

# HSÜAN-TSANG'S NOTICE OF P'I-MO AND MARCO POLO'S PEIN

BY

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My survey and excavations at Kara-dong were completed on March 17 in the midst of a sandstorm such as had greeted our arrival. Though the force of the wind, this time from the southwest, was somewhat less, the driving sand made the conclusion of the work decidedly trying both to my men and to myself. Next morning I left this desolate spot, just as I had reached it, in an atmosphere thick with dust, and oppressive by its haziness. My eyes were now turned to the south again, where a number of archaeological tasks still awaited me in the vicinity of the inhabited area.

First among them was a search for the ancient town of P'i-mo. Hsüan-tsang had visited it on his way from Khotan to Ni-jang or Niya, and its probable identity with Marco Polo's *Pein*, first suggested by Sir Henry Yule, made me all the more anxious to determine, if possible, its position. The distance and direction which the Chinese pilgrim's narrative records for P'i-mo, and which, together with other archaeological indications we shall presently have occa-

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1) Thanks to the Author, our friend, Dr. M. A. STEIN, and to the Managers of the University Press, Oxford, we are able to print from the proof sheets Sec. II of Chap. XIII, pages 452—457, of the Detailed Report of the celebrated explorer of the Ruins of Khotan.

sion to discuss in detail, had long before made me look out for the place somewhere to the north of the small oases extending from Chīra to Keriya. I had been anxious to search for it when leaving Dandān-Uiliq by marching due south through the desert. But the absence of local information and practical considerations connected with the condition of my men and animals prevented the execution of this plan. I was hence much pleased when, on my second visit to Keriya, I heard direct from Huang-Daloi, the kindly Amban, of two 'kōne-shahrs' which had been reported to him to exist in the desert beyond Gulakhma, an oasis on the Khotan road some forty miles to the north-west of Keriya. Rām Singh, too, when marching along this route in December, had heard of old remains in that direction. In order to save time I now decided to reach them, if possible, direct from the Keriya river by striking across the desert south-westwards.

During the four days which saw us returning along the Keriya river as fast as camels and ponies could be got to move, I was surprised to notice that the water in the river had fallen by some 3 ft. as compared with the level of the preceding week. Thus the first spring flood had passed by; yet in the vegetation of the riverine jungle I still looked in vain for any sign of approaching spring. Passing again on March 22 the familiar shrine of Burhān-uddīn-Pādshahim, I picked up *en route* the two men who, under the Amban's orders, had been sent by the Bēg of Gulakhma to guide me to the sites. They looked unusually reticent and stupid, but it was too late when we found out that they knew nothing of such a route as I wished to take. Too timid to admit their ignorance, they thought it safest to guide us further and further south, where at least there was no risk from the dreaded Taklamakān. Thus after leaving on March 23 the left bank of the river at a great bend the latter makes near the grazing-grounds of Kenk-kiōk, we

passed into a belt of dunes 20 to 30 ft. high, and further on crossed a big Dawān such as always flanks a riverine area in the desert. After about eight miles we struck the northern edge of a wide area of swampy jungle watered by the stream that flows from the springs and marshes of Shīvul, west of the Keriya oasis.

Passing through thickets of Toghraks and luxuriant undergrowth of scrub we reached a series of large pools, in which this stream seems to find its end during the winter. Half a mile to the southwest of these we came to the edge of a long stretch of boggy marsh, treacherously covered with light sand, through which a safe passage for the ponies could be found only with great difficulty. The ground was quite impracticable for the camels, which accordingly had to be sent northward to turn the obstacle by a détour of many miles. The local knowledge of our guides now quite gave out, and though there were everywhere the tracks of flocks that had grazed here during the winter, we did not succeed in finding a single shepherd to help in guiding us. Fortunately we came at last, after one and a half miles of marsh, upon firm sandy ground near the pasture of Shākūn-Öghil. South of this we found the course of the Shīvul Daryā, which flowed here as a limpid and fairly rapid stream, fully 6 to 8 ft. deep, in a winding but well-defined bed about 15 ft. broad. This helped once more to guide our guides. We followed it upwards to a lake-like depression they called Kazānköl, and ultimately, after a long and tiring day's march, arrived at the solitary little shrine known as Ārish-Mazār ('the Mazār of the Cross-ways'), ensconced in a grove of splendid old Toghraks. A large pond in front of it was said to receive water from another spring-fed stream that traverses the area of sandy jungle between Keriya and Kara-kīr Langar. The camels did not arrive until close on midnight, the big bonfires we had kindled *en route* having helped to guide them.

After the experience gained of the value of our guides, there was no alternative but to resign myself to letting them reach again familiar ground near cultivation before striking off into the desert. Accordingly, on March 24, when the thermometer again registered a minimum temperature close to freezing-point, we made our way south-westwards through a belt of sandy jungle, in which the water of another spring-fed stream, the Kara-kīr Daryā, finally loses itself. Here, at the grazing ground of Kara-chilan, we got hold of some shepherds, who, after prolonged protestations of complete ignorance of any and every route, were prevailed upon to guide us at least to the northernmost portion of the Domoko oasis, the nearest in the direction I was aiming at.

The track we now followed led through a maze of tamarisk-covered sand-cones, standing closer together than I had seen them before anywhere on the borders of the true desert. In their midst, at a point about four miles to the north-west of Kara-chilan, where erosion had created a stretch of ground somewhat more open, we unexpectedly came upon the unmistakable remains of some ancient settlement. The shepherds called the spot *Ak-taz*, or simply 'Tatilik'. The latter designation, general as it is, seemed appropriate, seeing that the remains consisted mainly of broken bits of old pottery and similar small débris. The fragments were mostly lying on the top of small loess banks rising 8 to 10 ft. above the rest of the ground, and evidently marking the extent of erosion which the soil had undergone where not protected by remains or otherwise. Close to some tamarisk-covered cones the foundations of a few mud walls could be distinguished, manifestly the remains of small houses. These walls showed bundles of Kumush placed vertically between layers of mud, a mode of construction identical with that which I observed on the day following in the modern ruins of 'Old Domoko',

and which still prevails for the ordinary dwellings of villagers throughout the neighbouring oases.

The potsherds, of several varieties, red, black, and a yellowish colour, were hard and undoubtedly old; but neither they (see for specimens D. K. 006 in list below) nor a bronze finger ring with a jewel of opaque glass (E. 004, see Plate LI), which was picked up on the slope of a loess bank, furnish any definite indication of date. Several small areas of open ground similarly strewn with pottery débris were passed at short intervals for about one mile, remains of mud walls being traceable, however, only in two places. Other small Tatis are likely enough to be hidden away among the tamarisk-covered cones, but there was no time to search for them. It was clear that, owing to their exposed condition and the vicinity of the inhabited area, these scanty remains of old settlements must have been stripped long ago of any materials of value, and that the chance of finding structural ruins was very slight indeed. Turdi Khwāja, who rejoined me with a Dāk at Ārish-Mazār, had heard the site spoken of by people of Domoko as 'Kōnsamōma's town' <sup>1</sup>), and as an object of frequent visits from villagers who hoped to find 'treasure', but were afraid of venturing far into the desert.

Ultimately we struck the well-marked bed of the stream of Domoko, about twenty yards broad, but now completely dry, all its water being absorbed for the time by the irrigation demands of the oasis. Immediately beyond we emerged on land newly brought under cultivation belonging to the village of Malakalagan, where we camped for the night. The colony had been formed about fifteen

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1) 'Kōnsamōma' seems to be the name given to a demon of old times whom popular legend of Khotan connects with a number of deserted localities near or within the oases, e. g., above Ujāt and at Halālbāgh. I never succeeded in getting hold of a full legend concerning the demon, but gathered that he was credited with feeding on human beings.

years before by people from the main oasis of Domoko<sup>1</sup>). The latter, extending on both sides of the Khotan-Keriya road from six to eight miles further south, was said to be separated from Malakalagan by a barren belt of dunes. The reclamation of desert soil going on at the new colony was a sight as cheering as it was instructive. Small irrigation cuts were seen winding along the old tamarisk-covered hillocks of sand that had not yet been levelled down by the combined effect of running water and the cultivators' digging. Between them extended carefully-fenced fields. In order to save all arable ground the colonists had sensibly established their homesteads on the top of the larger sand-cones. Here and there the Toghrahs of the desert jungle had been spared, particularly near the huts of the settlers. But it was clear they would soon disappear in a hopeless minority by the side of the avenues of young Tereks, Jigda, mulberry and other fruit trees that were rapidly growing up along all irrigation channels. I regret not to have ascertained, in the midst of many pressing occupations, what specific circumstances had led to the establishment of the new village. But there could be no doubt about the geographically interesting fact of cultivation here successfully invading the desert.

Before I proceed to describe my search of the next days for the old sites in the desert northward, it will be convenient to set forth here what Hsüan-tsang tells us of P'i-mo, and what had made me look for possible traces of its position in this vicinity. We learn from the *Hsi-yü-chi* that 300 li to the east of the Khotan capital the pilgrim was shown in the middle of a great desert marsh

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1) This is the form of the local name as I heard it commonly pronounced. M. Grenard, *Mission D. de Rhins*, iii. p. 45, writes it *Doumakou* (i. e. Dumaku), Dr. Hedin, *Reisen in Z.-A.*, p. 201, *Damaka*. The first vowel is certainly *o* or *u*, both sounds being practically interchangeable in Eastern Turki. The second vowel may be more correctly spelt as *ä*, its sound closely approaching *o*, owing to the preceding labial and the effect of epenthesis from the following *o* or *u*, a phonetic tendency strongly developed in the Khotan dialect.

an area of several thousands of acres where the ground was completely bare and of a dark-red colour<sup>1</sup>). Tradition asserted that this was the spot where in old days a large army from the Eastern kingdom, i. e. from China, counting a million of men, was met in battle by the king of Kustana at the head of a hundred thousand horsemen. The troops of Kustana having been defeated, the king was made a prisoner, and all his men slaughtered. Their blood gave to the soil its red colour. Similar local legends, intended, no doubt, to account for pieces of ground of which the striking red colour exercised popular imagination, were heard by Hsüan-tsang elsewhere on his travels<sup>2</sup>).

Going thirty li or so to the east of this battle-field, the pilgrim arrived at the town of P'i-mo 犍摩. Here there was a miracle-working statue of a standing Buddha carved in sandalwood, and about twenty feet high<sup>3</sup>). 'Those who have any disease, according to the part affected, cover the corresponding place on the statue with gold-leaf, and forthwith they are healed. People who address prayers to it with a sincere heart mostly obtain their wishes'. The local tradition, which the *Hsi-yü-chi* relates at great length, asserted that this statue had been made by Udayana, king of Kausāmbī, and that after Buddha's death it came through the air to the town of Ho-lao-lo-chia 曷勞落迦. The people of that town were rich

1) See *Mémoires*, ii. pp. 242 sq.; Beal, ii. p. 323; Watters, *Yuan Chwang's Travels*, ii. p. 298. There is apparently nothing in the wording of the text to justify Julien's assumption that the battle here related is the one which was supposed to have preceded the foundation of the kingdom of Kustana; see above, p. 157. The very mention of a 'king of Kustana' speaks against it. Rémusat, *Ville de Khotan*, pp. 60 sq., assumes an error in the text and attributes the victory to the Khotan king.

2) See, e. g., his description of the spot of Buddha's 'body-offering' (*Mémoires*, i. pp. 164 sq.; Beal, i. p. 146), which I have had occasion to discuss in detail in my *Archaeological Report, N.W. Frontier Province, 1904—05*, pp. 41 sqq.

3) The *Life*, which gives an abbreviated account of P'i-mo, makes the statue thirty feet high, and describes it as 'distinguished at the same time by the beauty of its form and an attitude grave and severe'; see *Vie de H.-Ths.*, p. 289.

and prosperous, but had no regard for Buddhist teaching. Hence, though the image displayed its miraculous power, no worship was paid to it. When subsequently an Arhat came and respectfully saluted the statue, the king, to whom his strange appearance had been reported, ordered him to be covered with sand and earth. The Arhat in this condition was deprived of food, but a pious man who had previously worshipped the statue secretly supplied him with nourishment. When the Arhat was at the point of departure he predicted to this pious person that in retribution for what he had suffered the town would within seven days be covered by sand and earth and all the people perish.

Warned to look to his own safety, the pious man told his relatives and friends of the impending doom, but was treated by all with ridicule. On the second day there arose a great wind, which 'carried before it all dirty soil, whilst there fell various precious substances'<sup>1</sup>). The pious man, who was thereupon reviled afresh, prudently 'excavated for himself a secret passage leading outside the town. On the night of the seventh day there fell a rain of sand and earth which filled the interior of the town. The pious one escaped through his passage, and going eastwards came to this country, and took up his abode in P'i-mo. At the same time appeared there the statue which he worshipped. Ancient tradition said: "When the law of Śākya is extinct then this image will enter the dragon-palace". The town of *Ho-lao-lo-chia* is now a great sand mound. The kings of the neighbouring countries and persons in power from distant spots have many times wished to excavate the mound and take away the precious things buried there, but as soon as they have arrived at the borders of the place a furious wind has sprung up,

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1) This version of Beal's is supported by Watters. Julien, *Mémoires*, ii, p. 245, assumed a corruption of the text and substituted characters meaning 'sand and earth' for 'various precious substances'.



dark clouds have gathered together from the four quarters of heaven, and they have become lost to find their way'.

The distance of 330 li east of the Khotan capital indicated by Hsüan-tsang's account clearly points to some locality in the neighbourhood of the closely-adjointing oases of Chira, Gulakhma, and Domoko as the probable position of P'i-mo, seeing that three daily marches from Yōtkan would be counted to any of them. With this location might also be reconciled the *Hsi-yü-chi's* record of the next stage on the pilgrim's onward journey. We are told that, going to the east of 'the valley of P'i-mo' he entered a desert, and after having travelled for about 200 li arrived at the town of Ni-jang or Niya. The distance and character of the ground here indicated are quite correct when referred to the journey from the Keriya river to Niya, a distance still ordinarily reckoned at two marches. But the very distinction made here between the town of P'i-mo and the valley of P'i-mo seemed to me an indication that the town could not have been situated about the present Keriya, quite apart from the fact that the distance between the latter and Yōtkan, about 110 miles by the present road, could not have been treated in Hsüan-tsang's days as a three days' journey, any more than it is at present.

Sung Yün's narrative, as apparently first recognized by Beal<sup>1</sup>), supplies an earlier reference to P'i-mo, but under a different name, and with topographical indications that seem less precise at first sight than those of the *Hsi-yü-chi*<sup>2</sup>). Yet we shall see how important they have proved for the identification of the site. Sung Yün, coming from *Tso-mo*, which, as we have seen above, is identical with Hsüan-tsang's and the T'ang Annals' *Chü-mo* (*Tsiu-mo*), and must

1) See *Travels of Sung-Yun* in *Si-yu-ki*, i. p. LXXXVI, note 9.

2) I take all details as to Sung Yün's description from M. Chavannes' *Voyage de Song Yun*, p. 14.

be located at the present oasis of Charchan<sup>1</sup>), travelled 1275 li westwards, and arrived at the town of *Mo* 末, where flowers and fruits reminded him of those of Lo-yang (the present Ho-nan-fu); but the flat roofs of the mud-built houses formed a contrast.

'After travelling 22 li to the west of the town of *Mo*, [Sung Yün] came to the town of *Han-mo* 捍磨 or 捍麼. Fifteen li to the south there is a great temple with more than three hundred monks; in it there is a gilt statue six feet high, of marvellous aspect; on it there are displayed in a manifest fashion the distinctive marks [of Buddha], primary and secondary. Its face is always turned towards the east, and it has refused to turn round to the west. According to the story of the old people it arrived flying through the air; the king of the kingdom of Yü-tien came in person to see it, and after having worshipped the statue carried it away on a car, but in the middle of the journey, during a night's halt, it suddenly disappeared; people were sent to search for it, and found that it had returned to its original position; thereupon [the king] erected a temple, and assigned for its maintenance four hundred homesteads; when the people of these families have some disease they apply a gold leaf to the statue in the place where they suffer, and are all at once miraculously healed. Since then thousands of people have by the side of the statue erected statues 16 feet high and all kinds of buildings and shrines'. Sung Yün further records that the banners and canopies of embroidered silk put up there counted by tens of thousands. More than half of them, we are told, were banners presented under the Wei dynasty; many of the Chinese inscriptions on them recorded dates from 495 to 513 A.D., while

1) See above, p. 436, note 15.

one of them dated as far back as the period of the Yao Ch'in, 384—417 A.D. <sup>1</sup>).

With the historical interest of the last portion of this record, which plainly indicates close intercourse with China during a period when Chinese political supremacy over the Tarim Basin was wholly in abeyance, we are not concerned here. What is important for us to note is that the miraculous statues which Sung Yün describes as the object of such extensive worship was undoubtedly the same which Hsüan-tsang saw at P'i-mo, and that accordingly Sung Yün's *Han-mo* must be identified with the latter place. With this conclusion the total distance from Tso-mo, 1275 + 22 li, i.e. approximately thirteen marches, is in remarkably close agreement, seeing that the same number of marches would still be reckoned at the present day from Charchan to Domoko or Gulakhma. In striking contrast with this correct reckoning is the immediately following location of the capital of Yü-tien at a distance of 870 li west of Han-mo—an instance of those palpably erroneous measurements which unfortunately are by no means rare in the extant versions of Sung Yün's narrative.

The clear recognition of the fact that 'Marco Polo's route must have been nearly coincident with that of Hiuen Tsang' led Sir Henry Yule to propose the identification of the former's *Pein* with the Chinese pilgrim's *P'i-mo*<sup>2</sup>). This identification was not based primarily on the similarity of the names—though this is close enough, especially if we consider that, as Sir H. Yule pointed out in a note, '*Pein* may easily have been miscopied for *Pem*, which is indeed the reading of some MSS.', and that 'Ramusio has *Peym*'—but on

1) The banners here referred to were evidently of the same type as the often costly prayer-flags and painted banners still to be found as votive offerings in Buddhist temples of Tibet, China, &c. We have found modest miniature representations of them among the deposits in the Fadere temple cella; see above, p. —.

2) See Yule, *Marco Polo*, i. pp. 191 sq.

on the exact correspondence of the topographical facts. For Marco Polo, travelling eastwards, mentions his 'Province of Pein' immediately after Khotan, and his description, already referred to, of the desert route between it and Charchan proves that it must have lain to the west of Niya. Hence Sir Henry Yule, with such geographical information before him as Johnson's journey had furnished, was justified in assuming that Pein or P'i-mo 'cannot have been very far from Kiria'.

The archaeological evidence which I secured, and which greatly strengthens Sir Henry Yule's identification of Pein with P'i-mo, will be detailed hereafter<sup>1</sup>). Here it will suffice to point out that Marco Polo describes Pein as 'a province five days in length, lying between east and north-east. There are a good number of towns and villages, but the most noble is PEIN, the capital of the kingdom'. Its position is not indicated, but the length of five marches given to the province is in close agreement with the distance separating the westernmost outpost of the Chira oasis from Niya. Of the people who were 'worshippers of Mahommet, and subjects of the great Kaan', he tells us that 'they have plenty of all products, including cotton. They live by manufactures and trade'. The custom he relates of their marital relations has already been quoted in illustration of the laxity of the marriage tie prevailing from old times in the whole Khotan region<sup>2</sup>).

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1) I was glad that a brief abstract of it based upon the remarks in my *Preliminary Report*, pp. 58 sq., with illustrations of some of the antiques from Uzun-Tati, could be embodied by Prof. H. Cordier, Sir Henry Yule's learned editor, in a supplementary note to the new edition of *Marco Polo*, ii. p. 595.

2) See p. 140.