

Tào-tih-king it has to be studied as a whole. With Professor de Harlez's answer to his question I am in perfect agreement. The Tào was undoubtedly "le grand Sans-Nom," but that was only one of many designations.—Yours faithfully,

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*To the Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society.*

## 8. THE DISCOVERY OF BUDDHA'S BIRTHPLACE.

*Vienna, February, 1897.*

The kindness of Dr. Führer enables me to give some account of his discoveries in the Nepalese Terai, north of the district of Gorakhpur, which were briefly noticed in an Indian telegram of the *Times* of December 28, 1896. He has sent me two excellent impressions of the new Ashoka edict on the Pillar of Paderia, together with a memorandum regarding his tour and the situation of the ruins in its neighbourhood.

The edict leaves no doubt that Dr. Führer has accomplished all the telegram claimed for him. He has found the Lumbini garden, the spot where the founder of Buddhism was born, according to the tradition of the canonical works of the South and of the North. The decisive passages of the Paderia Edict are as follows:—"King Piyadasi [or Ashoka], beloved of the gods, having been anointed twenty years, himself came and worshipped, saying, 'Here Buddha Shakyamuni was born' . . . and he caused a stone pillar to be erected, which declares, 'Here the worshipful one was born.'" Immediately afterwards the edict mentions the village of Lummini (*Lumminigâma*), and adds, according to my interpretation of the rather difficult new words, that Ashoka appointed there two new officials.

However that may be, Lummini is certainly equivalent to Lumbini, and the pillar marks the site which was pointed out to Ashoka as the royal garden to which Mayadevi

retired immediately before her confinement. The evidence of the edict could only be set aside if it were shown that the pillar has been carried from some other place to its present site. But there is collateral evidence to prove that it is in its original position. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsiang, who visited the sacred places of the Buddhists all over India and reached the Lumbini garden in A.D. 636, mentions the pillar erected by Ashoka. He says that it stood close to four Stupas, and Dr. Führer says that their ruins are still extant. Hiuen Tsiang further alleges that the pillar had been broken into two pieces through the contrivance of a wicked dragon, and Dr. Führer remarks that it has lost its top part, which appears to have been shattered by lightning. The Buddhists consider destructive storms to be due to the anger of the snake-deities or Nāgas, whom the Chinese call dragons. If Hiuen Tsiang does not mention the inscription, the reason is no doubt that it was not visible in his time. When Dr. Führer first saw the pillar on December 1, only a piece, nine feet high, was above the ground, and it was covered with pilgrims' records, one of which bears the date A.D. 800. This piece must, therefore, have been accessible, and the surface of the ground must have been at the present level for nearly 1,100 years. When the excavation of the pillar was afterwards undertaken, the Ashoka inscription was found 10 feet below the surface and 6 feet above the base. It seems impossible to believe that 10 feet of débris could have accumulated in the sixty-four years between the date of Hiuen Tsiang's visit and the incision of the oldest pilgrim's record at the top. Finally, it may be mentioned that the site is still called Rumindei, and the first part of this name evidently represents Ashoka's Lummini and the Pali Lumbini.

The identification of the Lumbini garden fixed also the site of Kapilavastu, the capital of the Shakyas, and that of Napeikia or Nabhika, the supposed birthplace of Shakyamuni's mythical predecessor Krakuchanda. According to the Chinese Buddhist Fahien, Hiuen Tsiang's predecessor,

Kapilavastu lay 50 li (about 8 miles) west of the garden. Following this indication, Dr. Führer discovered extensive ruins 8 miles north-west of Paderia, stretching in the middle of the forest from the villages of Amauli and Bikuli (north-west) to Ramghat on the Banganga (south-east), over nearly 7 miles. Again, Fahien gives the distance of Napeikia from Kapilavastu as one *yojana*. Dr. Führer found its ruins with the Stupa, which is still 80 feet high, 7 miles south-west. As the Stupa of Konagamana, another mythical Buddha, had already been found by Dr. Führer, together with its Ashoka edict, in 1895, at Nigliva, 13 miles from Paderia, all the sacred sites in the western part of the Nepalese Terai mentioned by the Chinese pilgrims have been satisfactorily identified. Some others, particularly Ramagrama and Kusinara, the place where Buddha died, will probably be found in the eastern portion of the Nepalese lowlands. For, if the direction of the route from Kapilavastu to these places has been correctly given by the Chinese, Kusinara cannot be identical with Kasia in the Gorakhpur district, where Sir A. Cunningham and Mr. Carlleyle believed they had found it.

Dr. Führer's discoveries are the most important which have been made for many years. They will be hailed with enthusiasm by the Buddhists of India, Ceylon, and the Far East. For the student of Indian history they yield already some valuable results, and they are rich in promise.

It is now evident that the kingdom of the Shakyas lay, as their legend asserts, on the slopes of the Himalaya, and that they were, as they too admit, jungle and hill Rajputs exiled from the more civilized districts. Their settlement in the hill-forest must have separated them for a prolonged period from their brethren further south and west. Their isolation no doubt forced them to develop the entirely un-Aryan and un-Indian custom of endogamy, as well as other habits not in accordance with those of their kindred. This also explains why intermarriages between them and the other noble families of Northern India did not take

place. It was not, as their tradition says, their pride of blood which prevented such alliances, but the stigma attaching to exiles who had departed from the customs of their race, and were perhaps not even free from a strong admixture of un-Aryan blood.

For the history of Ashoka, the Paderia Edict and the Nigliwa inscription, the mutilated lines of which may now be restored with perfect certainty, teach us that the king visited in his twenty-first year the sacred places of the Buddhists in Northern India. His journey extended probably also in the east to Kusinara, and further west to Shravasti, where Hiuen Tsiang saw his inscribed pillars. And his route from his capital at Patna to the Terai is probably marked by the row of columns found from Bakhra, near Vaishali or Besarh, as far as Rampurva, in the Champaran district. The journey may indicate that Ashoka was at the time already a convert to Buddhism, or it may have been, as I think more probable, one of the "religious tours" which, according to the eighth Rock Edict, he regularly undertook from his eleventh year "in order to obtain enlightenment."

The fact that he planted a number of pillars all over the Terai indicates that also this district belonged then to his extensive empire. If I am right in my interpretation of the concluding sentence of the Paderia Edict, according to which Ashoka appointed there two officials, this inference becomes indisputable.

The promise which Dr. Führer's discoveries hold out is that excavations of the newly-found ruins will make us acquainted with monuments and documents not only of the third century B.C., but of a much earlier period, extending to the fifth and sixth centuries, which latter will be partly Buddhistic and partly pre-Buddhistic, like the ancient Shiva temple seen by Hiuen Tsiang ("Siyuki," vol. ii, p. 23, Beal) outside the eastern gate of Kapilavastu, where the Shakyas used to present their children. Kapilavastu and its neighbourhood are particularly favourable for the discovery of really ancient monuments; for in Fahien's time, about

A.D. 400, the country was already a wilderness, with very few inhabitants, and full of ancient mounds and ruins. Hiuen Tsiang's description is very similar. It is therefore to be expected that the old buildings have not been disfigured by late restorations. I am glad to learn from Dr. Führer's memorandum that the Nepalese Governor of the district, General Khadga Shamsher Jang Rana Bahadur, who had the pillar of Paderia excavated, but did not think any other operations feasible on account of the severe famine, has generously promised to lend next year a number of his sappers for more extensive excavations. I trust that the Indian Government will now consent to prolong the existence of the Archaeological Department, which, if the rumours in the papers are true, was recently threatened. The services of the few officers still employed are sorely needed for conducting the researches in a really systematic and scientific manner.

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