

KP
JB 24

The Identifications of some of Ptolemy's Place-Names in the Golden Khersonese

by W. LINEHAN
(Received February 1951)

Ptolemy, an Alexandrine Greek, wrote his *Geographike Uphegesis* or Guide to Geography,¹ in the Greek language, about 150 A.D.

Ptolemy's Book VII deals with the Golden Khersonese. His Books II to VII contain his systematic tabular location of places and features in terms of latitude and longitude for all countries. The arrangement of the subject-matter in tabular form, instead of being at once embodied in a map, suggests that Ptolemy's object was to enable the student to construct maps for himself. Nevertheless, the work was from the time of its first publication accompanied by maps, which are regularly referred to in Book VIII. How far the maps which are appended to the extant MSS. represent the original series is a moot point. It is possible, however, that they have been transmitted by uninterrupted tradition from the time of Ptolemy.

The following three quotations are from Braddell:

"Ptolemy's work from the 2nd to the 16th centuries A.D. was constantly consulted and often added to or corrected by those who used it or adapted it to their personal experiences. Actually of the existing MSS. only one is as old as the 11th century while one other belongs to the 13th and the rest are later. Of the maps in existence the oldest seems to date from 1401 A.D. and not one is from any of Ptolemy's....."²

There are four methods used in the attempts to reconstruct Ptolemy's maps, (a) the purely geographical or mathematical, (b) the etymological, (c) the historical and archaeological, and (d) a mixture or combination of the previous three. "The first method can never be conclusive.....the second..... can, again, never be conclusive; the third fails because of the paucity of material; but the fourth, if followed wisely, does provide a path to solution."³

The "maps and MSS. of Ptolemy which remain to us all date many centuries later than the original work and there exists the margin of error caused by faulty copying or by deliberate changes. Accordingly it is useless

-
- (1) The published works or papers on the subject of Ptolemy's geography available to the present writer are: G. E. Gerini, *Researches on Ptolemy's Geography of Eastern Asia*, 1909; L. Renou, *La Geographie de Ptolemee—L'Inde* (VII, 1-4), 1925; A. Berthelot, *L'Asie Ancienne Centrale et Sud-Orientale d'apres Ptolemee*, 1930; Roland Braddell, *Ancient Times*, JMBRAS.: XIV, pt. 3, 1936, pp. 10-71; XV, pt. 1, 1937, pp. 25-31; XV, pt. 3, 1937, pp. 64-126; XVII, pt. 1, 1939, pp. 146-212; XIX, pt. 1, 1941, pp. 21-74; XX, pt. 1, 1947, pp. 161-186; and pt. 2, pp. 1-19; XXII, pt. 1, 1949, pp. 1-24. Dato F. W. Douglas's privately printed *Notes on the Historical Geography of Malaya* have also been available.
 - (2) XIV, pt. 3, 1936, p. 13.
 - (3) *Loc. cit.*, p. 14.

KJ
JB 24

Journal Malayan Branch [Vol. XXIV, Pt. III,

815775

M
911.5951

17 AUG 1995
Perpustakaan Negara
Malaysia

LIN

**Table showing the identifications by various writers of some
of Ptolemy's Place-Names in the Golden Khersonese.**

Name	Gerini	Berthelot	Braddell	Douglas	Present writer
Takola	Takuapa	Trang.	Trang.	Trang.	—
Khrysoanas	Lungu River or Trang River?	The Perak River.	The Bernam.	Mouth of the Bruas and Jarum Mas Rivers.	The Bernam and the Perak.
Konkonagara	Korbie, a mart or bay on the Malay Peninsula opposite Junkceylon.	On the Perak River, perhaps at Kuala Kangsar	Along the Bernam in the slab-grave region.	Mouths of the Muda and Merbok Rivers. Kedah.	In the present District of Kinta or of Batang Padang (which latter includes the Bernam area).
Tharra	Trengganu.	Possibly in the upper basin of the Pahang.	Impossible to suggest a locality for such a place.	The Krian swamp area in the region of which is Selinsing.	Bukit Treh, estuary of the Muar river, Johore.
Sabara	Selangor district?	Sabara was later replaced by Malacca.	There is no evidence upon which Sabara can be located.	The southern tip of the Malay Peninsula, on the west.	Klang.
Palandas	Pahang River? If not either the Klang or Langat River.	Western entrance of the channel of Singapore, in effect the mouth of the Johore river.	The Johore.	Either the Muar or the Linggi.	The Johore.
Palanda	Pahang; if not, Perak or Klang.	The Johore at ? Kota Tinggi.	Kota Tinggi, Johore.	Klang.	Kota Tinggi, Johore river.
Meleoukolon	Tanjong Gelang—a cape on the eastern coast of Malay Peninsula.	Tanjong Penyabong.	Tanjong Penyabong.	Tanjong Tengarok (East Coast).	—
Attabas	The Trengganu river or the Lebir River, Kelantan.	The Pahang.	The Pahang.	The Bebar River or the Pahang River.	The river systems debouching to-day in the estuaries of the Kuantan, the "old Pahang" (<i>Pahang Tua</i>) and at Kuala Pahang.
Kalonka	C'hump 'hon (the eastern terminus of the overland route across the Isthmus of Kra).	Valley of the Menam- louang.	Cannot be fixed in any particular place.	The Pulai area of Kelantap.	—
Kole	Kelantan district.	Tanjong Penunjok?	Might be at the mouth of the Kemaman where Chukai is to-day.	The Kuantan river (Pahang), or the Kemaman river (Trengganu).	Somewhere north of the Kuantan
Perimoula	Ligor.	Delta of Kelantan.	Mouth of the Kelantan or of Trengganu.	Besut river (Trengganu), or the Great Redang Island.	—
Perimoulikos Gulf	—	Beginning at the lagoon of Tale Sap.	Beginning at the Bay of Patani.	—	—

to attempt a purely mathematical approach to his longitudes and latitudes. The only method is to accept the general indications and to endeavour, as Berthelot does, to work back to the information received by Ptolemy, and then to check results, where possible, with archaeological and historical facts."⁴

G. Coedès⁵ considers that results based upon mathematical calculations are very deceptive and that only philology has been successful hitherto in obtaining satisfactory identifications of Ptolemy's place-names.

The identifications of Ptolemy's toponyms here attempted will be based largely upon archaeological, historical and etymological indications. For questions of latitude and longitude, reference may be made to Braddell.

Let us start by tabulating the names and descriptions of the places in the Golden Khersonese, as given in Renou's reconstituted text of Ptolemy (Book VII, 1-4). It will be seen that there are three separate references (pp. 45-6, 50-51 and 58).

Name	Description	Long	Lat
(pp.45—46)			
<i>Takola</i> . Variants, <i>Takala</i> , <i>Ta Kola</i> , <i>Takola</i> ,	Emporium	160° 30'	4° 15'
<i>The promontory situated after this</i> ,	—	158° 20'	2° 20'
<i>The Kbyroanas</i> . Variants, <i>Chyrsonae</i> , <i>Crisoanas</i> , <i>Chrisoanas</i>	Mouths (var., mouth) of the river	159°	1°
<i>Sabara</i> . Variants, <i>Sara</i> , <i>Sabala</i> , or <i>Sabana</i> ,	Emporium	160°	3° S.
<i>The Palandas</i> [? <i>palandos</i>] Variants, <i>Palanda</i> , or <i>Talanda</i>	Mouths (var., mouth) of the river	160° 30'	2° S.
<i>Meleoukolon</i> , Variants, <i>Meleoukolon</i> , <i>Malleou kolon</i> , <i>Malaïou k.</i> , <i>Maleou k.</i> , <i>Maleou kolan</i> , <i>Malei</i> (<i>Colonia</i>)	Cape	163°	2° S.
<i>Attabas</i> . Variants, <i>Attabe</i> , <i>Ataba</i> .	Mouths (var., mouth) of the river	164°	1° S.
<i>Kole</i> (<i>polis</i>), <i>Koli</i> , <i>Kolipolis</i> , <i>Calipolis</i> , <i>Cilop-Colip</i> , <i>Coli oppidum</i> , <i>C. civitas</i>	Town	164° 20'	Equator
<i>Perimoula</i> , Variant, <i>Perimmula</i>	—	163° 15'	2° 20'
<i>Perimoulikos Kolpos</i> . Variants, <i>Perimoulos</i> , <i>Perimulitus</i> (<i>sinus</i>)	Gulf	162° 30'	4°
(p.58)			
<i>Kalonka</i> . Variants, <i>Balonka</i> , <i>Bol-</i> , <i>Baloncha</i> , <i>Balonca</i> , <i>Balonga</i>	—	162°	1° 20'

(4) XXII, pt. 1, 1949, p. 6.

(5) *Etats Hindouises*, 1948, pp. 39-40, footnote 5.

<i>Konkonagara</i> Variants, <i>Kokonagara, Kokko-, Kako- Coaco-, Cacconagara, Coco-, Cocconagora, Cocconagara</i>	—	160°	2°
<i>Tbarra</i> Variants, <i>Tbrea,</i> <i>Tarra, Barra</i>	—	163° 15'	1° 20' N.
<i>Palanda</i> Variant, <i>Malanda</i>	—	163° 15'	1° 20' S.

(pp.50—51)

Ptolemy here says: "The rivers that flow through the Golden Khersonese after having been first joined with one another come from nameless crests which dominate the Khersonese. That which flows into the Khersonese breaks off first (to form)

the Attabas⁶ at 161° 30' E. long., 3° N. lat.

and

the Khrysoanas⁷ at 161° E. long., 1.20° N. lat.

the rest becomes the Palandas⁸."

Let us now set forth in tabular form the identifications by Gerini, Berthelot, Braddell and Douglas and, to anticipate conclusions, that of the present writer.

TAKOLA. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri⁹ and Quaritch Wales¹⁰ accept Braddell's view that this place was Trang. One point, however, may be mentioned in passing (it may have been mentioned in other writings) : in a *Directory for the Navigation of the Indian Archipelago, China and Japan* (2nd ed., London, 1878, p. 119), one of the little islands in the sea-channel leading to the estuary of the Klang is called *Pulo Tekolo*. To-day, in the maps issued by the Survey Department, it is called P. Tekukur (*Dove Island*).

KHRYSOANAS, One of the three rivers of the Golden Khersonese (the others being the *Palandas* and the *Attabas*) mentioned by Ptolemy and represented on versions of his maps as flowing west from the main mountain range of the Golden Khersonese and debouching on the west coast. Gerini would identify the Khrysoanas with the Lungu river or the Trang river; Berthelot prefers the Perak river; Braddell¹¹ favours the Bernam; Douglas would put the place at the mouths of the Bruas and Jarum Mas rivers.

(6) Variants: *Atan, Attan, Atton, Attam* (? accusatives of *Atas, Attas, Attos, Atta(s)*), *Atabas, Atjabam* (? accusative of *Attaba(s)*).

(7) Variants: *Kbrysoannan, Kbrysoan, Cbrysonam, Crysoam; Chbrisoiam, Chrysoam, Cbrysoanum* (? accusatives of *Kbrysoannas, Kbrysoas, Chrysona(s), Crysoa(s), Chbrisoia(s), Chrysoa(s), Cbrysoanus*).

(8) Variant: *Paladas*.

(9) *Takuapa and its Tamil Inscription*, JMBRAS., XXII, pt. 1, 1949, pp. 25-30.

(10) *A Note on Takola, Langkasuka and Kataba* JMBRAS., XXIII, pt. 1, 1950, pp. 152-153.

(11) JMBRAS., XVII, pt. 1, 1939, pp. 147-9.

It appears not unlikely that the Khrysoanas was the Perak-Bernam river systems which, about 2000 years ago, may* in their lower reaches have united into one waterway before debouching into the sea. In their lower reaches, to-day, the rivers at one point approach within six miles of each other, and the intervening country is low-lying. It is necessary of course to bear in mind that, as Braddell has pointed out, the configuration of the coast-line must have altered considerably since Ptolemy's time.

Braddell has adverted to the existence of the Bernam-Pahang route as bearing upon the question of the identification of the Khrysoanas. An account of the Perak-Pahang land-river routes in modern times is given by W. Cameron,¹² F. A. Swettenham¹³ and H. D. Noone.¹⁴ In an unpublished memorandum, dated 1928, the late Sir Hugh Clifford (then Governor of the Straits Settlements and High Commissioner for the Malay States) wrote, "There is a natural rock-shelter, known to the Malays as Sapor Batu (the stone lean-to shed) situated on the banks of the Bersih river, a left affluent of the Slim, and distant about six miles from Kuala Chin Lama—which forty years ago was the usual *ka-naik*, or starting point, on the Perak side of the main range, for wayfarers crossing from the watershed of the Bernam to that of the Lipis.

"I spent the night of February 2nd, 1887, under this rock-shelter, and noted that the route which I was then following, in company with the Ungku Muda of Pahang, was probably one of the most ancient aboriginal highways across the main range, which at this point is very easy to traverse. At the summit of the range, or rather of the comparatively speaking low pass by means of which the range is crossed which bears the name of Changkat Perangin, there is a large boulder named Batu Gajah,¹⁵ which is

(12) *Exploration of Pahang*, JSBRAS., No. 15, 1885, pp. 155-157. And v., W. G. Maxwell, *Cameron Highlands*, JMBRAS., IV, 1926, pp. 122-128.

(13) *Journal kept during a Journey across the Malay Peninsula*, JSBRAS., No. 11 1885, p. 1 seq.

(14) *The Penarikan and Bernam Land Routes*, JMBRAS., XVII, pt. 1, 1939, pp. 144-145.

(15) V. the note by Mr. H. A. L. Luckham, JMBRAS., XXIII, p. 1, 1950, p. 139, on the origin of the name of the locality in Kinta District called *Batu Gajah*. Both Clifford's and Luckham's accounts associate the rocks with the *kělēmbai*. The *Batu Gajah* of Kinta lay on or near the northerly route between Perak and Pahang, that of Sapor Batu lay on the southerly route. These legends about the *Batu Gajah* may well have originated in stories about the people who sculptured the *Batoe Gadjab* of Sumatra. R. J. Wilkinson, *Malay Dictionary*, s.v., *kělēmbai*, gives the Perak and Pahang meaning of the word as, "a giant or race of giants who overran the country turning all the people into stone." We may well associate the legends about the *Kělēmbai* with the people who introduced the megalithic culture into Malaya.

supposed to be a petrified elephant—probably one of the innumerable objects turned to stone by being addressed by the Malayan Prometheus, Sang Kelembai—which in those days was greatly revered by the natives of the Lipis valley. Every wayfarer passing this boulder used to pluck a handful of twigs from a neighbouring bush, strike the stone with it, and then each of the limbs and finally his body, hitting the rock between each blow dealt to himself. This done, the handful of twigs was thrown down upon a great heap of similar offerings which was popularly supposed to constitute the food of the petrified elephant.

“If this route is, as seems probable, a very ancient aboriginal highway across the mountains, it is possible that the natural rock-shelter, which is of unusual size and convenience, may also have been occupied by human beings from a very early period, and that excavation there may yield interesting results.”

Mr. I. H. N. Evans, who carried out some archaeological investigations at Sapor Batu, found nothing except a few fragments of comparatively modern Chinese porcelain quite near the surface of the ground.

Clifford refers to the same route that Swettenham had followed in 1885. This route led from the Bernam through the Bersih, and after crossing the divide, followed the Lipis river through Raub District to Kuala Lipis, the junction of the Lipis and the Jelai. At Kuala Lipis it joined the more northerly route from the valley of the Kinta, Perak, which led over or near the present Cameron Highlands, into the Telom or the Bertam and thence into the Jelai.

It was the latter route which Cameron followed. For the mountainous parts he employed elephants. Proceeding up the Sungai Raia, he crossed from Perak into Pahang at the source of the Kinta and the Penoh rivers (which flow into Perak) and the Telom (which flows into Pahang) in the region of the present Cameron Highlands. From Cameron Highlands he descended, by the Telom, into the Jelai. There was however, a shorter and easier way by which he could have reached the Jelai. This was by the Bertam which met the Telom in its lower reaches, both combining for a short distance before they poured their waters into the Jelai.

The variation of Cameron's route was used, in 1929, by Chinese illicit miners of tin in the Lower Telom to transport tin, by means of aboriginal labour, from the Lower Telom, *via* the Bertam, through the Cameron Highlands plateau into Chinese mines in the locality of Gopeng, Kinta District, Perak. The present writer

has travelled over the whole of the Pahang part of this route (which led through the valley of Misong, a name reminiscent of *Mi-sün* in Champa), and (earlier) over part of the route on the Gopeng (Perak) side. The parts of the route of which I have had experience did not present any great difficulties.

There were then in late historical times two routes linking Perak and north Pahang. The more northerly route was by the watershed of the Kinta, *via*, very roughly the present Cameron Highlands, into the Jelai, Ulu Pahang. The other, a much shorter route, led from the Bernam, south Perak, into the headwaters of the Lipis in Pahang. On the Pahang side, both these routes converged at Kuala Lipis, the junction of the Lipis and the Jelai. The combined Lipis and Jelai rivers, still called the Jelai, joined the greater volume of water, the *Tëmbëling*, to form the Pahang.

The existence of these land-river routes between north Pahang and Perak in late historical times is established. What evidence have we that such routes existed in Ptolemy's time? The evidence is: (a) These routes provided access to places such as *Tërsang*, Raub District, and the old *Sëlingsing* (Pahang) mines where we know that gold was worked in ancient times. (b) The routes provided access to well-nigh all the places in Pahang and Perak where have been found remains such as the *Tëmbëling* bronze-age drum, bronze fragments, iron-age implements and slab-graves which may be regarded as contemporaneous with Ptolemy.¹⁶ (c) The traditions about the *batu gajah*, assignable to the Malayan megalithic period, which lay astride these routes.

The mouth or mouths of the Perak-Bernam river system (the point where the Perak-Pahang land-river routes converged on the west) as they were in Ptolemy's day, may then be regarded as a reasonable identification of his *Khrysoanas*.

KONKONAGARA. An inland town. Gerini thought the place to be at Korbie opposite Junk Ceylon; Berthelot placed it on the Perak river towards Kuala Kangsar; Braddell would locate it along the Bernam in the slab-grave area; Douglas favours the region of the mouths of the Muda and Merbok rivers, Kedah. Braddell considers *Konkonagara* to be a definitely Indian name. However, there is the possibility that the word is hybrid, and derived perhaps from the Malay *kolong-kolong*, colloquially, *këkolong*, "mine-workings", and the Sanskrit *negara*. The word

(16) There is, however, one defective link in the chain of our knowledge (and this had been sensed by Clifford): no archaeological objects of any sort have yet been recorded from the mountainous parts of the routes.

would then mean "the country of the mines". Konkonagara may have been located in the District of Kinta or of Batang Padang (which includes the Bernam area); *v.* the discussion *supra* about the Perak-Pahang land-river routes.

THARRA. A town. Berthelot remarks that the manuscripts give no less than ten different versions (three for longitude) which would perhaps indicate that Tharra was notorious and that each of the possessors of a manuscript corrected it according to his own notion. He conjectures that Tharra was in the upper basin of the Pahang. Gerini suggested Trëngganu; Braddell cannot suggest an identification; Douglas favours the Krian swamp area near which is the (Perak) Sëlingsing (the site of discoveries described by Evans).¹⁷

Near the estuary of the Muar¹⁸ river, just above the present town,¹⁹ is situated a small hill called *Bukit Treh*²⁰ where an object, or objects, of gold were found under circumstances which are recorded in a rather conflicting fashion. Braddell²¹ wrote in 1935,

(17) *Excavations at Tanjong Rawa, Kuala Sëlingsing, Perak*, JFMSM., XV, pt. 3, 1932, pp. 79-134.

(18) Derived from the Sundanese *muara*, a river-mouth.

(19) Called *Bandar Maharani*, a name given to it, about the year 1884, by the late Sultan of Johore.

(20) Variants, *Trek*, *Tëreb*, *Tre* and *Tëre*. The word *treb* may be a form of the Malay *tëra* which means royal seal, stamp, impression or mint-mark. It is probable that the word *tëra* is derived from a word *tamra* which is used in the 14th century inscription of Trengganu (H. S. Peterson, *An early Malay Inscription from Trengganu*, and C. O. Blagden, *A Note on the Trengganu Inscription*, JMBRAS., II, 1924, pp. 252-263). Blagden (p. 262) writes, "*tamra* which evidently denotes the record itself (and in this particular case could have been rendered "edict") is probably an abbreviation of the Sanskrit *tamrasasana*, "an edict, etc., inscribed on copper," which was the usual Indian way, alternatively with stone. I imagine that the long association of the word with royal edicts, grants, etc., coupled with ignorance of its true etymological meaning, led to its abbreviation and to its use to describe this stone record." Coedes, *Le Royaume de Crivijaya*, BEFEO., XVIII, No. 6, 1918, discussing (pp. 15-18) the identification of the country *Ma-dama-lingam* and of regions with names which he considered cognate to it, mentions an inscription, in incorrect Sanskrit, engraved on a pillar originating from Jaiya and dated 1230 A.D. The inscription bears a proclamation from a personage styled Sri Dharmaraja who is described as "Lord of Tambralinga" (*Tambralingecvarab*). Coedes goes on to say that *tambra* is a Prakritic form of *tamra*, "copper", still used in Singhalese; and that, taking *linga* as meaning "mark, character", *Tamralinga* would mean, "(the country) which has as its characteristic copper."

Tamra, in Malay, appears to have developed in meaning from "copper" to "an inscription, edict or record (in copper or stone)", and, in its form *tëra*, to "seal, stamp, impression, or mint-mark." The relationship of the words *treb*, *tamra* and *tëra*, as here indicated, accords well with the find of an object of gold bearing an inscription on the hill Bukit Treh.

(21) *Ancient Times*, JMBRAS., XIII, pt. 2, 1935, p. 71.

"Only recently while waterworks were being constructed at Bukit Trek near Muar in Johore, an inscribed sheet of gold was found by a coolie and taken by him to an Indian goldsmith to melt down before news of the discovery reached the European officer in charge of the work."

The result of enquiries by the present writer (Assist. Adviser, Muar, 1935-1936) is recorded as follows:²² "...there are the discoveries, from time to time, of gold objects on, or in the vicinity of Bukit Treh, a hill at the estuary of the river Muar in Johore. I had the opportunity recently of questioning the finder of one of the objects dug up in the year 1916 when the ground was being excavated for the laying of water-pipes. He described this discovery as being a thinnish piece of hammered gold, in which was inscribed, what he and his friends thought were letters in Arabic script.²³ According to the finder, he pocketed the find but it fell out of his pocket and was lost. In fact, there is little doubt but that he sold it to a gold-smith for its bullion value. And thus was lost what may have been a link, though a small one, in the chain of Malaya's history".

The name of the hill at the estuary of the Muar, the fact that the estuary was the terminus of a famous trade-route (known to the Malays and the Portuguese as *Pēnarekan*, "the Portage") which in historical times, and perhaps even in protohistorical times, ran from Pahang to the west coast,²⁴ and the find or finds above described (even though there is no *proof* that they were of any considerable antiquity) provide reasonable grounds for believing that Ptolemy's Tharra was situated at Bukit Treh.²⁵

(22) Linehan, *The Protection and Preservation of Antiquities in the Malay States*, Proc., 3rd Congress Prehist., F.E., pp. 17-18.

(23) If there were a writing in "Arabic" script, and if the object dated back to the first or second centuries A.D., there is the possibility that the script was Nabataean from which the Arabic alphabet was derived. The implications of such a possibility are indicated by the fact that Petra, the capital of the Nabataeans, was the centre of a trade route which led across the desert to the Persian Gulf from which trade was carried on with the East.

(24) V. Braddell, *JMBRAS.*, XIV, pt. 3, 1936, pp. 30-32 (he later changed his view that the Khrysoanas was the Muar); and Linehan, *The Prince of Chini*, *JMBRAS.*, XX, pt. 2, 1947, p. 130.

The region of Malacca, before the town of that name was founded towards the end of the 14th century, according to the *Ying-yai Sheng-Lan* (Groeneveldt, *Notes*, 2nd Series, Vol. 1, p. 243) was known as the Five Islands where trade must have been carried on between east and west. The island from which the region got its name lie just off the estuary of the Muar. The possibility that in Ptolemy's time, Bukit Treh was an island must not be ruled out of consideration.

(25) At the foot of the hill is a cave which merits investigation.