

Date of supposed Indian immigration.

It is impossible in the present state of our knowledge to hazard any suggestion as to the probable date of this assumed settlement from the extreme north-west of India. But it deserves attention that both Hsüan-tsang and the Tibetan 'Annals of Li-yul' agree in making this event take place before the introduction of Buddhism into Khotan. The Tibetan text places the latter, with a semblance of accuracy which we have no means to control, in the reign of King Vijayasambhava, 170 years after the establishment of the kingdom²². Hsüan-tsang relates substantially the same legend about the Arhat Vairocana, who was believed to have first preached the Law in Khotan, and about the oldest Buddhist convent established by him, but does not specify 'the former king' whom the saint converted²³. On the other hand, we owe to him the explicit and significant statement that the Arhat came from Kashmir. We shall see hereafter how much in the local traditions of Khotan and in archaeological evidence also suggests the special dependence of Khotan on Kashmir in the matter of Buddhism and other importations from India.

Indian elements in Khotan preceding Buddhism.

Without anticipating conclusions which will have yet to be established, it is impossible here to indicate the many interesting archaeological facts which become more easily explicable if we assume that the population of Khotan had already, before the introduction of Buddhism, undergone the infusion of a strong Indian element and the cultural influences accompanying it. The history of India during the centuries which could have witnessed such a migration across the Karakorum or Hindukush is too obscure for us to expect there any trace of such an event. But if we can trust Hsüan-tsang, popular tradition must be believed to have long retained some vague recollection of it in the very region from which these Indian settlers were believed to have come.

Local legend of Taxila.

In his account of Takṣaśilā or Taxila the pilgrim relates at length the legend of Prince Kuṇāla, Aśoka's eldest son, who while governing that frontier province was believed to have been deprived of his eyesight through the intrigue of a wicked step-mother²⁴. A Stūpa, still traceable near Shāh-ke-Dhērī, the site of ancient Takṣaśilā, was shown to Hsüan-tsang as marking the spot of this tragic event. When Aśoka had learned of his son's cruel fate, thus the story ran, he punished the guilty ministers and councillors by death or exile. Among the people who had been under Kuṇāla's charge, 'the most powerful were banished to a sandy desert, to the north-east of the snowy mountains²⁵.' It cannot be doubted that a reference to Khotan and its Indian colony is intended. The story of Kuṇāla's blinding can only be treated as folklore²⁶. But just as the belief of a son of Aśoka having governed at Takṣaśilā can be shown to have had a foundation of historical fact²⁷, so is it possible that the part of the legend relating to a forced emigration from that territory to Khotan also rested on some genuine tradition.

If such a local tradition really existed at Taxila independently of that surviving at Khotan, it would, no doubt, greatly strengthen the probability of the quasi-historical character of the latter. Unfortunately we cannot hope for decisive evidence on this point. We may give credit to Hsüan-tsang for having in his account of Taxila reproduced only traditions he had actually heard there and not having treated us to information anticipated as it were from

²² See Rockhill, *Life of the Buddha*, p. 237.

²³ Compare *Si-yu-ki*, transl. Beal, ii. p. 312, where the rendering 'a former king of the country' seems more appropriate than Julien's 'le premier roi de ce royaume', *Mémoires*, ii. p. 227.

²⁴ See *Mémoires*, i. pp. 154 sqq.; *Si-yu-ki*, i. pp. 139 sqq.

²⁵ See *Mémoires*, i. p. 161; *Si-yu-ki*, i. p. 143.

²⁶ See Mr. V. Smith's remarks in his *Asoka*, 'Rulers of India'

Series, p. 190 note. It deserves to be noted that the legend of Kuṇāla is related in much the same form by Buddhist Sanskrit texts preserved in Nepāl, the *Divyavadāna* and *Aśokavadāna*, which at least shows the antiquity of this piece of folklore; see Burnouf, *Introduction à l'histoire du Bouddhisme*, pp. 358, 400 sqq.

²⁷ Compare V. Smith, *Asoka*, p. 44.