

Former commentators differed very widely as to the position of Pein, and as to the direction of Polo's route from Khotan. The information acquired of late years leaves the latter no longer open to doubt. It must have been nearly coincident with that of Hiuen Tsang.

The perusal of Johnson's Report of his journey to Khotan, and the Itineraries attached to it, enabled me to feel tolerable certainty as to the position of Charchan (see next chapter), and as to the fact that Marco followed a direct route from Khotan to the vicinity of Lake Lop. Pein, then, was identical with PIMA,* which was the first city reached by Hiuen Tsang on his return to China after quitting Khotan, and which lay 330 *li* east of the latter city.† Other notices of Pima appear in Rémusat's history of Khotan; some of these agree exactly as to the distance from the capital, adding that it stood on the banks of a river flowing from the East and entering the sandy Desert; whilst one account seems to place it at 500 *li* from Khotan. And in the Turkish map of Central Asia, printed in the *Jahán Numá*, as we learn from Sir H. Rawlinson, the town of *Pim* is placed a little way north of Khotan. Johnson found Khotan rife with stories of former cities overwhelmed by the shifting sands of the Desert, and these sands appear to have been advancing for ages; for far to the north-east of Pima, even in the 7th century, were to be found the deserted and ruined cities of the ancient kingdoms of *Tuholo* and *Shemathona*. "Where anciently were the seats of flourishing cities and prosperous communities," says a Chinese author speaking of this region, "is nothing now to be seen but a vast desert; all has been buried in the sands, and the wild camel is hunted on those arid plains."

Pima cannot have been very far from *Kiria*, visited by Johnson. This is a town of 7000 houses, lying east of Ilchi, and about 69 miles distant from it. The road for the most part lies through a highly cultivated and irrigated country, flanked by the sandy desert at three or four miles to the left. After passing *eastward* by Kiria it is said to make a great elbow, turning north; and within this elbow lie the sands that have buried cities and fertile country. Here Mr. Shaw supposes Pima lay (perhaps upon the river of Kiria). At Pima itself, in A.D. 644, there was a story of the destruction of a city lying further north, a judgment on the luxury and impiety of the people and their king, who, shocked at the eccentric aspect of a holy man, had caused him to be buried in sand up to the mouth.

(*N. et E.* XIV. 477; *H. de la Ville de Khotan*, 63-66; *Klap. Tabl. Historiques*, p. 182; *Proc. R. G. S.* XVI. 243.)

[Dutreuil de Rhins and Grenard took the road from Khotan to Charchan; they left Khotan on the 4th May, 1893, passed Kiria, Nia, and instead of going direct to Charchan through the desert, they passed Kara Say at the foot of the Altyn tâgh, a route three days longer than the other, but one which was less warm, and where water, meat, milk, and barley could be found. Having passed Kapa, they crossed the Karamuren, and went up from Achan due north to Charchan, where they stayed three months. Nowhere do they mention Pein, or Pima, for it appears to be *Kiria* itself, which is the only real town between Khotan and the Lobnor. Grenard says in a note (p. 54, vol. ii.): "*Pi-mo* (Keria) recalls the Tibetan *byé-ma*, which is pronounced *Péma*, or *Tchéma*, and which means *sand*. Such is perhaps also the origin of *Pialma*, a village near Khotan, and of the old name of Charchan, *Tché-mo-to-na*, of which the two last syllables would represent *grong* (pronounce *tong*=town), or *kr'om* (*t'om*=bazaar). Now, not only would this etymology be justified because these three places are indeed surrounded with sand remarkably deep, but as they were the first three important places with which the Tibetans met coming into the desert of Gobi, either by the route of Gurgutluk and of Polor, or by Karakoram and Sandju, or by Tsadam, and they had thus as good a pretext to call them 'towns of sand' as the

* *Pein* may easily have been miscopied for *Pem*, which is indeed the reading of some MSS. Ramusio has *Peym*.

† M. Vivien de St. Martin, in his map of Hiuen Tsang's travels, places Pima to the *west* of Khotan. Though one sees how the mistake originated, there is no real ground for this in either of the versions of the Chinese pilgrim's journey. (See *Vie et Voyages*, p. 288, and *Mémoires*, vol. ii. 242-243.)