

中国  
为什么叫 China



Why Is China Called “China”?

中国为什么叫 China

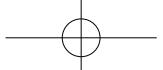


## Why Is China Called “China” ?

Over 2,000 years ago, China did not have a name known to foreigners until the first dynasty of imperial China known as the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC)<sup>1</sup>. The First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty unified the country for the first time in



<sup>1</sup> Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC): It was the first empire in Chinese history that unified the country. Ying Zheng, the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty, founded the Qin Dynasty in 221 BC and unified China.



Chinese history. The Central Asian states of the time soon began to learn of the oriental empire named Qin, and the Persians<sup>2</sup> named it Cin. At the same time, Qin established relations with countries in the west through jade trade. The name Cin was gradually accepted by various countries and brought into Archaic Latin.



However, there is an issue in this theory: Qin was not pronounced as Qin in Chinese back then, so how did foreigners get to know these variants of Qin?

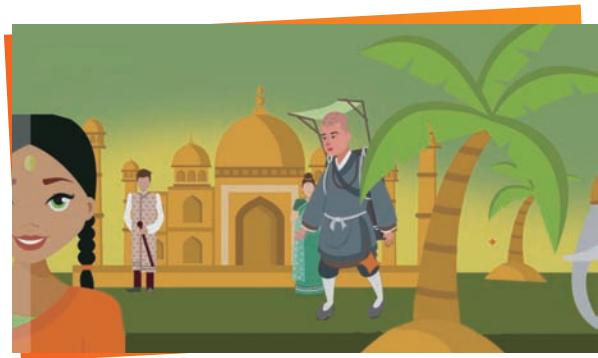
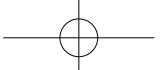
For another popular theory, we need to look back to ancient India. When Xuanzang<sup>3</sup>, a Buddhist monk in the Tang Dynasty<sup>4</sup> (618-907) made a westward pilgrimage to

---

<sup>2</sup> Persia: An ancient state located in present-day Iran.

<sup>3</sup> Xuanzang: A renowned Buddhist monk of the Tang Dynasty.

<sup>4</sup> Tang Dynasty (618-907): It followed the Sui Dynasty (581-618), and it was a unified empire and one of the most powerful dynasties in Chinese history.



India<sup>5</sup>, he found that China was called Mahacinasthana in Sanskrit for a long time. History experts speculate the “cina” in this word also referred to the Qin Dynasty and became the derivation of China in Indo-European languages.

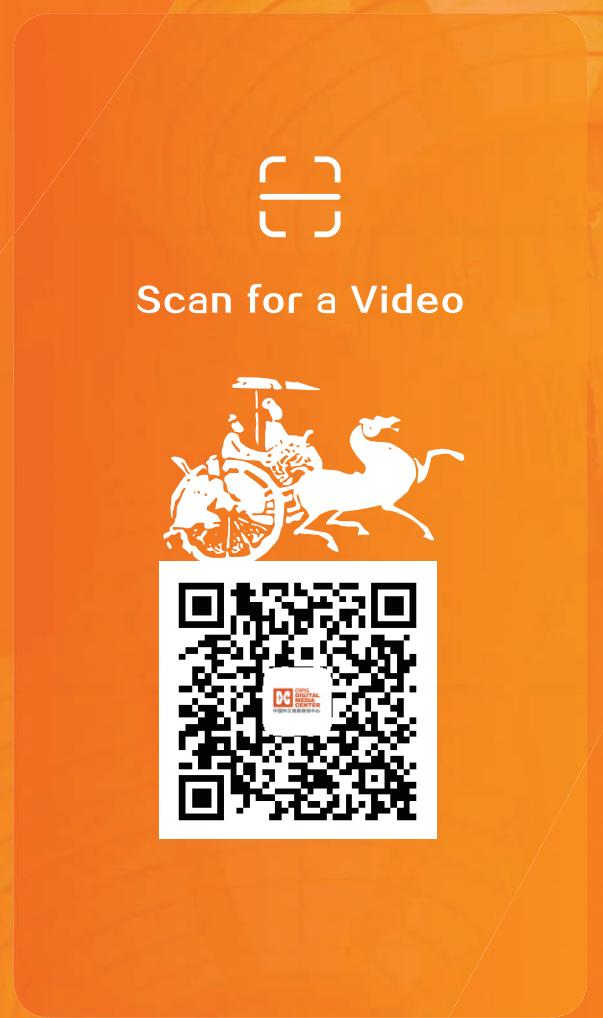
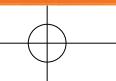
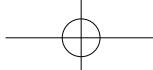
However, China in modern language was first recorded in 1516 in a journal of the Portuguese explorer Duarte Barbosa.



A number of languages such as English, German, Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch use variants of the word China. Now we know that China does not come from the porcelain meaning of china.

---

<sup>5</sup> India: The largest country in South Asia. In ancient times, the Chinese referred to India as the Western Heaven (the Buddhist Paradise).

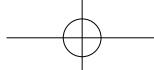




## zhōng guó wèi shén me jiào 中国为什么叫 China

liǎng qiān duō nián qián zhōng guó hái méi yǒu zì jǐ  
两千多年前，中国还没有自己  
de “yīng wén míng”，zhí dào zhōng guó dì yī gè  
的“英文名”，直到中国第一个  
fēng jiàn wáng cháo qín cháo (qián 221 – qián 206)  
封建王朝秦朝（前221 – 前206）





de chū xiàn qín cháo<sup>1</sup> de dì yī wèi huáng dì  
的出现。秦朝<sup>1</sup>的第一位皇帝——  
qín shǐ huáng shí xiàn le zhōng guó lì shǐ shàng de dì  
秦始皇，实现了中国历史上的第  
yī cì dà yī tǒng “qín” zhè ge míng chēng zhú jiàn  
一次大一统。“秦”这个名称逐渐  
chuán rù zhōng yà dāng shí de  
传入中亚，当时的  
bō sī<sup>2</sup> rén bǎ qín cháo chēng  
波斯<sup>2</sup>人把秦朝称  
wéi “Cin”，这是  
xī fāng rén duì zhōng guó zuì zǎo  
西方人对中国最早  
de chēng wèi nà shí hou  
的称谓。那时候，  
qín tōng guò yù shí jiāo yì yǔ  
秦通过玉石交易与  
xī fāng gè guó jiàn lì le wǎng  
西方各国建立了往  
lái “Cin” zhè ge cí yě jiù mǎn mǎn de wéi  
来。“Cin”这个词也就慢慢地为  
bù tóng guó jiā suǒ jiē shòu tóng shí yě jìn rù le gǔ  
不同国家所接受，同时也进入了古  
lā dīng yǔ。  

---



<sup>1</sup> qín cháo zhōng guó lì shǐ shàng dì yī gè dà yī tǒng wáng cháo cháo dài míng qín  
秦朝：中国历史上第一个大一统王朝朝代名。秦  
shǐ huáng yíng zhèng yú gōng yuán qián nián tǒng yī zhōng guó jiàn lì qín cháo  
始皇嬴政于公元前 221 年统一中国，建立秦朝  
(前 221—前 206)。  
<sup>2</sup> bō sī gǔ guó míng zài jīn yī láng  
波斯：古国名，在今伊朗。



dàn shì zhè ge shuō fǎ zhì jīn cún yí  
但 是，这 个 说 法 至 今 存 疑，  
“qín” zhè ge zì zài dāng shí de fā yīn bìng bù shì  
“秦” 这 个 字 在 当 时 的 发 音 并 不 是  
“Q in”，那 它 又 是 怎 样 以 “Q in”  
的 发 音 传 到 外 国  
的 呢？

### 另 一 个 流

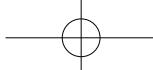
chuán hěn guǎng de shuō fǎ yuán zì gǔ yìn dù tāng dài 3  
传 很 广 的 说 法 源 自 古 印 度。唐 代  
( 6 1 8 - 9 0 7 ) sēng rén xuán zàng 4 céng xī xíng  
至 古 印 度 求 佛 法。僧 人 玄 澄 <sup>4</sup> 曾 西 行  
zhōng yǒu yí gè chēng hu zhōng guó de cí yǔ cún zài yǐ  
中 有 一 个 称 呼 中 国 的 词 语 存 在 已  
jiǔ: “M a h a c i n a s t h a n a”。历 史  
xué jiā rèn wéi zhè li de “C i n a” tóng yàng zhǐ  
学 家 认 为 这 里 的 “C i n a” 同 样 指  
qín zhè ge cí hòu lái chuán rù yìng ōu yǔ xì chéng  
秦，这 个 词 后 来 传 入 印 欧 语 系，成



<sup>3</sup> 唐代：继隋朝之后的大一统朝代，中国古代最强盛的朝代之一（618—907）。

<sup>4</sup> 玄奘：唐代著名高僧。

<sup>5</sup> 印度：亚洲南部最大的国家，古代中国人把印度叫作“西天”。



wéi ” China ” 的词源。

dàn xiàn dài yǔ yán zhōng de  
但现代语言中的“China”，  
zuì zǎo chū xiànl zài pú táo yá háng hǎi jiā dù wǎ ěr  
最早出现在葡萄牙航海家杜瓦尔  
tè • bā ěr bó shā nián de rì zhì zhōng  
特•巴尔伯沙1516年的日志中。

xiàn zài shì jiè shàng de hěn duō yǔ yán dōu  
现在，世界上的很多语言都  
shǐ yòng le zhè ge cí de biàn tǐ  
使用了“China”这个词的变体，  
rú dé yǔ xī bān yá yǔ pú táo yá yǔ hé hé  
如德语、西班牙语、葡萄牙语和荷  
lán yǔ děng xiàn zài wǒ men zhī dao le zhōng guó de  
兰语等。现在我们知道了，中国的  
yīng wén míng zì “China” bìng bù shì cóng cí qì  
英文名字“China”并不是从瓷器  
“china”这个词来的。



扫描上方二维码  
观看相关视频