

# Faxian's 'journey through Ladakh' or how (not) to do history or science ধ্ঞিৰ "অত্যুক্ত কিন্তি কিনি কিন্তি কিন্তি কিন্তি কিন্তি কিন্তি কিন্তি কিন্তি কিন্তি কিন্তি

Bettina Zeisler / ইিল্'বেইৰ্'জেম্'র্ডির্ম্মেৰ্'ঝ'

IALS 19, Choglamsar, 2019

के लि दिल्य म् १ १८०० वि लि से हिन त्व के स्वा वि से से के से कार्य के से कार

In the year 399 or 400 CE, the Chinese monk Fah-Hian, modern simplified Pin-yin: Faxian, began his pilgrimage from the then Chinese capital Changan to India and back, which took him about 15 years. He he was certainly not the first person to do so, but he is the first to have left us a report about his travels. The Chinese rendering of the place names is not unproblematic. One can follow Faxian with certainty up to Khotan and one can relocate him after some time along the Sindhu (i.e. Indus) river in present-day Pakistan. Where he exactly passed through in between is open to discussion.

According to a very common, but rather ill-founded claim, Faxian came through Ladakh or Skardu. This assumption was first put forward by Klaproth (1836) and further promoted by Cunningham (1854) and Legge (1886) without a detailed geographical mapping of the place names mentioned by Faxian. Nevertheless, an honourable professor from an equally honourable university recently defended the repetition of this claim by his Ladakhi student with the verdict that Cunningham had once and for all established the fact and that they had no time to re-open the case.

दशस्त्रश्चात्रेत्त्रम्यात्रम् अर्थ्वाक्षेत्रे श्वाक्षेत्र स्वाधित्र स्वाधित्र स्वाधित्र स्वाधित्र स्वाधित्र स्व स्वादः स्वाद स्वादः स्वाद स्वादः स्वदः स्वादः स्वादः स्वादः स्वादः स्वादः स्वादः स्वादः स्वादः स्वादः स्व

This is actually a very sad position for an academic or a lay person alike. It is like giving somebody a clean chit and not allowing further evidence into account. What if Cunningham was mistaken?

मूब्रायाधरक्षेत्रं १८६८ संतित्वरावर्षा संविद्या विद्या वि

Already Beal (1869) followed by Giles (1877) maps the route differently. Curzon (1896) likewise questions the feasibility of a route through Ladakh. They think Faxian followed the route also known from other pilgrims, namely through the Tarim Basin and then through the Pamirs.

तर्भः रहेशानीतर है देव नाक्षेव त्वव से सित सर से से नाविव हैंना। है नालु व तन्नर शे क्षेव हैं रे से नाविव हैंना धर र क्षेणा धेंन् सेव ने रावव से देवितर तन्ने त्वव से से सेन् त्वव हैंना। तनेत व "णा वेर हे से से क्षेव से क्षेव का नुवा शासे हैंने त्वव से ने कैंस्र साम सुवा का ते हव हव त्वव से तन्ने से क्षेव साव। है तर ने राज्य से स्था से क्षेव हैंना। सु लिया त ने राज तन्य त?

There is no hard proof for either position, such as an entry at a check post or in a guest house account. So could one really say Cunningham has settled the question? Lets take some time to re-open the case.

तवातः सः रेशः र्शेरः त्वतः तेः हैः रः

<b>চুশ'ৰ্ম'</b>	নহ্ন দেৰ্ শৈ	ইঝ'ন'ঝ'	নবাব:ৰ্ঘ:ইম:শ্লুব:নেৰ:র্ঘ:
7436	ो ( अप्तेया रेसीुका /	र्विदःदेशःश्रुद्धः त्वदःर्वेशः चःशेः	१ বিজ্ঞার্থাইম /
	२ ) यानःईवः		२ रे गार में रसाय क्विय हो। मार्सिया क्विर हो।
			उरायमुनको यन्ग्रवादार्यस्थान्न्यः रेक्नायः
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744E	বন্ধীন.	र्विदःदेशःश्रुदःतिदःर्येशःचःशः	শ্বপ্রামার্বার্যার প্রামার্থ কিন্তু ব্রাক্তি কর্ম
つくひひ	यहैता.	र्विदःदेशःश्रुद्धःत्वदःर्वेशःचःशः	শাপ্রবাম ব্রম ঘারীম মীমী ক্রুন দীর্ঘারীকা
つくひひ	बेह	र्विदःदेशःश्रुदःपव्दःर्धेशःचःश्रेः	शेर वो सुरकार्य क्रुन दे सूत्र दे पर्द रेश
7406	र्वेत्रन्ग्रींर:बेद्	रदःवेशःश्रवःतृतेःवृत्यः.वृतःवर्द्दनःवर्द्धशःवःशः	यःश्चेरःरे:रे:क्रुर्:दे:र्यं:रेशः
rece	মেন্ত্ৰ:মৰ্	ब्रु सेश यदी प्रद्ये प्रंत हेत् ते	न्नूर-र्ने-ब-र्रेर-र्ने-र्य-रेश-
2016	स्रेव:	ब्रु सेश यदी प्रमु संय हेरा थे	र्तिः हुब बुबा हुन् गाउः झुब द्रार त्रद्र देश देश्वः
			ইম'র্জিম'রাম্ব'র্ক্ষবা'শ

Let us start with the early suggestions for the route. We have four 19<sup>th</sup> century translations, one geographical report and Cunningham's statement.

# Suggested routes

	date	author	based on	suggested route
	1836	1) Abel-Rémusat/	primary source	1) from Khotan rather directly to Kashmir/
		2) Klaproth		2) via the Karakorum pass, following the
				Shayok (to Trangtse), crossing the Chang la, to reach Leh, and then Skardo
	1854	Cunningham	2 <sup>nd</sup> -hand musing	via Ladakh, possibly following Klaproth
	1869	Beal	primary source	via southern Pamirs
	1877	Giles	primary source	but relies completely on Beal
	1886	Legge	primary source	but follows Klaproth
	1896	Curzon	geography	via central or southern Pamirs
	1999	Allen	secondary sources	via Skardo and the Rongdo gorge
2006		Sen	secondary sources	via Khotan and Tashkurgan to Dareil and
				Uddiyāna

त्रीः से प्राचित्र व्याचित्र विश्व विश्व

When we have to weigh these statements, the opinon of the primary translators should weigh most. If we take thus only the primary translators, two opt for the Pamir route, and two opt for a route through Baltistan or perhaps also Ladakh. The two others are similarly opposed, so that in the end, we have an equal number of voices for each option.

तर्रिक्षेत्रित्यम् विक्रायात्र्वायाय्येत्रावद्ये के स्वर्थः के स्वर्थः के स्वर्थः के स्वर्थः विक्रायः विक्

One could not say that the question was ever settled in favour of Ladakh. Among the modern authors the situation is not that much different. Allen (1999) favours a route through Skardo, whereas Sen (2006) presents a route similar to Beal. Thus we are thrown back on ourselves, and we have to look whether there is some evidence for one or the other suggestion.

तमातः त्यसः र्से मृत्या विष्ठा विष्ठा विष्ठा विष्ठा विषय । विष्ठा विषय । विष्ठा । विषय । विष

The respective suggestions rest on the one hand on the feasibility of the route, on the other, mainly on the interpretation of the 11<sup>th</sup> stage: Kie-cha (Beal), also spelled Chieh-ch'â (Giles) yielding simplified *pinyin* Jiecha.

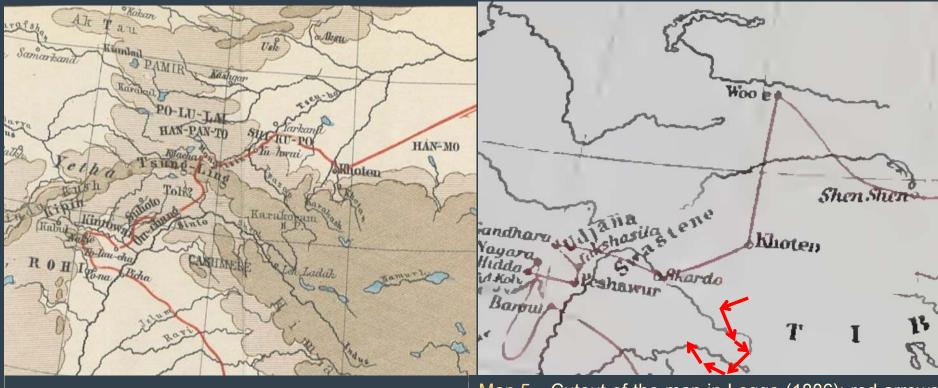
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ح	ब्दःधेः		54.222.
ч	দুৰ্'কুন্তহ'	ৰুবা'ম'স্কুব'বনুৰ'ঐ'প্ৰদ'ৰ্ঘ'ইঝ'	नवःनवः
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C	र्डे.वि.स्वाकाःस्	बिया आ बि र्ह्ये केंग्र अप्य	र्क्टर-दे व प्यु-हू
20	ત્તા. ટેંડુ હુ.	ब्रमाः अं भुःर्नः दः देश्कृतः देवदः । । । । । । । । । । । । । । । । । । ।	শী-জৌ-ক্র'
77	गी'खे'क'	ब्यान रेगा सुन केंगा भारत हैं ना स्थाप केंद्र केंगा का स्थाप केंद्र केंगा के स्थाप केंद्र केंद्र केंद्र केंद्र व्याप केंद्र कि सुन केंद्र	हें हो

Faxian's stages

1 starting point	travel time and type of road or difficul-	endpoint			
	ties				
2 Ch'ang-an		Lung [in eastern Gansu]			
3 Lung					
4 staying the rain	y season in prince Ch'ien-kuei's country	Chang-yeh [NW of Lanzhou, near the			
		Great Wall]			
5 Chang-yeh		Tun-hwang = Dunhuang			
6 Tun-hwang	17 days through the desert	Shen-shen [=Lou-lan, near Lop Nor]			
7 Shan-shan		country of Wu-i [near Kucha or Kara-			
		shahr on the northern edge of the Tarim?]			
8 Wu-i	1 month, 5 days SW	Yu-tien [Khotan]			
9 Yu-tien	25 days	Tseu-ho = ?? [Yarkand river?]			
10 Tseu-ho	4 days south	T'sung-ling mountains = Onion Range =			
		Pamirs-Karakoram-Hindukush and the			
		country of Yu-hwui = ??			
11 Yu-hwui	25 days among 'hills'	Kie-cha = ?? – in the middle of the Onion			
		Range			
12 Kie-cha	1 month westwards through the Onion	towards 'North India' (i.e. Afghanistan			
	Range; there are poisonous dragons	and Pakistan) reaching T'o-li = ??			
		Thalpan, Thor ??			
13 T'o-li	15 days SW 10,000ft above the Sin-tou	Wu-chang = Uddiyāna, i.e., Swāt in			
	(Indus).	northern Pakistan			

क्वी अप्राप्त स्वास्त्र स

The place name Kie-cha of the 11<sup>th</sup> stage, has led to wild speculations. Abel-Rémusat had thought it to be Kashmir, while Klaproth opted for Iskardo/Skardo. This would have necessitated Faxian to cross the Karakoram, travel down the Shayok valley, crossing again over to Leh over the Chang la or even further east – or, what would make more sense, continuing travelling the lower Shayok valley to Khaplu in Baltistan.



Map 4 Cutout of the map in Beal (1869)

Map 5 Cutout of the map in Legge (1886); red arrows for the route as suggested by Klapproth

मुल्यस्वरूषिश्चावार्ष्ठवाताः हेत्रते गाविराने साविरास्य विषय स्वाप्त स्वापत स्वाप्त स

Cunningham bases his reasoning in part on quasi-historical considerations, which are worth to be quoted in length.

र्यः क्षेत्रः तेश्वाश्चित्रः वित्रः तरेः ध्युत्यः चेतः तेश्वाश्चितः श्वेषा। ध्यरः त्रस्यात्यः स्त्रूत्यः चेत्र क्षेतः सेन् श्वेषा। व्यः नृष्यात्रः वित्रः तेत्रः विष्याः वित्रः वित्रः विश्वाश्चित्रः विष्याः स्त्रुतः विष्या

But the other details, recorded by Fa-Hian, seem to place this identification beyond all doubt. The country was "mountainous, and so cold that no grain but corn ever ripened," which is exactly the case with Ladák.

ध्यदःर्यः क्षेत्रः तेशः र्रोत्यः वित्रः त्रीत्रः त्रीतः त्रीत

Kie-chha, moreover, possessed a stone vase of the same colour as Buddha's alms-dish, besides a tooth of Buddha. Now, one of these relics (the alms-dish) still exists in a temple to the north of Lé. It is a large earthenware vase, similar in shape to the two largest steatite vases extracted from the Bhilsa Topes. But Ladák also possessed a tooth of Buddha, which was formerly enshrined at Lé in a dung-ten, or solid mound of masonry similar to the Topes of Bhilsa and of Afghanistan. The dung-ten still exists, though ruinous; but the holy tooth is said to have been carried away by Ali Sher, of Balti, upwards of 200 years ago, when Ladák was invaded and plundered by the Musabnans of the west ...

हैर तह्वा ये गा गा वैर हे अ ते से र वर लेव गी छो क बेर त्वव ये सेर वर चें र ये त्व ये चेर त्वव ये सेर हैं वा श छोव हैं वा लें। धर त्व य उव बेर त्वव ये धुव व र व्वव के लेंक के विव के विव के कि लेंक के विव के लेंक के विव के लेंक के विव के ल

Lastly, the name of Kie-chha, and the designation of the people as "men of the snowy mountains," both point unmistakably to Ladák, which is still known as Kha-pa-chan, or Kha-chan, "abounding in snow," or Snow-land, and the people as Kha-pa-chan-pa, or Kha-chan-pa, "men of the snowy land." (Cunnningham 1884: 2–3).

वर्ने से र र्कट सामी विद्या दक्ष से से व त्या के विद्या

All these points can be argued against as follows:

१ द्र-द्रुबन्धान्य प्रदर्भे क्षेत्र क्षेत्र क्षेत्र प्रदेश क्षेत्र प्रवाद क्षेत्र क्षेत्र प्रवाद क्षेत्र क्षेत्र प्रवाद क्षेत्र क्षेत्

1.) Buddhist relics and quasi relics, such as the said vase certainly multiplied over the centuries, and in some cases they may have traveled from one place to another. The fact that similar vases have been found elsewhere points to the fact that such items are not very specific. Therefore, the presence of such relics in Leh by the 19<sup>th</sup> century or the 19<sup>th</sup> century memory of such relics unfortunately does not proof anything. At the very best it may suggest a certain likelihood for the identity of a place, which, however, could easily be ruled out by other evidence.

दो त्यायाउवालुवा विदेशसीर नेरातवादीर में का क्षेत्र का विदेश के का विदेश के कि विदेश के क

2.) The Pamirs certainly also deserve the designation 'Snow Mountains' and it can be assumed that the vegetation including the agricultural products in the higher regions are similar to that of the Himalayas in general and Ladakh more specifically. The Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang wrote:

[T]he valley of Po-mi-lo (Pamir) [...] stretches 1000 li [Chinese 'miles'] or so east and west, and 100 li or so from north to south; in the narrowest part it is not more than 10 li. It is situated among the snowy mountains; on this account the climate is cold, and the winds blow constantly. The snow falls both in summer and spring-time. Night and day the wind rages violently. The soil is impregnated with salt and covered with quantities of gravel and sand. The grain which is sown does not ripen, shrubs and trees are rare; there is but a succession of desert without any inhabitants (Beal 1884 II: 297, emphasis added).

द्रो त्याख्य त्रिक्षे स्वाधिक विद्या स्वाधिक विद्या विदेश स्वाधिक विद्या स्वाधिक स्वाध

3.) As for the designation *kha(ba)can*, Cunningham apparently forgot that it first of all referred to Tibet and not to Ladakh, and secondly, that in most likelihood it is not a very old designation. The expression *kha.ba.can*, usually preceded by *bod*, hence '(Tibet) the Snowclad' (not: \*'the Snowmountain'), is not found in the Old Tibetan inscriptions and documents of Dunhuang, but appears in various *phyidar* historical accounts from the 11<sup>th</sup> c. onwards, the earliest possibly being the 11<sup>th</sup> c. *Bkaḥ.chems Ka.khol.ma*, the 'Testament from the Pillar'.

One may further ask whether it is possible at all that around 400 CE the inhabitants of Ladakh and Baltistan, not yet being conquered by the Tibetan empire – which at that time also did not yet exist – already spoke Tibetan.

हैर यहवा ये गा गा वैर हे अ वैश विर विश्व अअ च र्य क्षेत्र विश्व विश्व श्री कु सुर श ये क्षेत्र विश्व व

Finally, Cunningham bases his reasoning also on Faxians description of his trail along the frightening Indus gorge.

र्यः क्षेत्रः देशः दर्ने ः र्हेवाशः दर्ने ः श्रेत्रः वा वा वित्रः रहेवा॥

Faxian writes about the Indus river:

र्द्धराय ब स्वराय क्वी या त्यी अर्थ क्वी अर्य क्वी अर्थ क्वी अर्थ क्वी अर्य क्वी अर्य क्वी अर्य क्वी अर्थ क्वी अर्थ क्वी अर्थ क्वी अर्य

Keeping along the incline of the Tsung Ling Mountains, in a south-westerly direction, they travelled onwards for fifteen days. The road is difficult and fatiguing. Steep crags and precipices constantly intercept the way. These mountains are like walls of rock, standing up 10,000 ft. [or cubit?] in height. On looking over the edge the sight becomes confused, and then, on advancing, the foot loses its hold and you are lost. At the base there is a stream called the Sin-to (Indus). Men of old days have cut away the cliff so as to make a passage, and have carved out against the rock steps for descent, amounting altogether to 700 in number. Having passed these, there is, suspended across the river, a bridge of ropes, by which travellers pass over it. From one side of the river to the other is eighty paces [ca. 50-60m] (Beal 1869: 21, emphasis added).

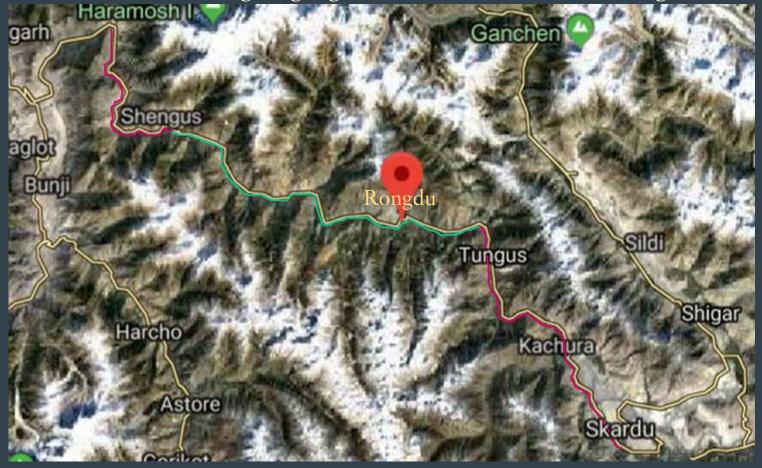
भूगः विरक्षिण्यत्ये स्वान्यः स्व स्वान्यः स्व

Cunningham now associates this with the Rondu gorge below Skardu:

From Skardo to Rongdo, and from Rongdo to Makpou-i-shang-rong, for upwards of 100 miles, the Indus sweeps sullen and dark through a mighty gorge in the mountains, which, for wild sublimity, is perhaps unequalled. Rongdo means the country of defiles ... Between these points the Indus raves from side to side of the gloomy chasm foaming and chafing with ungovernable fury. Yet even in these inaccessible places has daring and ingenious man triumphed over opposing Nature. The yawning abyss is spanned by frail rope bridges and the narrow ledges of rock are connected by ladders to form a giddy pathway overhanging the seething caldron below (Cunningham 1854: 89).

षाषोत्पर्यः त्रेश्वात्तर्भित्रः श्वात्रो तिने र्हिषायात्र द्वीः शेष्वत्त्रणः । "र्यः क्षेत्रः त्रेश्वात्तरे मूत्रः त्रेश्वात्तर्यः त्रेश्वात्तर्यः । स्वात्त्रेष्वात्त्रः त्रेश्वात्तर्यः स्वात्त्रः त्रेश्वात्तर्यः स्वात्त्रः त्रेश्वात्तर्यः स्वात्त्रः त्रेश्वात्तर्यः स्वात्त्रः स्वात्त्रः स्वतः त्रेश्वात्तरः स्वतः त्रेश्वात्तरः स्वतः स्वतः

Allen (1999: 191) concurs: "Faxian provides a vivid description of the passage of the 100-mile Rongdo gorge between Skardu and Shanglus."



Map 3 Baltistan highway S-1 along the Indus River: Skardo to Shengus

व्रिंश र्शे द खु त्या द दे श्री का रे दे दे हैं हैं द से हैं की साथ दे हैं वा साथ है ता हो ता हो ते हैं की द हैं वा साथ है ता हो ता हो ता हो ता हो ता है का ता है ता है की द हैं वा साथ है ता हो ता हो ता है का ता है ता है की स्वार है ता है की साथ है ता है ता है ता है की साथ है ता है त

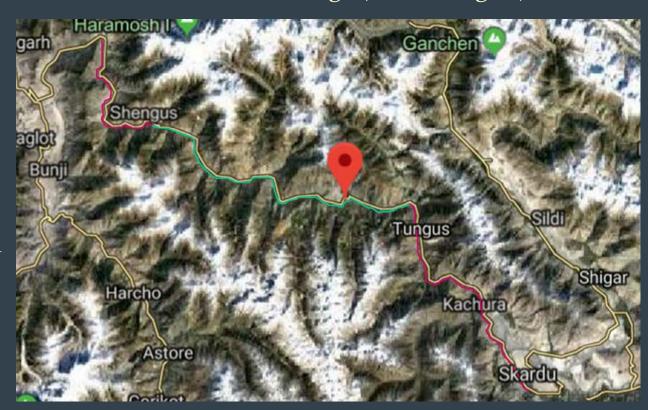
Thomson (1847, cited after Schuh, internet encyclopedia) writes about the gorge: It is but seldom that the stony bed of the river or the alluvial platforms overhanging it, afford a level road for a few hundred yards at a time. In general the path continually ascends and descends over each successive ridge; the elevation to which it is required to ascend to find a practicable passage, varying from a few hundred or several thousand feet above the bottom of the valley. In at least eight or ten places between Iskardo and Rondu, the path ascends or descends by mean of ladders placed against the face of a perpendicular wall of rock, or crosses fissures in the cliffs by planks laid horizontal over them. This road is therefore quite impracticable for beasts of burden or horses, and is never used except in winter, when no other route is open to the traveller (emphasis added).

दर्भेत्वत्याः हे खेत्राक्ष्याः अर्थेत् क्ष्याः व्याप्ताः अर्थेत् व्याप्ताः अर्थेत् क्ष्याः व्याप्ताः अर्थेत् क्ष्याः व्याप्ताः व्यापत्तः वयापत्तः वय

Schuh thus concludes that Rongdo was the least accessible area in Baltistan. One may thus wonder why any Chinese pilgrim should have passed through, especially as the route was not a shortcut. Furthermore, while the Rongdo gorge might be quite impressive, it is certainly not the most impressive gorge the Indus passes through. While Thomson mentions eight or ten ascends by ladders, Faxian mentions 700 of such steps cut into the rock!

What is more important, is that while Faxian speaks of a south-westerly direction, the Indus river between Skardu and Mendi bridge (near Rongdo) flows

mostly in a north or north-northwest direction (red), between Rongdo and Shanlus it flows almost straight west-northwest (green), after Shanglus it turns again towards the north (red) until reaching the Haramosh mountain, where it finally turns towards the south.



प्यत्रविश्वा प्यत्रविश्वाविश्व विश्व स्वाविश्व स्वाविश स्वाव

What the proponents of the Ladakh route also overlook is the fact that in the ancient geography of Buddhist and Purāṇic sources alike, and even in the Perso-Arabic sources, the Sindhu or Indus flows from the south of Mt Meru (or the greater Pamir region), and its upper course is actually identical with the Gilgit river. The 'real' upper course of the Indus river, according to modern standards, was either unknown or considered to be rather negligible.

None of the proponents of the Ladakh route seem to have taken into account that the designation of the "Upper Indus Valley", for a historical site full of the most beautiful rock carvings, inscriptions, and coin hords, a designation common even in present-day historical sources, actually refers to the middle course of the Indus in Pakistan from to the confluence with the Gilgit river onwards or even includes the latter river. This nomenclature is clearly based on the ancient geographic sources.

So where did Faxian actually come along? The description of the Indus passage matches well with what is known from Chinese sources as the so-called "Hanging Passages" or "Flying Ladders". These most difficult passages have been commonly associated with a passage along the "Upper Indus", that is, somewhere below the country of Bolor/ Gilgit.

भूरायायदी स्वाप्तायाय स्वाप्तायाय स्वाप्ताय स्वापताय स्वाप्ताय स्वाप्त्य स्वाप्ताय स्वाप्ताय स्वाप्ताय स्वाप्ताय स्वाप्ताय स्वाप्ताय स्

It seems that the original path reached a height of about 3,000m or 10,000ft above the river. Another Chinese pilgrim, Sungyun, who travelled down the Indus at the end of the year 519, describes the passage as follows:

From the country of Po-lu-lai (Bolor [, i.e. Gilgit]) to the country of Uchang (Udyana) they use iron chains for bridges. These are suspended in the air for the purpose of crossing (over the mountain chasms). On looking downwards no bottom can be perceived; there is nothing on the side to grasp at in case of a slip, but in a moment the body is hurled down 10,000 fathoms [?? most probably rather cubits or feet]. On this account travellers will not cross over in case of high winds (Beal 1884: xciii).

Xuanzang, who, in ca. 630, went up the Indus in the opposite direction, describes it similarly:

Going north-west from the town of Mung-kia-li [Mungali], crossing a mountain and passing through a valley, we reascend the Sin-tu river. The roads are craggy and steep; the mountains and the valleys are dark and gloomy. Sometimes we have to cross by ropes, sometimes by iron chains streched (across the gorges). There are foot-bridges (or covered ways) suspended in the air, and flying bridges across the chasms, with wooden steps let into the ground for climbing the steep embankments. Going thus 1000 li or so [ca. 350 km], we reach the river valley of Ta-li-lo, where stood once the capital of U-chang-na. ...

त्रने हैर व न्यर केंग्रेय श्वासी स्थान के केंग्रेय स्थान केंग्रेय केंग्रेय

Going east from this, after climbing precipices and crossing valleys, we go up the course of the Sin-tu river; and then, by the help of flying bridges and footways made of wood across the chasms and precipices, after going 500 li or so [ca. 175 km], we arrive at the country of Po-lu-lo (Bolor) (Beal 1884 I: 133, 134).

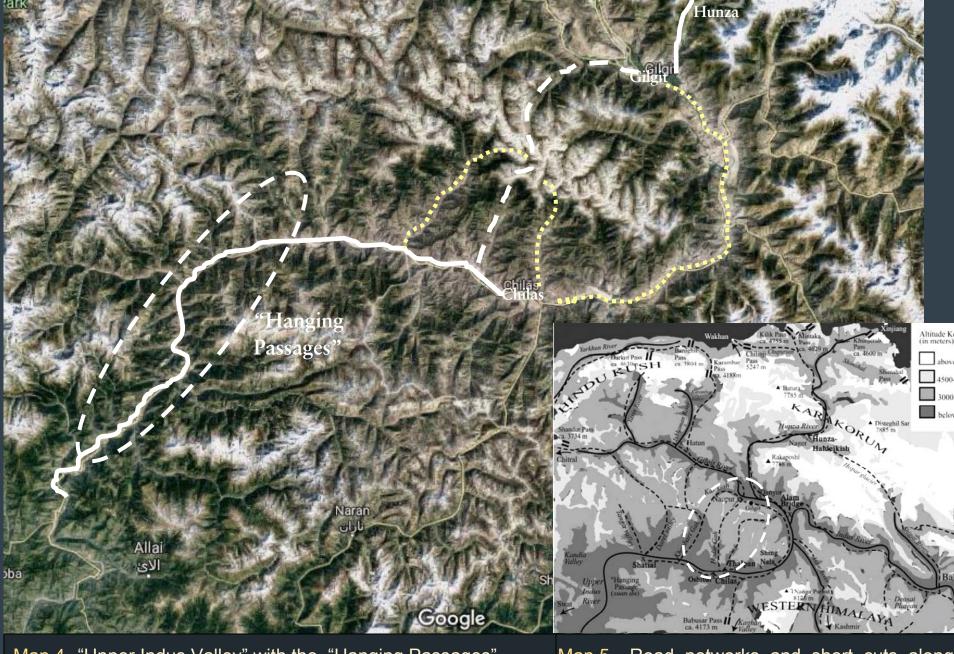
क्रूँन से हूं वेर त्वत्ये स्टब्स में क्रुन ले त्यस में र्रेट ने ले रेट न स्वर स्वर स्वर स्वा स्वा रेट की तर्रेवा।

The route along the "Upper Indus" is thus quite longer than the Rongdu gorge.

द्र।

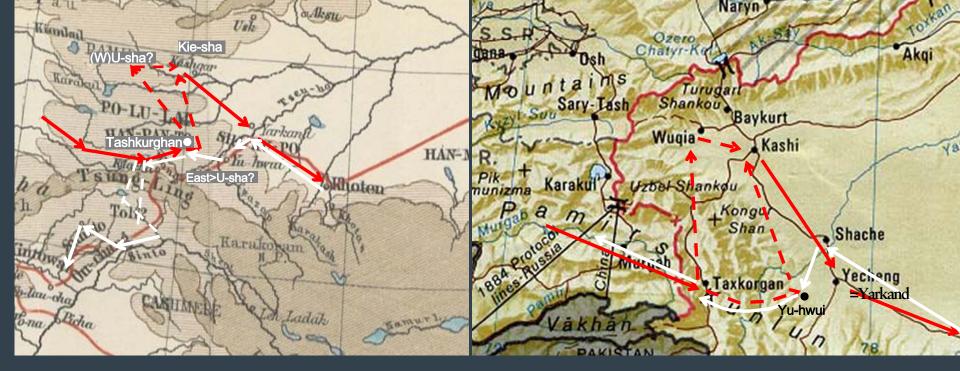
द्रित्ति स्त्रित्ति स्त्रित्ति स्त्रित्ति स्त्रित्ति स्त्रित्ति स्त्रित्ति स्त्रित्ति स्त्रित्ति स्त्रित स्त्रित्ति स्त्रित स्त्र स्त्रित स्त्र स्त्र स्त्रित स्त्र स्त्

While it is not possible to trace the exact route along the Indus, it seems to be quite clear that Faxian came down the Indus river at some point below its confluence with the Gilgit river. He could have come down from the Pamirs via Hunza, corresponding to the Karakoram Highway, or a valley further west, and might have followed the Gilgit river until its confluence with the Indus. He might also have taken a shortcut from Gilgit to Chilas on the Indus river, as indicated by Map 5.



Map 4 "Upper Indus Valley" with the "Hanging Passages" as described by Stein, and the short cuts (see insert)

Map 5 Road networks and short cuts along the "Upper Indus Valley" (Neelis 2006)



lines indicate possible alternative routes.

Map 6 Cutout of Beal's (1869) map. White arrows: Map 7 Cutout of a Chinese-Russian map, showing the Faxian's route, red arrows: Xuanzang's route. Broken position of Tashkurghan 'in the middle of' the mountains. hite arrows: Faxian's route, red arrows: Xuanzang's route. Broken lines indicate possible alternative routes.

देश्यान हेन निष्ठ निष्ठ

If my guess is correct, Faxian's route into the Pamirs would in many ways correspond to Xuanzang's route out of the Pamirs on his way back. This is certainly not very surprising. One can assume that both travellers followed common trade routes, and given their common interest in centres of Buddist learning, it is also not surprising that they visited the same kingdoms or towns.

त्ययाक्षेत्रामाः भ्रीत्रायम् दिख्येम् दिवाक्षेत्राम् स्टिन् दिन् भिष्यायाः देवात्यम् स्टिन् त्यम् दिन् स्टिन् त्यम् स्टिन् त्यायाः स्टिन् त्यम् स्टिन् स्यम् स्टिन् स्टिन्स् स्टिन् स्टिन् स्टिन् स्टिन् स्टिन् स्

Even if some of the places cannot be identified exactly, and even if the two routes would not match exactly, it is, nevertheless, quite evident that Faxian did not come through Ladakh and Baltistan. The mentioning of the poisonous dragons does not suit Ladakh or Baltistan, but rather corresponds to the dragon lake mentioned by Xuanzang.

दःष्यदःश्रमःत्रःस्या। गाःवेदःहेमःत्रेभःत्रेभःपःक्षेतःषः द्वान्यःत्रेःप्रःदेभःश्चेत्रःष्यः। त्वदःश्चेत्रः। त्वदः। त्वदः।

I would further think that Cunningham was rather selective in citing what could have fit to his hypothesis that Faxian came through Ladakh.

दर्निः हिन्या क्ष्रीत्या विष्ट्र हिन्य क्ष्रा दिन्य विष्ट्र विष्ट्

Now you might think that the present speaker has settled the question once and for all, and you might be tempted to think that henceforth no further inquiry is needed. This, however, would be utterly wrong. What if in the future contradiciting evidence shows up, e.g., a graffity saying something stupid like "Faxiang was here"? Even if though it is rather unlikely that something like this shows up, you cannot just blindly follow what I have said. This is certainly not the way, one does academic or more particularly historical research.

It is known that Buddha admonished his adherents not to follow his teachings blindly, but to judge them by their own intelligent logical reasoning and follow them only if they came to the conclusion that his words were true. How much more should any statement from ordinary human beings, be it Mister Cunningham, a university professor, or the present speaker, undergo logical scrutinity, again and again, and any time! Only if you use your own brain carefully, can you find something new, which everybody else coming before you might have overlooked or misjudged. Whatever you study, please make intelligent use of your own brain!

# केंदरक्रायाश्वाकाहेंके॥

Thank you all for your patience and thugrjeche and juley!