

Muztāgh-
Ata Peak
suggesting
a Stūpa.

Whatever opinion may be held on this point, it is certain that the remarkable shape of the huge dome of ice rising above all other mountains must have vividly suggested to Buddhist eyes the idea of a gigantic Stūpa. This striking form, which even more than its height distinguishes Muztāgh-Ata from all ice-crowned peaks of the Pāmirs, is illustrated by the photographs I took of its west and north faces from the Shamālda ridge (Fig. 11) and Lake Little Kara-kul (Fig. 12). But it is even more notable when this mighty mountain mass is seen from a greater distance, as when I first sighted its glittering dome on my way to Tāsh-kurghān, some fifty miles away as the crow flies¹⁸. It is to be hoped that a telephotographic view taken by some future traveller may yet do full justice to this aspect of the 'Father of ice-mountains'.

The worship of natural objects bearing resemblance to the traditional form of Stūpas came as readily to Buddhists as that of *svayambhū* or 'self-created' images to Hindus of all periods¹⁹. In the latter case it may be noted that the origin of the peculiarly shaped rocks, peaks, &c. thus worshipped, is invariably traced back to some miraculous event or similar extraordinary occasion. It seems probable that we have to interpret in this sense the feature of the Buddhist legend, which connected the creation of 'a Stūpa of a wonderful and mysterious character' with the miracle witnessed by an ancient king.

¹⁸ See *Ruins of Khotan*, pp. 68 sq.

¹⁹ Compare, regarding the worship of 'Svayambhū' images, &c., in Kashmīr, my note on *Rājat.* ii. 136; for other

references see the index of my *Rājat.* translation, s. v. *svayambhū*.