

more accurately the position of this people, which are those of Mela and Pliny, gravitate distinctly towards China in its northern aspect as the true idea involved. Thus Mela says that the remotest east of Asia is occupied by the three races, the Indians, the Seres, and the Scythians, of whom the Indians and the Scythians occupy the southern and northern extremities, the Seres the middle. Just as in a general way we might say still that the extreme east of Asia is occupied by the Indies, China, and Tartary, the three modern expressions which answer with tolerable accuracy to the India, land of Seres, and Scythia of the ancients.¹

12. Ptolemy first uses the names of SERA and SERICE, the former for the chief city, the latter for the country of the Seres, and attempts to define their position with a precision beyond what his knowledge justified, but which was the necessary result of the system of his work. Yet even his definition of Serice is quite consistent with the view that it indicated the Chinese Empire in its northern aspect, for he carries it eastward to the 180° of longitude, which is also according to his calculations, in a lower latitude, the eastern boundary of the Sinæ. In one especial point he is inferior in the justness of his views to his predecessors, for whilst Mela and Pliny both recognise the position of the Seres upon the Eastern Ocean which terminates Asia, no such ocean is recognised by Ptolemy (so far as I can discover) in any part of his work. The Ravenna Geographer denounces as an impious error the idea that there is in the extreme east an ocean passing from south to north.

13. Ammianus Marcellinus devotes some paragraphs to a description of the Seres and their country. It is no more than a conversion of the dry statements of Ptolemy into fine writing, with the addition of some more or less fabulous particulars about their mode of growing silk and carrying on commerce, which are similar to those given by Pliny. One passage indeed of the geographical description of Ammianus is startling at first sight in its seeming allusion to the Great Wall; and in this sense it has been understood by Lassen, and apparently also by Reinaud.²

¹ See Extracts from Mela and Pliny in Notes III and IV.

² See *Lassen*, ii, 536, and Reinaud's translation of the passage in *Rel. Pol.*