



A Historiographical Analysis of the Existing Relationships between the Roman Empire in the Early Principate and the Kushan Empire

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Abstract

The rule of the Julio-Claudian dynasty was a period of economic development and stability in the Roman Empire. During this time, the Romans strengthened their relationships with neighbouring countries, which were trade-driven. One of the most important trading routes was the Silk Road, that connected the Roman Empire with the East. The Kushan Empire was an empire located in modern-day India, which was an important link of the Silk Road. The Roman Empire and the Kushan Empire lived a period of economic growth during the same period and researchers suggest that in this time there was contact between the Roman Empire and the Kushan Empire. However, little has been researched on the nature of the relationship between the two empires. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to shed a light on the relationship between the Roman Empire and the Kushan Empire. Specifically, it aims at exploring whether diplomatic and trade contacts happened between the two empires. This thesis answers its question using an historiographical analysis of four primary sources. The findings and the limitations of the research are discussed.

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1. Introduction

Trade

Trade is, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary: “the business of buying and selling, or bartering commodities”.¹ It has always played a determining role in the establishment and development of social, economic and political interactions between humans. Trade is not just about the exchange of materials and goods between individuals or national entities. Nor is it only about borders and export and import of commodities. It is a powerful tool to foster or jeopardize bonds between nations.² Throughout history, trade facilitated journeys to unknown lands to exchange goods with foreign people, and developed as an instrument to pursue political goals. In fact, international trade is the drive to economic prosperity of today’s world, and the very foundation of nations’ agendas.³ Furthermore, it allows people to earn a living and invest money in many different assets. At the base of the growth of international trade is the people’s need to engage and deal with one another. Doing business also involves sharing uses, habits and cultural differences, and the two parts of a trade deal supposedly are both economically and culturally enriched.⁴ This has been true already in ancient times, as trade allowed empires to grow and develop themselves.

Trade in the Roman Empire during the Principate

Trade was also an important aspect in ancient Rome. Because of territorial expansion, urban growth and population shifts, the Roman empire had many mouths to feed. Already the city of Rome had a population estimated to be around one million during the Empire and they had to have access to enough food.⁵ The same held for the huge army that was professionally employed by the Romans. Next to this, technological advancements, taxation and an agricultural surplus created a fertile ground for trade to flourish upon.⁶ Trade was done not only with food, but also with other products, such as leather, glass, pottery, textile and construction materials like gold, silver, copper, wood, marble and glass. Lastly, for the Romans there was also a considerable slave trade, as slaves were used for anything in everyday Roman life.⁷ Many of these products were found within the expanding borders of the Roman Empire. Wine and slaves were imported from Egypt, olive oil, gold, silver and copper from Spain, Iron and wood and glass from Gaul.⁸ However, many luxury products such as spices, silk, perfume and ivory came from territories, outside of the Roman Empire, such as Arabia, India and (southeast-)Asia. In return for these products, the Romans exported glass, wines, linen, coral and pottery. The foreign products entered the Roman Empire by boat through the Italian port of Ostia, the Spanish port of Gades or the Egyptian port of Alexandria, or were transported over land.

¹ Trade. (n.d.) In Merriam-Webster’s collegiate dictionary. Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/trade>

² Pigman G.A. (2016) International Trade as Diplomacy. *Trade Diplomacy Transformed*. International Political Economy Series. Palgrave Macmillan, London. P.1

³ Ibid. p.1

⁴ Ibid. p.1

⁵ Tchernia, A. (2016). *The Romans and trade*. Oxford University Press. p.5

⁶ Ibid. p. 5-9

⁷ Cartwright, M. (2018, April 12) *Trade in the Roman World*. Retrieved from <https://www.ancient.eu/article/638/trade-in-the-roman-world/> on 5 January 2020

⁸ Charlesworth, M. P. (2016). *Trade-routes and Commerce of the Roman Empire*. Cambridge University Press. p. 4-6

The Silk Road

The most important trading route that connected the Roman Empire with the East was the “Silk Road”.⁹ The silk road was a network of trading posts, positioned strategically all over modern day Asia. This network enabled the exchange, distribution and storage of goods.¹⁰ Figure 1¹¹ gives an idea of what the Silk Road might have looked like in the time of Augustus. It is not sure whether this was exactly what the road looked like during this period, but many historians confirm that it at least must have been similar to what is displayed.¹² The silk road enabled trade between the Roman Empire and empires in Asia.¹³ The Silk Road went as far as present-day China. There is some evidence of an empire in China that might have had contacts with the Romans during this time and that was a very important provider of silk. The people from this place were called the Seres. Other trade routes reached the northern border of present-day India, where the Kushan Empire was located.

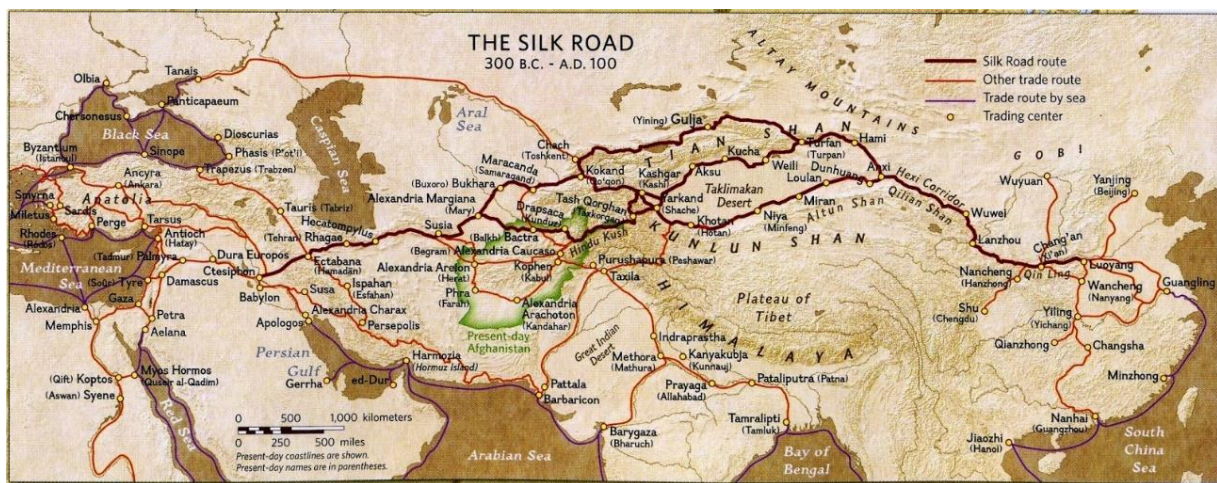


Figure 1

The Kushan Empire was an important link in the chain of the Silk Road. It was one of the many empires that could be found in current day India and was of these empires presumably Rome’s largest trading partner. The Kushan Empire is believed to have consisted of present-day Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kashmir, parts of Soviet and Chinese Central Asia, and much of the Ganges plain in India.¹⁴ Figure 2¹⁵ shows a map of the Kushan Empire and what was believed to be its greatest size around 150 A.D.. Because of its strategic position, the Kushan empire gained an important function as a link between the seagoing trade towards the Indian ocean and the trade of the silk road over land. This gave the Kushans a lot of influence over the trade within that area.

⁹ Ibid. 7 (on p. 2)

¹⁰ The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica (2019). Silk Road. In *Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.* Retrieved from Encyclopædia Britannica on 4 January 2020.

¹¹ Corey, C. (2019, May 13). *Shaping the Future: A History of China-African Relations driven by Cooperation and Beauty* retrieved from <http://canadianpatriot.org/the-power-of-classical-culture-in-shaping-the-future-a-history-of-china-african-relations-driven-by-cooperation-and-beauty/>

¹² Ibid. 10

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Thorley, J. (1979). The Roman Empire and the Kushans. *Greece & Rome*, 26(2), 181-190. P. 181-182

¹⁵ Kushan Empire (ca. 150 A.D.) [online image]. (2000) Retrieved 5 January 2020 from https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/kush/hd_kush.htm



Figure 2

Relevance

Historians and researchers alike have not yet researched the nature of the contacts between the Roman Empire and the Far East to a great extent. This thesis aims to examine whether there existed trade and diplomatic relationships between the Roman empire and the Far East. It studies what the extent of Rome's influence was and tries to see how far this influence reached by investigating the relationships with empires at the ends of the silk road. This thesis will delve into the position that Rome held within the international political context in the Early Principate. It will try and form a basis on which further research can be built and from which some valuable new perceptions can be shaped.

This thesis addresses the following research question:

What relationships existed between the Roman Empire in the Early Principate (27 BC – 68 AD) and India, particularly the Kushan empire, and what was the nature of these relationships?

Methodology

This thesis will answer the question primarily by studying primary sources. The number of primary sources that discuss the contact between Rome and the Far East in the Early Roman Principate is scarce. This thesis collects the four primary sources that include at least one relevant paragraph on the relation between the Roman Empire and India in the Early Roman Principate: 1) The 'Res Gestae Divi Augusti', written by Augustus himself between 10 and 14 A.D.; 2) Cassius Dio, *Roman History* written between 211 to 233 A.D.; 3) Lucius Florus, *Epitome of Roman history* written in the beginning of the 2nd century A.D. and 4) Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* from 77 A.D. The sources are analysed according to the techniques and

guidelines of historical methodology. Since any translation is an interpretation of the text, the thesis takes the original Latin or Greek text as the point of departure of the study. Wherever necessary, the English translation that was done by experts will be critically evaluated against the literal meaning of the original Latin or Greek words. The thesis carefully assesses the historical value and reliability of the authors and their historical works, including paragraphs on so-called source criticism. In order to have a proper understanding of the primary sources, the thesis explains concepts, events and ideas, familiar to the Romans, but not necessarily to the modern reader. This thesis will also be using secondary sources to provide background information that is necessary for examining the four primary sources.

The time period that will be discussed in this thesis is the time period of the early Roman Empire under Julio-Claudian emperors' rule. To be exact, it starts with the beginning of the Roman Empire in 27 B.C. when Emperor Augustus comes to power and it ends with the death of Nero in 68 B.C., marking the end of the imperial rule by the Julio-Claudian dynasty. This time period is an extremely interesting time to research as it is a period in which Rome's territory expanded greatly and in which Rome also developed immensely on a cultural and economic level. Next to this, the Early Roman Empire is fairly well documented, particularly compared to earlier periods in Roman history.

The next chapter of this thesis will go into the historical and political context of the Early Roman Empire and the Far East. This chapter will furthermore explain some important notions of diplomacy and how diplomacy was practiced in the Roman Empire. The third Chapter will analyse the four primary sources and link them to the research question. Finally the conclusion will, through summarizing the most important information and connecting the different parts, come to an answer to the research question.

2. Historical and Political Framework

This chapter aims at providing the necessary historical and political context in which trade and diplomatic contacts between the Roman empire and the Kushans took place.

Augustus

The Imperial age started under the rule of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. The emperors Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Nero belonged to this dynasty.¹⁶

In 27 B.C., Augustus returned to Rome as its sole leader after almost three decades of civil war. When he did, he restored his power to the Senate and the Roman people¹⁷. He had come back to a Roman empire that was unstable and searching for stability.¹⁸ Augustus knew that if he wanted to restore peace in the empire, while still keeping a part of his powers intact, he had to make a compromise with the Senate. Augustus made sure that the Senate's dignity was restored and the Senate in turn gave Augustus certain powers that confirmed his position as 'primus inter pares'.¹⁹ He received the *tribunicia potestas*, which made Augustus inviolable and granted him the right of veto, while he himself could not be vetoed upon. Furthermore, Augustus had received the *imperium proconsulare maius*, which put him above all governors of the provinces, and made him the commander of the Roman troops.²⁰ In 19 B.C. Augustus received a lifelong imperial consulship. This made it possible for him to gain all the power and immunities that fall under the consulship, without him officially taking that title. Augustus could, through power of this special imperial consulship, preside over the assemblies and the Senate, and propose legislation.²¹ It was thanks to the accumulation of republican powers that Augustus managed to become the most powerful person in Rome.

Borders of the Roman Empire

During the rule of the Julio Claudian emperors, the Roman Empire reached a large size. The rivers Euphrates, Danube and Rhine were considered to be the natural borders of the Roman Empire, even though there were some areas beyond these rivers that were under the control of Rome, the so called 'client states'.²² Figure 1²³ presents the borders of the Roman Empire during the rule of Augustus. The yellow coloured areas are the territories that were already under Roman control before the rule of Augustus. The green coloured areas have been conquered during Augustus' reign. These are Egypt, Galatia, Dalmatia, Raetia, Iberus, and the northern part of Gallia. The pink areas were 'client states' of the Roman Empire. These are states that were not conquered by the Romans, but that were politically, economically or militarily

¹⁶ Hekster, O., Claes, L., Manders, E., Slootjes, D., Klaassen, Y., & de Haan, N. (2015). Nero's ancestry and the construction of imperial ideology in the early empire. A methodological case study. *Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology*, 1(4). P.8

¹⁷ Galinsky, K. (2012). *Augustus : Introduction to the life of an emperor*. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com>. P.61-83

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Grant, M. (2019). Augustus. In *Encyclopædia Britannica, inc*. Retrieved from Encyclopædia Britannica on 18 December 2019.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Wasson, D.L. (2016, January 5) *The Extent of the Roman Empire*. Retrieved from <https://www.ancient.eu/article/851/the-extent-of-the-roman-empire/> on 18 December 2019

²³ By Cristiano64 - Lavoro proprio, self-made, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2452303>

dependent on the Roman empire.²⁴ The white areas were the areas that were not under Roman control. Some of these were states that did maintain friendly relations with the Romans. Examples of these are the Parthians, Sarmatians, Scythians, Bastarnae, Dacians and Armanians. In some instances, these relations of friendship were partially instigated by a fear of being annexed by the expanding Roman empire and by establishing these relationships the nations hoped to remain independent.²⁵



Figure 3

The Kushan Empire

Figure 3 shows in the most eastern side of the map the Caspian sea. The Indian empires laid even further away, as is shown by figure 1. The distance between the Caspian sea and the top of India was roughly two thousand kilometres. To go from Rome to the Caspian sea was roughly another two thousand kilometres. This was an enormous distance that had to be covered by foot or by horse and took a lot of time and effort. Through some historical sources that will be discussed in a next chapter, there is great reason to believe that the middlemen and caravans facilitated trade relations between the Romans and the Kushan empire.²⁶ Before delving deeper into these relations, it is important to establish some ground information about the foreign, far away empire that the Romans were dealing with.

²⁴ Client state. In *The Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*. Retrieved January 4, 2020, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/client%20state>

²⁵ Goldsworthy, A. (2016). *Pax romana : War, peace, and conquest in the roman world*. New Haven: Yale University Press. P.18

²⁶ Thorley, J. (1979). The Roman Empire and the Kushans. *Greece & Rome*, 26(2), 181-190.

At the end of the 1st century B.C. and in the beginning of the 1st century A.D. many little kingdoms and empires came into existence in India, after the disintegration of the large empire of the Mauryan.²⁷ Despite this fragmentation, a period of economic prosperity began through the increasing trade with close neighbours and distant nations such as Central Asia, Southeast Asia and the eastern Mediterranean.²⁸ One of the empires that managed to benefit from its strategic geographic position in this period of flourishing trade over longer distances was the Kushan Empire.

The Kushan Empire, as can be seen in figures 1 and 2, most likely stretched itself around the area of the Great Indian Desert. The inhabitants of the empire were a mixed group of Indo-Europeans, who had been driven to this area by the so-called “Huns”.²⁹ The location of the empire, especially the Ghandara region, was much sought-after land. It was located right in the middle of the silk road and had access to both fertile land and water ports. For this reason the land had been conquered by many. First by Alexander the Great from 327/26 to 325/24 B.C., then by his Indo-Greek successors in the third to second centuries B.C., and after that by a combination of Scythians and Parthians around the second to the first centuries B.C.³⁰ Since so many different people from different cultures had been living in the area, the mixture of nationalities and religions in the Kushan Empire was great.³¹ Governing them was done through a, most likely, three- tiered system: Locally, provincially and centrally.³² Above this all stood the king. These kings were believed to be “Sons of God” and were deified during their rule and after their death. It is believed that the king had unlimited powers and ruled without councillors or advisory body. In the Empire there were officials performing civil and military functions. They were called *dandanayaka* and *mahadandanayaka*.³³ These officials were responsible for carrying out administrative and military functions in different parts of the empire. What fell under their duties was, for example, being the police commissioner, judge in criminal administrative justice or military commander.³⁴ On the local level there were village heads, or *gramika*, that would collect information about crimes in the area.³⁵ An interesting fact is that, at the higher levels of government, the Kushans installed foreigners, to prevent disorder, disagreement and to enhance efficiency.³⁶

As was the case in the Roman Empire, within the Kushan Empire there was a period of peace and prosperity in the 1st century AD. This prosperity was the result of four factors.³⁷ Firstly, the farm lands and agriculture of a large region were united in the Kushan Empire. Secondly,

²⁷ Subrahmanyam, S, Champakalakshmi, R. (2020). India. In *Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.* Retrieved from Encyclopædia Britannica on 12 January 2020.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Puri, B. N. (1994). The Kushans. *History of civilizations of Central Asia*, 2, 247-263.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Department of Asian Art (2000, October). “Kushan Empire (ca. Second Century B.C.–Third Century A.D.).” In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/kush/hd_kush.htm

³² McLaughlin, R. (2016). *The Roman Empire and the Silk Routes: The Ancient World Economy & the Empires of Parthia, Central Asia & Han China*. Pen and Sword. P. 81-85

³³ Ibid. 31

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Mukhamedjanov, A. R. (1994). Economy and social system in Central Asia in the Kushan Age. *History of civilizations of Central Asia*, 2, 265-290.

because of the governmental system that was implemented, there were long periods of political stability. Thirdly, on the agricultural level, many developments were made, such as crop irrigation. Fourthly, the Kushans expanded their trade relations with China, India and other countries in the near east.³⁸ These four things lead to developments in the social and economic lives of the inhabitants and an increase in trade with other nations.³⁹ A similar period of prosperity, wealth and development also occurred in the Roman empire, with the start of the period called “Pax Romana”.

“Pax Romana”

During the reign of the Julio-Claudian emperors, there was a period known as the period of “Pax Romana” or Roman Peace. This period was a time of general peace in the whole of the Roman Empire with fights limited to the outer borders that were protected by the Roman army.⁴⁰ The “Pax Romana” is said to have started when Augustus came to power in 27 B.C., and lasted until the end of the reign of emperor Marcus Aurelius in 180 A.D.⁴¹ For the Romans, the period of peace started with the closing of the double doors of the temple of Janus in 29 B.C. The “Pax Romana” was also called the “Pax Augusta”. The association between Augustus and the “Pax Romana” comes from the stability that Augustus had brought to the Roman Empire.⁴² During the “Pax Romana” there was not necessarily peace because there was no conflict with other states, there was peace because other states were reluctant to engage in war with the Roman Empire. This is because the Roman Empire was the superior military superpower. Chances of other military powers to win a fight from the Romans were slim.⁴³ Augustus had set up a permanent and professional army that was estimated to consist of a quarter million man at the time of Augustus’ death. Never before in that time had it been done that a state employed such a large army permanently.⁴⁴ This large army was necessary to maintain the growing empire of the Romans. The legionaries were never evenly distributed over the whole territory of the Roman Empire, but were placed there where they were most needed. For example, during the rule of Augustus the bulk of the army was located in modern day Egypt, Spain and Balkan countries and on the borders with the Germanic tribes. This makes sense, because these were the newly conquered areas that still needed extra surveillance to prevent any uprisings to guarantee a smooth transition period.⁴⁵ Foreign armies had difficulties in matching the Roman army and often did not have the strength to beat them. This made the Roman Empire the military superpower of that time.⁴⁶ During this period in time, the Roman Empire was able to flourish⁴⁷, because the empire became an economic unit where the essentials for life were easy to obtain and there was more wealth since the lack of war decreased the

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica (2018). Kushan dynasty. In *Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.* Retrieved from Encyclopædia Britannica on 5 January 2020.

⁴⁰ Ibid 27 p.18

⁴¹ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica (2019). Pax Romana. In *Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.* Retrieved from Encyclopædia Britannica on 4 January 2020.

⁴² Parchami, A. (2009). *Hegemonic Peace and Empire: The Pax Romana, Britannica and Americana*. Routledge.. ISBN 978-1-134-00704-2. p. 25

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 25 (on p. 7) p. 301

⁴⁵ Ibid p. 302-303

⁴⁶ Ibid p. 317

⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 18

amount of money that needed to be spent on warfare, armies and protection. Since the Roman Empire was a military power and the other nations were cautious and did not want to provoke a fight with them, the Romans were able to focus on building more stable relationships with the neighbouring states, through an early form of diplomacy.

Diplomacy

An important tool in modern-day relations between nations is diplomacy. The Encyclopaedia Britannica gives as a definition for diplomacy: “the established method of influencing the decisions and behaviour of foreign governments and peoples through dialogue, negotiation, and other measures short of war or violence.”⁴⁸ Although diplomatic practices have their roots in antiquity, there are substantial differences. Diplomacy today is a practice done mostly by professionals who have trained and studied for it. These professionals represent their respective countries or entities in political meetings, negotiations and other activities.⁴⁹ Furthermore, they protect and promote the interests of their nation and encourage friendly relationships. The professionals can discuss and sign diplomatic agreements on behalf of their client.⁵⁰ There are different types of diplomatic agreements. The most important and authoritative is a treaty: a written agreement that is binding to all parties under international law. Treaties can be multilateral and bilateral and can be concluded between individual states or international organisations. The second and almost equally influential is a convention. Conventions are always multilateral and are made up of laws, codes or regulations. The third is an agreement. Agreements are less formal than treaties and virtually always bilateral. For the most part, agreements deal with niche areas and topics. Finally there is the protocol. Protocols are prolongations, supplements or amendments of already existing agreements, conventions and treaties.⁵¹ Over time, the international world has seen the use of these four instruments drastically increase. In contrast, during antiquity, formal, binding agreements were used only very little.⁵²

Diplomacy in the Roman Empire

There has been very little research on the topic of diplomacy in the Early Roman Empire. Chances are that this is because the Early Roman Empire was a period of relative stability, with good external security and very little major external threats.⁵³ Next to this, on the matter of diplomacy in this period, very little primary sources can be found, and the sources that do exist often contain contradictions. However, along the extensive borders of the Roman Empire there was a lot of contact with different cultures, languages and people. Because of this there have been forms of diplomacy but in different shapes than we might think of beforehand.

Diplomacy in the Roman Empire was undertaken differently from how it is done in modern times.⁵⁴ The Romans did not have a formal and permanent institution that concerned itself only

⁴⁸ Freeman, C. W. & Marks, S. (2019). Diplomacy. In *Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.* Retrieved from Encyclopædia Britannica on 5 January 2020.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Campbell, B. (2001). Diplomacy in the Roman world (c.500 BC-AD 235). *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 12:1, 1-22, DOI: 10.1080/09592290108406185

⁵³ Millar, F., Cotton, H., & Rogers, G. M. (2004). *Government, society, and culture in the Roman Empire*. University of North Carolina Press. P.195

⁵⁴ Burton, P. J. (2018). Roman Diplomacy. *The Encyclopaedia of Diplomacy*, 1-10.

with maintaining Rome's diplomatic relations. Instead, diplomacy was carried out by the Senate and the magistrates in the Roman Republic and later primarily by the Emperor.⁵⁵ They would have delegations that would carry out negotiation for them. The members of the senate or magistrates that would lead the delegation were not professional diplomats, but were nonetheless expected to bring the negotiations to a fruitful ending.⁵⁶ The Romans mostly conducted offensive diplomacy. This means that they relied on their military strength to convince others to negotiate with them. Romans valued good faith as the principle that had to underly all contacts.⁵⁷ Furthermore, diplomacy was always carried out through personal contact and face to face discussions and negotiations. Letters were used to set up meetings, lay down the previously discussed agreements or work out the protocol of the diplomatic visit. Protocol was another important element in the diplomatic conduct of the Romans. Furthermore, preceding a diplomatic meeting and sometimes following the meeting, it was customary to present gifts. When the Romans accepted these gifts that meant that they accepted the delegation that arrived and agreed with the terms on which the negotiation was going to be held, that were presented in the letter preceding the meeting. The functions of Roman diplomacy were as follows. Firstly it was a method used for peace-making. Secondly, it arranged the distribution of spoils. Thirdly, it lay at the foundations of establishing a treaty. The treaties could be about new alliances, trade or accords made after a war. Fourthly, it was a means of settling commercial disputes and regulating trade in other ways than by treaties.⁵⁸

Treaties were held in high esteem by the Romans. They were set up according to guidelines and recorded on bronze or stone tablets that were then published in governmental or public areas such as the forum⁵⁹. The Romans valued treaties as important documents and made sure to follow the rules that were set out within them. However, the Romans rather were not subject to a binding contract⁶⁰ and therefore, often entered into relations of friendship that were bilateral and flexible. There were very little obligations that followed from these friendship relations. When an ordinary treaty could oblige the Romans to support the other party in case they were under threat, a treaty of friendship would see support of the Romans as appreciated but not obligatory. A treaty of friendship's only obligation was mutual loyalty and trust. Most of Rome's diplomatic relations were relations of friendship that evolved during wartime on the basis of other states having a mutual enemy, having officially surrendered, being defeated or expecting an attack (either by the Romans or others) and hoping to prevent this by showing loyalty to the Romans.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Campbell, B. (2001). Diplomacy in the Roman world (c.500 BC-AD 235). *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 12:1, 1-22, DOI: 10.1080/09592290108406185

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 54 (on p. 10)

⁶¹ Ibid.

3. Historiographical Analysis of the Four Primary Sources

With the advent of the Julio-Claudian dynasty and the rule of Augustus, the Roman Empire knew a period of stability and economic prosperity. The Roman state flourished and its borders stretched to new territories. The newfound peace was maintained with the aid of a large, permanent army that deterred any aggressive behaviour by the bordering tribes and nations. Diplomacy emerged as a tool to impose the Roman's authority, and it enlarged their hold over the empire and even the world. Countries that were not directly militarily threatened by the Romans still felt the urge to maintain friendly relations with the Roman Empire. The Romans used treaties of friendship to make these relations official. The Kushan Empire was a nation, strategically positioned in the north of modern day India near the silk road that was a main trade route between ancient Europe and ancient Asia. The Kushans experienced a period of economic and cultural prosperity simultaneously with the Roman Empire under Augustus. This chapter will examine whether there have been trade and/or diplomatic contacts between the Roman Empire and the Kushan Empire in the Early Modern Principate through the analysis of the following four primary sources : 1) Lucius Florus, *Epitome of Roman history*; 2) *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, written by Augustus; 3) Cassius Dio, *Roman History* and 4) Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*.

1) Lucius Florus, *Epitome of Roman history*, II.34

Life of Lucius Florus and value of *Epitome of Roman history* as a source

Very little is known about the Roman historian and poet Florus. His full name was Publius Annus Florus and he was born in the 2nd century A.D. in Africa.⁶² The text “*Epitome de T. Livio bellorum omnium annorum DCC*” (“Abridgement from Livy of All the Wars over 700 Years”)⁶³ or, as it is better known, “*Epitome of Roman history*”, is accredited to Florus. The manuscript mentions the writer to be Lucius Annus or Julius, but the style of writing is very similar to another work of Publius Annus Florus. The book is a retelling of Roman history, based largely on the writings of Livy.⁶⁴ The style in which it is written is bombastic and rhetorical and mostly promotes the greatness of Rome. The text has been criticized for containing many geographical and chronological mistakes.⁶⁵ Despite a number of inaccuracies, the text has been used as a general overview of Roman history in the Middle Ages.⁶⁶ Through this, the text has been preserved quite well. The *Epitome of Roman history* is a large work, covering 700 years. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that not all parts of the text can be accurate. Next to this, Florus has based his work mostly on Livy, who focused more on literacy than historical accuracy.

Explanation and analysis of the relevant excerpts

The relevant excerpt is Flor., *Ep.*, II.34.61-62 and is entitled “The peace with Parthia and the deification of Augustus”.

⁶² The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica (2019). Publius Annus Florus. In *Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.* Retrieved from Encyclopædia Britannica on 18 December 2019.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

[61] *Omnibus ad occasum et meridiem pacatis gentibus, ad septentrionem quoque, dum taxat intra Rhenum atque Danuvium, item ad orientem intra Cyrum et Euphraten, illi quoque reliqui, qui immunes imperii erant, sentiebant tamen magnitudinem et victorem gentium populum Romanum reverebantur.* [62] *Nam et Scythae misere legatos et Sarmatae amicitiam petentes. Seres etiam habitantesque sub ipso sole Indi, cum gemmis et margaritis elephantos quoque inter munera trahentes, nihil magis quam longinquitatem viae inputabant—quadriennium inpleverant; et iam ipse hominum color ab alio venire caelo fatebatur.*

[61] Now that all the races of the west and south were subjugated, and also the races of the north, those at least between the Rhine and the Danube, and of the east between the Cyrus and the Euphrates, the other nations too, who were not under the rule of the empire, yet felt the greatness of Rome and revered its people as the conqueror of the world. [62] For the Scythians and the Sarmatians sent ambassadors seeking friendship; the Seres too and the Indians, who live immediately beneath the sun. Though they brought elephants amongst their gifts as well as precious stones and pearls, regarded their long journey, in the accomplishment of which they had spent four years, as the greatest tribute which they rendered; and indeed their complexion proved that they came from beneath another sky.

The text immediately following this excerpt gives us a clear idea about when and to whom these ambassadors came.

Flor., Ep., II.34, 63-66

[63] *Parthi quoque, quasi victoriae paeniteret, rapta clade Crassiana signa ultro rettulere.* [64] *Sic ubique certa atque continua totius generis humani aut pax fuit aut pactio, aususque tandem Caesar Augustus septingentesimo ab urbe condita anno Ianum geminum cludere, bis ante se clusum sub Numa rege et victa primum Carthagine.* [65] *Hinc conversus ad pacem primum in omnia mala et in luxuriam fluens saeculum gravibus severisque legibus multis coercuit, ob haec tot facta ingentia dictus imperator perpetuus et pater patriae.* [66] *Tractatum etiam in senatu, an, quia condidisset imperium, Romulus vocaretur; sed sanctius et reverentius visum est nomen Augusti, ut scilicet iam tum, dum colit terras, ipso nomine et titulo consecraretur.*

[63] “The Parthians too, as though they repented of their victory, voluntarily returned the standards which they had won at the time of Crassus’ defeat. [64] Thus everywhere throughout the inhabited world there was firmly-established and uninterrupted peace or truce, and Caesar Augustus ventured at last, in the seven hundredth year since the foundation of the city, to close the double doors of the temple of Janus, which had previously been shut on two occasions only, in the reign of Numa and after the first defeat of Carthage. [65] Next, devoting himself to securing tranquillity, by many strict and severe enactments he restrained an age which was prone to every vice and readily led into luxury. For all these great achievements he was named Perpetual Emperor and Father of his Country. [66] It was also discussed in the senate whether he should not be called Romulus, because he had established the empire; but the name of Augustus was deemed more holy and venerable, in order that, while he still dwelt

*upon earth, he might be given a name and
title which raised him to the rank of a deity.”*

Flor., *Ep.*, II.34.64 refers to a “firmly-established and uninterrupted peace or truce” and states that Caesar Augustus was able to “close the double doors of the temple of Janus”. He did so in 29 BC. The closing of the double doors of Janus has been a tradition in Roman history. The doors have a natural state of being open. Only when there was no war at all in Rome, the doors would be closed.⁶⁷ So, if Rome was at war, the doors of the temple of Janus would be open, if Rome was at peace, the doors would be closed.⁶⁸ Only on two occasions had the doors been closed before the start of the Pax Romana. Florus mentions them: “the reign of Numa and after the first defeat of Carthage”. The first occasion was during the reign of Numa Pompilius who is believed to have been Rome’s second king, succeeding Romulus. Numa was believed to be the person who brought peace, stability and prosperity over the city that Romulus before him had just founded with a great deal of violence.⁶⁹ Numa supposedly gave the order to build the temple of Janus and was the first person to close its doors to signify peace coming over Rome.⁷⁰ The second occasion that led to the closing of the doors of the temple of Janus was in 235 B.C. when Rome celebrated its victory over Carthage after seizing the island of Sardinia in the aftermath of the first Punic war and believing that now they had successfully put an end to all disturbances in the empire.⁷¹

In *Ep.*, II.34.63, Florus refers to the “standards” that the Parthians had won after defeating Marcus Licinius Crassus, who had invaded Mesopotamia with his army. Parthia (Regnum Parthorum) was a large Empire that, at the time of Augustus, was ruled by Phraates V. The Parthian empire was located on the crossroad between the Greco-Roman world and Asia so that it had a large influence over the trade routes that had to cross this land. This brought the Parthians great wealth and power and turned them into a rival of the Romans. The defeat of Crassus by the Parthians occurred in 53 B.C.⁷² during a battle with the Parthian army in central Mesopotamia. During the battle, Crassus was asked to negotiate a safe retreat, but was killed in a scuffle that happened after the Parthians tried to take Crassus prisoner. After the Parthians had won, they took the military standards that Crassus’ army carried with them on their conquests as evidence of the Parthian victory.⁷³ This implies that if, as we may believe from the text of Florus, the Parthians now voluntarily returned these standards, they must have feared the Roman Imperial army.

Florus talks about two titles that were given to Augustus in *Ep.*, II.34.65. Firstly, the title Perpetual Emperor. Emperor originally meant commander in Latin. Giving this title to Augustus would show that the Republic was kept intact, as the title refers to Augustus’ military

⁶⁷ DeBrohun, J. B. (2007). The gates of war (and peace): Roman literary perspectives. *War and peace in the ancient world*, 256-78.

⁶⁸ Green, S. J. (2000). Multiple Interpretation of the Opening and Closing of the Temple of Janus: A Misunderstanding of Ovid Fasti 1.281. *Mnemosyne*, 53(3), 302-309.

⁶⁹ Silk, M. (2004). Numa Pompilius and the idea of civil religion in the west. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 72(4), 863-896.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Kramer, F. R. (1948). Massilian diplomacy before the second Punic war. *The American Journal of Philology*, 69(1), 1-26.

⁷² Braund, D. (1993). Dionysiac Tragedy in Plutarch, Crassus. *The Classical Quarterly*, 43(2), 468-474.

⁷³ Mattern-Parkes, S. P. (2003). The defeat of Crassus and the just war. *The Classical World*, 96(4), 387-396.

achievements, rather than unrivalled leadership. Later, when Augustus had gained a very strong control on the empire the title meant more what we now use as the word emperor.⁷⁴ Secondly, *Pater Patriae*, or father of the country, was a title originally given to Romulus since, according to the legend, he was the founder of Rome and thus the father of the country. Augustus was believed to have done the same thing but in a different manner. Augustus made the Roman Empire live in peace and prosperity and for this he was believed to have deserved this title. The Senate conferred the title on him in 2 B.C..⁷⁵

In *Ep.*, II.34.62, Florus mentions that the Scythians and Sarmatians had sent ambassadors to Rome. The Scythians were the nomadic inhabitants of the Eurasian steppes.⁷⁶ The Sarmatians were another nomadic tribe that lived east of the Scythians.⁷⁷ There is very little evidence of contact between the Scythians and Sarmatians with the Romans. If they, as Florus says, indeed sent ambassadors to the Romans to seek their friendship, even these distant nomads must have felt the threat of the strong Romans.

After the Scythians and Sarmatians, Florus mentions the Seres and the Indians. In order to address the research question, this reference is important. Florus does not directly reference to the Kushans. The Kushan Empire was, however, the most powerful Indian nation and lay closest to the trade route of the Romans, so there is reason to believe that the Indians that were mentioned by Florus were the Kushans or, at least, included the Kushans.⁷⁸ The Seres were a people that were known by other people for the trade in silk. Etymologically the word ‘Seres’ is derived from the Greek word “Σῆρες” which was used as a word for silk. The Seres were literally “the silk people”. Possibly the Seres lived in a part of present-day China. If you look at a map of the world (figure 4)⁷⁹, that was issued by order of Augustus around 20 A.D., you can see that in the north there is the word “Seres” written. However, there are scholars that dispute the claim that the Seres were the Chinese people.⁸⁰ More knowledge about the Seres is not available to us today. On the map you can also see that the word ‘India’ is written, also on the top part and very close to ‘Seres’. Florus writes in *Flor., Ep.*, II.34.62 that the Indians “live immediately beneath the sun”. With this he could mean several things. He could mean that the Indians live on the equator, since the equator is the point where the earth is closest to the sun. He could also mean that the Indians must live in the sun more than the Romans. This was visible in the way their ‘complexion’ or skin colour was different from the Romans. Probably, the people that Florus describes as Indians had a more tanned skin than the Roman people and were thus believed to be from “beneath another sky” or living directly under the sun.

⁷⁴ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica (2011). Emperor. In *Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.* Retrieved from Encyclopædia Britannica on 1 December 2019.

⁷⁵ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica (2007). *Pater Patriae*. In *Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.* Retrieved from Encyclopædia Britannica on 15 December 2019.

⁷⁶ Yamauchi, E. (2007). The Scythians-Who Were They? And Why Did Paul Include Them in Colossians 3: 11. *Priscilla Papers*, 21(4), 13-18.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 25 (on p. 7)

⁷⁹ Amudu (2016, February 29). Roman map - Orbis Terrarum, 20 A.D. How the Romans saw the world.? [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://amudu-gowripalan.blogspot.com/2016/02/roman-map-orbis-terrarum-20-ad-how.html>

⁸⁰ Malinowski, G. (2012). Origin of the name Seres. *Serica—Da Qin: Studies in Archaeology, Philology and History of Sino-Western Relations (Selected Problems)*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo GAJT, 13-25.

The Indians are said to have brought the following luxury goods: elephants, precious stones and pearls. The most valuable thing the Indians had to offer the Romans, however, was the long and difficult journey they had undertaken to visit the Romans and show them their friendship. The journey had been four years and it showed the Romans that they viewed them important enough to undertake such an exploit.

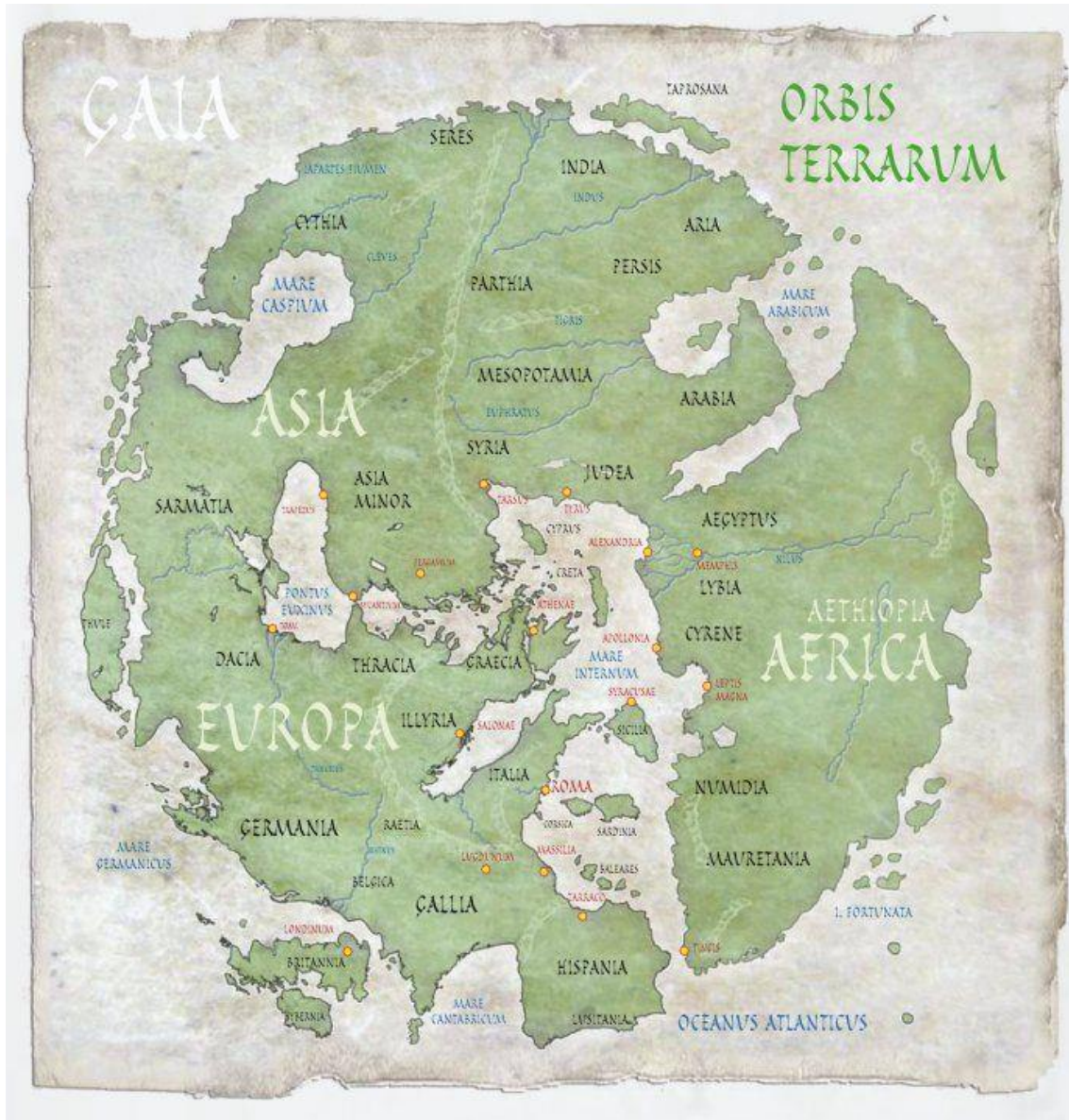


Figure 4

Conclusion

What relationships existed between the Roman Empire in the Early Principate (27 BC – 68 AD) and India, particularly the Kushan empire, and what was the nature of these relationships?

The excerpts from Lucius Florus' Epitome of Roman History partially answer the research question. The excerpts show that Roman military powers in 29 B.C. were intimidating to other nations and indicate that Rome was the greatest military power of the time.

Flor., Ep., II.34.62 shows that even peoples that did not border or have direct contacts with the Roman Empire felt the need to establish diplomatic contacts with Rome by sending ambassadors seeking friendship and ensuring good relationships with one of the most powerful empires in the world at that time. In order to do so, the Indians travelled for four years to reach Rome, and brought special and extravagant gifts to support their request.

The relationship that Florus thus alludes to was a diplomatic relationship of some kind. The nature of this relationship was for the Indians to maintain friendly relations with another nation that was getting increasingly more powerful.

2) Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, V 31

Life of Augustus

Augustus, or Gaius Octavius Thurinus as he was called when he was born in 63 B.C., was adopted by Julius Caesar.⁸¹ Through this heritage Augustus became senator and consul at an already young age. Augustus entered into a triumvirate with Marcus Antonius and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus.⁸² The three of them together controlled the west of the Roman Empire, while the murderers of Caesar, Marcus Junius Brutus and Gaius Cassius Longinus, controlled the east.⁸³ In 42 B.C. Antony and Augustus defeated Brutus and Cassius in a joined effort in the battle of Philippi and gained control over the whole empire.⁸⁴ Lepidus was side-lined relatively fast and lost his status as the third triumvir. The rivalry between Augustus and Antony for full supremacy in the whole empire escalated in 32 B.C. Augustus had convinced the senate that Anthony's loyalty no longer lay with Rome. Anthony's final testament had been leaked and in this it became clear that Anthony was leaving his legacy to the children he conceived with his mistress Cleopatra. Augustus declared war on Egypt, which was ruled by Queen Cleopatra.⁸⁵ Augustus conquered Egypt in 31 B.C. in the battle of Actium and Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide.⁸⁶ This left Augustus as the sole ruler of the entire Roman Empire. The end of the war with Marcus Antony had brought the civil war in the empire to an end, leaving it in a relative peace. In this period of peace, Augustus had the chance to experiment with different forms of governing that would define his power and put him in a supreme position.⁸⁷ Augustus prevented ruling as sole dictator like his adoptive father Caesar did before him, to prevent meeting a similar fate as him.⁸⁸ Instead, he restored the Republic and accumulated many Republican powers to his own advantage turning him into the first Roman Emperor and turning Rome into a Principate.⁸⁹

Value of the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* as a source

In his life Augustus not only devoted time to revising the public administration of Rome, expanding the empire and keeping peace, he also was the author of a number of, mostly lost, works.⁹⁰ The only remaining but also most famous work are the deeds of the divine Augustus. The text is written by Augustus himself and has the style of a eulogy.⁹¹ Augustus wrote the text in the last years of his life. Augustus had put in his will that the text should be inscribed on bronze tablets that were to be installed on his mausoleum. The text was also sent to all the Roman provinces with the order of the new emperor Tiberius that it should be published there

⁸¹ Deeds of the Divine Augustus. (2010). In B. Bonhomme & C. Boivin (Eds.), *Milestone Documents. Milestone Documents in World History: Exploring the Primary Sources That Shaped the World* (Vol. 1, pp. 267-281). Dallas, TX: Schlager Group. Retrieved from

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX2274800031/GVRL?u=tilburgb&sid=GVRL&xid=8963af44>

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Grant, M. (2019). Augustus. In *Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.* Retrieved from Encyclopædia Britannica on 1 December 2019.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 82

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 85

⁸⁹ Ibid. 82

⁹⁰ Ibid. 85

⁹¹ Ibid. 82

too. Many provinces did not follow these orders, but instead just read out the text in a meeting with local aristocrats. Some provinces, however, did inscribe the text on marble plaques near a temple for Augustus or Rome. Because this is an epigraphic source, it was kept free of transcription errors. It is a text that is written to list all the things Augustus has done for the Roman people and state. It has no complex explanations or justifications, but only includes statements of facts. The text is written in the first person in a very business-like manner. It presents a single positive image of Augustus as the restorer of the Roman republic and the protector of the citizens of Rome.⁹² The text does not provide a complete and fully accurate summary of all events in Augustus' life. It omits many of the negative things that Augustus did.⁹³ Nevertheless, the *Deeds of the Divine Augustus* is a valuable and unique source that gives insights and information about Augustus' reign.

Explanation and analysis of the relevant excerpts

The Relevant excerpt of the *Deeds of the Divine Augustus* is V.31:

[31] *Ad me ex India regum legationes saepe missae sunt non visae ante id tempus apud quemquam Romanorum ducem. Nostram amicitiam appetiverunt per legatos Bastarnae Scythaeque et Sarmatarum qui sunt citra flumen Tanaim et ultra reges, Albanorumque rex et Hiberorum et Medorum.*

[31] *Embassies were often sent to me from the kings of India, a thing never seen before in the camp of any general of the Romans. Our friendship was sought, through ambassadors, by the Bastarnae and Scythians, and by the kings of the Sarmatians who live on either side of the river Tanais and by the king of the Albani and of the Hiberi and of the Medes.*

Excerpt 29 that comes before this part gives insight as to when the embassies might have visited Augustus.

[29] *Signa militaria complura per alios duces amissa devictis hostibus recepi ex Hispania et Gallia et a Dalmateis. Parthos trium exercitum Romanorum spolia et signa reddere mihi supplicesque amicitiam populi Romani petere coegi. Ea autem signa in penetrali quod est in templo Martis Ultoris reposui.*

[29] *From Spain, Gaul and the Dalmatians, I recovered, after conquering the enemy, many military standards which had been lost by other generals. The Parthians I compelled to restore to me the spoils and standards of three Roman armies, and to seek as suppliants the friendship of the Roman people. These standards I deposited in the inner shrine which is in the Temple of Mars Ultor.*

This excerpt talks about the conquest of Gaul, Spain and the Dalmatians. The subjugation of Spain took place in 19 B.C. under the military command of Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa.⁹⁴ Not

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ *Deeds of the Divine Augustus*. (2010). In B. Bonhomme & C. Boivin (Eds.), *Milestone Documents. Milestone Documents in World History: Exploring the Primary Sources That Shaped the World* (Vol. 1, pp. 267-281). Dallas, TX: Schlager Group. Retrieved from.

⁹⁴ Grant, M. (2019). Augustus. In *Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.* Retrieved from Encyclopædia Britannica on 1 December 2019.

only did Spain, Gaul and the Dalmatians return the military standards that had been lost by Roman generals in the past to Rome, the Parthians too returned the spoils and military standards of three Roman armies to the Romans. Augustus indicates that even the powerful Parthians sought as suppliants the friendship of the Roman people in 20 B.C. In this agreement the return of those military standards was assented to.⁹⁵ These were the standards that the Romans had lost in the battle between the Parthians and Crassus in 53 B.C. This excerpt indicates that the visit of the Indian embassies might have taken place in 19 B.C.

Augustus (V.29 and V.31) refers to ambassadors coming to the Romans from many nations: the Bastarnae, Scythians, Sarmatians, Albani, Hiberi, Medes and the Indians. The Bastarnae were a large tribe, living in northern Europe.⁹⁶ As mentioned before, the Scythians were the nomadic inhabitants of the Eurasian steppes.⁹⁷ The Sarmatians were another nomadic tribe that lived east of the Scythians.⁹⁸ The Albani inhabited the area that is now called Albania.⁹⁹ The Hiberi were the people that we call the Iberians. They were people living on the Iberian peninsula.¹⁰⁰ The Medes, were Indo-Europeans, related to the Persians. They had settled in what we now know as northeast Iran.¹⁰¹ Augustus explains in V.31 that a visit of an Indian embassy was a new phenomenon as he says that never before a delegation of the Indians had visited any Roman general.

All these people, including the Indians, were not part of the Roman Empire. However, as this piece shows us, they still sought the friendship of the Romans. Most likely they saw the Roman Empire growing and becoming more powerful and for this reason thought it important to establish good relations with them.

Conclusion

What relationships existed between the Roman Empire in the Early Principate (27 BC – 68 AD) and India, particularly the Kushan empire, and what was the nature of these relationships?

This piece has a strong correlation with the information that is provided by Florus in his “Epitome of Roman History”. Both Augustus and Florus refer to a visit by an Indian embassy, combined with the visit of ambassadors of other nations, shortly after the Parthians had returned the military standards. This shows that, even though Florus was not always entirely accurate throughout his work, most likely this part was based on actual events, because it is similar to that of Augustus who was an eye witness. Furthermore, it gives more reason to believe that some sort of diplomatic contact took place between the Romans and the Indians. Augustus focuses on the fact that this is a very unusual thing as no Indian delegation had ever visited a Roman general before. This strengthens the belief that during the rule of Augustus the Roman

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica (2017). Bastarnae. In *Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.* Retrieved from Encyclopædia Britannica on 1 December 2019.

⁹⁷ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica (2019). Scythian. In *Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.* Retrieved from Encyclopædia Britannica on 1 December 2019.

⁹⁸ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica (2018). Sarmatian. In *Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.* Retrieved from Encyclopædia Britannica on 1 December 2019.

⁹⁹ Biberaj, E. and Prifti, P.R. (2019). Albania. In *Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.* Retrieved from Encyclopædia Britannica on 1 December 2019.

¹⁰⁰ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica (2016). Iberian. In *Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.* Retrieved from Encyclopædia Britannica on 1 December 2019.

¹⁰¹ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica (2019). Mede. In *Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.* Retrieved from Encyclopædia Britannica on 1 December 2019.

Empire held such a military strength that even nations that were not directly threatened by the Romans thought it wise to stay in good contact with them.

The relationship between the Roman Empire and the Indians that Augustus describes is a diplomatic relationship. This relationship, according to Augustus, was new and still needed to be developed.

3) Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 54.9.7

Life of Cassius Dio

Cassius Dio was a Roman administrator and historian. He lived from 150 to 235 A.D. His most important work was the *Romaika*, a book of 80 volumes on the history of Rome, which was written in Greek. The book starts with the landing of *Aeneas* in Italy and ends with Cassius Dio's own consulship, most likely in 204 A.D. Cassius Dio has held many political positions in the Roman Empire. It is believed that, in 194 or 195 A.D., Cassius Dio held the praetorship.¹⁰² He then went on to govern a province in the Empire, probably an Eastern province.¹⁰³ Then Dio is believed to have become consul sometime after 204 A.D., there is a debate about when exactly, but what is known with more certainty is that he was a consul under emperor Septimus Severus who was emperor from 193 to 211 A.D..¹⁰⁴ During his consulship, Cassius Dio also was *Amicus Principis*, meaning that he was an advisory agent to the emperor.¹⁰⁵ After his consulship, Cassius Dio went on to become a Curator of Pergamum and Smyrna until he became consul for the second time in 229 A.D..¹⁰⁶

The value of *Roman History* as a source

Since Cassius Dio had held many offices in the Roman Empire, he had great opportunities for historical research and investigation and it is believed that, before writing the *Roman History*, he first conducted an investigation and collected materials.¹⁰⁷ In the beginning of his book, Cassius Dio is summarizing most of the events. Only from the first century B.C. onwards, he becomes more descriptive and detailed. Cassius Dio tries to maintain an objective perspective and is cautious in describing events that he has witnessed to prevent too much subjectivity from slipping in.¹⁰⁸ In his texts he often refers to only stating what was recording. With this he possibly makes a reference to the fact that he used references to support his story. He does not explicitly mention them but it does show that he probably did not come up with these particular pieces of history himself. Volumes 36 to 60 have survived almost intact. They describe the events from 69 B.C. to 49 A.D., with the exception of a large gap after 6 B.C. Much of the other, especially later volumes have been preserved by later historians.

For three reasons the *Romaika* of Cassius Dio is a valuable source to look for information, especially regarding events starting from the end of the Republic until the start of the third century A.D.. Firstly, Cassius Dio has described the events in his book from the most objective perspective that he could manage.¹⁰⁹ Secondly, most of his work has survived so we have a lot of information at our disposition. Lastly, Cassius Dio was, for most of his life, a Roman statesman. Through this he might have had access to many political sources and records of meetings that an ordinary citizen could not have had.

Explanation and analysis of the relevant excerpts

The text in Cassius Dio's *Roman History* that is of relevance is 54.9.8-10:

¹⁰² Barnes, T. (1984). The composition of cassius dio's "roman history". *Phoenix*, 38(3), 240-255. P. 242

¹⁰³ Ibid. p. 243

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. p. 244

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 251

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 251-252

[8] πάμπολλαι γὰρ δὴ πρεσβεῖαι πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀφίκοντο, καὶ οἱ Ἰνδοὶ προκηρυκευσάμενοι πρότερον φιλίαν τότε ἐσπέισαντο, δῶρα πέμψαντες ἄλλα τε καὶ τίγρεις, πρῶτον τότε τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις, νομίζω δ' ὅτι καὶ τοῖς Ἑλλησιν, ὁφθείσας. καὶ τι καὶ μαιράκιόν οἱ ἄνευ ὤμων, οἴους τοὺς Ἑρμᾶς ὀρῶμεν, ἔδωκαν. [9] καὶ μέντοι τοιοῦτον ὃν ἐκεῖνο ἐς πάντα τοῖς ποσὶν ἅτε καὶ χερσὶν ἐχρῆτο, τόξον τε αὐτοῖς ἐπέτεινε καὶ βέλη ἠφίει καὶ ἐσάλπιζεν, οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως: γράφω γὰρ τὰ λεγόμενα. [10] εἷς δ' οὖν τῶν Ἰνδῶν Ζάρμαρος, εἴτε δὴ τοῦ τῶν σοφιστῶν γένους ὢν, καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο ὑπὸ φιλοτιμίας, εἴτε καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ γήρως κατὰ τὸν πάτριον νόμον, εἴτε καὶ ἐς ἐπίδειξιν τοῦ τε Αὐγούστου καὶ τῶν Ἀθηναίων 'καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖσε ἦλθεν' ἀποθανεῖν ἐθελήσας ἐμνήθη τε τὰ τοῖν θεοῖν, τῶν μυστηρίων καίπερ οὐκ ἐν τῷ καθήκοντι καιρῷ, ὥς φασι, διὰ τὸν Αὐγούστον καὶ αὐτὸν μεμνημένον γενομένων, καὶ πυρὶ ἑαυτὸν ζῶντα ἐξέδωκεν.

[8] For a great many embassies came to him, and the people of India, who had already made overtures, now made a treaty of friendship, sending among other gifts tigers, which were then for the first time seen by the Romans, as also, I think by the Greeks. They also gave him a boy who had no shoulders or arms, like our statues of Hermes. [9] And yet, defective as he was, he could use his feet for everything, as if they were hands: with them he would stretch a bow, shoot missiles, and put a trumpet to his lips. [10] How he did this I do not know; I merely state what is recorded. One of the Indians, Zarmarus, for some reason wished to die, — either because, being of the caste of sages, he was on this account moved by ambition, or, in accordance with the traditional custom of the Indians, because of old age, or because he wished to make a display for the benefit of Augustus and the Athenians (for Augustus had reached Athens);— he was therefore initiated into the mysteries of the two goddesses, which were held out of season on account, they say, of Augustus, who also was an initiate, and he then threw himself alive into the fire.

The text right before the relevant excerpt (54.9.7) explains where the events from the excerpt have taken place:

[7] ὁ δὲ Αὐγούστος ἔς τε τὴν Σάμον ἐπανῆλθε κἀνταῦθα αὐθις ἐχείμασε, καὶ ἐκείνοις τε ἐλευθερίαν μισθὸν τῆς διατριβῆς ἀντέδωκε, καὶ ἄλλα οὐκ ὀλίγα προσδιώκησε.

[7] But Augustus, for his part, returned to Samos and once more passed the winter there. In recognition of his stay he gave the islanders their freedom, and he also attended to many matters of business.

As becomes quite clear, the object of the text is Augustus. He has, according to the text, returned to Samos, a Greek island. Here, Augustus concerns himself with some local matters: he “(...) gave the islanders their freedom (...)”. As we can see he also undertook other political matters: “(...) he also attended to many matters of business. (...)”. Right after this sentence, Cassius Dio continues by stating “For a great many embassies came to him (...)” In the relevant excerpt then, Augustus is the “him” that is talked about and he is at that time residing on the Greek island of Samos.

The following excerpt (54.10.1-2) gives an indication about the time in which the events have happened:

[1] ὑπάτευνε μὲν δὴ ἐν τῷ ἔτει ἐκείνῳ Γάιος Σέντιος· ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ τὸν συνάρξοντα αὐτῷ προσαποδειχθῆναι ἔδει ὁ γὰρ Αὐγουστος οὐδὲ τότε τηρηθεῖσάν οἱ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐδέξατο, στάσις τε αὐτίς ἐν τῇ Ρώμῃ συνηνέχθη καὶ σφαγαὶ συνέβησαν, ὥστε τοὺς βουλευτὰς φρουρὰν τῷ Σεντίῳ ψηφίσασθαι. [2] ἐπειδὴ τε μὴ ἠθέλησεν αὐτῇ χρῆσασθαι, πρέσβεις πρὸς τὸν Αὐγουστον, μετὰ δύο ῥαβδούχων ἕκαστον, ἔπεμψαν. μαθὼν οὖν ταῦτ' ἐκεῖνος, καὶ συνιδὼν ὅτι οὐδὲν πέρας τοῦ κακοῦ γενήσοιτο, οὐκέτ' αὐτοῖς ὁμοίως ὥσπερ καὶ πρὶν προσηνέχθη, ἀλλ' ἐκ τε τῶν πρεσβευτῶν αὐτῶν Κύντον Λουκρήτιον, καίπερ ἐν τοῖς ἐπικηρυχθεῖσιν ἀναγραφέντα, ὕπατον ἀπέδειξε, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐς τὴν Ρώμην ἠπείχθη.

[1] The consul that year was Gaius Sentius; and when it became necessary for a colleague to be elected (for Augustus on this occasion, also, did not accept the position after it had been kept open for him), factious quarrelling again took place and murders occurred, so that the senators voted a guard for Sentius; [2] and when he was unwilling to use it, they sent envoys to Augustus, each with two lictors. Now when the emperor learned of these things, realizing that there would be no end to the evil, he did not this time deal with the matter as he had before, but appointed one of the envoys themselves, Quintus Lucretius, to the consulship, though this man's name had been posted in the list of the proscribed and he hastened to Rome himself.

Gaius Sentius and Quintus Lucretius were consuls in the year 19 BC. The text comes right after the last sentence “(...) he then threw himself alive into the fire.” This suggest that the year in which Augustus was on Samos to receive the Indian embassies was probably the year 19 B.C..

Now the excerpt 54.9.8-10 is placed in a time and place and the “him” is defined as Augustus, it is important to look at what the excerpt contains with regards to other information.

The first sentence of the excerpt is very important and requires a deeper look into its meaning. The word “embassies” comes from the Greek “πρεσβεῖαι”(presbeiai). According to Liddell and Scott intermediate Greek English lexicon, this word means: I. Age or seniority, 1. rank dignity; II. An embassy, embassy 2. the body of ambassadors.¹¹⁰ In this case, the word is to be translated as an embassy. The next part of the sentence “who had already made overtures, now made a treaty of friendship” is an adequate translation of the original Greek προκηρυκευσάμενοι πρότερον φιλίαν τότε ἐσπείσαντο. The word “προκηρυκεύομαι”(prokhrukeuomai) means “having proclaimed by herald”¹¹¹, “πρότερον” (proteron) means “before”, “φιλία” (filia) means “friendship”, “τότε” (tote) means “then” and “σπένδω” (spendoo) means “making a drink offering” but is also used in the context of making treaties. The Greek-English lexicon by Liddell and Scott has as a second definition: “pour libations one with another, and, as this was the custom in making treaties or agreements, make a treaty, make peace”. If you look at these literal definitions the sentence would say that the Indians, who before had already proclaimed by herald that they wanted to conclude a treaty of friendship with Rome, then made a drink offering of friendship. Pouring libations, or making a drink offering, was a Greek custom. The Greeks would, whenever they wanted to confirm a treaty with the ambassadors from another party, make a drink offering. They would pour wine on the ground for the Gods, and then shared the wine among the ambassadors of both parties. This would signify the official signing of the

¹¹⁰ Liddell and Scott (1889). πρεσβεῖαι. *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford. Clarendon Press.

¹¹¹ H. G. Liddell and R. Scott (1940) προκηρυκεύομαι. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. revised and augmented throughout by Sir H. S. Jones, with the assistance of R. McKenzie. Oxford. Clarendon Press.

treaty.¹¹² The Romans normally did not use this custom to conclude treaties. However, since they were at Samos, which is a Greek island, they might have used the Greek tradition for making treaties. The Indians who had already publicly announced that they wanted to make a friendship treaty beforehand, made it official by making a drink offering with the Romans. To support this, the Indians brought many expensive and rare gifts.

The gifts were tigers and a boy with no shoulders or arms who was functional in life still. The boy looked like the Roman statues of Hermes, as these statues also miss arms. Hermes was the Greek god that was connected to trade and travel. Since the Indians gifted a boy that looked like Hermes, they might have wanted to show him as the embodiment of the idea of crossing boundaries and establishing communications.¹¹³ Next to this, the Indian Zarmarus killed himself to display either ambition, old age or honour to Augustus. He did this and was initiated “into the mysteries of the two goddesses”. This last part is a reference to the Eleusinian Mysteries. These mysteries were ancient Greek rituals that took place twice a year.¹¹⁴ The Lesser Mysteries in Spring and the Greater Mysteries in September. The goddesses that Cassius Dio refers to were Demeter and Persephone. The Mysteries have been shaped around their myth, in which the goddess Demeter tries to save her daughter Persephone from the hands of Hades, who had kidnapped her.¹¹⁵ In the myth, there is a compromise in which Persephone would have to spend half of the year in the underworld with Hades and half of the year with her mother Demeter on earth. The initiates to the Eleusinian Mysteries were sworn to secrecy about what they learned and how the rituals took place, but through the writings of some important thinkers and writers, such as Plato, Plutarch and Cicero, we have learned that during the rituals the initiates were taught something that made them no longer fear death.¹¹⁶ If Zarmarus was initiated in these mysteries, this probably meant that he was not afraid of death and therefore was not afraid to throw himself in the fire and to die.

Conclusion

What relationships existed between the Roman Empire in the Early Principate (27 BC – 68 AD) and India, particularly the Kushan empire, and what was the nature of these relationships?

The excerpts of Florus, Augustus and Cassius Dio show a certain pattern. The Indian delegations in the excerpts present the Romans with rare and expensive gifts. In the excerpt of Florus the gifts are elephants, precious stones and pearls. None of these were freely available in the Roman empire. The Indians in Cassius Dio’s excerpt present Augustus with tigers, a living version of the Herma and a life offering.

Next to this, the Indians apparently believed the Romans to be valuable friends, as it shows that twice they undertook a journey that takes four years to accomplish. It also shows that the contacts between the Romans and Indians under the rule of Augustus have been relatively intensive. The first visit takes place in 29 B.C and, according to Augustus, this was the first

¹¹² Constantinou, C. (1996). *On the way to diplomacy* (Borderlines, v. 7). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

¹¹³ McLaughlin, R. (2010). *Rome and the distant east: Trade routes to the ancient lands of Arabia, India and China*. Bloomsbury Publishing. P. 114

¹¹⁴ Mark, J.J. (2012, January 18) *The Eleusinian Mysteries: The Rites of Demeter*. Retrieved from <https://www.ancient.eu/article/32/the-eleusinian-mysteries-the-rites-of-demeter/> on 18 December 2019

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

visit of Indians to a Roman general. The second visit is ten years later in 19 B.C. This shows that the Indians went back to India and almost as soon as they had arrived, returned to Rome, which took another four years. Possibly this return might have been to confirm the request for friendship they expressed the first time. The first visit as explained by Florus and Augustus might have been the way that the Indians had first given public notice (προκηρυκεύομαι) after which they in Dio's excerpt returned to confirm the treaty of friendship. A point that has to be addressed is that none of the sources reference the Kushans directly but all mention an Indian delegation. The relationship that Cassius Dio describes is a diplomatic relationship. It was quite an intensive relationship, since the Indians, if we may believe the sources of Augustus and Florus too, have now send a delegation to the Romans twice in a relatively short time span.

4) Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 12.41

Life of Pliny the Elder

Pliny the Elder, or Gaius Plinius Secundus, as was his Latin name, lived from 23 to 79 A.D..¹¹⁷ He was born into a prosperous family. When he was 23 he started a military career in Germany where he rose to the rank of cavalry commander.¹¹⁸ In Germany, Pliny lived in semi-retirement where he devoted his time to studying and researching until 69 A.D.. In this time he returned to Rome to serve under emperor Vespasian. In 79 A.D. he was sent to Naples as commander of the fleet to suppress piracy there. Here he died when the Vesuvius erupted.¹¹⁹ Pliny was the uncle of Pliny the younger, or Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus, whom he had adopted.¹²⁰

Value of *Natural History* as a source

Pliny is most notably known for his work *Naturalis Historia* or *Natural History*. This work is accredited with being the first scientific encyclopaedia.¹²¹ It consists of 37 *libri*, or volumes and covers topics such as astronomy, geography, zoology, botany, medicine, geology and mineralogy.¹²² The special thing about the *Natural History* is that the first book is a summary of all the other books and is dedicated to all the sources that Pliny has used in writing the rest of the book.¹²³ In this first book Pliny has compiled a list of almost 100 sources that name the authors and titles of the references that Pliny used. Such a thing had not yet been done before. The *Natural History* was an important source of knowledge in the Middle-Ages. However, even though Pliny had a good basis in sources, historians in the late 15th century had come to realize that the books were not very accurate.¹²⁴ Pliny was sometimes careless in translating his sources, added passages that were based on his own superstitions and often provided his own commentary.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, Pliny's *Natural History* (12.41) includes valuable information on the relation between Rome and India in the Early Principate:

<i>[82]Non sunt eorum cinnamomum aut casia, et tamen felix appellatur arabia, falsi et ingrati cognominis, quae hoc acceptum superis ferat, cum plus ex eo inferis debeat. beatam illam fecit hominum etiam in morte luxuria quae dis intellexerant genita inurentium defunctis. [83] Periti rerum adseverant non ferre tantum annuo fetu, quantum nero princeps novissimo poppaeae suae die concremaverit. Aestimentur post ea toto orbe singulis annis tot funera</i>	<i>[82] These people have not got cinnamon or cassia, and nevertheless Arabia is styled 'Happy' – a country with a false and ungrateful appellation as she puts her happiness to the credit of the powers above, although she owes more of it to the power of below. Her good fortune has been caused by the luxury of mankind even in the hour of death, when they burn over the departed the products which they had originally understood to have been created for the gods.</i>
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¹¹⁷ Stannard J. (2019). Pliny the Elder. In *Encyclopædia Britannica*, inc. Retrieved from *Encyclopædia Britannica* on 1 December 2019.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ The Editors of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (2019). *Natural History*. In *Encyclopædia Britannica*, inc. Retrieved from *Encyclopædia Britannica* on 1 December 2019.

¹²² Doody, A. (2010). *Pliny's Encyclopedia: The Reception of the Natural History*. Cambridge University Press.

¹²³ *Ibid.* 117

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* 121

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* 117

acervatimque congesta honori cadaverum quae dis per singulas micas dantur. Nec minus propitii erant mola salsa supplicantibus, immo vero, ut palam est, placatiores. [84] Verum arabiae etiamnum felicius mare est; ex illo namque margaritas mittit. minimaque computatione miliens centena milia sestertium annis omnibus india et seres et paeninsula illa imperio nostro adimunt: tanti nobis deliciae et feminae constant. quota enim portio ex illis ad deos, quaeso, iam vel ad inferos pertinet

[83] Good authorities declare that Arabia does not produce so large a quantity of perfume in a year's output as was burned by the Emperor Nero in a day at the obsequies of his consort Poppaea. Then reckon up the vast number of funerals celebrated yearly throughout the entire world, and the perfumes such as are given to the gods a grain at a time, that are piled up in heaps to the honour of dead bodies! Yet the gods used not to regard with less favour the worshipper who petitioned them with salted spelt, but rather, as the facts show, they were more benevolent in those days. [84] But the title 'happy' belongs still more to the Arabian Sea, for from it come the pearls which that country sends us. And by the lowest reckoning India, Seres¹²⁶ and the Arabian peninsula take from our empire 100 million sesterces every year – that is the sum which our luxuries and our women cost us; for what fraction of these imports, I ask you, now goes to the gods or to the powers of the lower world?

Pliny gives a very cryptic explanation about the use of perfume in Roman life. Originally, perfumes were used as an offer to please the gods.¹²⁷ When making an offering to the gods, the Romans used many expensive products to satisfy them and put themselves in a good light in order to receive benefits such as a good harvest or favourable conditions in a battle. According to the text by Pliny we can see that perfume also had an important function during burial ceremonies. Dead bodies have a very unpleasant smell. Romans have tried to mask this smell by covering the corpse in incense and perfume.¹²⁸ Furthermore, it was believed that by burning incense and perfume, the soul of the deceased would be ascending to heaven together with the smells and smoke of the perfume and incense.¹²⁹ In his text Pliny rejects this use of perfume as a luxury and believes it should be kept more exclusive for the gods.

In this excerpt, Pliny suggests that the trade relations between the Romans and the Indians existed to such an extent that they provided for an outflow of money Pliny estimated to be at least 100 million sesterces per year. This is a large amount of money, it has been estimated to have been one eighth of the expense budget of the Romans.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ It is interesting that in the translation by Loeb the word *Seres* is translated with "China". It was not fully clear whether with the *Seres* the Romans actually meant the people of what we now call China. Therefore I have adjusted the translation to the original 'Seres'.

¹²⁷ Clements, A. (2014). Divine scents and presence. In *Smell and the Ancient Senses*. Routledge. p. 58-71

¹²⁸ Graham, E. J. (2011). Memory and materiality: re-embodying the Roman funeral. *Memory and Mourning: Studies on Roman Death*, 21, 39. P.29

¹²⁹ Ibid. 127

¹³⁰ McLaughlin, R. (2010). *Rome and the distant east: Trade routes to the ancient lands of Arabia, India and China*. Bloomsbury Publishing. P.4

Conclusion

What relationships existed between the Roman Empire in the Early Principate (27 BC – 68 AD) and India, particularly the Kushan empire, and what was the nature of these relationships?

Pliny describes a trade relationship between the Romans and the Indians. His *Natural History* shows that the trade relations between the Romans and Indians were intensive. This text focuses mostly on the Roman import of perfumes that come from India, Arabia and the empire of the Seres. It is however difficult to believe that the 100 million sesterces that Pliny talks about were only paid in the trade for perfume. The period that Pliny is discussing lays after the days that Augustus was the emperor of the Roman Empire. It is therefore difficult to say whether the trade relations between the Romans and the middle and far east in the time of Augustus were the same as the way Pliny describes them. However, trade relations that amount for one eighth of the Roman expense budget cannot have appeared out of thin air. These relations had been in place for a while and probably already existed in the time of Augustus. Presumably, the trade relations in that time will have been similarly extensive as Pliny describes them many years later.

4. Discussion

The rule of Augustus, whose reign marked the start of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, ensured stability and a greater economic wealth throughout the Roman Empire. Even though the borders of the Roman state expanded considerably, the efficient and large Roman army worked as a deterrent against possible uprisings by the annexed tribes and people. The newfound political stability, mainly ensured by the strength of the Roman army, was the perfect environment for the Romans to start building ties and long-term partnerships with the foreign countries that bordered the empire, through an early form of diplomacy. This diplomacy was carried out by sending and receiving delegations to and from other states. The delegations consisted of non-professionals and followed protocols based on mutual trust and respect. Delegations arrived from neighbouring states that wanted to discuss and protect their (semi-) independent position. Embassies also came from nations that were not directly threatened by Rome's expansionistic goals but that searched for attractive trade opportunities and friendship with the Roman empire. One of the countries that scholars believe was tied with the Roman Empire by an economic and diplomatic relationship, is the Kushan Empire. This was a nation in the north of modern day India that was located in the proximity of the silk road, the main trade route between ancient Europe and ancient Asia. The Kushans experienced a period of wealth and cultural flourishing simultaneously with the Roman Empire under the rule of Augustus. This prosperity, combined with the geographic location of the Kushan Empire has given researchers reason to believe that they cultivated important trade and diplomatic relationships with the Roman Empire.

The four texts by Florus, Augustus, Cassius Dio and Pliny suggest that during the rule of Augustus the Romans and Indians had contacts. The first three texts discuss visits of diplomatic envoys coming from India. The last text provides some information on a trade relationship that existed between the Romans and the Indians.

The excerpts show that Roman military powers in 29 B.C. were intimidating to other nations. As stated by Flor., *Ep.*, II.34.62, the wish for the Roman Empire's friendship did not only originate from nations that bordered or had direct contact with it. The sources explicitly mention the Scythians, Sarmatians, (add others), alongside the Indians among the peoples sending ambassadors to Rome to develop a relationship based on friendship. In order to nudge the Romans into considering this proposal, the Indians brought rare and valuable gifts to the Romans. This indicates that the Indians thought that the Romans were valuable allies. The fact that the Indians undertook a journey of four years to bring these gifts emphasizes this and furthermore shows that the relationship between the Romans and the Indians was continuous. Augustus emphasizes that this visit in 29 B.C. was the first visit to Rome of the Indian people. This unprecedented situation strengthens the belief that during the rule of Augustus the Roman Empire held such a military strength that even nations that were not directly threatened by the Romans thought it wise to stay in good contact with them. The excerpt of Cassius Dio refers to a visit of an Indian delegation on a later moment in 19 B.C.. Taking into account that the travel time was four years, this meant that the Indians returned to the Roman Empire almost as soon as they had arrived back in India.

The relationship that Florus, Augustus and Cassius Dio describe is a diplomatic relationship. It was quite an intensive relationship, since the Indians, if we may believe the sources of Augustus and Florus too, have now send a delegation to the Romans twice in a relatively short time span.

The first visit being in 29 B.C. at that Augustus closes the double doors of Janus at the start of the Pax Romana. The sources present the idea that the second visit of the Indians in 19 B.C. was a confirmation of the relations of friendship that were first established in 29 B.C.. In the second visit the Romans and the Indians go through a Greek ritual of making a drink offering to the Gods to confirm a treaty of friendship between them.

Pliny describes a trade relationship between the Romans and the Indians. The text indicates that India, Arabia and the Seres combined withdraw 100 million sesterces per year through trade. This trade relation amounts for one eighth of the roman expense budget. These relations had been in place for a while and they were quite intensive. Possibly, the trade relations and diplomatic relations between the Romans and Indians are closely related.

5. Conclusion

This thesis has tried to provide an answer on the research question *What relationships existed between the Roman Empire in the Early Principate (27 BC – 68 AD) and India, particularly the Kushan empire, and what was the nature of these relationships?*

With the information that is presented above, the following answer can be given to the research question. Between the Roman Empire in the Early Principate and India there is evidence of trade and diplomatic relationships. The trade relationships were of quite a large scale and provided the Romans with luxury products such as perfume and silk. The diplomatic relationships that existed between the Indians and the Romans was based on friendship. The Indians believed the Romans to be an important authority in that time and found it important to seek their friendship. The expensive and rare gifts they saw necessary to bring, support the assumption that they, just like many other people that were not part of the Roman Empire, saw Rome as one of the dominant powers of that time. The fact that they came to the Roman Empire twice in the timespan of ten years lead us to believe that the relationship was of an intensive nature, since the travel time alone was four years. It is unsure whether the Kushan Empire was the nation that was referred to when the four sources used the words India and Indians. All the texts refer to India in a general way and make no specific reference to the Kushans. The geographic location and supremacy of the Kushan Empire in its region are a careful indication that with India, the four sources actually refer to the Kushans.

The most important limitation from this study arises from the lack of access to primary source material on and from the Indian perspective. The conclusions are taken from the Roman perspective through sources only written by people living in the Roman Empire. This limitation originates in the limited expertise of the researcher on Indian history.

An additional limitation can be found in the primary sources that were used in the research. The authors of the primary sources, with an exception of the *Res Gestae* by Augustus, did not live during the time in which the historical events they are describing, occurred. This might result in inaccuracies with regards to the timeline they provide. Furthermore, the descriptions of visits of Indian embassies were written from a positive perspective on the Roman power in that time. Therefore, they might have provided a one-sided perspective on the events that put the Romans in a positive light. Lastly, on this particular topic there were not many sources to be found and the sources that were used did not discuss diplomatic and trade relationships as a primary topic. Therefore credibility of the sources is decreased.

Further research on this topic should be carried out by two historians, one with a background in Roman history and one in Indian history. This will increase the chances of finding reliable primary sources from both the Roman and Indian perspectives. Furthermore, any inaccuracies that might have slipped into this thesis because of the restricted knowledge of the researcher, can be rectified. Another possibility for future research lies in further researching the relation between trade and the existence of diplomatic relationships between the Romans and the Indians. Furthermore expanding the period on which research is carried out can be an option for future researchers. The diplomatic and trade relationships may have progressed over time. Other emperors might have received more ambassadors from the Indian empires and this might provide insights into the evolution of the relationships.

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