

north to south; in the narrowest part it is not more than 10 *li*. It is situated among the snowy mountains. On this account the climate is cold, and the winds blow constantly. The snow falls in summer and springtime. Night and day the wind rages violently. The soil is impregnated with salt, and covered with quantities of gravel and sand. The grain which is sown does not ripen; shrubs and trees are rare; there is but a succession of deserts without any inhabitants. In the middle of the valley is a great Dragon Lake; from east to west it is 300 *li* or so, from north to south 50 *li*. It is situated in the midst of the great Ts'ung-ling mountains, and in the central part of Jambudvīpa. The land is very high. The water is pure and clear as a mirror; it cannot be fathomed. The colour of the lake is dark blue, the taste of the water sweet and soft. In the water hide all kinds of aquatic monsters. Floating on its surface are ducks, wild geese, cranes, and so on. Large eggs are found concealed in the desert wastes, or among the marshy shrubs, or on the sandy islets. To the west of the lake there is a large stream, which, going west, reaches so far as the eastern borders of Ta-mo-hsi-t'ie-ti 達摩悉鐵帝 (Wakhān), and there joins the river Po-ch'u 縛芻 (Oxus), and flows still to the west. So on this side of the lake all the streams flow westwards. On the east of the lake is a great stream which, flowing north-east, reaches to the western frontiers of the country of Ch'ia-sha 佉沙 (Kāshgar) and there joins the Hsi-to 徙多 river (Yārkand R.) and flows eastward; and so all streams on the left side of the lake flow eastward. . . . On leaving the midst of this valley and going south-east, along the route, there are neither men nor villages. Ascending the mountains, traversing the side of precipices, encountering nothing but ice and snow, and thus going 500 *li*, we arrive at the kingdom of Chieh-p'an-t'o 竭盤陀 (Sarīkol).¹¹

Lord Curzon has already rightly emphasized the fact that 'the salient features of the account stand out as an unmistakable picture of the Pamir country'. He, too, has fully explained the geographical errors involved in the exaggerated extent and the eastward-flowing drainage ascribed to the 'great Dragon Lake'.¹² In the pilgrim's description of the latter it is easy to recognize that mixture of correct record of locally observed facts with naïve reproduction of traditional beliefs which is throughout characteristic of the pious traveller's narrative. The clearness, fresh taste, and dark blue colour of the water of the lake are just as he describes them. Its shores in the spring and autumn swarm with aquatic birds, and according to Kirghiz statements their eggs are then to be found in plenty amidst the thin scrub of the shores. That the imagination of old travellers passing this great sheet of water at such a height and so far away from human occupation should have credited it with great depth and peopled this with 'dragons' and other monsters is easy to understand. What legends, if any, are current nowadays about the lake I regret not to have been able to ascertain; for none of the Kirghiz who graze on the Great Pāmīr were within reach during my day's halt, being away in the higher side valleys to the east.

Marco Polo's account of the 'Pamier' makes it equally clear that his route led him past the 'Great Lake'. 'And when you leave this little country (Wakhān), and ride three days north-east, always among mountains, you get to such a height that 'tis said to be the highest place in the world! And when you have got to this height you find [a great lake between two mountains, and out of it] a fine river running through a plain clothed with the finest pasture in the world; insomuch that a lean beast there will fatten to your heart's content in ten days. There are great numbers of all kinds of wild beasts; among others, wild sheep of great size, whose horns are good

Hsüan-tsang's 'great Dragon Lake'.

Marco Polo on great lake of Pamier.

¹¹ See *Si-yu-ki*, transl. Beal, ii. pp. 297 sq.; transl. Julien, ii. p. 207 sqq.; Watters, *Yuan Chwang*, ii. pp. 282 sq. Regarding the identifications of Ta-mo-hsi-t'ie-ti: Wakhān; Ch'ia-sha: Kāshgar; Hsi-to: Yārkand River and its Sarīkol feeder; Chieh-p'an-t'o: Sarīkol; cf. *Serindia*, i.

p. 62; *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 27 sqq., 35, 48.

As to *Shang-mi*, which Hsüan-tsang did not visit himself but describes in a way showing its location in the present Mastūj or Kāshkār-bālā, cf. *Serindia*, i. pp. 44 sq.

¹² Cf. Curzon, *Pamirs*, pp. 69 sq.