

from the heart of Imam Shakir Padshah, who died here in battle with the infidel, *i.e.*, the Buddhists of Khotan. The youthful son of one of the Sheikhs attached to the shrine was alone present to tell me the story. Many thousands had fallen on both sides, and it was impossible to separate the bodies of the faithful 'Shahids' from those of the 'Kafirs.' Then at the prayer of one of the surviving Musulmans the bodies of those who had found martyrdom were miraculously collected on one side, and the doves came forth to mark the remains of the fallen leader. From gratitude, all travellers on the road offer food to the holy birds. I too bought some bags of Indian corn from the store of the shrine, and scattered their contents to the fluttering swarms.

While watching the pretty spectacle I could not help being reminded of what Hiuen-Tsiang tells us of a local cult curiously similar at the western border of Khotan territory. Some thirty miles before reaching the capital, "in the midst of the straight road passing through a great sandy desert," the pilgrim describes "a succession of small hills," which were supposed to be formed by the burrowing of rats. These rats were worshipped with offerings by all the wayfarers, owing to the belief that in ancient times they had saved the land from a great force of Hiung-nu, or Huns, who were ravaging the border. The Khotan king had despaired of defending his country, when in answer to his prayer myriads of rats led by a rat-king destroyed over-night all the leather of the harness and armour of the invading host, which then fell an easy prey to the defenders.

"The rats as big as hedgehogs, their hair of a gold and silver colour," of which Hiuen-Tsiang was told as inhabiting this desert, are no longer to be seen even by the eyes of the pious. But the locality he describes corresponds exactly to the position of the 'Kaptar-Mazar' relative to ancient Khotan, amidst dunes and low conical sandhills covered with tamarisk bushes, while the manner in which the