

## CHAPTER VIII

### ANCIENT SITES OF THE KHOTAN OASIS

#### SECTION I.—THE HILL OF GOŚRĀGA

My archaeological inquiries and explorations in the Khotan region, the account of which may now be resumed, were in the first place directed towards the identification of those ancient sites within the oasis, of which some notice is to be found in the records discussed in the preceding chapter. All these sites, including that of the ancient capital, belong to the *topographia sacra* of Khotan, and consequently it is natural that Hsüan-tsang should prove our principal and most reliable guide for their location.

It was no small advantage that I was able to commence my survey of the sites described by the pilgrim from a point, the identity of which was from the first placed beyond all doubt by unmistakable natural features. M. Grenard had already recognized that Hsüan-tsang's Hill of Gośrāga, with its sacred cave and shrine, situated to the south-west of the capital, could be no other than the Kohmārī hill which rises above the Kara-kāsh river near the extreme south-west of the oasis, and in its conglomerate cliffs contains a small cave held sacred to this day as a Ziārat<sup>1</sup>. My surveying expedition into the Kun-lun range south of Khotan, for which I had been obliged to set out within a few days after my first arrival<sup>2</sup>, had by the 11th of November, 1900, brought me down to Ujat, where the valley of the Kara-kāsh debouches into the fertile plain of the oasis. I could not have desired a more appropriate place from which to start my archaeological survey of the oasis; and the fatigues resulting from the trying mountain journey just completed did not keep me from visiting on the next day the neighbouring hill of Kohmārī.

Hsüan-tsang's Memoirs tell us that 'to the south-west of the capital about twenty li or so is Mount Ch'ü-shih-ling-ch'ieh (or *Gośrāga*, meaning in Chinese "the cow's horn")<sup>3</sup>. This hill has two peaks, steeply scarped and very pointed. In the valley which separates them<sup>4</sup>, there has been built a convent; in this is placed a statue of Buddha which constantly spreads around a brilliant light. In ancient days Tathāgata came to this spot and delivered a concise digest of the Law for the benefit of the gods. He prophesied that in this country there would be founded a kingdom, and that its inhabitants would respect and honour his Law and zealously follow the doctrine of the Great Vehicle'.

<sup>1</sup> See Grenard, *Mission D. de Rhins*, iii. pp. 142 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> For an account of this expedition, rapid and difficult, but amply rewarded by geographical results, see *Ruins of Khotan*, pp. 206-43.

<sup>3</sup> See *Mémoires*, ii. pp. 229 sqq.; *Si-yu-ki*, transl. Beal, ii. p. 313. I follow Julien's version except where otherwise indicated.

The meaning of the Sanskrit Gośrāga is given in a note of the original by *niu-chio* 牛角; *niu* can mean both ox or cow. The latter translation is adopted in the name, in accordance with S. Lévi's rendering, see below, p. 186.

<sup>4</sup> I have reproduced above the translation given by Rémusat (*Ville de Khotan*, p. 43) which appears to come nearest to a description of the actual features of the locality meant. Julien translates 'Il est surmonté de deux pics, et, de quatre côtés, il est comme taillé à angles droits. Entre la vallée et les flancs de cette montagne, on a construit un couvent, &c.' Beal has: 'there are two peaks to this mountain, and around these peaks there are on each side a connected line of hills. In one of these valleys there has been built a *Saṅghārāma*, &c.' It would seem that the wording of the original text presents some ambiguity.

*Topogra-  
phia sacra of  
Khotan.*

*Hsüan-  
tsang's Mt.  
Gośrāga.*