

Maës' route
to the Seres.

According to Ptolemy's express statement, Marinus gathered his geographical data about the land of the Seres from the account given by Maës, a Macedonian merchant 'called also Titianus', who had sent agents into the country. The route of these agents, which we may safely assume to have been a caravan road in frequent use for the silk-trade from China into the Parthian Empire, led from Hierapolis on the Euphrates through Hekatompilos, Areia, and Margiana (Merv) to Baktra. From there the route passed first northward to the mountain district of the Komedi, and then along it to the south-east 'as far as the ravine that opens into the plain country'. In this ravine the traveller had to ascend for 50 schoeni northward when 'he arrives at the Stone Tower, after which the mountains recede to the east and unite with Imaus, the range that runs up to the north from Palimbothra'.¹² Another passage of Ptolemy places to the east of the Stone Tower, and in the axis of Mount Imaus itself, the station or Sarai (ὄρητήριον) 'whence traders start on their journey to Sera'.¹³

The 'Valley
of the
Komedi.'

It is the joint merit of Sir H. Yule and Sir H. Rawlinson to have demonstrated beyond all doubt the identity of the mountain tract of the Komedi with the Chü-mi-t'o of Hsüan-tsang on the one hand and the 'land of the Kumēdh' of early Muhammadan writers on the other¹⁴. It thus became possible to locate with certainty 'the valley of the Komedi' in the mountains which divide the Wakhshāb river and the adjacent alpine tracts of Karategin from the course of the Oxus. From Karategin a direct and comparatively easy line of communication leads along the Wakhshāb up to the rich grazing grounds of the wide Alal plateau. Ascending the latter to its eastern end, it then crosses the watershed range between the Oxus and the Tārīm at its lowest point, the Taun-murun Pass¹⁵; and a short distance below, near the headwaters of the Kāshgar river, it joins the great route which connects Kāshgar with Farghāna over the Terek Dawān.

Position of
the 'Stone
Tower.'

Baron Richthofen, by a series of convincing arguments, has proved how closely the description of the road followed by Maës' agents agrees with the route just indicated¹⁶. An exact location of the famous 'Stone Tower' (λίθινος πύργος) is not possible at present, and can be hoped for only from antiquarian investigations effected on the spot¹⁷. In regard, however, to the

¹² See Ptolemy, *Geographia*, I. cap. xii. 7 sqq. By Imaus is meant the watershed range between the Oxus and the Tārīm; compare Richthofen, *China*, i. p. 484.

¹³ Ptolemy, *Geogr.* VI. cap. xiii. 1. It deserves to be noted that the traders' station is placed due east of the 'Stone Tower', Lat. 43° being indicated for both.

¹⁴ See Yule, in *J.R.A.S.*, 1873, pp. 97 sq.; for other references compare Richthofen, *China*, i. p. 497, note. The connexion between the Komedi of Ptolemy and Chü-mi-t'o of Hsüan-tsang had first suggested itself to Sir A. Cunningham; but as in the case of numerous other conjectural identifications, which in the end proved equally happy, he was not able to support it by critical evidence or to locate the territory. On the other hand, the discussion of the Ptolemy passage in *Cathay*, i. p. cxlix, is still of value, as showing how Sir H. Yule, by a chain of sound critical reasoning, had been led to Karategin as the probable position of the Komedi, even before information became available as to the survival of the local name into Muhammadan times.

¹⁵ This is the form in which I heard the name pronounced on the spot; General Kuropatkin writes 'Toongooboo-roon,' see *Kashgaria*, translated by Major W. E. Gowan (Calcutta, 1882), p. 31. In the Russian Survey Maps the

spelling *Taun-murun* seems to have been adopted.

¹⁶ See *China*, i. pp. 496 sqq.

¹⁷ The question as to the position of the 'Stone Tower' had been discussed at length by a number of distinguished scholars, from Humboldt to Sir H. Rawlinson, before the identification of the mountains of the Komedi supplied a definite clue to the direction of Maës' route. For a synopsis of these conjectured locations, which range from Tāshkend in the north-west to Tāsh-kurgān in the south-east, see Richthofen, *China*, i. p. 498, and McCrindle, *Ancient India as described by Ptolemy* (Bombay, 1885), p. 12.

I avail myself of this opportunity to correct the error into which I fell by accepting Sir H. Rawlinson's identification of the λίθινος πύργος with Tāsh-kurgān, in my *Preliminary Report*, p. 12, and also in *Ruins of Khotan*, p. 71. When writing the original diary notes on which both the above records of my journey are based, my scope for reference on the subject was restricted to Dr. McCrindle's above-quoted publication on Ptolemy, in the copious notes of which the well-established identification of the Komedi has unfortunately remained unnoticed.

The more recent conjectures concerning the position of the 'Stone Tower,' which Dr. Marquart quotes in his *Ērānshahr*,