

now occupies the crest of the conglomerate cliff rising almost perpendicularly above the right river-bank, has inherited the religious merit of the old Buddhist shrine. It forms a favourite place of pilgrimage for the faithful of Khotan, who believe that the intercession of the saint is most efficacious when the low state of the rivers makes the cultivators fear a failure of their crops. On this account official recognition, in the form of a liberal offering from Amban Pan-Darin, was said to have recently been accorded to the shrine.

The cave which the Chinese pilgrim saw still exists in the side of the cliff some fifty feet below the crest. It is approached along a ledge of rock which contains the semi-troglodyte dwelling of the Sheikhs attending the Mazar. The cave itself, which is about 40 feet deep and from 8 to 10 feet high, is believed to have been the refuge of the saint whom the infidels killed here with smoke. Thus the legend accounts for the black soot that covers the rock walls. Pious pilgrims are wont to sit and pray in the cave, and the fires they light to keep themselves warm in winter time have naturally left their traces on the rock. A small upper chamber, approached from below by a ladder, shows above a narrow fissure running into the rock. The legend heard by the Chinese pilgrim represented this fissure as a passage which had been miraculously blocked by fallen rocks to hide the Arhat.

Apart from its association with Hiuen-Tsiang's visit, the Kohmari cave possessed for me a special interest. From it the fragmentary birch-bark leaves of the ancient Indian manuscript in Kharoshthi characters, now known as the Dutreuil de Rhins MS., were alleged to have been obtained. M. Grenard's account shows that the leaves were delivered to him and his companion on two successive visits to Kohmari by natives who professed to have found them with other remains inside the grotto. But it is equally clear that neither of them was present on the occasion or was shown the exact spot of discovery. The men who sold those precious leaves to the