

ceeded in safely identifying all the sacred Buddhist sites which Hsüan-tsang, my Chinese pilgrim guide, had visited and described within the Khotan oasis. On ground continuously cultivated and irrigated for centuries nothing of structures built with sun-dried bricks could of course survive except low shapeless mounds at the best. But there were still traditions which indicated survival of ancient local worship at places where Buddhist sanctuaries had been replaced by Ziarats, or tombs of supposed Muhammadan saints.

The site of the ancient capital of Khotan could indeed be definitely located at the little village of Yotkan, about half-way between the two rivers and some seven miles to the west of the present chief place of the district. The digging carried on there for some thirty-five years by 'treasure-seeking' villagers had revealed a 'culture stratum' of completely decayed matter buried under a very deep layer of alluvium. Curiously enough this has been dug and washed mainly for the flakes of gold leaf which at one time were rather plentifully obtained from it. These were the relics of the rich gilding which, according to the testimony of an early Chinese pilgrim, had covered not only images but many parts of Buddhist religious structures at the capital. In recent years antiques such as ornamented fragments of pottery, terracotta figurines, chiefly of monkeys, engraved stones and coins had come to be counted as a kind of secondary by-products of a saleable kind (Fig. 26).

Interesting as it was to collect such small remains and to survey the strangely revealed site which they indicated, yet I felt glad when, after careful completion of all arrangements for supplies and transport, I was free to start by