

ART. XV.—*Notes on the old Mongolian Capital of Shangtu.*
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ON February 9th, 1874, I read a paper before the Royal Geographical Society entitled, "Notes of a Journey outside the Great Wall of China," made by the Hon. T. G. Grosvenor and myself in the autumn of 1872, including an account of a visit to the ruins of the city of Shangtu, the ancient northern capital of the Yuan Dynasty, described in such glowing terms by Marco Polo, who was there in the reign of its founder, the famous Kublai Khan. They are situate on the northern bank of the Lan-ho—the Shangtu River—about twenty-five miles to the north-west of Dolonnor, the populous city founded by the Emperor Kang-hi, as a trading mart between the Chinese and the Mongolian tribes. These ruins were identified by the existence of a marble memorial tablet, with an inscription of the reign of Kublai, in an ancient form of the Chinese character. A more detailed account of the history of the city so frequently referred to by mediæval travellers, derived from Chinese and other sources, has been drawn up; and a plan of the ruins, with a facsimile and translation of the inscription, added, in the hope that it may prove of some interest to the Members of your Society.

The city was founded in the year 1256. It is recorded in the "Geographical Statistics of the History of the Yuan Dynasty," that in the fifth year of the reign of Hien Tsung (A.D. 1255) the Emperor (Mangu Khan) ordered Shih tsu (his younger brother Kublai, who succeeded him five years after) to occupy this territory, and to form a military encampment there. The following year Shih tsu commanded Liu Ping-chung to select a favourable site for the city, to the east of the city of Huan-chou,¹ in the neighbourhood of the

¹ Huan-chou is now known by the Mongolian name Kourtu Balgasun.

Dragon Hill, north of the Lan River. The new city was named K'ai-p'ing-fu in the first year of the Chung t'ung epoch (the beginning of Kublai's reign, A.D. 1260). Four years later an Imperial Residence was built there, and there was added to the name the title of Shangtu—Upper Residence (as distinguished from Taitu—Principal Residence—the title of Cambalu, afterwards known as Peking). The Emperor resided there for a time every year. In 1268 Shangtu, previously the chief city of a 'lu,' or circuit, was made the seat of a governor-general. It is also recorded in the same History, ch. iv. fol. 3, that an imperial decree was issued in the third spring month of the cyclical year ping chen (A.D. 1256) appointing Seng-tzu-tsung to examine geomantically the land east of Huan-chou, north of the Lan River, in order to find a propitious site for the new city of K'ai-p'ing-fu and of the Imperial Palace to be erected there. It was the custom of the Emperor to spend the three summer months here, the journey from Cambalu occupying ten days. A minute account of the journey, with an itinerary, by a Chinese mandarin who travelled in the suite of one of the successors of Kublai, is preserved in one of the appendices of the recent "Official Statistics of Cheng-te-fu" (Jehol). Having passed through the Chü-yung-kuan Pass, the modern Kalgan post-road was followed as far as T'u-mu-yi, where the party branched off northwards, trending westwards till they arrived at the Palace of Chagannor, built near the Mongolian city of Hsing-ho (Kara Hotun). From this to the city of Shangtu was three days' journey. The return trip in the autumn followed the same route as far as Chagannor, where several days were spent making hawking excursions among the numerous lakes in the vicinity, all of which abound in water-fowl. From this in a southerly direction to Hsuan-hua-fu—the Sindachu of Marco Polo—a department famous for its vineyards and fruit orchards, and once more by the Chü-yung-kuan Pass to Cambalu.¹ The "order of the Great Khan when he journeyeth" is the heading of ch. 39 of the "Description of Friar Odoric of Pordenone:" "Now this

¹ See Yule's Cathay, and the Way Thither.

lord passeth the summer at a certain place which is called Sandu, situated towards the North, and the coolest habitation in the world. But in the winter season he abideth in Khan-balech. And when he will ride from one place to another, this is the order thereof. He hath four armies of horsemen, etc. The king travelleth in a two-wheeled chariot, all of lign aloes and gold, and covered over with great and fine skins, and set with many precious stones. It is drawn by four elephants, well broken in and harnessed, and also by four splendid horses richly caparisoned. Moreover, he carrieth with him in his chariot twelve gefaultons; so that even as he sits therein upon his chair of state or other seat, if he sees any birds pass, he lets fly his hawks at them. And so also his women travel according to their degree, and his heir-apparent travels in similar state."

In the Statistics of Jehol, cited above, there is also preserved a description of the new city of K'ai-p'ing-fu by a Chinese traveller, Wang Yun, who went there in Kublai's suite soon after its foundation. He says: "This walled city was founded in the cyclical year 'ping chen' (A.D. 1256), to the south of the Dragon Hill, with the Lan River flowing by on the opposite side. Encircled on four sides by mountains, it stands on a well-chosen site in a luxuriant and beautiful country. To the north-east of the city, not more than 10 li distant, are large pine forests, the haunt of many kinds of birds, notably the species called chapiku (a celebrated kind of falcon). The mountains are covered with fine trees; fish and salt, and the hundred kinds of valuable natural products abound; and the flocks and herds flourish and multiply, so that the inhabitants have at hand an abundant provision of food. The river, though shallow, is broad; the water being frozen down to the river-bed in the cold season. The climate is cool in summer, extremely cold in winter, and altogether it is the coolest station in the north-eastern part of the empire. This, according to the geographical records, was part of the Wu-huan territory during the Eastern Han Dynasty. It is distant 45 li from the new city of Huan-chou."

A more interesting account is contained in chapter lxi. of Marco Polo, who must have resided here constantly when attached to the court of Kublai. "And when you have ridden three days from the city last mentioned (Chagannor), between north-east and north, you come to a city called Chandu, which was built by the Kaan now reigning. There is at this place a very fine marble palace, the rooms of which are all gilt and painted with figures of men and beasts and birds, and with a variety of trees and flowers, all executed with such exquisite art that you regard them with delight and astonishment. Round this palace a wall is built, inclosing a compass of 16 miles, and inside the park there are fountains, and rivers, and brooks, and beautiful meadows, with all kinds of wild animals (excluding such as are of ferocious nature), which the emperor has procured and placed there to supply food for his gervfalcons and hawks, which he keeps there in mew. Of these there are more than 200 gervfalcons alone, without reckoning the other hawks. The Kaan himself goes every week to see his birds sitting in mew, and sometimes he rides through the park with a leopard behind him on his horse's croup; and then if he sees any animal that takes his fancy, he slips his leopard at it, and the game when taken is made over to feed the hawks in mew. Moreover, at a spot in the park where there is a charming wood, he has another palace built of cane, gilt all over, and most elaborately finished inside. It is stayed on gilt and lackered columns, on each of which is a dragon all gilt, the tail of which is attached to the column, whilst the head supports the architrave, and the claws likewise are stretched out right and left to support the architrave. The roof, like the rest, is formed of canes covered with varnish. The construction of the palace is so devised that it can be taken down and put up again with great celerity; and it can all be taken to pieces and removed whithersoever the Emperor may command. When erected it is stayed against mishaps from the wind by more than 200 cords of silk. The Lord abides at this park of his, dwelling sometimes at the marble palace and sometimes in the cane palace, for three months in the

year, to wit June, July, and August; preferring this residence because it is by no means hot; in fact it is a very cool place. When the 28th day of the moon of August arrives, he takes his departure, and the cane palace is taken to pieces."

This account of Messer Marco must have inspired Coleridge when writing his dream of Kublai's Paradise:—

“In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
 A stately pleasure dome decree :
 Where Alph, the sacred river, ran,
 By caverns measureless to man,
 Down to a sunless sea.
 So twice five miles of fertile ground
 With walls and towers were girdled round :
 And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
 Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
 And here were forests, ancient as the hills,
 Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.”

In the wail which Sanang Setzen, the poetical historian of the Mongols, puts into the mouth of Toghon Temur, the last of the Chinghizide dynasty in China, when driven from his throne, the changes are rung on the lost glories of his capital Daitu and his summer palace Shangtu, as given in Col. Yule's translation from Schott's amended German rendering of the Mongol:—

“My vast and noble Capital, My Daitu, My splendidly
 adorned !
 And Thou, my cool and delicious Summer-seat, my Shangtu-
 Keibung !
 Ye also, yellow plains of Shangtu, Delight of my godlike
 Sires !
 I suffered myself to drop into dreams,—and lo ! my Empire
 was gone !
 Ah Thou my Daitu, built of the nine precious substances !
 Ah my Shangtu-Keibung, Union of all perfections !
 Ah my Fame ! Ah my Glory, as Khagan and Lord of the
 Earth !

When I used to awake betimes and look forth, how the
 breezes blew loaded with fragrance !
 And turn which way I would all was glorious perfection of
 beauty !

* * * * *

Alas for my illustrious name as the Sovereign of the World !
 Alas for my Daitu, seat of Sanctity, Glorious work of the
 Immortal Kublai !

All, all is rent from me ! ”

I have seen a Chinese version of this poem, perhaps the original, the productions of this unfortunate Emperor being still quoted as specimens of elegant versification. A despatch in verse imploring the mercy of his conqueror, the warlike founder of the Ming dynasty, is among the curious pieces included in the work cited above.

Yet another palace was erected by Kublai in this part of Mongolia, as described by Rashiduddin. “ On the eastern side of Kaiminfu a karsi or palace was built called Langtin, after a plan which Kublai had seen in a dream and retained in his memory.¹ The philosophers and architects being consulted gave their advice as to the building of this other palace. They all agreed that the best site for it was a certain lake encompassed with meadows near the city of Kaiminfu.” This has been confused with Shangtu, but was really quite distinct. The district through which the river flows eastwards from Shangtu is known by the Mongolians of the present day by the name of Langtirh, the terminal consonant of the old name being softened. The ruins of the city are marked in a Chinese map in my possession, Pai ch’eng tzu, *i.e.*, White City, this title implying that it was formerly an imperial residence : the ruins of Chagannor, for example, are also called Pai ch’eng tzu by the modern Chinese. The remains of the wall are seven or eight li in diameter, of stone, situate about forty li N.N.W. from Dolonnor. This confirms the statement of Sanang Setzen, that “ between the year of the rat (1264), when Kublai was fifty years old,

¹ D’Ohsson reads this passage : “ Kublai caused a palace to be built for him east of Kaipingfu ; but he abandoned it in consequence of a dream.”

and the year of the sheep (1271), in the space of eight years he built four great cities, viz. for summer residence *Shangtu Keibung* Kurdu Balghassun; for winter residence *Yeke Daitu* Khotan; and on the shady side of the Altai Arulun *Tsaghan* Balghassun, and Erchugin *Langting* Balghassun."

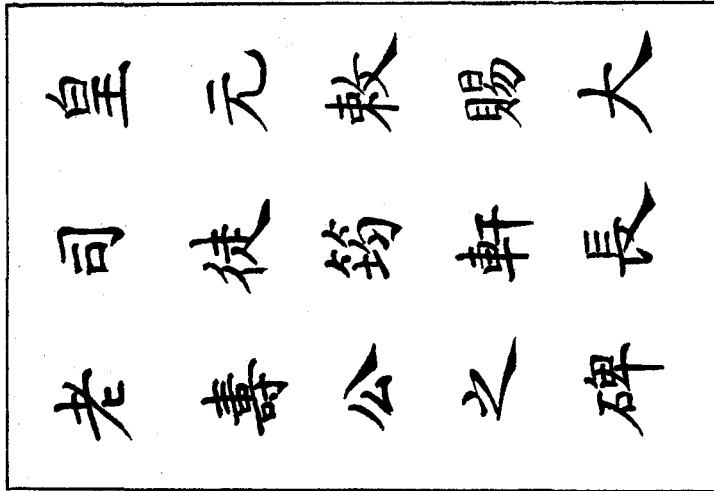
After the fall of the Yuan dynasty the city of Shangtu rapidly diminished in importance. It was taken by Chang Yu-ch'un in the second year of the new reign (A.D. 1369), but remained constantly attacked and harassed by the nomade Mongolian tribes, until it was finally abandoned by the Chinese in the fifth year of the reign of the fifth Ming Emperor (A.D. 1430), when the frontier was contracted to the line of the Great Wall, and the garrison removed to Tu-shih-k'ou. The site was visited by the Jesuit missionary Gerbillon towards the end of the seventeenth century; it is marked down in the map in D'Anville's Atlas under the modern name Chau nayman suma, but "no more notice is taken of this famous capital than of Kara Koram and the other ancient Mongolian cities." (Astley, iv. 376.) The Abbé Huc, during his celebrated journey from the Valley of Black Waters to the capital of Thibet, made some stay at Dolonnor, which he wrongly supposed to have been built on the site of the ancient city of Shangtu.¹

The position of Dolonnor has been quite lately determined to be 42° 4' N. lat., 116° 4' E. long., by Dr. H. Fritsche, Director of the Russian Observatory at Peking, who passed through it during his journey last summer (1873) through Eastern Mongolia from Peking to Nerchinsk, so that the latitude (42° 22' N.) of Chang-tou (Shang-tu) given in the Tables of the "Obs. Mathemat. etc." of Père Souciet cannot be far wrong.

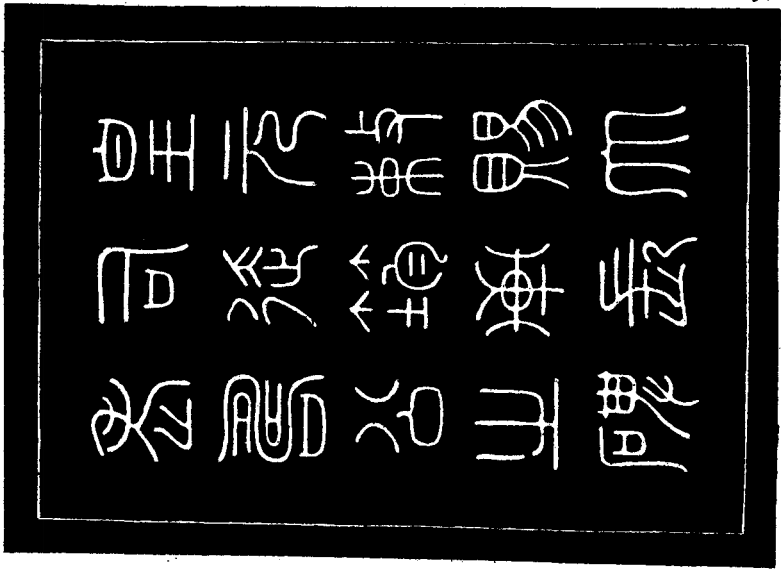
Mr. Grosvenor and I visited the ruins of Shangtu on September 16th, 1872. They are situated 80 li (about 27 miles) north-west of Dolonnor, being now known by the Mongol name of Chao naiman sumé Hotun—"the city of a hundred and eight temples." The road passed first over a series of low sand-hills, then crossed a steep range of

¹ Souvenirs d'un Voyage dans la Tartarie, le Thibet et la Chine, chap. ii. p. 39.

volcanic hills, descending into a wide rolling prairie, covered with long grass and fragrant shrubs, the haunt of numerous herds of antelope. This prairie gradually slopes down to the marshy bed of the river, here a considerable stream twenty feet wide : in former times flat-bottomed grain junks ascended from the sea to this point, bringing up supplies of rice from the southern provinces for the use of the city and court. Now the only building in the neighbourhood is a small Lama monastery, the abode of some six or seven wretched priests, while a few scattered tents belonging to the Chahar tribe stand on the river banks. The city has been deserted for centuries, and the site is overgrown with rank weeds and grass, the abode of foxes and owls, which prey on the numerous prairie-rats and partridges. The ground is but slightly raised above the bed of the river, which flows past the south-east at a distance of four or five li from the city wall, while it is overshadowed on the opposite side by the Hingan range of mountains, trending south-west, north-east, and rising into lofty peaks farther north. The annexed plan will serve to give an idea of the ruins. The walls of the city, built of earth, faced with unhewn stone or brick, are still standing, but are more or less dilapidated. They form a double enceinte, the outer a square of about 16 li with six gates, a central one north and south, and two in each of the side walls ; while the inner wall is about 8 li in circuit, with only three gates—in the southern, eastern, and western faces. The south gate of the inner city is still intact, a perfect arch 20 feet high, 12 feet wide. There is no gate in the opposite northern wall, its place being occupied by a large square earthen fort, faced with brick ; this is crowned with an obo or cairn, covered with the usual ragged streamers of silk and cotton tied to sticks, an emblem of the superstitious regard which the Mongols of the present day have for the place, as evidenced also by its modern legendary name—"the city of 108 temples." The ground in the interior of both inclosures is strewn with blocks of marble and other remains of large temples and palaces, the outlines of the foundations of some of which can yet be traced ; while broken lions, dragons, and



TRANSLATION; The monument conferred by the Emperor of the August Yuan (dynasty) in memory of His High Eminence Yun Hien (styled) Chang-iao (canonized with the title of) Shou-Kun (Prince of Longevity)



the remains of other carved monuments, lie about in every direction, half-hidden by the thick and tangled overgrowth. Scarcely one stone remains above another, and a more complete state of ruin and desolation could hardly be imagined, but at the same time everything testifies to the former existence of a populous and flourishing city. Outside the city proper there is yet a third wall, marked in the plan by a dotted line, smaller than either of the others, but continuous with the south and east sides of the outer city wall. This is now a mere grassy mound inclosing an area, estimated at five square miles, to the north and west of the city. This must be the park described by Marco Polo. Inside the north-east angle of the outer city—the spot marked *b* in the plan—there lies a broken memorial tablet, amid many other relics, on a raised piece of ground, the site evidently of a large temple. The upper portion projecting above the surface of the ground contains an inscription of the Yuan dynasty in an ancient form of the Chinese character, surrounded by a border of dragons boldly carved in deep relief. I made a careful copy of this inscription on the spot, and append a fac-simile, reduced four diameters; giving also the same in the modern Chinese character. The translation is as follows:—“The monument conferred by the Emperor of the August Yuan (dynasty) in memory of His High Eminence Yun-Hien (styled) Chang-lao (canonized with the title of) Shou-Kung (Prince of Longevity).” This forms the “heading” commonly prefixed to similar inscriptions, being, as is often the case, in the so-called seal character. The lower portion of the massive marble slab lies doubtless buried beneath the surface of the grass, but we were unable to get at it—for want of proper tools. It would be found to contain an account of the life, offices, and achievements of the Buddhist priest mentioned in the heading—that he was actually a Buddhist priest is proved by the use of the title “Chang-lao.”

The existence of this inscription is mentioned in the “Imperial Geography of the reigning dynasty of China”—“In the north-east corner of the outer city wall there is a stone tablet with an inscription of the chih-yuan epoch of the

Yuan dynasty." The chih-yuan epoch was A.D. 1264-94, forming the greater part of the reign of Kublai Khan, the founder of the Yuan dynasty in China. I have looked through the native histories and biographies of this period, but have been unable to find any contemporary notice of the priest Yun-Hien. I am indebted to the Archimandrite Palladius, of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission at Peking, who has done so much to elucidate the history and antiquities of the Mongolians, for a reference to an account in manuscript of a Chinese traveller who visited Shangtu during the reign of the Emperor Kang-hi (A.D. 1662-1722), in which it is mentioned that the aforesaid Yun-Hien was the chief priest of a large Buddhist Monastery, and that the date of the inscription was the twenty-fifth year of the chih-yuan epoch, *i.e.* A.D. 1288. These details were gathered doubtless from the main body of the inscription, the lower part of the slab, in all probability, being at that time still visible above the surface of the ground. Marco Polo, in his description of "Chandu," gives a particular account of the Buddhist priests, whom he calls Baksi, adding, "They have also immense Minsters and Abbeys, some of them as big as a small town, with more than two thousand monks (*i.e.* after their fashion) in a single abbey."
