

described presently. This negative fact is quite compatible with the opinion that the oasis of Gūma has been under cultivation from early times. The observations to be detailed below regarding the Khotan oasis, prove beyond all doubt that an area constantly irrigated for centuries is, under the physical conditions prevailing between the foot of the Kun-lun range and the Taklamakān, bound to be covered by a steadily rising deposit formed of silt and loess dust<sup>15</sup>. All ancient remains are so effectively hidden by the rapid growth of this overlying deposit that, as the fate of the culture-strata of Yōtkan convincingly demonstrates, nothing but the formation of deep ravines in the soil, or else long-continued subsequent denudation through the erosive action of the wind, can ever reveal their existence.

I did not see any indication of either of these two agencies being at work now within the cultivated area of Gūma, while all round its northern outskirts the accumulation of drifting 'sand'<sup>16</sup> is actively proceeding. Hence I hold that the absence of any archaeological finds within or on the outskirts of the oasis is no evidence against ancient occupation.

Gūma, together with Mokuila and Moji, must be assumed to have formed part of the 'kingdom' of *P'i-shan* (Pe-shan) 皮山, which the 'Notice of the Western Regions' in the Han Annals places half-way between Khotan and Yarkand (So-ch'ê), at 380 li distance from either<sup>17</sup>. The population was reckoned at 3,500 persons, showing that the territory was a small one. The statement made in the Notice that India adjoins it to the south, is a manifest reference to the Karakorum route, which is reached by going due south via Kilian or Sanju. The T'ang Annals speak of P'i-shan as a small territory absorbed by the Khotan kingdom<sup>18</sup>.

The inquiries made on my behalf among the people of Gūma for antiques produced no result, notwithstanding the offer of liberal reward for any acceptable article and the manifest *empressement* shown by the local authorities to facilitate acquisitions. The small octagonal bronze seal (G. 001), apparently of Chinese make (Plate L), which was sold to me at Karghalik as having been found near Gūma, is of uncertain date and origin, and could in no case be relied upon as evidence, since it had passed through the Bāzār channel.

### SECTION III.—THE TATI OF KAKSHAL

The morning of the 6th of October saw me on my way towards Moji, the next caravan stage, filled with keen expectation as to the remains of 'kōne-shahrs' which, according to my Gūma informants, were to be seen *en route*. After we had emerged from the shady lanes of the southern part of the Gūma oasis, and had crossed a stretch of stony Dasht about three miles broad, I came upon the first of these on the right bank of the wide river-bed, now entirely dry, which the day before I had followed lower down to Karatāgh-aghzi. For a considerable distance along the right bank, which, where crossed by the road rises some twenty feet above the sandy bottom of the flood-water channel, the ground was thickly strewn with small fragments of coarse red pottery. No ornamented pieces could be found, but the exceptional hardness and occasional fine grain of these potsherds showed that they belonged to a remote period. The width of the area over which these scattered fragments could be traced was not great, as it extended only for about a third of a mile from the river-bank to where the soft sandy soil, unmistakably

Early occupation of Gūma.

The *P'i-shan* of Chinese Annals.

Débris area near Mokuila.

<sup>15</sup> Compare below, chap. VIII. sec. ii; *Ruins of Khotan*, pp. 263 sqq.

<sup>16</sup> I use the expression 'sand' here and elsewhere without any prejudice as to the real geological nature and origin

of the substance composing the dunes.

<sup>17</sup> Compare Wylie, *J. Anthropol. Inst.*, x. pp. 30 sq.; also above, p. 97.

<sup>18</sup> See Chavannes, *Turcs occid.*, p. 125.