

MAES TITIANUS, PTOLEMY AND THE “STONE TOWER” ON THE GREAT SILK ROAD

Igor' Vasil'evich P'iankov
Novgorod State University

The “Stone Tower” (Λιθινὸς πύργος) is mentioned as the most important landmark on the Great Silk Road in the famous “Geographical Guide” of Claudius Ptolemy. Ptolemy knew about the “Stone Tower” from two sources: first of all, via his predecessor Marinus of Tyre from the itinerary of Maes Titianus. This itinerary contained the only complete description from Classical Antiquity of the land route of the Great Silk Road from Roman Syria to the capital of China. Secondly, Ptolemy drew his information from sailors, his contemporaries, when the land route had already been connected through India with the maritime route. Both of these sources indicated that the “Stone Tower” divided the Great Silk Road at its midpoint. Ptolemy’s information about this is both in the narrative part of his work and in his description of his maps.

Some observations on methodology¹

Interpretations by historians using the written sources from Classical Antiquity frequently make the mistake of assuming those texts are original, primary sources, whereas in fact they tend to be complex compilations. Before one can use them, it is necessary to carry out specific textual analysis with reference to the sources they may have used and which can reasonably be documented. In the process, it is important to understand how the ancient geographers went about compiling their descriptive texts and maps.

A recent example of what this author considers to be a flawed approach to analyzing Ptolemy’s mapping of Central Asia is an article by the distinguished French scholar Claude Rapin (1998/2001). Rapin argued that Ptolemy’s mapping of Central Asia derived in the first instance from some kind of a Seleucid map compiled from graphic documents which had been created for administrative purposes. This process of creating a collage from the sources involved various “rotations” and repositioning with resulting distortions of geographic data. In Rapin’s view, Ptolemy

then supplemented the Seleucid map with new material contributed by Marinus of Tyre and by Ptolemy himself. Among the new sources was the itinerary of Maes Titianus.

Such an interpretation belongs to the category of hypotheses which are impossible to prove or disprove. The various “rotations” are pure supposition with the help of which one can explain anything one wishes. But in general the method presupposed by this hypothesis — the creation of a global map by means of a diligent combination of many regional document maps — is not characteristic for ancient science. Broad generalizations in both ancient Greek geography and ancient Greek historiography always were developed on the basis of and within the framework of literary tradition. New information could change only specific details in traditional schema, and old schema usually were not discarded but rather were adjusted to co-exist with the new. If documentary material was used, it did little to change the already established interpretive framework. In ancient Greek cartography such documentary material was itineraries, which were simply overlaid on traditional cartographic concepts.

If we examine Ptolemy’s data against the broad background of the traditions of Classical geography (which Rapin did not attempt to do), then we find ample evidence of this. Of course even with this different approach the conclusions will be hypothetical, but nonetheless testable and based on concrete factual material obtained from comparison with the data of other Classical authors. This approach informs the analysis in a number of my earlier publications, to which the reader is referred and which by and large have escaped the attention of scholars outside of Russia. My conclusion is that in the first instance, Ptolemy derived his framework from data he extracted from Eratosthenes, Hipparchus and Poseidonius. The data from Maes Titianus, transmitted via Marinus of Tyre, was layered on top of that scheme, and then supplemented by reports of Ptolemy’s contemporaries.

Maes Titianus and his itinerary²

The itinerary of Maes Titianus is a unique example of its genre in ancient Graeco-Roman literature. It alone describes the entire overland route of the Great Silk Road from the Syrian city of Hierapolis and the Roman border on the Euphrates to the capital of Serika (China).

We know about Maes Titianus and his itinerary only from the information provided by Claudius Ptolemy in his "Geography" (ca. 150–160 CE). And Ptolemy himself knew about this author only through his main source, the work of Marinus of Tyre (ca. 107–114 CE).³ Various opinions have been expressed about the nature of the contacts between Marinus and Maes. Some scholars have even suggested that they were personally acquainted (Hennig 1961, p. 402). But it is more persuasive to speak only of literary contact, a view supported by an analysis of Ptolemy's text (Kubitschek 1935, p. 235). Judging from Marinus' comments, he had little faith in the accuracy of the data in Maes' itinerary (Ptol., *Geogr.* I.11.6-7).⁴

The author of our itinerary, Maes (Μάης), nicknamed "Titianos" (Τιτιανός), was in all likelihood a Syrian of Macedonian origin, a "Macedonian" in social status, a hereditary wholesale merchant who carried out long-distance trading operations with the help of his commercial agents. One can but hypothesize with regard to the place where he lived and composed his itinerary.⁵ Most likely that was the ancient Phoenician city of Tyre in Syria, the main center for the manufacture of purple silk textiles (Cary 1956, p. 130; Hennig 1961, p. 402). The need to import to Tyre Chinese raw silk, it appears, would have been the catalyst for the trading activity of the family of Maes Titianus. It is also no accident that the itinerary of Maes came down to us only thanks to the mediation of Marinus of Tyre, a presumed fellow-countryman of Maes. Apparently, this itinerary was known only in a narrow circle of the merchant houses of Tyre. Less probable is the idea that Maes Titianus was from Alexandria in Egypt or some other city of Hellenistic Egypt (Kubitschek 1935, p. 235). And it is very unlikely that he was an Iranian, born in Central Asia (Altheim and Stiehl 1970, p. 707).

Even less easily established are the dates of Maes Titianus' life. Should we be able to determine his dates, then we could establish the date of the journey of his commercial agents and the composition of the itinerary.⁶ Unfortunately, the sources contain no direct indication at all concerning the date of these travels, leaving us with but indirect evidence about the historical circumstances. Thus it is no surprise that opinions range over a broad period approximately from the beginning of the Common Era to the beginning of the 2nd century CE. The majority of scholars are in-

clined to a late date: the end of the 1st to beginning of the 2nd century CE. Thus, Albert Herrmann, one of the most prominent historians of the Great Silk Road, dates the itinerary of Maes to 97 CE, or, in any event, prior to 100 CE.⁷ The attraction for scholars of a late dating is entirely understandable, since it was precisely at that time that the struggle between the Romans and Parthians for the monopoly over the Great Silk Road reached its apogee, and the Parthian expedition of Trajan (113–117 CE), so it seems, tilted the scales in the favor of Rome.

Let us look at the possibilities of dating according to the historical circumstances on the overland route of the Great Silk Road within the chronological boundaries where the *terminus post quem* is 64 BCE, when Syria became a Roman province, and the *terminus ante quem* is 114 CE, when Marinus completed his collection of materials for his work (Honigsmann 1930, col. 1768; Lasserre 1969, col. 1027). In contrast to the usual approach by scholars, we will begin with the situation on the western end of the Great Silk Road, on the Roman-Parthian border, not on its eastern end in China.⁸

In the west at the beginning of the indicated period two routes competed, the overland one through Seleucia on the Tigris and the maritime route. The Romans controlled the maritime route, but evidenced an interest as well in the overland one. The silk of the Seres begins to be mentioned frequently in Roman literature approximately from 30 BCE. Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus, 65 BCE – 8 CE) names the Seres both together with the Indians (Horace 1959, *Carm.* 1.12. 53-57), which indicates the maritime route, and in connection with the Bactrians, Tanais and the Persians (*Carm.* 3.29.25-28; 4.15.21-24), which is evidence of his acquaintance with the overland route. It is precisely in the period of Augustus that Roman agents for the first time made their way overland into the heart of Parthian territory (Debevoise 1938, p. 139; 2008, pp. 176–82).

Following their serious conflict with Rome (the battle at Carrhae, 53 BCE), the Parthians, who had at first protected the overland routes, recognized the threat they posed to Arsacid rule and attempted to block them. The overland route across the Iranian plateau along its entire distance was controlled by Greek colonies which had been founded earlier in the Hellenistic period. These Greek cities were longstanding opponents of the Arsacids and adherents of the Romans. Along this route the Romans could easily penetrate the most significant and flourishing centers of the Parthian kingdom. It is no accident that Crassus, having occupied Greek cities on the Euphrates at the far western end of the Great Silk Road, threatened the Parthians that he will explain to them the reason for his actions in Seleucia (Plut., *Crass* 18; Cassio Dio 40.16).⁹

But most importantly, the Parthians assiduously protected their monopoly of the trade in silk with the Roman state and could not allow direct contacts of the Romans with the Chinese. So long as the route was in the hands of Greek colonies, to preserve the monopoly was very difficult. A Chinese source speaks openly about this monopoly: the Parthians, wanting to be the only ones to supply the Romans with silk, would not allow Romans to pass through their territories to China (1st-2nd centuries CE), nor would they permit the Chinese to reach Rome. The history of Gan Ying (97 CE) attests eloquently to this: traveling via the overland route, apparently he reached the Euphrates, but thanks to the machinations of the Parthians at the border of the Roman Empire, he could not cross into it (Bichurin 1950, pp. 225-27; Hill 2015, Vol. 1, pp. 23, 25, 27). Only in the 3rd century CE did the Chinese learn about the route to Rome overland through Iran (Sherkova 1991, p. 27).

There is reason to think that the continual rebellion of the Greek cities under Seleucia against the power of the Arsacids and the support for them by the Roman protégés on the Parthian throne was evidence of the struggle by the Greeks to retain the benefits from their position on the Great Silk Road. The final event of this struggle was the enthusiastic reception by Seleucia and by the other Greek cities of the next Roman protégé, Tiridates III (36 CE) (Tacit. *Ann.* 5.41-42). Characteristic is the list of cities which supported Tiridates III immediately following Seleucia: Nicephorion and Anthemousias (Batnai), Hala and Artemita. The first two were cities on the Euphrates, on the western end of the Great Silk Road, and the last two in the valley of the Diyala, on the approach to Seleucia from the east. One must think that this was an act of desperation, immediately after which began the Great Rebellion (35-42 CE) when Seleucia refused to recognize the rule of the Parthian emperor. After the suppression of the rebellion, as archaeology shows, Seleucia lost a significant part of its Greek heritage. One can think that the overland route in its capacity as an international Roman-Parthian road ceased to function at that point.

Now the rivalry turned to the struggle for control of the sea route: in the given instance for control of the eastern branch of the Palmyra route leading to the Persian Gulf. The Romans asserted their power in Palmyra; the Parthians built the city of Vologaesias (77 CE), which controlled the lower Euphrates section of the route. Seleucia soon (from 24 CE) was excluded from the Palmyra trade. The events of the Parthian campaign of the Roman emperor Trajan (113-117 CE) show that the Romans at that time had entirely lost interest in Seleucia and that all their attention had shifted to the port cities of the Persian Gulf in the lower

reaches of the Tigris and Euphrates. In Seleucia, now no longer a Greek city, there was even an uprising of the Jewish population against the Romans, and Trajan burned the city. At the mouths of the Tigris and Euphrates, the emperor established customs houses, which is but one more indication of the effort of the Romans to control the maritime route. They sent off to the coastal city of Spasinou-Charax and sailed through the Persian Gulf.¹⁰

Given these circumstances, it seems anachronistic to date the itinerary of Maes Titianus the end of the 1st to beginning of the 2nd century CE. More probable is an earlier date, the end of the 1st century BCE to beginning of the 1st century CE. At that time the overland route still had not lost its relevance, and the relations of Rome with Parthia were the most friendly for the entire period we have examined. Thus the hypothesis of Max Cary acquires special significance, according to which the patron of Maes Titianus was Titius, the Roman viceregent of Syria (in 20-17 and 13/12 CE). This Titius was a close confidant of the Parthian emperor Phraates IV, judging from his participation in events that were unprecedented in the history of Roman-Parthian relations. The emperor sent to Augustus in Rome his sons and grandsons as hostages, and it was Titius who was the mediator in the negotiations with the emperor (12-10 CE) (Strab. 16.1.28). At that time Maes might have received permission from the Parthian ruler for his traders to penetrate the heart of Parthian territory. Max Cary proposes that the journey far to the east was thought up already by Agrippa, the closest collaborator of Augustus, but was put into effect by Titius with the help of Maes Titianus in the period between 20 and 1 BCE (Cary 1956, pp. 132-33). This was an exceptional case (although not necessarily unique). The penetration of Roman traders through the Euphrates to Mesopotamia was not a great rarity (Raschke 1978, p. 642), but farther east the road had been closed to them. There are no Roman coins on the territory of the Arsacids east of Mesopotamia.

The "Stone Tower" on the Continental Route.¹¹

The itinerary of Maes Titianus provides the basic information about the continental route. The immediate context for the data about the "Stone Tower" there is found in the description of the section of the route from Bactra to the halting place of the merchants. This description is both in the discussion of the itinerary (the section of the route from Bactra to the "Stone Tower": Ptol. *Geogr.* I.12.7-8), and in the description of the maps (Bactriana, Sogdiana, The Land of the Sakai: Ptol. *Geogr.* VI.11-13; for his map, my Appendix, p. 74).

For Ptolemy, the information about the itinerary was an entirely new description of places about which nothing had been written in earlier sources. This re-

quired even the insertion of changes into the traditional cartographic schemes which Ptolemy employed (P'iankov 1997, pp. 77, 270–72; 2010, pp. 318–24). In explaining Marinus, Ptolemy divided the route from Bactra to the “Stone Tower” into three parts.

The first part of the route is Bactra and the road from Bactra. “The road to Bactra extends to the east” (from Antiocheia Margiana). According to Ptolemy, this road, like Bactra itself, is on the parallel of the Hellespont (41°) (*Geogr.* I.12.7). The map also provides these coordinates for Bactra: 116°/41°. “The road thence [from Bactra] to the ascent to the Mountain Country of the Komedes (Κωμηδῶν) ([*the map adds:*] from Sogdiana) goes north” (*Geogr.* I.12. 7).

The second part of the route is the road through the Mountain Country of the Komedes. “The road through the Mountain Country itself up to the Gorge ([*the map adds:*] of the Komedes) which traverses a plain, goes south; it is oriented from the north-western parts of the Mountain Country, where the ascent is found, to the south-eastern parts.” Marinus locates the north-western parts on the parallel of Byzantium (43°), and the south-western parts on the parallel of the Hellespont (41°) (Ptol. *Geogr.* I.12.7). On Ptolemy’s map, the ascent in the north-west of the Mountain Country of the Komedes is indicated as 125°/43°, and the Gorge in the south-west of the Mountain Country as 130°/39°. Apparently this marked bending of the mountain road to the south had been noted already by Marinus, who considered (on the basis of the data in the itinerary of Maes Titianus?), that “this road, while it extends almost straight eastwards, bends to the south” (Ptol. *Geogr.* I.12.7).

The third section of the route is the road through the Gorge of the Komedes. “The road thence [from the exit from the Mountain Country of the Komedes at its south-western end along the Gorge of the Komedes?] in fifty *schoinoi* up to the ‘Stone Tower’ bends to the north, and indeed after the ascent the Gorge gives way to the ‘Stone Tower,’ to whose east, the mountains, opening out, adjoin the Imaon,” which ascends from Palimbothra to the north (Ptol. *Geogr.* I.12.8). The coordinates of the “Stone Tower” on Ptolemy’s map are 135°/43°. Regarding Ptolemy’s words concerning the Imaon, “which ascends from Palimbothra to the north,” they seem to be based on more recent sources (end of the 1st–beginning of the 2nd century CE) with which Ptolemy supplemented the information of Marinus. They concern the route through Bactra and the “Stone Tower” in the context of the maritime route with its overland branches through India, among them one through Palimbothra (*Geogr.* I.17.4).

As we can see, the description is not distinguished by its clarity. Scholars have suggested many interpreta-

tions of it, which form three basic groups: some trace the road from Balkh along the Karategin and Alai valley; others, from Balkh through Samarkand and Fergana; and the third from Balkh through the Pamirs.¹² However, none of these variants explains completely all of Ptolemy’s data.¹³ In our view, these data cannot be explained merely by locating them on a modern map. What is necessary first is to analyze Ptolemy’s text.

In Ptolemy’s indications, both the narrative and cartographic, what strikes us first of all is the differences in the way he characterizes the “ascent” (ἀνάβασις – in the given instance, a pass) into the Mountain Country of the Komedes. On the one hand, the road there goes directly north from Bactra; on the other, those traveling from the Sogdians go there, and it is located most probably to the east rather than to the north of Bactra (the coordinates of Bactra are 116°/41°, and of the ascent, 125°/43°). On the one hand, after the ascent, one immediately enters the Gorge, which extends to the “Stone Tower” and then enters the plain, while on the other, the ascent leads into the Mountain Country. Apparently Ptolemy himself did not note that the description deals with two different ascents. This observation is the key to deciphering all of Ptolemy’s data on the section of the route from Bactra to the “Stone Tower.” Of itself, this interpretation is not new,¹⁴ but further conclusions have not been drawn from it, and for the analysis of Ptolemy’s text, as far as we know, it has not been used.

We can describe approximately in this way the history of the information about the section of the route from Bactra to the “Stone Tower.” For that section of the route, the itinerary of Maes Titianus describes not one but rather two branches of the route. One led from Bactra directly to the country of the Saka people, the Komedes, and, after the ascent to that country, ran through the Gorge, past the “Stone Tower,” and then along a broader mountain valley. The other led to the Komedes through Sogdiana and, after the ascent, went through the Mountain Country. Marinus adhered to the geographical scheme which was widespread in his time, according to which Bactriana, Sogdiana and the Country of the Sakai were located along a single latitude from west to east, the first two separated by the Oxus, and the second and third by the Jaxartes. This scheme, borrowed by Ptolemy from Marinus was inscribed on the latter’s maps (for details, see P'iankov 1997, pp. 243–46, 270–71; 2010, pp. 318–20). Understandably, such a scheme entirely excluded the possibility that the Bactrians were direct neighbors of the Sakai. Marinus apparently considered erroneous the indication of such proximity in the description of one of the branches of the road, but did not completely discard this description, instead attempting, follow-

ing a rather common practice, to unite both branches into a single route.

In order to reconstruct and explain the original description of two branches of the road in the itinerary of Maes Titianus, we will focus on the main landmarks of this section of the route, including Bactra and the "Stone Tower" – the beginning and end points of the given section in the itinerary – the ascent to the Land of the Komedes, the Gorge of the Komedes, and, finally the Komedes people themselves. We will also examine the route from the "Stone Tower" to the halting place of the merchants, about which we have only the information on the map.

1. Bactra and the road from Bactra, its two branches.

The starting and most important point on this segment of the route was Bactra (Βάκτρα). Ptolemy names this city both in the description of the itinerary and on the map (*Geogr.* VI.11.9; VIII.23.9). Judging from the map, the city was located on the river Dargoid (Δάργοιδος) (*Geogr.* VI.11.2). This information of Ptolemy is based on the data of the itinerary of Maes Titianus, but Ptolemy also knew about the same city and river from other sources, which duplicated them under the respective names of Zariaspa and Zariasp (*Geogr.* VI.11.2.7). The city and river which Ptolemy knew under two names and which he separated are the city of Balkh and the River Balkhab. We see no reason to seek alternative identifications for them as some have tended to do (e.g., Humbach, pp. 73–75).

The crossing of the Oxus. Bactra was the starting point for two branches of the route. In order to continue the route further in the northern direction, merchants had to cross the Oxus (Amu Darya). There is nothing in the itinerary about this crossing, but it is evident from the map that the crossing was in any event necessary, whichever branch of the route was followed. Much later the direct route from Balkh to the north led to a crossing of the Amu Darya in the region of Termez, and there one branch went further north, along the valley of the Surkhan Darya to the Hisar valley and Karategin, and the other over the low mountain range of Baysuntau to Samarkand.

After crossing the Amu Darya, the route of the merchants divided, and each of its two branches led to its own "ascent" of the mountains.

2. The road through the Gorge of the Komedes and the "Stone Tower"

One ascent was located directly north from Bactra, and from it began the Gorge (φάραγος) of the Komedes. If we consider the beginning of this Gorge to be Obigarm (Marquart 1938, pp. 63–64), then the ascent to the Gorge would have to be located somewhere on the approaches to the latter at the eastern end of

the Hisar valley. It is of interest that located there is a place now called Kharangon. The Greek root **pharang-* with slight phonetic changes in its reconfiguring in Persian might well give the form *harang-on* (where *-on* is the plural suffix). The preservation of Greek names in the later toponymics of Central Asia is not exceptional (Rtveladze 1977, pp. 182–87).

A road 50 *schoinoi* long goes through the Gorge and has a north-eastern direction and respective coordinates of the beginning and end of 130°/39° (41° according to Marinus) and 135°/43°. The information about this Gorge has also been interpreted in various ways, depending on how the given segment of the route according to Ptolemy's map is superimposed on a modern map [Fig. 1, next page; Color Plate IV]. But if one examines the information about the Gorge of the Komedes independently of one or another preconception, then the most natural and convincing conclusion would unequivocally be to identify it with the Karategin.¹⁵

The "Stone Tower" was located at the exit from the Gorge. Ptolemy's indications of its location are contradictory: in one case it is located at 135°/43° (*Geogr.* VI.13.2), in another at a distance of 26,280 or 24,000 stadia from the crossing of the Euphrates (*Geogr.* I.11.3; 12.3.9), that is respectively on the meridians 137°30' or 132°. J. Oliver Thomson (1953, p. 428) believed that no one has explained this discrepancy, a contradiction which had led some to think that the name "Stone Tower" did not designate a specific geographical location (Kubitschek 1935, p. 233). But that discrepancy in fact was explained by Albert Herrmann (1938, p. 94): the second indication was based on the data of the itinerary of Maes, accompanied by Ptolemy's correction, and the first on the cartographic calculations of Marinus, according to which the oecumene was 90,000 stadia in circumference (cf. *Geogr.* I.11.1). The "Stone Tower" was also mentioned in the more recent sources used by Ptolemy to supplement the information of Marinus, specifically in the previously mentioned descriptions of the maritime route to the Seres through India and Bactria (*Geogr.* I.17.4). Since the Komedes of the Alai in the Chinese sources correspond to the Saka tribe of the Xiuxun (P'iankov 1994, p. 41), the mention of the "Stone Tower" on its territory and in the Chinese sources is to be expected.¹⁶

As most analysts now agree, the "Stone Tower," which apparently represents a settlement that arose around some kind of stone structure, should be located in the region of Daraut-Kurghan in the Alai valley. The very Perso-Turkic name "Daraut-Kurghan" supports such a conclusion: in the root of the first word is unquestionably the common Iranian **dara-*, "gorge," and as a whole the name apparently denoted roughly a "tower at the gorge." Archaeological data confirm

After: USSR General Staff 1:500000 maps quadrants J-42-B (Ordzhonikidzeabad) (1987=88 ed.), and J-43-A (Murgab) (1977 ed.).

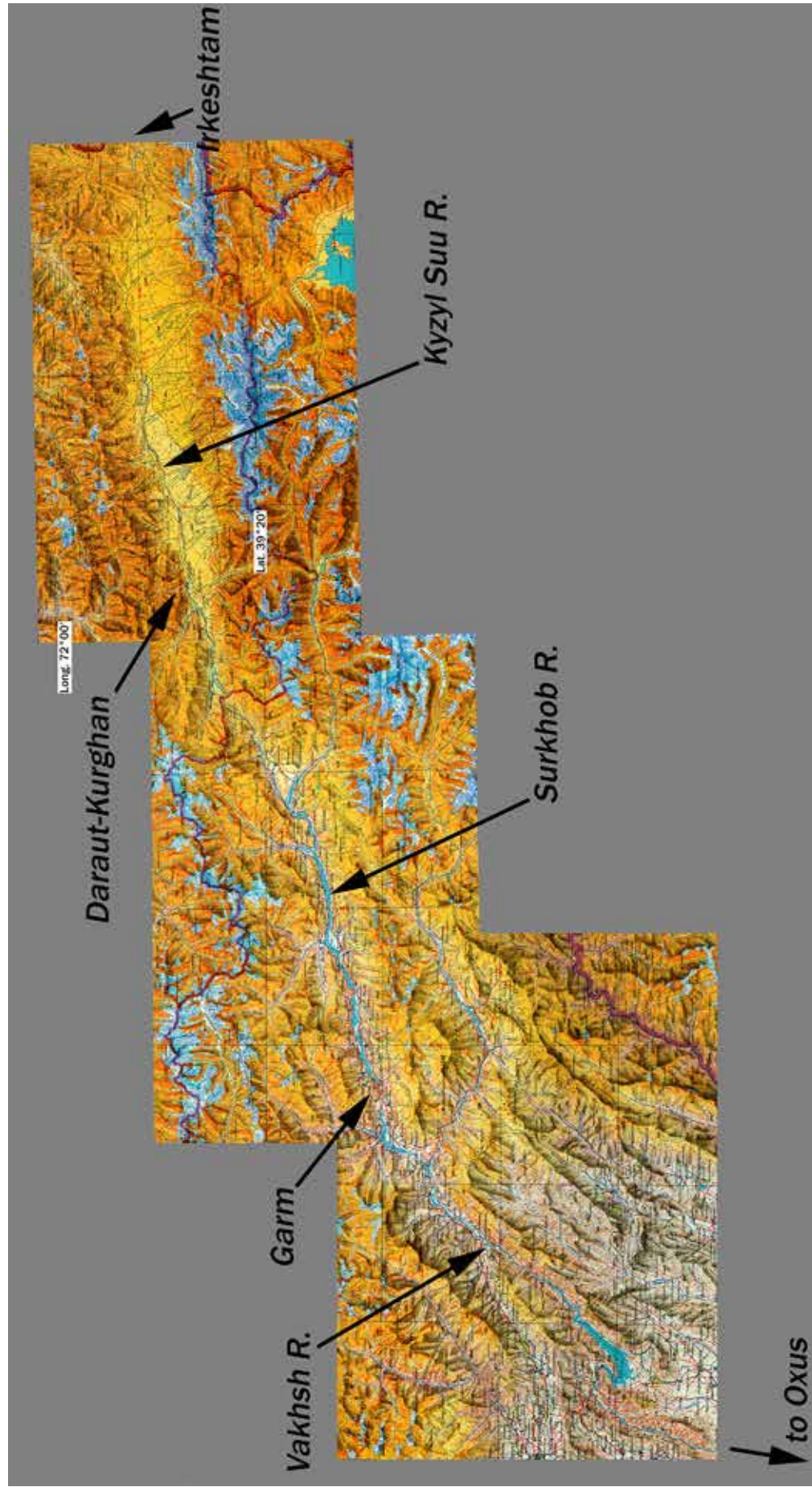


Fig. 1. Modern topographic map showing route starting north of the Oxus along the Vakhsh and Surkhob rivers in Tajikistan, passing Daraut-Kurghan and following the Kyzyl Suu River in Kyrgyzstan to the Chinese border. Just west of Daraut-Kurghan, the valley floor is at an altitude of 2415 m; the valley is flanked on the south by peaks rising to over 7000 m. Composite image.

such a localization: in the vicinity of Daraut-Kurghan have been found remains of a settlement with the stone foundations of large structures which existed in the Kushan and earlier times (from the 2nd half of the 1st century BCE) (Bernshtam 1952, pp. 205–07; Zadneprovskii 1962, p. 186). Another widely believed localization of the “Stone Tower” in the region of Tashkurghan in Sarikol has been supported only by the closeness in the meaning of these two names (the Turkic “stone tower”). However the toponym Tashkurghan is not all that rare and, moreover, is of rather late origin.¹⁷

The further route from the “Stone Tower” to the east, is already “along the plain (τὰ πεδία), where the hills open out (χωροῦντα) and come up” to the meridial “branch of the Imaon” (Ἰμαον) (*Geogr.* I.12.7–8), from 135°/43° to 140°/43°, to the halting place of the merchants near that same Imai range: this is the route through the Alai/Kyzyl Suu valley from Daraut-Kurghan to Irkeshtam.

Our interpretation of Ptolemy’s information about the “ascent” as describing two different ascents makes it unnecessary to search in the specific section of the route for bends first to the south-east and then to the north-east, obtained by Ptolemy as a result of his artificial combining of information about two different roads. In fact, the route here ran only to the north-east. Thus, the route proposed by Albert Herrmann (1938, p. 104) is entirely improbable for trading caravans — from Garm through the Peter the First Range into the Obikhingou valley, then to the Muksu gorge and through the Tersagar pass to Daraut-Kurghan — imagined by him only in order to explain these bends.

Fig. 2 (below). The broad Alai/Kyzyl Suu valley extending east from Daraut-Kurghan, whose location is indicated by the arrow.

Fig. 3 (right). Aerial view of Alai/Kyzyl Suu valley, taken approaching village of Sary Tash and looking east in the direction of the border with China. Sary Tash is approximately 40 km east of the point at the right edge of the map in Fig. 2.

Fig 2 after: Kyrgyzstan State Agency for Geodesy and Cartography 1:200000 map “Pik Lenina” (1992 ed.); Fig. 3 courtesy of Daniel Waugh.



In 1979 the author was able to travel in an expedition vehicle the entire route of the specific section examined here. The area of the expedition was the Pamir plateau, and from there the route ran through the Pamir tract along the eastern edge of the plateau first to the north up to the city of Osh. Thus the author himself saw the Gorge of the Komedes — a narrow (not wider than 2 km) valley of the Karategin with steep cliff walls — as well as the “Stone Tower” — Daraut-Kurghan with an impressive structure resembling a tower along the road, a border fort of the Khan of Kokand in the 19th century. (Apparently there was a centuries-old tradition of building fortified towers in that location). Beyond to the east we traversed the “plain” where the hills “open out” [Figs. 2, 3] — the broad (up to 40 km wide) Alai valley with a flat bottom, coming up to “Imai”, the massive peaks of the Sarikol range bordering the Pamir from the east, and of other mountains extending this range to the north.¹⁸

3. The road through Sogdiana

The other ascent, “from the side of the Sogdians” (ἀπὸ τῶν Σογδιανῶν), was located at 125°/43° (Ptol. *Geogr.* VI.13.2); those same coordinates were given for the source of the Jaxartes (Ἰαξάρτης) (Ptol. *Geogr.* VI. 12. 1). This coincidence was not accidental and was based not on some kind of general considerations as often is supposed (e.g., Gorbunova 1976, p. 27). It is evidence of the fact that the place where the ancient merchants ascended to the Mountain Country of the Komedes in fact was located not far from the source of the river considered to be the beginning of the Jaxartes. Ptolemy’s map shows the Jaxartes in its upper reaches



flowing from the ascent into the Mountain Country of the Komedes directly north along the 125° meridian (Ptolemy 1971, Tab. 2). This new information even obliged Ptolemy to introduce some corrections into his usual cartographic scheme, where the sources of the Jaxartes were shown somewhat differently, in order to bring them into closer correspondence with the data of the itinerary of Maes Titianus (P'iankov 1997, pp. 269, 271; 2010, p. 321).

The mention of the ascent "from the Sogdians" presupposes as well the existence of another branch of the route from Bactra: a route through Sogdiana. Unfortunately, the Land of the Sogdians (Σογδιανοί) on Ptolemy's map is depicted in an entirely fragmentary way, divorced from reality (P'iankov 2010, pp. 318–24). To separate out here the data deriving from the itinerary of Maes Titianus is difficult and controversial (P'iankov 1985, pp. 133–34). Nonetheless, it is possible that the coordinates of the "metropole" of Sogdiana, that is, Maracanda, through some misunderstanding termed by Ptolemy Drepsa (Δρέψα), 120°/45° (*Geogr.* VI.12.6), were provided from the indications in the itinerary of Maes.¹⁹

This branch of the route should have gone through Samarkand and Ferghana. The ancient road from Sogdiana, on arriving at the river Kurshab, one of the tributaries of the Syr Darya (Jaxartes), ran north along that river in the same longitudinal direction as shown on Ptolemy's map for the upper course of the Jaxartes, and then turned to the Terek-Davan pass and came out in the valley of the River Kok Suu and went on to Irkeshtam. Apparently the given pass was also the second ascent into the Country of the Komedes, and Kurshab was considered the upper end of the Jaxartes (Mandel'shtam 1957, pp. 37, 38, 65; cf. Humbach, 1975, p. 73).

If this road in antiquity also came into the Kurshab in the region of Gulcha, then it is precisely here that one should look for Cyreschata (Κυρέσχατα), located by Ptolemy (*Geogr.* VI. 12.5) on the meridian of the source of the Jaxartes, that is, of the Kurshab. Cyreschata of Ptolemy, of course, has nothing in common with the Cyreschata of the time of Alexander of Macedon. It is possible that Marinus inserted the name Κυρέσχατα in place of some other, phonetically similar name found in the itinerary of Maes and preserved to this day in the name of the River Kursh-ab.

In general, this northern, Sogdian branch of the route, apparently, was better represented in the itinerary where it connected to the second "ascent." In essence, this was the route through Ferghana, through the region of the upper reaches of the Syr Darya–Kara Darya. Ptolemy (*Geogr.* VI.12.4) places along the upper, meridional course of the Jaxartes depicted ac-

ording to the data of the itinerary a people called the Aristei (Ἀριστεῖς), whose name is preserved in the name of the city of Urest (Osh) and the village Rishtan on the route from Osh westwards. Here as well, to the west of the upper (meridional) Jaxartes, Ptolemy knows two tributaries this river, the Dym (Δύμος) and Baskatis (Βασκάτις). These two tributaries of the Syr Darya, west of the Kurshab, were later known as the rivers of the cities of Urest (Akbur) and Kuba (Bartol'd 1965, p. 212).

The last segment of the route connected with the ascent "from the Sogdians" is the route through the Mountain Country (ὄρεινή) of the Komedes from the ascent itself (125°/43°) to the Gorge of the Komedes (130°/39° or 41° according to Marinus). In reality, this is the short section of the road which goes in the south-eastern direction from Kurshab and the Terek-Davan pass to its intersection with the southern branch at Irkeshtam, which went thence from the Gorge of the Komedes, i. e., the Karategin. Apparently Marinus, who had no precise information about the extent of this road but knew that the Komedes occupy all of the Mountain Country of the Saka (Ptol. *Geogr.* VI.13.3), correspondingly traced it to the south-east almost all the way through the Country of the Saka. And then, he combined it mechanically with the southern branch, heading north-east, beginning from the other ascent – the ascent to the Gorge of the Komedes. Hence he equated both ascents to a single one.

But the very concept of the "Mountain Country" of the Saka or Komedes was much broader. The merchants of Maes borrowed it undoubtedly from local geographic representations. The equivalent term here "Kohistan" later and down to the present is the name for the mountain region between the upper courses of the Amu Darya–Panj and Syr Darya, including as well the valley of the Surkhob–Kyzyl Suu.

4. The conflation of the two roads in the itinerary. The Komedes.

In consequence of the conflation of two ascents to the Country of the Komedes was obtained a line, clearly visible on the reconstruction of Ptolemy's map (Ptolemy 1971, Tab. 2). It is precisely this line which Ptolemy has in mind when, right after the description of the road through the Mountain Country of the Komedes he continues: "Thus he [Marinus] says that this road, although it runs almost directly to the east, bends to the south" (*Geogr.* I.12.7). This sentence has elicited many different interpretations (e.g., Hermann 1938, p. 103), but it is clear that at its core lies the understanding by Marinus about the road from the ascent to the Mountain Country of the Komedes to the "Stone Tower": although both of these points have been placed by him on a single longitude (43°),

the road which connects them first heads south-east, indeed significantly bending here to the south, to longitude 41° or even 39° (from the ascent “from the side of the Sogdians” to the Gorge), and then heads north-east (from the Gorge to the “Stone Tower”).

That Marinus did not have any real data about the distances between the main points along his single route reconstructed out of its two separate branches is evident from the coordinates of these points: the Sogdian metropole, 120°/45°; Cyreschata on the Jaxartes, 125°/46°20′; the ascent to the Country of the Komedaï at the source of the Jaxartes, 125°/43°; the Gorge of the Komedes, 130°/39° (41° according to Marinus); the “Stone Tower”, 135°/43°; the halting place of the merchants, 140°/43°. It is clear that in indicating the distances between points, Marinus simply added to each of them 5° of longitude and specifies their latitude as falling between definite limits – the parallels of the Hellespont (41°) and Byzantion (43°).

The same thing is indicated by the distances in stadia. All of those who support the Karategin-Alai interpretation of Ptolemy’s data note that the distance determined by Marinus and Ptolemy substantially exceeds the actual extent of the route through Karategin and the Alai valley. Thus, Albert Herrmann (Ibid., pp. 106, 133) established the distance from Bactra to the “Stone Tower” as 8600 stadia or 1800 km, where the actual distance from Balkh to Daraut-Kurghan is 650 km. And this despite Ptolemy’s attempts to shorten the distances! Such a discrepancy demands explanation. Herrmann’s hypothesis (Ibid., pp. 107, 111) that this is a mistake incurred in the calculation of the Chinese *li* equivalent to the stadia is unlikely. More probably Marinus knew approximately the extent of the route along each of the two branches, but having combined them into a single route, combined their distances as well. The extent of the route from Balkh to Daraut-Kurghan through Karategin plus the distance of the route from Balkh to Irkeshtam through Samarkand and Ferghana in fact is approximately equal to the distance from Bactra to the “Stone Tower” as calculated by Herrmann.

Such is my explanation of the information of the itinerary about the “ascents” to the Country of the Komedes and the branches of the route connected with them. Other explanations of this information – for example, the interpretation by Josef Marquart (1938, pp. 61–62), according to whom the single ascent to the Country of the Komedes was in Karatag, where the mountain path from the Zeravshan valley, that is “from the Sogdians”, connected with the main road – neither agree with the data of Ptolemy nor with reality. It is unlikely that this path could have served at one time as a caravan road: even today the road, no longer a path, through Anzob is considered one of the most

difficult mountain roads of Central Asia.

The most important place on this segment of the route, on the other side of the two “ascents,” in the interpretation of Maes Titianus, is occupied by the Saka people, the Komedes (Κομηδαί). The name of the Komedes appears at that time as well in another Classical written tradition independently of Maes, but in a more archaic form, *Caumadae. Later the Chinese sources speak of the Komedes, as Xiumito, Xiumi, and as also do the medieval Islamic sources: Kumed, Kumiji. But in the Chinese sources contemporary with Maes they are known as the Saka tribe of the Xiuxun. At that time the Komedes occupied a very large territory: the whole Mountain Country of the Saka, the Gorge of the Komedes, the region of the “ascent from the Sogdians” and the region of the sources of the Jaxartes and its two upper left tributaries (Ptol. *Geogr.* VI.12.3). From this it follows that the Komedes at that time had settled the Alai valley and the mountains of the Alai range, Karategin, and in the south, apparently, Darvaz and the regions beyond up along the Panj, possibly even all the way to the Hindu Kush.²⁰ But this situation lasted only to the beginning of the Common Era, from which time into these parts from the north-east, from the Tian Shan, moved the Huns. Already in the 1st-2nd centuries CE they occupied the Alai, judging from their cemeteries in the region of Daraut-Kurghan (Bernshtam 1952, pp. 193, 204, 207). The itinerary of Maes does not know of Huns in these locations. This is yet one more argument in favor of the dating of the itinerary to a time no later than the beginning of the Common Era.

5. The route to the halting place of the merchants

The region east of the “Stone Tower” in Ptolemy’s description corresponds completely with the localization of the “Stone Tower” in the region of Daraut-Kurghan. But beyond, the route led to the Imai ranges and the border between two parts of the oecumene: on the one and on the other side of the Imai.

Here, first of all, it is necessary to note a certain imprecision in the indications of the itinerary about the boundaries between the two parts of the oecumene. On the one hand, in the recounting of the itinerary by Ptolemy, the “Stone Tower” is several times mentioned as the main boundary between the western and eastern parts of the route. To the east of the “Stone Tower” the route extends all the way to the Seres. On the other hand, on Ptolemy’s map, which is also based on the itinerary, is evident that the actual boundary along Imaon was the halting place of the merchants, located directly on the meridial branch of the Imai (Ptolemy 1971, Tab. 2). Such a duality is to be explained by the division of the route on the section described above from Bactra to the halting place

of the merchants with its two branches and mountain “ascents”: the road from the Land of the Sogdians and the road along the Gorge of the Komedes. The merchants of Maes Titianus went along the latter, southern branch of the route and passed the “Stone Tower,” which for some reason was for them the most important landmark. From it they also estimated the distance to the Seres. But both branches farther east come together at the halting place of the merchants. The road from the “Stone Tower” to the halting place of the merchants was the road from Daraut-Kurghan to Irkeshtam, which ran along the broad Alai valley, where “the mountains open out and come up to the Imaon” (Ptol., *Geogr.* I.12.8), in the given instance to the mountain ranges of Kashgaria.

In actual fact then the beginning of the route through the oecumene beyond the Imai was the halting place of the merchants (Ὁρμητήριον), who carried out trade with Seres (Ptol. *Geogr.* VI.13.1). The very fact of the determination of that place is evidence that the information about it derives from the itinerary of Maes Titianus. Apparently here was the collecting point for all the merchants who traveled through Central Asia specifically for trade with China. It was located immediately east of the “Stone Tower” (its coordinates, 140°/43°), directly on the meridial branch of the Imai, that is on the watershed. The one and the other correspond to Irkeshtam, to the west of which flows the Central Asian Kyzyl Suu, and to the east, the Kashgar.²¹

Thus, analysis of the data of the itinerary of Maes Titianus about the route from Bactra to the “Stone Tower” leads us to the following conclusion. One cannot agree with a single one of the three interpretations indicated above about these data. But it seems that the first variant is the one closest of all to the source. In all probability, the merchants of Maes themselves followed the road through Karategin and the Alai, past the “Stone Tower” to the halting place of the merchants, but they also knew about the route through Samarkand and Ferghana, at the same time that they were ignorant of the route through the Pamirs. However, this does not mean that such a route did not exist at the time.²² With regards to the period when these routes operated, all data are in agreement that we are talking about the end of the 1st century BCE to the beginning of the Common Era, not later.

One should note that for the 1st–2nd centuries CE there is considerable evidence about intensive contacts of Central Asia with Rome and Roman merchants. This includes finds of Roman coins of the 1st–2nd centuries CE. And it includes information about the visits by Bactrians (usually accompanied by Indians) – at that time undoubtedly already subjects of the Kushans – to the Roman possessions, judging from the indi-

cations in the sources, through Egypt and Egyptian Alexandria. But this evidence already concerns a completely different route, the maritime route which circumvented Parthian territories.

The “Stone Tower” on the continental-maritime route

Information about the “Stone Tower” is to be found also in a second source, in the communications by seamen who sailed along the shores of Arabia and India. These are the chronologically most recent sources for Ptolemy, unknown even to Marinus, and consequently much later than the itineraries of Maes. Inserting corrections to some assertions of Marinus, Ptolemy refers to “tales [of his] contemporaries” (τὰ νῦν ιστορούμενα). These are the indications by people who often sailed along the shores of Arabia and India and knew well the lands all the way to Golden Chersones and to port cities of the Sin of Cattigara (*Geogr.* I.17.1-4).

They say that above the Sin is a country and the metropole of the Seres, and to the east [sic!] of them is an unknown land where there are swampy lakes in which is a tall reed, sufficiently thick that one can cross the lake on it, and that from there the road goes not only to Bactriana through the “Stone Tower” but also to India through Palimbothra. [*Geogr.* I.17.14.]

Fragments from this new version of the description of the Great Silk Road are contained in other parts of Ptolemy’s work. One fragment is the words of Ptolemy in the previously cited exposition of the itinerary of Maes Titianus about “Imai, which ascends from Palimbothra to the north,” to the “Stone Tower,” the Komedes mountains and Gorge (*Geogr.* I.12.8). In another fragment Ptolemy speaks of the “Mountain Country of the Lambatai at the sources of the Koas, which extends to the Mountain Country of the Komedes” (*Geogr.* VII.1.42). This last entry in its turn is part of the description of Western India (*Geogr.* VII.1.42-63), very close in time to Ptolemy, judging from the fact that it mentions Tiastan (Chashtana) with his capital at Ozen (*Geogr.* VII.1.63), who lived at the end of the 1st – beginning of the 2nd century CE. All this information is even younger than the “Periplus of the Erythraean Sea”, which knows the predecessors of Tiastan (Manbana to Nakhapan) but does not know Tiastan himself.²³

This anonymous “Periplus of the Erythraean Sea” (ca. 70–90 CE) provides the closest analogy for the new version of the description of the Great Silk Road by Ptolemy. The indicted periplus is precisely a route description by one of those merchants who “sailed along the shores of Arabia and India” all the way to the Golden isles. It includes a mention of the

“huge city of Tina” (which corresponds to Sera as the metropole of the Seres), from which merchants go overland through Bactra (to India down along the Indus and then) to Barygaza, the port city at the mouth of the Narbada, or along the Ganges (and then along the eastern shore of India?) to Limyrika in south-western India (Periplus Maris Erythraei, 64).²⁴ As we see, here is the road from Tina to Bactra, corresponding to the road described in the second part of the itinerary of Maes, which was mentioned in the context of the maritime route.

The “Stone Tower” in the new source of Ptolemy is mentioned in the context of the description of routes oriented to the sea. According to this description, the route from the “metropole” of the Seres, that is the “huge city of Tina” ran first to the “swampy lakes” (λίμναι ἐλώδεις). But it led, of course, not to the east but to the west. It is possible, in this geographical misunderstanding somehow the “continental” viewpoint of Ptolemy is to blame, where he confused the shoreline of East Asia on his map. When we read about strange lakes on the routes leading from the metropole of the Seres, through which one crossed directly on thick and high reeds (*Geogr.* I.17.4), it becomes clear that we are dealing here with the phenomenon of the periodically shallowing and disappearing “wandering” swamp-lake Lop Nor. This means that the contemporaries of Ptolemy now led their caravans through those parts of Kroraina (Loulan) which were located directly at Lop Nor. The merchants of Maes Titianus passed south of Lop Nor. There, at the shores of Lop Nor, began the road for the caravans which, dividing after a certain time, opened before the travelers two routes – to the valley of the Indus and to the valley of the Ganges:

1. The route to the Indus valley went through the places already known to Maes Titianus – the “Stone Tower” and Bactria, but then turned south, circumventing Parthia, which was closed for the silk merchants connected with the Roman Empire, and went on to the sea along the Indus valley. Here the merchants brought their wares to the cities of the lower Indus and the Narbada valley, among them Ozen (Ud-jain). There they dealt with seamen who sailed “along the shores of Arabia”, the merchants who enabled them to contact the countries of the Ancient world.

2. The route along the Ganges valley followed along the Imai (here the Himalaya), which “rises from Palimbothra [Pataliputra] to the north,” coming out in the plain located east of the “Stone Tower.” Apparently to the description of this route which crossed the Imai crest (here the Hindu Kush) are related the mentions that the Mountain Country of the Komedai is adjacent (in the given instance, the valley of the Upper Pianj on the northern slopes of the Hindukush) and the Mountain Country of the Lambatai (the valley of Kabul

Darya on the southern slopes of the Hindukush) “at the sources of the Koas” (Kunar). Here the merchants should have dealt with seamen who sailed all the way to the Golden Chersones (the Malacca peninsula) and Cattigara (most likely Canton) in the country of the Sin (of those Chinese who were also the Seres but known to the sailors via the sea approaches).

Thus the settlement called the “Stone Tower” which was located not far from the present Daraut-Kurghan, was the most important landmark on the Great Silk Road in the period, at least, from the 1st century BCE through the 2nd century CE. On the territory of Central Asia the overland trans-asiatic route divided into three branches. The “Stone Tower” was on the middle branch, which is evidence, it seems, of the fact that the given branch was the main artery of travel in the indicated period. When the overland route in Central Asia changed its direction and turned southwards, along the Indus and Ganges to the sea, the “Stone Tower” retained its significance.

About the author

Professor **Igor’ Vasil’evich P’iankov** has taught since 1994 in the Department of World History at the Novgorod State University named for Iaroslav the Wise. He studied under the eminent Byzantinist M. I. Siuzumov and received his graduate degrees from the Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow and the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies. He teaches on the Middle East in Antiquity and is a leading specialist on the Greek and Roman sources concerning Central Asia. E-mail: <Pyankov_iv@mail.ru>.

References

Editions and translations of Ptolemy:

Ptolemy 1843-45

Claudii Ptolemaei Geographia. Edidit C.F.A. Nobbe. Editio stereotypa. T. 1-3. Lipsiae: Sumptibus et typis Caroli Tauchnitii, 1843-1845.

Ptolemy 1883

Claudii Ptolemaei Geographia. E codicibus recognovit, prolegomenis, annotatione, indicibus, tabulis instruxit C. Müllerus. Vol. 1, pars 1. Parisiis: Didot 1883.

Ptolemy 1953

Klavdii Ptolemei. *Rukovodstvo po geografii*. Kn. 1. Tr. K. S. Apt. In: *Antichnaia geografiia: kniga dlia chteniia*. Moskva: Gos. izd-vo. geograficheskoi literatury, 1953: 286-318.

Ptolemy 1971

Ptolemaios. *Geographie 6, 9-21: Ostiran und Zentralasien*. Teil 1. Griech. Text neu herausgegeben und ins Deutsche übertragen von Italo Ronca, mit der lat. Übersetzung und textkritischen Noten. Roma: IsMEO, 1971.

Ptolemy 1998

Ptolemy. *Geography. Book 6: Middle East, Central and North Asia, China*. Part 1. Text and English and German transl. by

- Susanne Ziegler. Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1998.
- Ptolemy 2000
J. Lennart Berggren; Alexander Jones. *Ptolemy's Geography: An Annotated Translation of the Theoretical Chapters*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Pr., 2000.
-
- Alemaný 2002
Agusti Alemany i Vilamajó. "Maes Titianos i la Torre de Pedra. I: una font grega sobre els orígens de la ruta de la seda." *Faentia* 24/2 (Barcelona, 2002): 105–20.
- Altheim and Stiehl 1970
Franz Altheim and Ruth Stiehl. *Geschichte Mittelasiens im Altertum*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970.
- Bartol'd 1965
Vasilii Vladimirovich Bartol'd. "K istorii oroshenii Turkestana. IX. Syr-dar'ia" [On the History of Irrigation in Turkestan. IX. Syr Darya]. In: idem, *Sochineniia*. T. 3. *Raboty po istoricheskoi geografii*. Moskva: "Nauka", 1965: 210–31.
- Bernard 2005
Paul Bernard. "De l'Euphrate à la Chine avec la caravane de Maès Titianos (c. 100 ap. n. e.)." *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, 2005, No. 3: 929–69.
- Bernshtam 1952
Aleksandr Natanovich Bernshtam. *Istoriko-arkheologicheskoe ocherki Tsentral'nogo Tian'-Shania i Pamiro-Alaia* [Historical and Archaeological Essays on the Central Tian Shan and Pamir-Alai]. Moskva-Leningrad: Izd-vo. AN SSSR, 1952.
- Bichurin 1950
Nikita Iakovlevich Bichurin (Iakinf). *Sobranie svoenii o narodakh, obitaushikh v Srednei Azii v drevnie vremena*. T. 2 Moskva-Leningrad: Izd-vo. AN SSR, 1950.
- Bokshchanin 1966
Anatolii Georgievich Bokshchanin. *Parfiia i Rim: vozniknovenie sistemy politicheskogo dualizma v Perednei Azii* [Parthia and Rome: The Origins of the System of Political Dualism in the Near East], 2 v. Moskva: Moskovskii un-t., 1960–66. Here, Vol. 2.
- Bukharin 2007
Mikhail Dmitrievich Bukharin. *Neizvestnogo avtora "Peripl Eritreiskogo moria"*. *Tekst, perevod, kommentarii, issledovaniia*. [The Anonymous "Periplus of the Erythrean Sea." Text, translation, commentary and analysis]. Sankt-Peterburg: Aleteiia, 2007.
- Cary 1956
Max Cary. "Maes, qui et Titianus." *The Classical Quarterly* 6/3-4 (1956): 130–34.
- Casson 1989
Lionel Casson. *The Periplus Maris Erythraei*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Pr., 1989.
- Debevoise 1938
Neilson Carel Debevoise. *A Political History of Parthia*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Pr., 1938.
- Debevoise 2008
_____. [N. K. Diboiz]. *Politicheskaiia istoriia Parfii*. Tr. from English, ed. and bibliographical appendix by Valerii P. Nikonorov. Sankt-Peterburg: Filologicheskii fakul'tet, Sankt-Peterburgskogo un-ta., 2008.
- Frye 1996
Richard N. Frye. *The Heritage of Central Asia From Antiquity to the Turkish Expansion*. Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1996.
- Gorbunova 1976
Nataliia G. Gorbunova. "Fergana po svedeniiam antichnykh avtorov" [Fergana according to the information of the Classical Authors]. In: *Istoriia i kul'tura narodov Srednei Azii: drevnost' i srednie veka*. Moskva: Nauka, 1976: 26–30.
- Hennig 1961
Richard Hennig. *Nevedomye zemli* [Terrae incognitae]. 4 v. Moskva; Izd-vo. inostranoi literatury, 1961-63. [tr. of *Terrae incognitae: eine Zusammenstellung und kritische Bewertung der wichtigsten vorcolumbischen Entdeckungsreisen an Hand der darüber vorliegenden Originalberichte*, 4 v., Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1936–39; 2nd rev. ed. 1944–56]. Here, Vol. 1.
- Herrmann 1938
Albert Herrmann. *Das Land der Seide und Tibet im Lichte der Antike*. Leipzig: Koehler, 1938.
- Hill 2015
John E. Hill. *Through the Jade Gate – China to Rome. A Study of the Silk Routes 1st to 2nd Centuries CE. An annotated translation from the Hou Hanshu "The Chronicle on the Western Regions."* Updated and Expanded 2nd ed. 2 vols.. N. p., 2015.
- Honigmann 1930
Ernst Honigmann. "Marinos von Tyros." In: *RE*. Hlbd. 28 (1930): col. 1767–96.
- Horace 1959
Quintus Horatius Flaccus. *Opera*. Tertium recognovit F. Klingner. Lipsiae 1959.
- Humbach 1975
Helmut Humbach [G. Gumbakh]. "Ptolemei i Tsentral'naia Aziia v kushanskuiu epokhu" [Ptolemy and Central Asia in the Kushan Period]. In: *Tsentral'naia Aziia v kushanskuiu epokhu*. T. 2. Moskva: "Nauka", 1975: 71–75.
- Kubitschek 1935
Wilhelm Kubitschek. "Lithinos pyrgos." In: *RE* 1935, Suppl. Bd. VI: col. 232–33.
- Lasserre 1969
François Lasserre. "Marinos 2." In: *Der Kleine Pauly*. Bd. 3. Stuttgart 1969: col. 1027–29.
- Lehmann-Haupt 1929
Ferdinand Lehmann-Haupt. "Stadion 2. Metrologie." In: *RE*. 1929, Hbd. 6 (2 R.): col. 1931–63.
- Lerner 1998
Jeffrey D. Lerner. "Ptolemy and the Silk Road: from Baktra Basileion to Sera Metropolis." *East and West* 48/1-2 (1998): 9–25.

- Lubo-Lesnichenko 1994
Evgenii Iosifovich Lubo-Lesnichenko. *Kitai na Shelkovom puti: shelk i vneshnie svyazi drevnego i rannesrednevekovogo Kitaia* [China on the Silk Road: Silk and the Foreign Connections of Ancient and Early Medieval China]. Moskva "Vostochnaia literatura," 1994.
- Mandel'shtam 1957
Anatolii Maksimilianovich Mandel'shtam. *Materialy k istoriko-geograficheskomu obzoru Pamira i pripamirskikh oblastei s drevneishikh vremen do X. v. n. e.* [Materials for a historical-geographical survey of the Pamirs and adjoining regions from ancient times to the 10th century CE]. Stalinabad: Izdvo. AN Tadzhijskoi SSR, 1957.
- Mandel'shtam 1959
_____. Rev. of K. Shiratori, *On the Tsungling Traffic Route Described by C. Ptolemaeus* (Tokyo, 1957). In: *Problemy vostoikovedeniia* 1959, 2: 124.
- Marquart 1938
Josef Marquart [Markwart]. *Wehrot und Arang: Untersuchungen zur mythischen und geschichtlichen Landeskunde von Ostiran*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1938.
- P'iankov 1972
Igor' Vasil'evich P'iankov. *Drevnii Samarkand (Marakandy) v izvestiakh antichnykh avtorov* [Ancient Samarkand (Maracanda) in the Accounts of the Classical Authors]. Dushanbe: Donish, 1972.
- P'iankov 1985
_____. "Shelkovyi' put' ot Hierapolia v Seriku (Sredneaziatskii uchastok)" [The "Silk" Road from Hierapolis to Serika (the Central Asian Section)]. In: *Pamirovedenie*. 2 (Dushanbe, 1985): 125-40.
- P'iankov 1986
_____. "Vostochnyi Turkestan v svete antichnykh istochnikov" [East Turkestan in the Light of the Classical Sources]. In: *Vostochnyi Turkestan i Sredniaia Aziia v sisteme kul'tur drevnego i srednevekovogo Vostoka*. Ed. B. A. Litvinskii. Moskva: "Nauka", 1986: 6-23.
- Piankov 1994
_____. "The Ethnic History of the Sakas." *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, N. S., 8 (1994): 37-46.
- P'iankov 1997
_____. *Sredniaia Aziia v antichnoi geograficheskoi traditsii. Istochnikovedcheskii analiz* [Central Asia in the Classical Geographical Tradition. A Source Study]. Moskva: "Vostochnaia literatura" RAN, 1997.
- P'iankov 2004
_____. Antichnye istochniki o Srednei Azii i ikh interpretatsiia (Po povodu odnoi sovmetnoi raboty F. Grene i K. Rapena) [Classical Sources about Central Asia and Their Interpretation (On a Joint Study by F. Grenet and C. Rapin)] *Vestnik drevnei istorii*, 2004, No. 1: 96-110
- P'iankov 2010
_____. "Sogdiana Ptolemeia" [The Sogdiana of Ptolemy]. In: *Gaudeamus igitur. Sbornik statei k 60-letiiu A. V. Podosinova*.
- Ed. T. N. Dzhakson, I. G. Konovalovoi, and G. R. Tsetskhladze. Moskva: Un-t. Dmitriia Pozharskogo, 2010: 318-24.
- P'iankov 2014
_____. "'Kamennaia Bashnia' na Velikom shelkovom puti" [The "Stone Tower" on the Great Silk Road]. In: *Scripta Antiqua. Voprosy drevnei istorii, filologii, iskusstva i material'noi kul'tury*. T. 3. *K iubileiu Edvarda Vasil'evicha Rtveladze*. Moskva: Sobranie, 2014: 204-19.
- P'iankov 2015
_____. *Velikii Shelkovyi put': putevoditel' Maia Titsiana* [The Great Silk Road: the Guidebook of Maes Titianos]. Palmariun Academic Publishing, 2015.
- Rapin 1998/2001
Claude Rapin. "L'Incompréhensible Asie centrale de la carte de Ptolémée: Propositions pour un décodage." *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, N. S., 12 (1998/2001): 201-25.
- Raschke 1978
M. G. Raschke. "New Studies in Roman Commerce with the East." In: *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*. Part II, Vol. 9, sec.2. Berlin; New York: W. de Gruyter, 1978: 604-1378.
- RE
Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft. Neue Bearbeitung. Stuttgart; München; Alfred Druckermüller, 1894-1980.
- Ritter 1873
Carl Ritter. *Zemlevedenie K. Rittera: geografiia stran Azii nakho-diashchikhsia v neposredstvennykh snosheniakh s Rossieiu: Vostochnyi ili Kitaiskii Turkestan*. Tr. and suppl. V. V. Grigor'ev. 2 v.. Sankt-Peterburg: V. Golovin, 1869-. Here, Vol. 2, pt. 1.
- Rtveladze 1977
Edvard Vasil'evich Rtveladze. "K lokalizatsii 'grecheskoii' perepravy na Okse" [On the localization of the "Greek" crossing of the Oxus]. *Vestnik drevnei istorii*. 1977, No. 4: 182-87.
- Sherkova 1991
Tat'iana Alekseevna Sherkova. *Egipet i Kushanskoe tsarstvo* [Egypt and the Kushan Empire]. Moskva: "Nauka", 1991.
- Stein 1932
Aurel Stein. "On Ancient Tracks Past the Pamirs." *The Himalayan Journal* 4 (April 1932): 1-26.
- Thomson 1953
James Oliver Thomson. *Istoriia drevnei geografii*. Moskva: Izdvo. inostrannoi literatury, 1953 (tr. of *History of Ancient Geography*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr., 1948).
- Tomashchek 1883
Wilhelm Tomaschek. *Zur historischen Topographie von Persien I. Die Strassenzüge der Tabula Peutingerana* (Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-Hist. Klasse. Sitzungsberichte, 102.3). Wien: Gerold in Komm., 1883.
- Tupikova et al. 2014
Irina Tupikova, Matthias Schemmel and Klaus Geus. *Travelling along the Silk Road: A new interpretation of Ptolemy's co-*

ordinates. Preprint 465. Berlin: Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, 2014.

Zadneprovskii 1962

Iurii Aleksandrovich Zadneprovskii. *Drevnezemledel'cheskaia kul'tura Fergany* [The Ancient Agricultural Culture of Fergana]. Moskva-Leningrad: Izd-vo. AN SSSR, 1962.

Zelinskii 1964

A. N. Zelinskii. "Drevnie puti Pamira" [Ancient routes of the Pamir]. *Strany i narody Vostoka*. 1964, Vyp. 3: 104–108.

Notes

1. This section has been translated from P'iankov 2004, esp. pp. 97–98 – *Ed*.

2. This section translates and adapts P'iankov 2015, esp. pp. 16–20 – *Ed*.

3. Kubitschek 1935, p. 235. On the date of Marinus of Tyre, see Honigmann 1930, 1767–68 (between 107 and 114 CE); Berggren and Jones 2000, pp. 23–24 (no later than 110 CE).

4. My quotations from Ptolemy are based on the editions and translations listed in the first section under "References" above. I have provided my critical edition of the relevant Greek texts and their Russian translation in P'iankov 2015, pp. 4–14, followed by extensive commentary.

5. For a survey of the various opinions regarding the name Μάης and Maes himself, see Alemany 2002, pp. 106–13. Cf. Bernard 2005, pp. 930–39, where he concludes that Maes may have been a native of Hierapolis and, further, dates his itinerary to ca. 100 CE.

6. For a review of the various opinions on this question, see P'iankov 1997, p. 73; Lerner 1998, p. 23 n. 40; Alemany 2002, pp. 113–18.

7. Herrmann 1938, pp. 91, 93. The more recent work on this subject has proposed dates of 73–128 CE (Lerner 1998, p. 24) and 91–113 CE (Alemany 2002, pp. 113–18).

8. For a recent treatment of the Great Silk Road in a broad historical context, see Frye 1996, pp. 151–57.

9. The Classical texts cited here may all be found in the original and in translation in the editions of the Loeb Classical Library.

10. On Trajan's Parthian campaign, see Bokshchanin 1966, pp. 232–52; Debevoise 1938, pp. 238–39; 2008, pp. 183–202.

11. This section of the article to the end translates P'iankov 2014 – *Ed*.

12. On the history of the question, see Mandel'shtam 1957, pp. 39–43, and Zelinskii 1964, pp. 104–08.

13. Lerner (1998, p. 19), author of one of the more recent discussions of this matter, reaches the same conclusion.

14. That Ptolemy describes two different ascents was noted long ago by V. V. Grigorev, in Ritter 1873, p. 63.

15. Concerning this see, e.g., Marquart 1938, p. 63; Thomson, 1953, p. 428; Mandel'shtam 1957, p. 43. The actual length of the "stadion of the itineraries" has been checked and confirmed by a calculation of the distance of the Gorge from Obigarm to Daraut-Kurghan. The correspondence of

schoinoi to *stadia* as adopted by Marinus and Ptolemy is precisely known: 1 *schoinos* = 30 *stadia* (Ptol. *Geogr.* I, 11.3). In another itinerary close in time to Maes, the "Parthian Stations" of Isidore, a *schoinos* is likewise adopted which equals three Roman miles (Tomaschek 1883, p. 149), that is, approximately 4.5 km (more precisely 4.440 km = 1480 x 3). It is possible to confirm that this was also the *schoinos* of Maes thanks to the indication that the Gorge of the Komedes was 50 *schoinoi* long (Ptol. *Geogr.* I.12.8). If we take the length of the Karategin (from Obigarm to Daraut-Kurghan) to be 220 km (Marquart, p. 64), then the *schoinos* of Maes equals 4.4 km (220 ÷ 50). As one might expect, the length of a *schoinos*, which was the basic measure of distance for a group of itineraries contemporary with that of Maes, would be about the same for all of them. This was the *schoinos* which was devised from the "decimally divided *stadion*" (in relationship to the Roman mile) (Lehmann-Haupt 1929, col. 1961–62), what is otherwise known as the itinerary *stadion*.

16. Lerner, p. 18, n. 31. Of course it is one and the same Stone Tower.

17. For a summary of the various opinions as to what exactly the Stone Tower was and where it was located, see Lerner 1998, pp. 18–19. I have not yet analyzed the arguments of Tupikova et al. 2014, based on elaborate calculations of Ptolemy's data that the authors claim point to Tashkurghan as the location of the "Stone Tower." However, they admit that their data do not preclude its identification with Daraut-Kurghan. See Hill 2015, Vol. 2, p. 22.

18. Among the most recent commentators on Maes' route, Bernard 2005, pp. 953–57, accepts the arguments for this route and specifically rejects Rapin's support for the Fergana route through Osh. Citing Stein, both Berggren and Jones, in Ptolemy 2000, p. 51, and Hill 2015, Vol. 2, pp. 21–23, also favor this view. Stein (1932, pp. 22–24) traveled it: crossing the Amu Darya near Termez, the Surkhan Darya valley, the region of Dushanbe, the gorge of the Surkhab-Kyzyl Suu (Karategin), Daraut-Kurghan, Irkeshtam. The present author proposed its reconstruction in P'iankov 1985, pp. 130–36.

19. On the reason for this misunderstanding and the history of the question, see P'iankov 1972, pp. 54–56.

20. For a summary of information about the Komedes, see P'iankov 1994, pp. 41–42.

21. For a review of various opinions concerning the location of the halting place of the merchants, see Lerner 1998, p. 19.

22. I reached this conclusion earlier in P'iankov 1985, pp. 130–36. There I published the reconstruction reproduced here for the two branches of the route. Of the works which have devoted particular attention to this problem, I would single out two which responded to my ideas: Sherkova 1991, p. 23, and Lubo-Lesnichenko 1994, pp. 235–36. In comparing my scheme with that of Lubo-Lesnichenko, T. A. Sherkova asserted that "the reconstruction proposed by I. V. P'iankov is rather convincing." She further supports that reconstruction with archaeological data. On the other hand, E. I. Lubo-Lesnichenko agrees only partially with our view, while he admits that "the proposed scheme allows one to understand an extremely confused text of the 'Geographic Guide' and resolve the lack of correspondence in distanc-

es and coordinates supplied by Marinus and Ptolemy. This explanation can be considered the most successful attempt to resolve the scholarly controversy which has lasted almost two centuries.” He agrees with the reconstruction of the northern route through Samarkand and Ferghana, but prefers instead of the Karategin variant that of the Pamir through Wakhan and Tashkurghan, referring to the Japanese scholar Shiratori Kurakiti. But Lubo-Lesnichenko failed to take into account one review of Shiratori’s work (Mandel’shtam 1997, p. 234), where in very convincing and substantiated fashion, one after another of that scholar’s arguments concerning the Pamir route are rejected. Compare

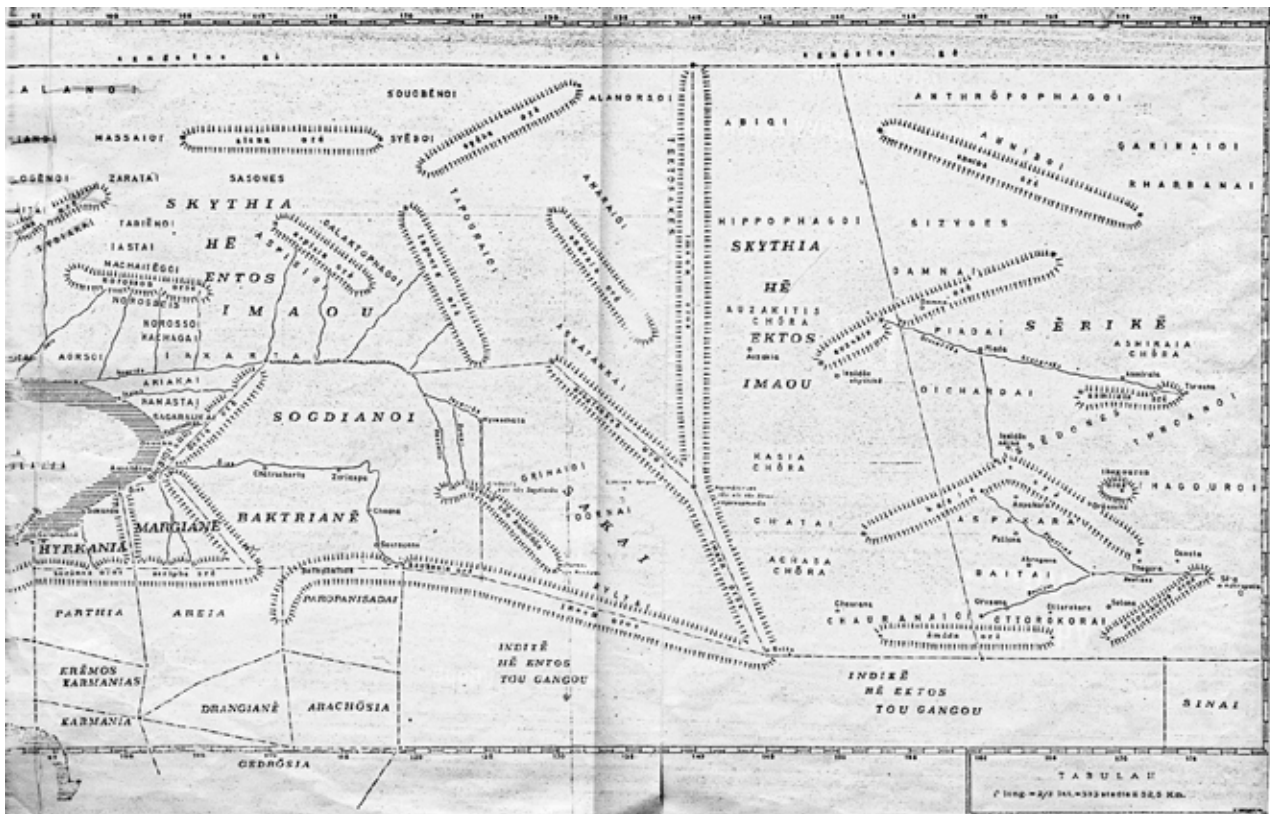
one of the most recent reconstructions of that section of the Silk Route: Lerner 1998, p. 22.

23. For a recent study of this source, see Bukharin 2007. For the dating of the life of Tiastan (Chashtany), who initiates the Saka period in 78 CE, see pp. 141, 161–68, 210. The standard English translation and study of the “Periplus” is that by Casson 1989.

24. On the routes from Serika to Bactria and India, see P’iankov 1986, pp. 21–22.

– translated and edited by Daniel C. Waugh

Appendix: A Reconstruction of Ptolemy’s Map



This ancient map, reproduced here from Ptolemy 1971, is a reconstruction based on the *Geographia*, in which Ptolemy indicates the coordinates of specific places, rivers and mountains. Shown here is the easternmost part of the oecumene as Ptolemy knew it, as represented in his maps of “Scythia beyond the Imai” and “Serica”. To a considerable degree, the information on the maps derives from very complex data about the Great Silk Road contained in the descriptions derived from Maes Titianus.

After: USSR General Staff 1:500000 maps quadrants J-42-B (Ortzhomikidzeabad) (1987-88 ed.), and J-43-A (Murgab) (1977 ed.).

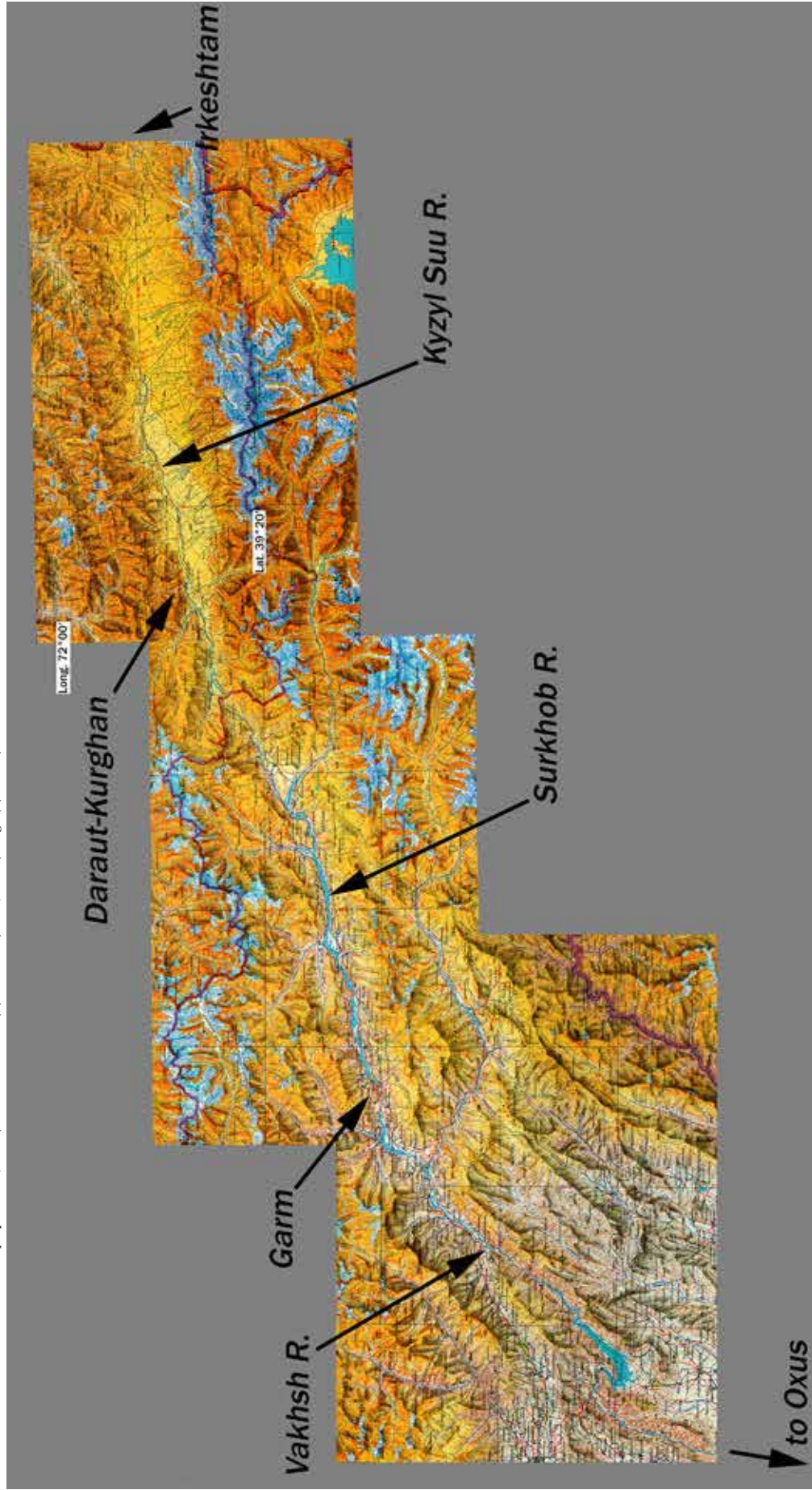


Plate IV

[P'iankov, "Maes Titianus," p. 65]

Modern topographic map showing route starting north of the Oxus along the Vakhsh and Surkhob rivers in Tajikistan, passing Daraut-Kurghan and following the Kyzyl Suu River in Kyrgyzstan to the Chinese border. Just west of Daraut-Kurghan, the valley floor is at an altitude of 2415 m; the valley is flanked on the south by peaks rising to over 7000 m. Composite image.