

where old Hsüan-tsang heard it located, on the caravan track leading to Khotan from the west.

Still more curious, perhaps, was my later discovery that one of those painted tablets represents the Chinese princess who, according to a story also recorded by Hsüan-tsang, was believed to have first introduced sericulture at Khotan. There it was in the pilgrim's time a flourishing industry just as it still is at present. The princess was supposed to have brought hidden in her head-dress the first silkworm seeds from China, which jealously prohibited their export. For this pious fraud the clever lady was subsequently deified in her adopted country, and a famous shrine which the pilgrim visited near the capital was dedicated to her memory.

The painted panel I have referred to remained very puzzling for a long time (Fig. 31). It shows seated in the centre a richly dressed lady with a high diadem on her head and girls kneeling on both sides of her. At one end of the oblong panel is seen a basket filled with what might be taken for fruits, at the other a much-effaced object difficult at first to interpret. The puzzle was solved when I recognized the meaning of the gesture by which the attendant figure on the left with her raised left hand points to the diadem of the lady. It was under this diadem that the princess had smuggled the silkworm seeds out of China. In the basket at one end of the panel are represented the cocoons produced from them, while the object at the other end reveals itself as a loom for weaving the silk spun from the cocoons.

Among the dozen or so of ruined structures which I could trace and carefully clear, several proved to have belonged to small Buddhist monastic establishments. In the sand filling their lowest apartments, which were all that survived,