

33. If such trivialities as most of these were all on which to build, the identification with the Roman empire would not be very satisfactory. But in addition to the name of *Fulin*, and the position ascribed to the kingdom as lying N.W. of Persia, others of the details, though the mention of some of them has a dash of the whimsicality of Chinese taste, appear to be genuine touches from the reports of those who had visited Constantinople. The account of the coral fishery and the horse-posts have already been alluded to, as well as the desire ascribed to the kings of Tathsin for a direct communication with the Middle Kingdom, which has its counterpart in the statements of Procopius and Menander about the silk trade. The compass of 100 *li* or 20 miles, ascribed to the capital of Fulin, nearly corresponds with that estimated by Benjamin of Tudela, and by popular opinion in the city itself.¹ It stands upon the shore of the sea; the houses are very lofty, and built of stone; the population extends to 100,000 fires (say 500,000 souls); the adjoining boroughs, villages, and houses are in such numbers as to form an almost unbroken succession.² The palaces and other great houses of the capital had colonaded porticoes, and parks with rare animals; there were twelve principal ministers, distinguished by titles of honour, who directed the administration of the empire.³ One great gate of the city towards the

Odoric, at p. xlv of *Appendix*. In the Byzantine History of Nicephorus Gregorias, there is a curious account of some Blondins of those days, whose itinerancies extended from Egypt through Constantinople to Cadiz, and who, in their funambulistic exhibitions, shot arrows standing on the rope, and *carried boys on their shoulders* across it at a vast height from the ground, etc. (viii, 10).

¹ Benjamin says eighteen miles (p. 74). According to Gibbon, it was really between ten and eleven. "Ambitus urbis non attingit tredecim milliaria . . . si ejus situs collinus in planitiem explicaretur, in ampliorem dilataretur latitudinem, attamen nondum ad magnitudinem *quam vulgo Byzantini ei attribuunt, videlicet duo de vingti miliariorum.*" (*Pet. Gyllius de Topog. Constant in Banduri, Imp. Orientale, Venet., 1729, i, 284*; see also *Ducange, Const. Christiana.*)

² When King Sigurd sails into Constantinople, he steers near the shore, and sees that "over all the land there are burghs, castles, country towns, the one upon the other without interval." (*The Saga of Sigurd—Early Travels in Palestine, p. 58.*)

³ The Empire, whilst entire, was divided into *thirteen* dioceses; but of