

the main force under Kao Hsien-chih himself and the Imperial Commissioner Pien Ling-ch'êng passed through the kingdom of Hu-mi or Wakhān, ascending the main Oxus valley from the west. Another column which is said to have moved upon Lien-yün by the route of *Ch'ih-fo-t'ang*, 'the hall of the red Buddha', may be assumed, in view of a subsequent mention of this route below,³ to have operated from the opposite direction down the headwaters of the Āb-i-Panja. These could be reached without serious difficulty from the Sarikol base either over the Tāghdumbāsh Pāmīr and the Wakhjir Pass, or by way of the Naiza-tāsh Pass and the Little Pāmīr. Finally, a third column composed of 3,000 horsemen, which was to make its way to Lien-yün by *Pei-ku* or 'the northern gorge', may be supposed to have descended from the side of the Great Pāmīr. For such a move from the north either one of the several passes could be used which lead across the Nicholas Range south-east of Victoria Lake, or possibly some track as yet unexplored descending by one of the gorges which debouch east of Sarhad. In any case it is clear that by thus bringing up his forces on convergent but wholly distinct lines, and by securing for himself a fresh base in distant Shighnān, the Chinese general effectively guarded against those difficulties of supplies and transport which then as now would make the united move of so large a body of men across the Pāmīrs a physical impossibility.⁴

³ Some distinct indication as to the position of the 'hall of the red Buddha', whatever may have been meant by this designation, is supplied by what Kao Hsien-chih's biography tells us of his return from Little P'o-lü. After having secured the king and his consort and pacified the whole territory, he is said to have retired by the route of 'the hall of the red Buddha' in the eighth month of the year A. D. 747. In the following month he rejoined the troops he had left behind at Lien-yün, i. e. at Sarhad, and by the end of the same month regained 'the valley of Po-mi' or the Pāmīrs.

Reference to the map shows that there are only two direct routes, apart from the Darkōt-Barōghil route, by which the Upper Āb-i-Panja Valley can be gained from Gilgit-Yasīn. One leads up the difficult gorge of the Karambār River to its headwaters east of the Yārkhūn River sources, and thence across the Khora-bohrt or Gazan Pass and down the Lupsuk Valley to the Āb-i-Panja. This it strikes at a point close to Kārwan-balasi, about half-way between Bozai-gumbaz and Langar and two and a half marches above Sarhad (see below, p. 72). The other, a longer but distinctly easier route, leads up the Hunza River to Guhyāl whence the Āb-i-Panja headwaters can be gained either via the Kilik and Wakhjir Passes (the route I followed myself in 1901, as described in my *Ruins of Khotan*, chaps. III, IV) or by the Irshad Valley. From the head of the latter the less known but not particularly difficult Irshad Pass gives access to the Lupsuk Valley debouching near Kārwan-balasi on the Āb-i-Panja.

Taking into account the distinct statement that Kao Hsien-chih left after the whole kingdom had been pacified, it is difficult to believe that he should not have visited Gilgit, the most populous and important portion of 'Little P'o-lü'. In this case the return by the Hunza River route would have offered manifest advantages, such as a passage through relatively fertile tracts which had not yet been touched by invasion and would thus afford fresh resources. This assumption receives support also from the long time, one month,

indicated between the start on the return march and the arrival at Lien-yün. Whereas the distance from Gilgit to Sarhad via Hunza and the Irshad Pass is now counted at about twenty-two marches, that from Gilgit to the same place by the Karambār River and across the Khora-bohrt Pass is reckoned at only thirteen. But the latter route is described as very difficult at all times, and quite impracticable in the summer and early autumn when the Karambār River completely fills its rock-bound gorge. Hence its use for Kao Hsien-chih's return march would appear very improbable considering the time of year indicated, middle of September to middle of October.

The important fact, however, is that both routes would have brought Kao Hsien-chih to the same point on the uppermost Āb-i-Panja, opposite to the locality known as Dasht-i-Mirzā Murād, which must be passed by all wishing to gain Sarhad from the east. It is this circumstance which suggests to me that 'the hall of the red Buddha' must be located somewhere in this vicinity. Now it is certainly curious that we find just here, near the eastern end of the Dasht-i-Mirzā Murād, the small ruin known as *Kārwan-balasi* which has all the structural features of a Buddhist shrine though now revered as a Muhammadan tomb. Is it possible that we have here another trace of a lingering local cult, connected in this case with the 'hall of the red Buddha' once worshipped on this desolate route? For the ruin of Kārwan-balasi and the traces of old cultivation at Langar, the halting-place some ten miles further down on the route, cf. below, pp. 70 sqq.; Fig. 4.

⁴ The crossing of the Pāmīrs by a force, which in its total strength amounted to ten thousand men, is so remarkable a military achievement that the measures which alone probably made it possible deserve some closer examination, however succinct the Chinese record is upon which we have to base it. So much appears to me clear that the march was not effected in one body but in three columns moving up