

finds of worked objects in gold, in regard to which official control must be specially difficult. However this may be, there is material evidence of such finds in the fact that, on my later visit to Yōtkan in April, 1901, I succeeded in purchasing a tiny figure of solid gold of excellent workmanship, representing a monkey, that had been found during the previous year's washings. I have no doubt that any larger articles in gold are melted down speedily after discovery, in order to facilitate concealment and disposal.

Presence of
gold ac-
counted for.

Occasional finds of this kind cannot surprise us in the *débris* layers of a site which, during long centuries, was occupied by the capital of a flourishing kingdom rich through trade and mineral produce. On the other hand, it seems at first difficult to account for the prevalence of gold in that common form of leaf above described and over so large an area. Yet it is this alone which in reality constitutes the 'paying' basis of the Yōtkan diggings. The use of leaf-gold on an extensive scale in the decoration of Buddhist buildings and sacred objects offers, I think, the most likely explanation. From the detailed description which Fa-hsien has left us of the splendid Stūpa and temple he visited at what was then known as 'the King's New Monastery', a little to the west of the Khotan capital, it is certain that many parts of sacred buildings in ancient Khotan were richly overlaid with leaf-gold⁷. Apart from this distinct evidence of Fa-hsien, reproduced in the footnote, the example of Gandhāra remains, and the testimony of actual finds brought to light by my explorations lead us to conclude that the gilding of sacred images and other objects of worship must have been largely practised in Buddhist Khotan⁸. Whether applied to plaster or direct to the wood, which as we shall see, played so large a part in the construction of Khotan buildings, secular as well as religious, much of this leaf-gold must have fallen off and mingled with the dust, whenever the structures erected in such perishable materials as were known to old Khotan crumbled away or otherwise met with destruction. It is equally clear that the leaf-gold once lost in this way could not be recovered until the soil was washed by the method now followed.

Culture-
strata of
Yōtkan.

The examination of the stratum from which this gold is obtained proved very instructive. It varies considerably in thickness and depth at different points of the banks enclosing the excavated area, but is everywhere easily distinguished by its brownish colour and peculiar composition. It consists of decomposed rubbish and humus, in which are embedded fragments of ancient pottery, plain or ornamented, bones of animals, pieces of much decayed wood, ashes, and thin layers of charcoal—all indications that we have here the *débris* which accumulated on a site occupied by dwellings during long periods. Everywhere the excavations have been carried down until the natural loess soil was reached; hence the thickness of the upper stratum could be established without difficulty. Along the banks on the south and south-west, where

⁷ 'Seven or eight *le* to the west of the city there is what is called the king's New monastery, the building of which took eighty years, and extended over three reigns. It may be 250 cubits in height, rich in elegant carving and inlaid work, covered above with gold and silver, and finished throughout with a combination of all the precious substances. Behind the *tope* there has been built a Hall of Buddha, of the utmost magnificence and beauty, the beams, pillars, venetianed doors, and windows being all overlaid with leaf-gold. Besides this, the apartments for the monks are imposingly and elegantly decorated, beyond the power of words to express'; *Fa-hien's Travels*, transl. Legge, pp. 19 sq. The distance and bearing indicated make it highly probable that this great shrine must be identified with the So-mo-jê

convent of Hsüan-tsang and thus be located at the present village of *Somiya*, close to the west of Yōtkan; see below, sec. v. From the great height mentioned it is clear that the structure was of wood, like the famous Vaiśravaṇa temple in the capital itself.

⁸ For the numerous instances of gilding applied to Buddhist statuary as well as to Stūpas, comp. Foucher, *L'Art du Gandhāra*, pp. 82, 198 sqq. For traces of gilding in remains of Khotan sites, see below, chap. x. sec. i.; chap. xiv.

(It is curious that a passage of the *Rājatarāṅgīnī*, which mentions the gilt parasol placed over a Śiva temple in the time of Kalaśa (1063-89), ascribes instruction in 'the art of putting gold on copper' to an artist from the Turuṣka country, i.e. Turkeṣṭān; see my *Rājat.* vii. 528-531.)