

THE ORDAM-PADISHAH-SYSTEM OF EASTERN TURKISTAN SHRINES.

BY GUNNAR FARRING.

South-east of Kashgar, between the Kashgar-Layliq-Yarkand and the Yarkand-Yangi Hissar-Kashgar roads, there lies a vast infertile desert, composed of salt-steppes and sand-dunes. This region is very interesting both from an historical and a religious point of view, being the greatest system of Eastern Turkistan shrines. At many places in the desert there are sacred tombs, all of which are associated in legend with the 10th c. struggles between the native Buddhists and the adherents of Islam invading the country from the west.

This region plays an important part as the most frequented pilgrimage place in Eastern Turkistan. During the pilgrimage season tens of thousands of people go there. They walk in orderly processions, each group carrying banners (*tugh*) and long rods,

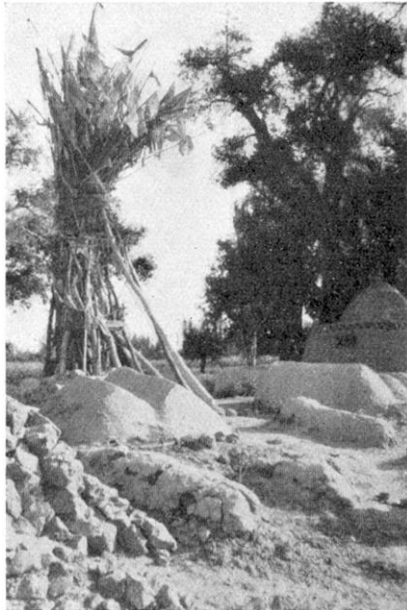


Fig. 1. Smaller shrine with modern graves round it. Just south of Khan-Ariq.

which are used afterwards at the shrines in a manner to be described below. The religious fanaticism displayed on these occasions is very great, and it culminates on the arrival at the shrines. The pilgrims prostrate themselves, crying and wailing, in honour of the holy martyrs, or else they recite long passages from the *tazkira*, the Lives of the Saints of this system of shrines.

Similar systems of shrines, which may be associated with a certain legend or certain historical facts, are to be found at several places in Eastern Turkistan. I particularly want to point out the one situated round the town of Uch-Turfan, which has been visited and described by Pantusov. The legend connected with this system is about the Khan Barbar or Berber and his son Aq-ata, who, in his dreams, was called upon by Muhammad to adopt Islam.¹ Neither this nor any other system, however, is by far so important as the one to the south-east of Kashgar.

This system of shrines in the south-western part of Eastern Turkistan may conveniently be called the Ordam-padishah system, from its largest grave. Already many years ago it attracted the attention of European explorers. An Englishman, Major Bellew, a member of the Forsyth expedition, first of all visited it in 1874. He made a special study of the system and its legends, pub-

¹ Cf. Записки имп. русск. геогр. общества по отдел. этногр. Т. 34. стр. 432—44. (1909).

lishing the results in the book referred to in the following pages.¹

Later on the system has been visited by Sven Hedin on several occasions. He went there twice in 1895, the first time starting from Yangi Hissar to Ordam-padishah, and the second time stopping there on his way from Kashgar to Khotan.² The most detailed description of Ordam-padishah



Fig. 2. Eastern Turkistan salt-steppe (*say*) south of Achiq.

and the road leading there has been given in the first of the books mentioned.

In 1900, Marc Aurel Stein passed Ordam-padishah on his way to Yarkand, and in two of his books he has given valuable contribution to the knowledge of the shrines.³

The traditional story associated with the system has been published in part by Shaw, and after him rough outlines have been given by several authors.⁴ As some features, however, are worthy of greater consideration, I will give a short summary of the legend: Satuq Bughra Khan, the first ruler of Eastern Turkistan who was converted to Islam, had a daughter called Ala-nur Khanim. She gave birth to a son, whose father was St. Gabriel. (A parallel to the Christian story of the Virgin Mary.) According to another notion she became pregnant on seeing a lion one day. The son who was subsequently born was called Sayid Ali Arslan Khan. The name Arslan, 'lion', is said to allude to the circumstances related above. He took a prominent part in a war against the Buddhist rulers Jukta Rashid and Nukta Rashid. A great battle was fought at Kashgar, and the Infidels fled towards Yangi-Hissar. Amongst the pursuers was Sayid

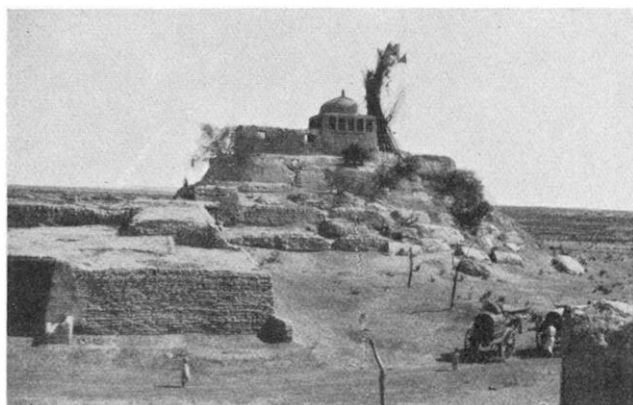


Fig. 3. The shrine Dost Bulaqim with *sarai* in the foreground.

¹ Report of a mission to Yarkund in 1873 under command of T. D. Forsyth. Calcutta 1875. p. 20, and H. W. Bellew, Kashmir and Kashghar. A narrative of the journey of the embassy to Kashghar in 1873—74. Lond. 1875. p. 367 sqq.

² Description in »En färd genom Asien 1893—97». T. 1. 1898, p. 401 sqq. and in »Die geographisch-wissenschaftlichen Ergebnisse meiner Reisen in Zentralasien 1894—1897». [Petermanns Mitteil. Erg. Bd 28. 1900.]

³ Preliminary report of a journey of archaeological and topographical exploration in Chinese Turkistan, 1901, and in »Sand-buried ruins of Khotan. . . » 1904. p. 142. sqq.

⁴ Shaw, R. B., A sketch of the Türki language . . . P. 1. Lahore 1875, and Bellew op. cit.



Fig. 4. Qizil-jayim-mazar with its *shaikh*.

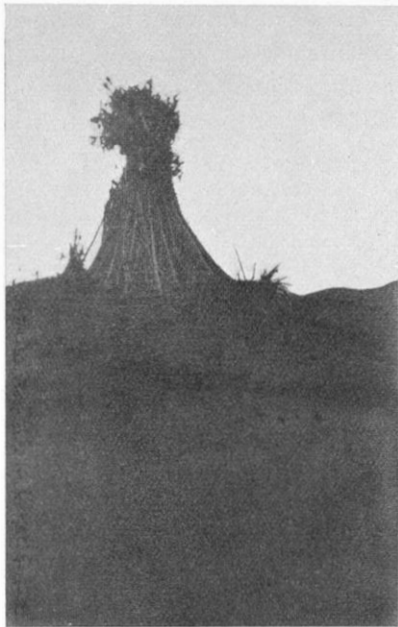


Fig. 5. Ordam-padishah-mazar.



Fig. 6. Praying pilgrim.

Ali Arslan Khan, who got killed in the pursuit. After the battle his eldest brother, Hassan Bughra Khan, read a prayer over the body of the fallen warrior. While he was thus praying there arose a sudden sand-storm (*qara buran*), which covered the bodies of the dead Mohammedans with sand, but those of the Infidels with salt. Prince Yussuf Kadir Khan then began a war of vengeance against the Infidels, and for the spoils taken in the war he bought the area round Khan-ariq, above all the seven villages in the neighbourhood of Tazghun, which were set apart for religious purposes. Khan-ariq and Tazghun form to this very day the north and south borders of the great Ordam-padishah system.

One may be well inclined to suspect a nucleus of truth in this legend. A full description of the lives of Satuq Bughra Khan and Sayid Ali Arslan Khan may be found in the so-called *Tadhkira-i-Bughra*, whose contents have been closely examined by F. Grenard.¹ But neither he nor later on Barthold have been able to find anything that goes to prove the historical veracity of the legendary tales.²



Fig. 7. The houses at Hazrat-i-Begim are slowly being buried by the sand.

In September, 1929, I had an opportunity to visit the Ordam-padishah system, starting from Kashgar, and in the following I will give some contribution to the knowledge of these most interesting shrines. I set out from Kashgar in a southerly direction to the little village of Achiq, the last outpost before the desert begins. The first tombs became visible on the very fringe of the Achiq oasis. Close by, to the southwest, lies the little Khaib mazar, so named after a man in the following of Sayid Ali Arslan Khan. In the little village of Khuraz-tam there is also a smaller unimportant mazar.

Typical of all these sacred tombs (*mazar*) are the bundles of rods hung with rags and cloths. The rods are brought there by the pilgrims, very often from distant parts, for out there in the desert are no trees which can be used for the purpose. The pilgrims consider it commendable to tear strips from their cloaks and to hang them up at the shrines. The wind makes the rags and cloths flutter and flap, and thus the evil spirits (*jin*) hovering round every grave are driven off.

The size of these bundles of rods with the *tugh* attached to them varies in proportion to the importance of the shrine. The Ordam-padishah one was largest, its bundle being about 10 m high, which makes it necessary for anyone wishing to add to the collection

¹ La légende de Satoq Boghra Khan et l'histoire. [Journal asiatique. Sér. 9. T. 15. 1900.]

² Cfr. Enzyklopædie des Islam. Art. Bughra-Khan.

to climb up the side of it. In order that the big 'broom' might withstand the storms, wooden supports have been put up round it.

The shrine called Dost bulaqim¹ is the northernmost grave of some importance in the Ordam-padishah system. It lies on the fringe of the salt-steppe immediately outside the desert. The tomb itself is roofed over with a cupola of the form usual in Eastern Turkistan. By its situation on top of a clay mound, cast up in the desert by the hand of man, it makes a strong impression on the spectator. By the side of the cupola appears the typical 'broom'.



Fig. 8. The bridge of Yaylaq drawn by Sven Hedin, in «Scientific results of a journey in Central Asia 1899—1902.» Vol. I, p. 4.

The cupola was no doubt built in the beginning of our own century, otherwise Sven Hedin or Aurel Stein, travelling here in the nineties, would have observed the monument, lying as it is on their route.²

Round the mazar are several inns (*sarai*, *langar*) for the accommodation of the pilgrims. Beside the shrine there is also a sacred well, strictly speaking a largish pond, and legend will have it that one of Sayid Ali Arslan Khans followers, during a

severe drought, flung his knife to the ground, and thus the well gushed forth.

Sultanim mazar and Qizil-jayim-mazar, the two shrines south of Dost-bulaqim, are but of minor importance, though there was quite a big collection of *tugh* close by the latter.

As has been pointed out above, Ordam-padishah, which is the chief shrine of the system, being the place where Sayid Ali Arslan Khan was killed, lies out in the barren desert. The grave itself, or rather the graves, for there are three of them, lie about one kilometer from the village of the same name. In the village there are quite good *langar* for the pilgrims. There is also a *madrassa* with some fifty students. I was told there were four *shaiikhs* and a resident population of about 400 people. They own land in the neighbouring arable parts of the country, which they cultivate, and for the rest they live on the pilgrims. At the time of my visit the greater part of the population was away tilling the soil. In summer the number of pilgrims is also considerably smaller than in winter, owing to the shortage of water.

Like most other shrines Ordam-padishah has sacred wells too. Two of these are called by a common name Jigda bulaq, 'The Oleaster-well'. They lie north of the village. Be-

¹ It is possible that it should be «Desht-bulaqim» 'steppe-well'. «Dost-bulaqim» would mean «well of the friend(s)».

² Hedin, *En färd genom Asien* I: 407. Stein, *Survey of India* No. 41. N.w. Serial No. 5. (map), where Stein's route in 1900—01 is clearly indicated.

tween the village and the shrine there is a third well, but I cannot tell whether it has got a name of its own. It had a wooden superstructure and was moreover covered with sheets of iron taken from Russian petroleum cans.

A smaller shrine close by the village of Ordam-padishah is called Doghru Begim mazar.

As a thing of great value the people of Ordam-padishah show the visitors a cauldron, a so-called *altun-dash*.¹ It is put up in a house where food is prepared for the pilgrims. It is about two meters in diameter and made of ordinary cast iron. The population associate it with the original legend, but more probably it is of modern make.

It is possible that the existence of the big cauldrons and the reverence shown them are connected with the cult itself. It is a popular belief in Eastern Turkistan that the ghost of a dead man remains in or about the grave until the day of resurrection, and that he must be provided with food at least for some time after his death. The smell of boiling cauldrons is considered sufficient to satisfy the ghost. It is just possible that this idea may be at the back of the veneration the people show *altun-dash* at Ordam-padishah, and that the cauldrons are not used for practical purposes only.

Due south of Ordam-padishah there lies a smaller mazar, Mivede-Khanim-mazar or Mivide-Khan-mazar, and south-west of that place a long ridge, Dua Karak or Da Karak (»the ridge of prayer«). (This may possibly be the Karak which, in Satuq Bughra Khan's tazkira, is said to form the eastern border of his kingdom.)² According to legend Sayid Ali Arslan Khan prayed here for the success of his arms before the fight with Jukta Rashid and Nukta Rashid. On the top of the ridge there is another mazar, Nishanim-mazar, called by Stein Mugh-nishan-mazar. Both names are used. From Nishanim-mazar one has a wide view to the south, with quite a number of shrines, the greatest and most important of which is Hazrat-i-Begim. This shrine can boast of a very big collection of rods and *tugh*, which indicates that it is a much frequented pilgrimage place. There are also rest houses and a *madrassa* with the same number of pupils as in Ordam-padishah.

Sven Hedin and Aurel Stein have assumed that this system may have some connection with an older settlement, as what the people in Eastern Turkistan call *kohna-shahar* »old town«. Thus we may imagine a pre-Mohammedan site here among the sand-dunes, and we may even think the present Mohammedan legend has some connection with an earlier Buddhistic legend. We find parallels in the shrines further east, which have previously been partly examined by Stein. We have, however, too scanty material for drawing any definite conclusions. It is to be hoped that travellers in a near future will bring more material to light.

¹ This *altun-dash* is compounded of *altun* »gold, golden« and *dash*, which word may be the Persian *tas* »basin«, found in Eastern Turki as *das* (Raquette, G., English-Turki dictionary, 1927, p. 9).

² Cf. Shaw, A sketch of the Túrki language, I: XIX.

TURKESTANSKA HELGONGRAVAR AV ORDAM-PADISHAH-SYSTEMET.

I sydvästra Östturkestan mellan städerna Kashgar och Jengi-Hissar ligger mitt ute i öknen ett stort antal helgongravar, som alla stå i förbindelse med samma legend och som åtnjuta stort anseende bland Östturkestans muhammedaner såsom den viktigaste vallfartsorten inom landet. Den största helgongraven är Ordam-padishah. Här blev legendens hjälte, Sayid Ali Arslan Khan, dödad under striden med de otrogna från Khotan längre österut i landet. Till åminnelse av denna händelse och islams slutliga seger i Östturkestan draga nu östturkar i tiotusental ut till dessa gravar i öknen medförande stänger och flaggor eller tygtrasor vilka hängas upp på de heliga platserna. De stora anhopningar av flaggprydda stänger som finnas vid de olika gravarna framgår av de till denna artikel fogade bilderna. Tygtrasorna tjäna det ändamålet att skrämma bort de onda andar, som alltid finnas vid gravarna.

Vid Ordam-padishah och en annan grav i detta system, Hazrat-i-Begim, finns dessutom muhammedanska högskolor, där ett antal elever utbildas för religiösa värv. Varje grav har dessutom sin shejk, föreståndare, som har till uppgift att vårda den och bevara traditionen, så som den finns i den skrift, som behandlar de heliga händelserna.
