

COMMUNICATIONS

A Roman City in Ancient China:

A Reply to Professor Cammann

Professor Cammann states that my account of *A Roman City in Ancient China* is "riddled with fallacies and over-hasty assumptions." I fear however that this crime against good historical method is committed by Prof. Cammann himself, not by me.

His first argument is that "if the town in question was founded by foreigners, they would have named it themselves," and assumes that this occurred for Li-jien about the fourth century B.C. or later. But Chinese history states how the name "Li-jien" arose. About 110 B.C., the Parthian king sent presents to the Chinese emperor, among which were fine jugglers, for which Alexandria was then noted. When these men were asked whence they came, the Chinese of course dropped the initial vowel and reduced the name to its next two syllables, making "Alexandria" into "Li-jien," a name like that used by the Chinese for their cities. Pelliot identified this name and its origin, and there can be little doubt about it (cf. Notes 6 and 8 in my book). Thereafter, since the Chinese had no contact with Rome, they used Li-jien to denote the Roman empire. No Alexandrian merchants would have used this name for any city they had founded.

The Chinese city Li-jien did not even exist in 79 B.C. Chinese history records that in 79 the Huns raided the area in which this city was later located, capturing three cities that later were close neighbors of Li-jien. Li-jien itself did not originate until 35 B.C. Professor Cammann states that this city "lay at the western end of the Kansu corridor." The *Han-shu*, written in the first century A.D., has a geographical chapter listing the various commanderies, kingdoms, and prefectures in the empire about A.D. 4. Li-jien is duly listed, *not* in the commandery at the western end of the present Kansu, but east of the middle of that corridor, only about fifty miles from the Yellow River. This is a watered area, where farming is possible, and is not a location suitable for a

merchant city. Professor Cammann evidently did not look at the atlas. He also neglected the fact that Li-jien is listed in the *Han-shu* as a prefecture (*hsien*). It required governmental action for its establishment. So the city of Li-jien must have been established by a Chinese imperial ordinance, not by merchants. When Wang Mang came to the throne, he changed the names of many places, in accordance with the Confucian belief that names should represent realities. He gave Li-jien the name *Jie-lu*, meaning "Captives (or captives) taken in storming a city" and "Captives raised up." Both interpretations deny Professor Cammann's theory, and fit a city founded for Roman troops.

As for Crassus' soldiers having been "rather old" eighteen years after their defeat at Carrhae in 54 B.C., as Professor Cammann states, some were undoubtedly aged. Such would hardly have tried escaping from Parthian custody. But if any had enlisted at the age of eighteen when Crassus scoured his proconsulate for troops in 54, they would still have been in their prime in 35 B.C. Professor Cammann takes for granted that I believe the soldiers who were "captured" by the Chinese in 35 were literally Romans. But they were not captured and did not surrender. Chinese military law recognized a distinction between those captured in battle and those who voluntarily came over to the Chinese. The Chinese account states that these "Romans" did not fight the Chinese, but merely remained in formation after the capture of the Hun city. With the death of Jzjzh, they were without support in central Asia. Chinese generals recognized good fighting men and undoubtedly offered to aid them if they came to China. The imperial government made good this promise by installing these Roman soldiers in a Chinese city called by the current *Chinese* name for the Roman empire—Li-jien.

In what sense these men were Romans is a different problem. If I may add a minor item to the discussion in my book: At that time, native-born Romans had special privileges and were not required to enter the Roman

army. Probably the greater bulk of Roman soldiers were from Gaul or (the present) Spain or Greece. I doubt if there were many Alexandrians: Roman generals cared little for the birth of their men, as long as they were loyal, well-trained, and able fighting men. The men themselves, being in Roman armies, were probably proud to call themselves Romans, just as did St. Paul. Roman culture and traditions came to China in Li-jien, but hardly Roman blood. This place was a Chinese prefecture, governed by a Chinese prefect according to Chinese usage, whose inhabitants remained proud of their derivation, even in the seventh century A.D.

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In his review of my book, *Economic Liberalism and Under-Development* (J.A.S. XXI, No. 3, May, 1962), Mr. Ellis has dismissed the contents as "essentially negative." I fail to grasp the nettle of this reproach, since my conclusions contained, amongst others, the following reflections:

With the palpable collapse of the old order, the economist can afford the luxury of non-involvement only at the price of his integrity. What is needed is not primarily greater conceptual clarity, but the courage to face fearlessly the seminal issues of the social revolution. It is relatively easy to skirt them by sorties into the intellectual wasteland of welfare economics. . . .

The crying need of the hour is to accelerate by every conceivable stratagem the tempo of industrialisation and modernisation, and this can only be achieved by comprehensive planning together with a sustained global offensive aimed at rooting out, swiftly and decisively, their native and foreign interests . . . frequently economic "help" becomes the abettor of a strategy of terror shoring up a senile élite that would normally have been flushed out by a revolutionary upsurge . . . and merely (serving) to make the approaching winds of reckoning more savage in its intensity. . . . Unpalatable as it may appear to some, the truth is that there is no viable alternative to integral planning which has become an irresistible and irreversible social dynamic.

Are these reflections negative? If so, negative to what and to whom? The book has also been pilloried for "internal inconsistencies." According to my critic, Arthur Lewis is "quoted approvingly" by me as saying that "an extensive network of communications is the greatest blessing which a country can have from the economic point of view." To the contrary; on that very page (232) I considered Lewis's thesis "fallacious, viewed in the power context of colonialism" and subsequently elaborated on this theme.

A reviewer has the right to his opinion, but not the right to distort the opinion of an author whose ideological enthusiasms he does not share.

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