu Huan 魚豢, which only partially survived as a comment to the *Sanguo zhi* (三國志 “Record of the Three Kingdoms”). The geographical records in these histories were exemplary for the subsequent Chinese histories and similar texts and thus often copied in parts or completely. The two early histories (*Shiji* and Early Han History) can be omitted here, because they do not mention any toponym, which resembles Armenia, but only the Arsacid Empire (Anxi 安息) and its immediate surroundings.¹²

Before we discuss the (possible) records on Armenia in the two later histories, a very rough outline of the Chinese perception of the areas situated west of the Empire seems necessary.¹³ When China looked west, its eyes first gazed upon a number of smaller states along the Silk Road, which were of prime importance for the trade and interchange between East, Central, and West Asia: Dayuan 大宛 (Fergana), Wusun 烏孫 (north of the Tianshan), Daxia 大夏 (Bactria), Yuezhi 月氏 (Kushans), Kangju 康居 (Sogdiana), Yancai 奄蔡 (Alans), and others. Embassies were comparatively frequently exchanged, and these states were thus rather well-known and familiar to the Middle Kingdom. Again in the sight of China “behind” these states, the Empire of the Parthians or the Arsacides could then be discerned; it was “the largest of the states”, as the author of the *Shiji*, Sima Qian, writes.¹⁴ The exchanges and interactions

¹² For the Anxi chapter, see A. F. P. Hulsewé, M. Loewe, *China in Central Asia: The Early Stage, 125 B.C.-A.D. 23: An Annotated Translation of Chapters 61 and 96 of The History of the Former Han Dynasty*, Leiden, 1979: 115-8.

¹³ A comprehensive introduction to the whole complex is found in D. D. Leslie, K. H. J. Gardiner, “Chinese Knowledge of Western Asia during the Han”, *T'oung Pao* 68 (1982): 254-308; for more recent researches, see D. D. Leslie, K. H. J. Gardiner, *The Roman Empire in Chinese Sources*, Rome, 1996; Edwin G. Pulleyblank's review article of the aforementioned work (with severe criticisms): “The Roman Empire as Known to Han China”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 119 (1999): 71-79; John E. Hill, “The Western Regions according to the ‘Hou Hanshu’”, <http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/hhshu/hou_han_shu.html> (8/10/08); idem, “The Peoples of the West from the *Weilue* 魏略 by Yu Huan 魚豢”, <<http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/weilue/weilue.html>>.

¹⁴ “最為大國” (*Shiji* [Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, 1982], j. 123: 3162); Leslie/Gardiner, “Chinese Knowledge of Western Asia”: 273, for a sketched map of the Chinese perception of the “Western Regions”, see *ibid.*: 302; *Shiji*: 303 (*Hanshu*); for a political

between the two empires and/or cultures proved to be one of the most important aspects of early Asian history, and if the “Chinese view” may be stressed again, Iran figured as certainly impressive on the Chinese horizon, but this fact does not necessarily diminish the role of the countries in between, which acted as important intermediaries between the two large empires. In spite of its great distance away, the Parthian Empire was still rather well-known to the Chinese officials, especially after Han armies led campaigns against the Dayuan at the end of the second century BCE, and after Gan Ying 甘英 was sent on a mission to *Da Qin* 大秦, which stood for Rome, or the eastern part of it, in 97 CE. However, the Chinese envoy only got to Anxi and Tiaozhi 條枝,¹⁵ where he was deterred by the Parthians from travelling any further because of the perils of the long sea voyage (obviously around the Arab Peninsula to Egypt). Beyond Anxi was the mighty Roman Empire, and the discussion on what the Chinese knew about it exactly and how the various toponyms attributed to that Western power can be identified still continues.¹⁶ Here is not the place to enter these discussions, but the focus will be only laid on the question if Armenia was mentioned. However, it will be certainly necessary to refer to the studies mentioned in some places.

map of that period, see Ehsan Yarshater (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 3/1. *The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods*, Cambridge, 1983: 544-5.

¹⁵ Pulleyblank identified Tiaozhi with Seleukia (op. cit.: 72-4); Leslie and Gardiner took it together with Ligan or Lijian 黎鞞 for the whole Seleucid Empire (“Chinese Knowledge of Western Asia”: 290-7); John Hill who cites the important sources in full is probably right in placing it in the area of Characene and Susiana, as can also be derived from the journey of Gan Ying (“The Peoples of the West from the *Weilue*”); David F. Graf (“The Roman East from the Chinese Perspective”, *Annales Archeologiques* 42, 1996: 203) states that Tiaozhi is a transcription of the Tigris. Be it as it may, Tiaozhi was most probably situated in Southern Mesopotamia or in the Susiana.

¹⁶ Some scholars who contributed to the geographical onomastics of the “Western Regions” and their works have already been named. It is impossible to give a complete bibliography here, but the more important studies shall be listed: F. Hirth, and Chavannes (additionally to his work on the Turks, the two following works are important in this context: “Les pays d’occident d’après le *Wei lio*”, *T’oung Pao* 6 (1905): 519-71; “Les pays d’occident d’après le *Heou han chou*”, *T’oung Pao* 8 (1907): 149-244); Kurakichi Shiratori (different articles in *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 15 [Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 1956]); Hulsewé/Loewe, Leslie/Gardiner, Graf, Pulleyblank, and Hill.

Now we may turn to the relevant texts. The *Later Han History* says about Aman:¹⁷

From Anxi going west 3400 li 里 one arrives in Aman country. From Aman going west 3600 li one arrives in Sibir 斯賓 country. From Sibir going south, crossing a river (or by river), then southwest, one arrives in Yuluo 于羅 country, 960 li, the furthest of Anxi's western border.

Hirth identifies Anxi in this case with one of its capitals, Hekatompylos, Aman with Ecbatana (modern Hamadan), Sibir with Ktesiphon, and Yuluo with Hira.¹⁸ Chavannes agrees with Hirth concerning Aman = Ecbatana as does Shiratori, but Leslie and Gardiner add a question mark to this identification.¹⁹ Hill gives a completely different analysis of the text: he argues that Gan Ying whose journey is obviously the basis of the text took not the northern route through Central Asia, but a southern one through India.²⁰ Coming from the Indus valley he entered the territory of the Parthians to the west of Uččh; and Hill identifies the first toponym, Anxi with the eastern border of the empire and not with its capital. Aman is accordingly not some place in the rather western part of the Parthian Empire, but Hill takes it for Herat. He overcomes the linguistic differences by maintaining that 阿蠻 was not pronounced *Aman*, but *Aluan*, because 蠻 was often used for 蠻 *luan*.²¹ Herat was pronounced *Areia* by the Greeks which would fit with *Aluan*, but *Harēv* in Middle Persian. If the analysis offered by Hill is accepted, the distances

¹⁷ Fan Ye 范曄, *Hou Hanshu* (Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, 1995), j. 88: 2918. Many translations exist; here we take that of Fr. Hirth as reference (*China and the Roman Orient*: 39).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*: 153-5.

¹⁹ Chavannes, "Les pays d'occident d'après le Heou han chou": 179; K. Shiratori, "A Study on T'iao-chih", *Memoirs*: 7; Leslie/Gardiner, *The Roman Empire in Chinese Sources*: 166.

²⁰ See his 'Section 10' with the relevant notes, further on Hill states in his 'Appendix D': "I believe that Gan Ying travelled from the Tarim Basin via Hunza/Gilgit (the 'Hanging Passages') to Gandhara and then headed south, crossing the frontier of Parthian territory somewhere southwest of Uch near the Indus, before heading mainly west via Kandahar and Herat, to Susa. From there, he would have then travelled southwest (as stated in the text) to the port city of Charax Spasinou and the coast of the Persian Gulf". <http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/hhshu/hou_han_shu.html>.

²¹ As Hill notes, this character appears only in Bernhard Karlgren (*Grammata serica recensa*, Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1957, no. 178) as **blwân/luân/luan*, but not in Edwin G. Pulleyblank (*Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese and Early Mandarin*, Vancouver, 1991).

given in the *Hou Hanshu* (one *li* in the later Han period equates to about 415 m) furthermore corresponded roughly with the actual geographical distances (~1400 km Parthian border—Herat, ~1500 km Herat—Sūs, and then ~400 km down to the Persian Gulf at Spasinou Charax, which Hill took for Yuluo).²²

As shown by these possible explanations, the texts in the *Hou Hanshu* (and others) can be analysed by several criteria: linguistic, geographical (according to the distances) and geo-historical, which set the toponyms in their historical context. Hill's argument that Aman should be pronounced as Aluan is possible, but all other scholars took the name as Aman, which was in Old Chinese probably read 阿 = ē < [ʔa] < [*ʔaj], and 蠻 = mán < [mæn] < [*mron],²³ in Early Middle Chinese, which rather accords with the time dealt with here, 阿 = [ʔa], and 蠻 = [main/mɛ:n].²⁴ In any case, both readings could correspond with Armenia (the latter being read [ʔa main/mɛ:n]). However, there is one more question: A foreign ending [-r] was rather transcribed with a [-n] during the Han period (for example, Anxi for the Arsacids). We would thus rather expect Anman for Armenia and not Aman.

However, if we turn to the second criterion—the question of distances—other difficulties with an identification of Aman with Armenia arise. If the northern route is assumed and Hekatompylos is taken as Anxi, a distance in a western direction to Armenia of about 1400 km is feasible, but then again a western way to Sibin—may it be taken as Ktesiphon or as Sūs—is not correct, because one has to go in a southern direction along a much shorter route. Hirth partially avoided these difficulties in taking Greek stadia (one Greek stadion was about 185 m). We believe that the Chinese measurements should be not taken too seriously, for example the distance between Luoyang 洛陽 and Anxi is given

²² Hill, 'Section 10' with relevant notes <http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/hhshu/hou_han_shu.html>; One more consideration in the footnotes: Wuyishanli 烏弔山離 (*Hou Hanshu*, j. 88: 2917) is identified by Pulleyblank ("The Roman Empire": 75) as Alexandria either in Areia (Herat) or in Arachosia (Qandahar). Hill takes the second option, but does not mention the first. Aman and Wuyishanli are not set in any relationship by the *Hou Hanshu* though they must have been—according to Hill—rather close, and the Wuyishanli paragraph mentions a route to Tiaozi, travelling southwest for several hundred days, again with no allusion to Aman. Aman and Wuyishanli were thus rather distant, not neighbours like Areia and Arachosia (cf. also Leslie/Gardiner, "Chinese Knowledge of Western Asia": 288-90).

²³ William H. Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, Berlin-New York, 1992: 755, 775.

²⁴ Pulleyblank, *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation*: 23, 207; for confusions in the measurements of the *Hou Hanshu*, see also Graf, "The Roman East": 207.

as 25,000 *li* (about 10,000 km), which is much too long, and even the closer and more known Khotan (Yutian 于阗) was not 4,900 km away from Luoyang, but only about 2,900 km.²⁵ Hirth presumed that Aman is the city of Ecbatana because of its similarity in reading and because it was “the first centre of population on the road west of Hekatompylos”.²⁶

The role of Armenia as a buffer state between the Roman and Parthian empires is well-known. Armenia was an important power, especially in the centuries before the beginning of the Common Era under the Artaxiad dynasty; some decades later the Arsacid prince Tiridates was crowned king of Armenia by Nero in 66 CE and in the following centuries the destiny of Armenia was most closely connected with that of the Arsacid and Sasanian empires.²⁷ Armenia was thus an important state between Rome and Parthia and also a major point *en route* between the two empires. Could it thus be probable that the Chinese had not heard about it? We will here go along with the inclination of Leslie and Gardiner “to follow the Japanese scholars, Ogawa and Miyazaki, supported by Tazaka, who take these states [Aman and Sibir] as Armenia and Sophene...”²⁸ It shall be argued here that it should be possible that China knew about Armenia and that strong reason speaks for an equation of Aman with Armenia. However, it should be kept in mind that the identification of these two place names “is one of the most controversial problems”, as the two scholars state.²⁹

The *Weilue* puts Aman in quite another context: “In the North of Qielan 且蘭, Sifu 氾復, Sibir and Aman is a mountain range, which goes from east to west...”³⁰ Hill suggests the Taurus being these mountains, circumventing the problem of the far distance to Areia as Aman by stretching the mountain range very far to the east; and he identifies the two hitherto not named toponyms as follows: Qielan = Wādī Sirhān, Sifu = Petra.³¹ On the contrary, Leslie and Gardiner suggest (with Hirth and Shiratori, supported by Graf) Qielan being Palmyra, Sifu (with Shiratori) being Damascus, Hirth suggests it being Homs and Graf finally according

²⁵ *Hou Hanshu*, j. 88: 2918, 2915.

²⁶ Hirth, *China and the Roman Orient*: 154; see the map in Yarshater, *op. cit.*: 25.

²⁷ *Ibid.*: 512-20.

²⁸ Leslie/Gardiner, *The Roman Empire in Chinese Sources*: 267-268.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Sanguo zhi*, j. 30: 862.

³¹ Hill, ‘Section 17’ with relevant notes, <<http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/weilue/weilue.html>>.

to Pelliot Bambyke or Hierapolis (reading it as *fanfu* 汜復).³² The exact identification of these place names is only of secondary importance here, more important is the location of Aman and the problem of the mountain range. If we equate Aman with Ecbatana and set the other three places in Syria and Mesopotamia, the Taurus mountains could have been in the *Weilüe*, but if we take Armenia for Aman this seems unlikely and the mountains would rather be the Caucasus—an opinion also supported by Leslie and Gardiner.³³ To conclude this first part: due to the importance of Armenia in the times around the beginning of the Common Era and in the first centuries afterwards, and its close affiliation with the Arsacid Empire, which was well-known to China, it seems unlikely that no one had heard in China of it. Though not definitely proven, Aman could indeed be the Chinese transcription of Armenia.

The *Tongdian*, though compiled some centuries later in 801, shall be treated here. As often in Chinese sources, the cited paragraph of the *Hou Hanshu* about Aman can also be found in this work, but this is just a repetition of the earlier data and offers no new information.³⁴ Then in the *Xiyu diming* mentioned Yamei country is more interesting. This toponym appears not in the *Tongdian* itself, but in an insertion where a few extracts from the *Jingxing ji* 經行記 (“Records of Passing”) by Du Huan 杜環—relative of Du You, author of the *Tongdian*—who was captured in the battle of Talas and returned to China in 762, appear. Most of his records unfortunately have been lost, but we can find this short passage in his notes on Arabia: “Molu country 末祿 is more than 700 *li* to the southeast of Yamei country”.³⁵ Molu is identified with the Khorāsānian city of Merv,³⁶ and Yamei could be a transcription of Armenia, as, according to Pulleyblank, the two characters can be read 亞 = *yà* < [ʔaɪ^h/ʔe:^h], and 梅 = *méi* < [məj] in Early Middle Chinese,³⁷ but distance and direction are certainly not correct, and no other toponyms in the context offer any solution. One may again think of Āmol, when reading Yamei.

³² Leslie/Gardiner, *The Roman Empire in Chinese Sources*: 194-196; Graf, “The Roman East”: 206; Paul Pelliot, “Note sur les anciens itinéraires chinoise dans l’orient romain”, *Journal Asiatique* 17 (1921): 141-145.

³³ Leslie/Gardiner, *The Roman Empire in Chinese Sources*: 268.

³⁴ Du You 杜佑, *Tongdian*, 5 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju), 1996, V: 5239.

³⁵ *Ibid.*: 5280; originally *zhu* was written 朱, but in comparison with other texts this was probably a mistake of the copyist, and it should be written *mo* 末 (*ibid.*: 5296-7).

³⁶ See Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*: 494-495, s.v. Cotton.

³⁷ Pulleyblank, *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation*: 354, 210.

ARMENIA IN CHINESE SOURCES IN THE MONGOL AND LATER PERIODS

After the Tang period, China was rather cut off from direct overland contact with Western Asia by kingdoms, which controlled the areas north and west of China, and, therefore, seaborne trade predominated during the Song dynasty. This situation changed drastically with the conquests of the Mongols, who ruled over large parts of Asia and put the various cultural and political entities together under common rule for some decades at least. Though Mongol rule soon split into four separate *ulus*, which were partially hostile to each other, the mutual influences and interactions prospered for decades, if not a century, after the Mongol Empire broke apart. The Caucasus region was again of prime importance for the Mongols, especially when it became the border between the Ilkhanīds and the Golden Horde. Armenia was in that period divided into Lesser Armenia (Cilicia), which had, not least because of the mentioned visit of Het'um I to the Mongol Court, good relations with the Ilkhanīds, while Greater Armenia was considered as being inside the borders of Iran and thus under direct Mongol/Ilkhanīd rule.³⁸ Though various rebellions took place against the Mongol yoke, Armenian culture could at least partially flourish, in particular before Ghāzān Khan accepted Islam. Important for our considerations here: Armenia was divided into two parts, Greater and Lesser Armenia, the former one being the core of historic Armenia, but not directly bordering the Caspian Sea.

We may now turn to Mongol and later cartography in East Asia in general and to the mentioned *Honil gangni yeokdae gukdo jido* in particular (from hereon called "Map of the Territories of the One World"). Zhu Siben 朱思本 was probably the first Chinese cartographer who drew the South African coast correctly, about 1312. Other Yuan scholars achieved similar successes: Li Zemin 李澤民 (fl. 1325) and Qingjun 清濬 (fl. 1370). Maps of the last two cartographers were brought to Korea, and in 1402 Yi Hoe 李薈 and Gwon Geun 權近 combined to produce the "Map of the Territories of the One World". This map found its way somehow to Japan, where it was copied several times. The original may be lost forever.³⁹ The most famous of these copies is probably the one held in Ryūkyō University, but others are also important for the history of

³⁸ Hamd-allāh Mustawfī, G. Le Strange (trans., ed.), *The Geographical Part of the Nuzhat-al-Qulūb*, 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, London: Luzac, 1919, reprint Frankfurt 1993): 100-101.

³⁹ Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, IV / 3: 499-501, plate CDXII.

Mongolian and East Asian cartography.⁴⁰ The (black and white) reproduced part for this article stems from the copy found in the book of Fujii e.a., *Daichi no shōzōh*. The original map of this copy is found in Ryūkoku University, Kyōto.⁴¹

What can be seen on this part of the “Map of the Territories of the One World”? Very clearly marked is the Caspian Sea, here named Jiulu-uwān 久六湾 (the last character being a short one on the map; the transcriptions and English names of the relevant toponyms can be found on the immediate right of the cartouches with the Chinese characters), and the large red coloured circle on its eastern shores. The characters written in this circle are unfortunately not visible on the copy reproduced here, but on the map is written *Babuduabuni* 八不督阿不你.⁴² Needham took it as a transcription of Derbend, but he did not read the first two characters, only the last four, thus *Tu-a-pu-ni* in his transcription.⁴³ These could certainly fit with Derbend, but if we read the word with the first two, the Arabic name of that city, *Bāb al-abwāb*—“Gate of Gates”,⁴⁴ which was crucial as a border region between the Ilkhanīds and later Timurids on one side and the Golden Horde on the other side—seems to be more likely.

Whereas the Caspian Sea is filled with colour, what is probably the Mediterranean and the Black Sea are not, possibly because a copyist was not sure about their nature and drew their coastlines as rivers. The shape of the Mediterranean (only partly seen on our reproduction), however, is quite clear and its northern annex should be the Black Sea. The landmass in between with the many place names could be interpreted as Minor Asia. For further identifications we have to refer mainly to the linguistic interpretation, the geographical being useful only in parts because obvious inaccuracies can be found on the map.⁴⁵ However, the achievement of the compilers was tremendous, and Mosul (Mashili

⁴⁰ For the different copies and later maps, see Fujii Jōji 藤井讓治, Sugiyama Masa-aki 杉山正明, Kinda Akihiro 金山章裕 (comp., eds.), *Daichi no shōzōh: ezu, chizu ga katura sekai* 大地肖像: 絵図地図が語る世界 (Kyōto: Kyōto Daigaku Gakujutsu Shuppankai, 2007): 448-454.

⁴¹ We would like to thank Prof. Taisaku Komeie, and especially Prof. Yukako Goto for their very kind help in getting the copies and permissions.

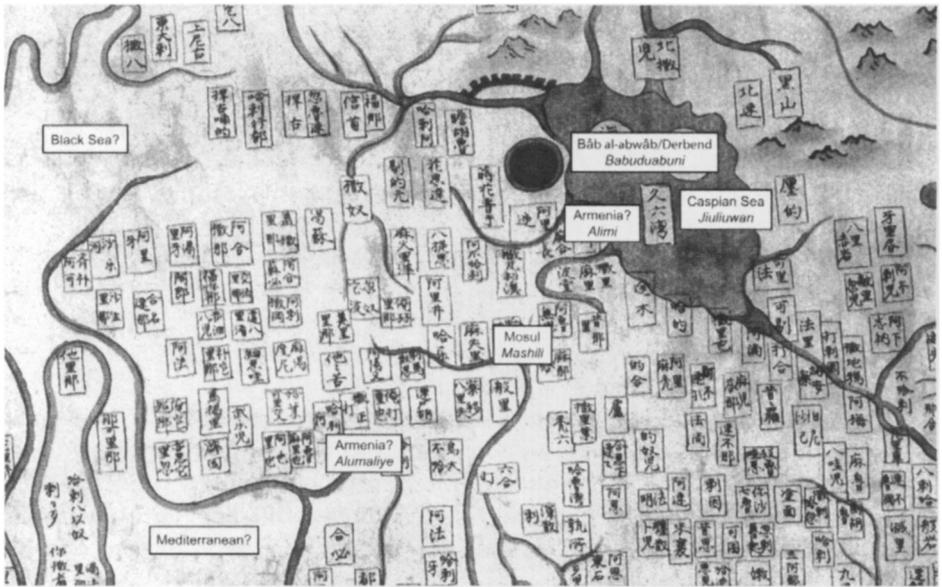
⁴² Transcription of the probable pronunciation in the Yuan period: [paʰpuʰtuʰɔpuʰniʰ] (Pulleyblank, *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation*: 23, 27, 43, 82, 223).

⁴³ Needham, op. cit., plate CDXII.

⁴⁴ Cf. Fujii, *Daichi no shōzōh*: 59.

⁴⁵ To give only one example: Egypt (Misr, Misi 迷思, which should mean Cairo) is north of Alexandria (Alasaiyi 阿刺賽伊) near the Mediterranean coast (see *ibid.*: 58).

麻失里), for example, can be found on the map where it is supposed to be.⁴⁶ When looking at Mosul we are in the direct vicinity of Armenia, which was certainly also known to the Mongols in the Mongolian heartlands and in China—the visit of Het‘um I may be brought to mind once more. Two candidates for Armenia can be found on the map: the first one is located immediately south of Derbend and written Alimi 阿里迷, the second is Alumaliye 阿魯麻里也 and situated in the north-eastern corner of the Mediterranean.⁴⁷ Both roughly correspond with Armenia, but the latter somewhat better, and Alimi is also situated near the Caspian coast and could thus stand for Ardabīl, whereas Alimuliye is almost exactly where Cilicia was located.⁴⁸ According to the Japanese



Detail of the *Honi gangni yeokdae gukdo* 混一疆理歷代國都之圖 (“Map of the Territories of the One World and the Capitals of the Countries in Successive Ages”) showing the Caspian Sea and Anatolia (Courtesy of the Department of Geography, Graduate School of Letters, Kyoto University)⁴⁹

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*: 59; Needham, *op. cit.*, plate CDXII.

⁴⁷ Reconstruction by Pulleyblank [əliˈmiˈ] and [əɫəˈmaˈliˈjeˈ] (Pulleyblank, *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation*: 23, 188, 200, 206, 213, 363).

⁴⁸ Fujii, Sugiyama, and Kinda took Alimi for Ardabīl and Alumaliye for Armenia (*Daichi no shōzōh*: 58-9).

⁴⁹ Fujii, *Daichi no shōzōh*, plate 34. It should be noted that the large river flowing into the Caspian Sea from the south-east could be the Amū-Daryā (and not the small

scholars Fujii, Sugiyama, and Kinda, other places around Alumaliye are to the west of Ayeliye 阿也里也 = Alanya/Alaya, in the north Tatakū 他他苦 = Daqūqā/Tāwūq, and in the east Andaliye 俺打里也 = Antalya.⁵⁰ To draw a conclusion: there are a number of reasons for identifying Alumaliye with Lesser Armenia/Cilicia, whereas an identification of Alimi with Armenia is not as likely.

A definite linguistic equivalent of Armenia can be found in a book "Muslim Prescriptions" (*Huihui yaofang* 回回藥方) of whose original 36 chapters only four survived in China's National Library in Beijing. These four chapters were published a few years ago by Song Xian 宋峴 and offer a wealth of information about medical knowledge transferred from the Middle East to Central Asia during the Mongol period.⁵¹ Though the manuscript dates from the Ming period (1368–1644), the original text was brought during the Mongol period to China, and reflects the interactions of the 13th and 14th centuries.⁵² We find Armenia or Armenian in several places: first, a *hazha'er A'ermani* 哈札而阿而馬尼 is mentioned, an Armenian stone (*hazha'er* derives from the Arabic *hajar* = stone); a further note explains that this medical component is a stone from the "small place" *dimian* 地面 A'ermani.⁵³ This transcription is quite obvious, and is even confirmed by the naming of an Armenian mud or plaster (*A'ermani ni* 阿而馬尼泥 or *A'ermani de ni* 阿而馬尼的泥) in many other places of the pharmaceutical treatise.⁵⁴ Here it is also said that the plaster originates from the "small place" A'ermani. The fact that these two ingredients from Armenia were known in China are further proof of the close links and interchanges between the two areas in that period.

Up to the modern period, the Yuan dynasty and the first half of the following Ming dynasty were periods of intense contacts between West and East Asia. Due to mainly inner-Asian reasons, these contacts broke

Atrak), which emptied into the Caspian Sea during that period (cf. *Encyclopaedia of Islam* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960–2004], I: 454–7, s.v.)

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*: 58.

⁵¹ Song Xian 宋峴, *Huihui yaofang kaoshi* 回回藥考釋, 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000).

⁵² See the prefaces in the edition, and for a short summary Liu Yingsheng, "Qian-long nianjian Aomen de Yameiniya shangren": 39–40. It should be mentioned that discussions exist as to whether the original text was written in Arabic (e.g. Song Xian's opinion) or Persian (e.g. Liu Yingsheng's opinion).

⁵³ Song Xian, *Huihui yaofang kaoshi*, I: 204, II: 218. For the term *dimian*, see Ralph Kauz, *Politik und Handel zwischen Ming und Timuriden: China, Iran und Zentralasien im Spätmittelalter* (Iran–Turan 7), Wiesbaden, 2005: 177.

⁵⁴ Song Xian, *Huihui yaofang kaoshi*, I: 360, II: 407, 408, 409, 416, 434, 439, 459, 460, 477, 482.

off rapidly in about 1500, though some of the knowledge was passed on. A treatise, which at least partially conserved the wisdom of preceding centuries, is the anonymous *Xiyu tudi renwu lue* 西域土地人物略 (“Summary of the Territories and Peoples of the Western Regions”), an itinerary preserved in several texts of the Ming and Qing dynasties. Probably the earliest text in which it can be found is the *Shanxi tongzhi* 陝西通志 (1542, “Shanxi Gazetteer”) compiled by Zhao Tingrui 趙廷瑞. The *Xiyu tudi renwu lue* is well-known, and Emil Bretschneider had already prepared a translation more than hundred years ago, but was generally cautious in the appraisal of the text: “I am far from claiming a high importance for these fragments of ancient Asiatic Geography, but I consider them sufficiently interesting to be rescued from oblivion [...] I must confess however that I am often puzzled what to make of the places enumerated in that ancient itinerary”.⁵⁵ The *Xiyu tudi renwu lue* describes the route from the Chinese border post in the Ming dynasty, Jiayuguan 嘉峪關 to Arabia (Tianfang 天方) and from Egypt to Lumi 魯迷, which probably denotes not Rome as Bretschneider suggests, but Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire which was called Rūm in Middle Eastern texts.⁵⁶ The toponyms west of Kāshgar become successively difficult to verify, but we can still find an option for Armenia, which naturally would be found on the route from Egypt to Istanbul.

If someone wanted to travel this route he must necessarily pass through Lesser Armenia. Here is the list of the places passed *en route*, their inhabitants and the direction to go:⁵⁷ Miqieli 米亂力 (Misr, Muslims) – west – Yaman 牙瞞 (Muslims) – west – Wengulu 文谷魯 (Chinamen) – west – Adumin 阿都民 (Muslims) – west – Yeleiduosi 也勒朵思 (Chinamen) – west – Saheisisai 撒黑四寨 (Chinamen) – Halimi 哈利迷 (Muslims) – west – Adena 阿的納 (Adana, Muslims) – west – Feiji 菲即 (Chinamen) – west – Angulu 安谷魯 (Ankara, Muslims) – west – Atai 阿臺 (Muslims) – west – Boluosa 孛羅撒 (Bursa, Muslims) – west – Lumi 魯迷 (Istanbul, Muslims and Chinamen). In addition to these scanty notes, a little more information is given concerning products, customs and so on. The identification of the people living in the various cities as Muslims (Huihui 回回) and Chinamen (Haner 漢兒) is curious, because there were obviously no Chinese living in that time in the Near East. The Chi-

⁵⁵ Emil Bretschneider, “Chinese Intercourse with the Countries of Central and Western Asia in the Fifteenth Century”, *The China Review, or Notes and Queries on the Far East*, 5 (1877): 227-241, esp. 227-229; Zhao Tingrui, *Shanxi tongzhi* (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2005).

⁵⁶ Bretschneider, op. cit.: 227-229.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*: 240-241; Zhao Tingrui, op. cit.: 489-490, 506-509.

namen were probably seen in contrast to the Muslims and thus probably non-Muslims—obviously mostly Christians were meant. The general direction—west—is impossible, because in many places a northern route had to be chosen. Some of the toponyms are obvious, such as Misr (which was probably in some way miswritten by a copyist), Ankara, Bursa, and Lumi for Rūm. Adena is a fair enough transcription of Adana in Lesser Armenia, and the preceding toponym Halimi could be a transcription of Armenia, especially because the *h* was unstable before initial vowels during the Mongol period. The whole description of Halimi reads: “There are Muslims with turbans, there is much raising of sheep and horses, cultivating of non-irrigated fields. They have water mills and produce yellow grapes and all kinds of fruit”.⁵⁸ The mention of Muslims is certainly strange, but Muslims were certainly living in Armenia and because the basis of the description was a pilgrimage to Mecca and a journey further on to Istanbul, the author was probably a Muslim and may have tended to overemphasise Muslim influence.

The last Chinese text, which will be discussed here is the *Haiguo wenjian lu* 海國聞見錄 (1730, “Seen and Heard Records of Maritime Countries”) by Chen Lunjiong 陳倫炯, in which various countries are described.⁵⁹ According to this treatise different maps also were drawn, which show these countries. In the chapter of the “Small Western Ocean” *Xiao xiyangji* 小西洋記 we find the following term: Alimiye 阿黎米也. It should be situated in the south-west of Iran and in the south of Eastern Turks (Dong Duo'erqi 東多尔其).⁶⁰ There is certainly a good chance that it may be the transcription of Arabia, a statement which was made by the editor Li Changfu, but the transcription is somewhat strange and would be more appropriate for Armenia than Arabia. However, it could be that the two toponyms were intermingled, and Arabia was meant, but it was written as Armenia.

SUMMARY

Many parts in this article are rather tentative, and conjectures prevail in some places. It cannot be definitely proven that Armenia was known to China during the Han dynasty about two thousand years ago, but we believe that a number of reasons support an equation of Aman with Armenia. Unfortunately, it is rather unlikely that new data which could

⁵⁸ Zhao Tingrui, *Shanxi tongzhi*: 489.

⁵⁹ Chen Lunjiong (author) Li Changfu 李長傅 Chen Daiguang 陳代光 (comment., eds.), *Haiguo wenjian lu* (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1984).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: 62.

support this thesis will be found. Our considerations are certainly a reflection of the general problems in the identification of the toponyms of far western places in early Chinese texts, and discussions on the respective problems have not yet come to an end.

The 13th and 14th centuries offer much more accurate data, especially the “Map of the Territories of the One World”, which to date has not thoroughly researched and which offers significant insights into Mongol/Chinese knowledge on West Asian geography. Maybe even the two Armenias, the *Armaniyyah al-akbar* and the *Armaniyyah al-asyar* of the *Nuzhat-al-Qulūb*, found mention in this magnificent map as *Alimi* and *Alumaliye*. Be this as it may, the record of Cilicia as *Alumaliye* in a circle of place names, which can be identified is fairly obvious.

The mention of two Armenian *materia medica* in the “Muslim Prescriptions” of the Mongol period is a proof—if such one is needed—for the close relations between Armenia and the Mongols. Finally, the “Summary of the Territories and Peoples of the Western Regions” and the “Seen and Heard Records of Maritime Countries” are added as geographical records of Western Asia of the Ming and Qing, which probably mention Armenia.

All these texts were made by Chinese scholars, who used Arabic/Persian and Mongol knowledge of the geographical situation in Western Asia, but not European sources. They prove two facts: Armenia was documented in Chinese texts at least from the Mongol period, but it can be argued with some reason that already in the Han period information existed in China about Armenia. Second, the Chinese and East Asian knowledge of Asia during the Mongol period and thereafter was immense and detailed. Even smaller places found their way into the geographical understanding and perceptions of China, and these perceptions were passed on in later centuries to the Ming and Qing periods.