

**NOTES ON CHINESE
MEDIAEVAL TRAVELLERS
TO THE WEST**

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Notes on Chinese Mediaeval Travellers to the West by E. Bretschneider

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E. BRETSCHNEIDER

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ON

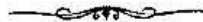
CHINESE MEDIÆVAL TRAVELLERS //

TO THE WEST

BY

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Physician to the Russian Legation at Peking.



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TO

ARCHIMANDRITE PALLADIUS,

THE LEARNED SINOLOGUE

AND INVESTIGATOR OF ASIATIC ANTIQUITIES.

This little Essay

IS RESPECTFULLY AND THANKFULLY DEDICATED,

BY

HIS FRIEND AND ADMIRER,

E. BRETSCHNEIDER.

PREFACE.

This little brochure now presented to the learned world, was originally published in the Chinese Recorder at Shanghai; and I have to thank the editor of that periodical, for the great attention he has paid to the sheets while passing through the press. Being so distant from the place of publication, it was impossible for me to improve or revise these pages. The reader may, on this account, occasionally observe blemishes and inadvertencies. As the first part of these notes was printed before I had begun to write the succeeding portion, there is here and there a want of harmony; and while pursuing further these investigations, I was sometimes obliged to change my views. I beg therefore, that the reader, who may occasionally be struck with seeming contradictions, will peruse the additional notes at the end. In some of my identifications and conclusions, I may sometimes be mistaken. It has always been my endeavour, however, not to impose my views upon the reader, but to lead him to form an opinion for himself, drawn from the facts brought together. *Citius emergit veritas ex errore quam ex confusione.*

In publishing these pages, the principal object in view has been to furnish *savants* interested in the ancient history and geography of Asia, with some interesting materials found in ancient Chinese literature. I have tried to make these translations as correct as possible, and it seems to me, that Peking is the only place, where such investigations can be successfully made; for the greater part of the ancient Chinese books required for reference can hardly be found in any European library, or in other libraries elsewhere in China. Peking is also the residence, at the present time, of several of the most accomplished sinologues, besides which there is no want of erudite native scholars; so that even a beginner, as I am, in this branch of knowledge, is in a position to understand Chinese works of difficult style, which could hardly be translated

correctly in Europe. I am however, far from asserting that my version is unimpeachable. Every sinologue knows how apt the ambiguous Chinese style is to give rise to misunderstandings, and often the Chinese themselves are unable to solve the difficulties.

At the time I wrote the translation of Ch'ang-ch'un's travels, I had not access to a good book of reference for identifying the dates occurring in the Chinese text, with the corresponding European dates; and I have therefore always given the Chinese dates, and mentioned the corresponding European days only approximately. Subsequently Mr. Wylie had the kindness to draw my attention to the importance of specifying the European dates, for Ch'ang-ch'un mentions precisely the date of a total eclipse of the sun, which was seen in western as well as in eastern Asia. As I know Mr. Wylie has given some attention to Chinese astronomy and chronology, I requested him to do me the favour of writing a few explanatory notes regarding this question, to which he kindly agreed.

In conclusion I have to state, that instead of *three* narratives of travel as announced in the Introduction, *one more* is added, for which I need not apologize.

E. B.

Рекла,

December 20th, 1874.



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NOTES

ON

CHINESE MEDIÆVAL TRAVELLERS TO THE WEST.

By E. BRETSCHNEIDER, M.D.

INTRODUCTION.

CHINESE literature, so vast in extent, contains very considerable accounts of the geography of Asia at different times, and of the peoples living formerly in that part of the ancient world. The greater part of these accounts of Asiatic peoples beyond China proper, is to be found in the histories of the various dynasties, which have up to the present time successively ruled in China. At the end of each of these dynastic histories, twenty-four in number, a chapter more or less extensive is found devoted to the foreign countries and peoples, who came in contact with the Chinese empire. They are generally termed 四夷 *see-yi*, "the four kinds of barbarians" (in allusion to the four quarters of the globe). These notices were probably collected by Chinese envoys sent to those countries, or compiled from the reports of envoys or merchants of those countries coming to China. Almost all Chinese works treating of foreign countries, drew their accounts from these sources; and even the celebrated geographer and historian *Ma Tuan-lin*, who wrote under the Mongol dynasty, has for the greater part compiled his excellent work, the *Wen hien t'ung k'ao*, from the dynastic histories.

Another category of Chinese accounts of foreign countries, is drawn up in the form of narratives of journeys undertaken by Chinese. It seems the Chinese never travelled for pleasure, or visited distant countries for the purpose of enlarging the sphere of their ideas, as Europeans are accustomed to do. All the narratives of travel we meet in Chinese literature, owe their origin either to military expeditions, or official missions of the Chinese emperors, or they were written by Buddhist or other pilgrims, who visited India or other parts of Asia, famed for their sanctity. The number of such reports, written by Chinese travellers, on different parts of Asia beyond China is by no