

A note on the “peculiar” name *Jingzhuguo* for India in the lost *Hou Hanshu* of Xie Cheng

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Han E, in his treatise *Suihua jili*, quotes a passage from the lost *Houhanshu* of Xie Cheng which contains the “peculiar” name of *Jingzhuguo* (country of pure dwelling) for the land of the Buddha, India. The present paper discusses the conditions under which this name could have arisen.

Key words: *Jingzhuguo*, India, Xie Cheng, Kuchean

In his seminal study of the Treatises of Later Han, Mansvelt Beck draws attention to a passage in the lost work of Xie Cheng (c. AD 220), the *Hou Hanshu*, quoted in Han E's *Suihua jili* and collected in the Ming compilation *Shuofu* (ed. 1647):

The Buddha was incarnated in a *guichou* 癸丑 year, the 7th month, the 15th day, in the belly of the Lady Maya of Jingzhu 淨住 country^①.

What is noteworthy in this passage is the name *Jingzhuguo* 淨住國 for India, which Mansvelt Beck calls “peculiar” because it does not appear either in previous or in subsequent works of the Buddhist *corpus*. The most obvious explanation is that *Jingzhu* refers to the “pure dwelling” or “pure rest” (Skt. *Upavasatha*), the Buddhist Sabbath

① Xie Cheng 謝承, *Hou Hanshu* 《後漢書》, ch. 8, pp. 14b-15a; Han E 韓鄂, *Suihua jili* 《歲華記麗》, ch. 3, in *Shuofu* 《說郛》, ch. 69, 5a. See Mansvelt (1990: 40 n. 5). The other source for Xie Cheng given by Wang Wentai 汪文臺 in his *Qijia Hou Hanshu* 《七家後漢書》, the chapter 3 of the section “Fahui” 發揮 from the *Lushi* 《路史》, does not contain the name *Jingzhuguo*.

day celebrated in the 15th day of the half-month, and is also a designation for a Buddhist temple. The word is already found in Buddhist translations dating from Western Jin, specifically in the *Dragon-King Sutra* 《佛說海龍王經》 and the *Sumatidārikāparipṛcchā Sutra* 《佛說須摩提菩薩經》 of the monk Dharmarakṣa (Zhu Fahu 竺法護, f. AD 266)^①. It is not impossible, then, that Xie Cheng may indeed be the author of the aforementioned lines, and that his use of *Jingzhuguo* is a way of naming India as the “country/land of pure dwelling” or “country of Buddhist temples.” Besides religious reasons behind the “peculiar” name of India in Xie Cheng’s *Hou Hanshu*, I shall explore an additional—but, nevertheless, not alternative—phonological explanation that may have been elaborated in the mind of the author of this work.

Xie Cheng was a native of ancient Shanyin 山陰 in the State of Wu (now Shaoxing, in Zhejiang province), who flourished about the middle of the third century, living between the end of Eastern Han and the beginning of the Three Kingdoms period. His work covers Later Han to the year 220, and although the exact sources he used to write his treatise remain unknown, we may infer that Xie Cheng had neither knowledge of, nor interest in, Buddhism, since he did not compose a treatise of the extent of the “Essay on Buddhism and Daoism” 釋老志, in which Wei Shou 魏收 explicitly says no one before him wrote at length on this topic^②. We have, however, widely recognized transcriptional materials in the historical records of the Han dynasty: in the *Shiji* we find the name 身毒國 *śin douk kuək*, from Sanskrit *Sindhu*, repeating eight times^③, and 天

① Taishō Tripitaka 12: 334, 77a29, b4, 6 and 15: 598, 143c14, 17, 25, etc, respectively. According to Yan Qimao 顏洽茂 and Lu Qiaoqin 盧巧琴 (2009: 182), *Jingzhu* was indeed a word dating from Western Jin.

② In the memorial accompanying it. See Ware (1933: 102). There is no satisfactory evidence that Xie Cheng did actually write a treatise on 佛.

③ SJ 9. 2995–6; 10. 3164, 3166 and 3170. Qian Wenzhong (1991: 179) has argued that 身 should be read *iʷən* rather than *śin*, from the Old Iranian *Hinduka*. Schuessler (2009: 321) also derives the word from *Hinduka*. Furthermore, the commentator of the *Shiji* in these passages records 捐 *wen*, 乾 *kan* and 訖 *kiət* as homophones to 身. Cf. *Hanshu* 9. 2687, 2694, 2703 and 11. 3841 (quoting the *Shiji*).

竺國 **hɛn touk kuək*, from Old Iranian *Hinduka*, on three occasions in the *Hou Hanshu*^①. The Chinese compound *Jingzhuguo* can be reconstructed as *dzieŋ^c do^c kuək* for his Late Han pronunciation, but the initial syllable does not correspond to either Sanskrit or Old Iranian forms. Nevertheless, the Kuchean^② name for India was pronounced **yentu* (**yentuke* being the gentilic)^③, which offers a more plausible source for the initial sound *dzieŋ^c*, while *do^c* is consistent with Kuchean **-tu* and Sanskrit *-dhu-*. Chinese *kuək* may stand either in place of the Kuchean gentilic suffix **-ke* (as in later 天竺國 **hɛn touk kuək*), or have been added to complete the meaning of the word.

Hence, Xie Cheng could have felt the name *Jingzhuguo* 淨住國 was not only apt in terms of meaning, but also phonologically appropriate because of its similarity with the name of India on the lips of Kuchean monks^④.

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- ① HHS 2. 306, 309 and 10. 2921. The material was compiled in the fifth century and is not relevant to our discussion here.
- ② For a relation between Kuchean (Tocharian B) and some Buddhist translations of Late Han - Western Jin, see Ji Xianlin 季羨林 (1995: 23-30, 36).
- ③ For the Chinese and Tocharian names of India see Qian (1991: 178). Reconstructions of Kuchean follows Adams (1999: 505) and Schmidt (1985: 764). For Later Han and Middle Chinese (MC) reconstructions, I follow transcriptional conventions from Schuessler (2007; 2009). For the guttural fricative initial of 天竺 *t^hen touk* as **hen* (or **hɛn* in Qian), see Coblin (1994: 156).
- ④ It is interesting to note that Wei Shou translated the title *buddha* as 淨覺 MC *dzän^c kau^c* (or *kāk*) (Ware 1933: 112).

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論謝承《後漢書》中特 有的“淨住國”一名

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本文試圖討論“淨住國”一名的起源。此名唯見於謝承《後漢書》卷八，今已亡佚，收於唐人韓鄂《歲華記麗》卷三。謝承使用罕見的古名指出佛陀籍貫。研究此詞語文學、宗教的根源，是筆者的基本旨趣。

關鍵詞：淨住國、印度、謝承、庫車語