

SECTION III.—UDYĀNA IN CHINESE RECORDS OF T'ANG TIMES

Hsüan-tsang's visit to Udyāna.

The expansion of Chinese political influence westwards which soon followed the accession of the T'ang dynasty early in the seventh century, is marked also by a considerable increase in the information which Chinese records have preserved about the 'Western Regions' and India. In the case of Udyāna, the advantage derived from this is mainly through the detailed account which Hsüan-tsang, the great 'monk of the T'ang period', has left of his visit to this territory about the year A.D. 630. Here, as elsewhere, in the vast area covered by his travels, there is reason to regret that the pious pilgrim's attention was so closely riveted upon matters of sacred tradition and doctrine to the exclusion of more worldly interests. Thus, for example, he fails to mention whether the kingdom of Wu-chang-na 烏杖那 was then one of the twelve dependent territories of the ruler of Chia-pi-shih or Kābul, or had a king of its own as a notice of the T'ang Annals seems to prove for A.D. 642.¹ As in Gandhāra, Hsüan-tsang found Buddhism here fallen low from its once flourishing condition described by the earlier pilgrims. Yet the traditional fame of the region was still great enough to induce him to give a general description of the country and people which presents distinct points of interest.

Description of Udyāna in *Hsi-yü-chi*.

Hsüan-tsang started for Udyāna northward from the city of Udabhāṇḍa or Und on the Indus and reached it after six marches across mountains and valleys.² He describes it as being more than 5,000 li in circumference, and comprising mountains and valleys, marshy plains and elevated plateaus, a description which correctly reflects the varied configuration of Swāt ground. The products of the soil, though varied, were not plentiful. There was abundance of grapes, but only little sugar-cane. The country produced gold, iron, and saffron;³ there was a vigorous growth of forest, and flowers and fruit-trees flourished. Cold and heat were moderate, with wind and rain at regular seasons. The people were of a soft and pusillanimous character, and by nature inclined to craft and deceit. They were fond of study, but did not pursue it with ardour. The science of magical formulae had become with them an art and a profession. They were chiefly dressed in white calico. Their spoken language, in spite of some differences, bore much resemblance to that of India. The same applied to their written characters and their manners.⁴

The people of Udyāna.

The description of the physical conditions here given is in close accord with the actual aspects of the country. What is said of the character of the people can be explained partly by the debilitating influence which extensive rice cultivation, as practised in Lower Swāt, is known to exercise upon Eastern races; an influence which the present Pathān settlers, too, relatively recent immigrants as they are, are believed to be undergoing. The reputation which Udyāna enjoyed as a home of magic is reflected in the legend which Sung Yün heard in Sarikol of a king who, in order to overcome a wicked dragon of that region, proceeded to Udyāna, and after having there studied the magical incantations of the Brahmans for four years, returned and successfully exorcized the Nāga.⁵ This practice of magical rites must have been closely bound up with the special prevalence of the Mahāyāna form of Buddhism in these parts. Hence Sir Henry Yule's just observation: 'The doctrines of Sakya, as they prevailed in Udyāna in old times, were probably strongly tinged

¹ See below. The way in which both the *Hsi-yü-chi* and the *Life* refer to Ta-li-lo as the former seat of the king of Udyāna seems to suggest that there was a local dynasty which had conquered Udyāna from that side.

² Cf. Julien, *Mémoires*, i. pp. 131 sqq.; Watters, *Yuan Chwang*, i. pp. 225 sqq.

³ Gold is washed, though only in very modest quantities,

from the sands of the Swāt River; iron is mentioned in Swāt by Abū-l-Faḍl (see Raverty, *Notes on Afghānistān*, p. 166) and is still smelted from gravel on the Panjkōra headwaters; see *Geograph. Journal*, xl. p. 53.

⁴ Thus Julien; Watters, *loc. cit.*, translates: 'The rules of their written language were in a rather unsettled state.'

⁵ See Chavannes, *Voyage de Song Yün*, p. 21.