

Between August 11 and September 8, 1906, I was kept away from Khotan by the expedition which took me into the mountains south for the sake of topographical explorations in the ice-crowned Kun-lun range above Nissa and Karanghu-tāgh. Of these I have given an account in my personal narrative.⁴ But the first march, by which I reached Lānghru, on the right bank of the Kara-kāsh River and at the foot of the mountains, provided opportunities for new antiquarian observations, even though I had passed over most of the ground before. Directing my way first to Yōtkan, the site of the ancient Khotan capital, I revisited the marsh of Aiding-kul and the mound of Naghāra-khāna on its southern bank. As I have shown at length in *Ancient Khotan*, there are strong reasons to locate at this mound the ruined convent by 'the drum-lake', about which Hsüan-tsang has preserved a curious ancient legend.⁵

Remains at
Naghāra-
khāna.

At the time of my visit in 1900 luxuriant beds of reeds covered the ground here, as elsewhere in the vicinity of the marsh, and rendered close examination of the mound difficult. But now the rapid spread of cultivation had converted the whole ground into fields, just as over most of the former waste known as *Shōrluk* which once extended between the Aiding-kul and Khotan town. The change had resulted in a considerable reduction in the size and height of the mound, the earth being carried off for manuring. But the cuttings thus effected made it easy now to see that the mound (Fig. 37) consisted of regular layers of stamped clay, i. e. loess soil, each about seventeen inches high. The small irrigation cuts skirting the foot of the main mound and of a much smaller one some thirty yards eastwards had laid bare abundant débris of ancient pottery, closely resembling that found in the 'culture strata' of Yōtkan.⁶ Still more interesting it was to find fragments of very hard burnt bricks and large rubble embedded on the north side of the main mound in a layer some five to six feet above the present ground level. There could be no doubt that the mound had been occupied by structures at successive periods, and this further strengthens the conclusion that this mound had once borne the remains of the ancient convent which Hsüan-tsang saw as a ruin, and the legend of which has left a trace in the name of *Naghāra-khāna*, 'the drum house'.

The neighbouring 'Mazār of the Three Ghāzīs' attests the survival of local worship to the present day.⁷ The Mullah in charge explained the intensive reclamation I found now proceeding by 'people getting too many and land less'. He himself had laid out some thirty Chinese acres quite close to Naghāra-khāna, and if this development of agricultural prosperity continues a generation or two may see the last trace of the site of Hsüan-tsang's convent disappear—and the 'drum-lake' itself reduced to a fertile depression; for cultivation has already begun to encroach on the reed-covered hillocks of sand which encircle the springs of the marsh.

Gold-
washing
operations
at Yōtkan.

At Yōtkan the great pit-like area resulting from the long years of washing for gold and 'treasure' at the site of the ancient capital, showed but slight change since 1900.⁸ A series of causes have tended to reduce the operations which have yielded as their by-product so many curious relics of ancient Khotan. In the first place, owing to the great increase of cultivated ground within the Borazān canton as elsewhere, it has become impossible to spare water from irrigation during the time of the summer floods, when the canals run full, for any extensive 'washing' operations. Moreover, on the north edge of the excavated area, near the hamlet of Khalche, where the 'paying' strata are known to extend still further,⁹ the increased value of agricultural land, with its trees, farm

⁴ See *Desert Cathay*, i. pp. 179-213.

⁵ Cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 227 sq.

⁶ The following are the specimens of pottery brought away from Naghāra-khāna: **Nagh. 001.** Pottery fr. of hand-made vessel. Coarse red clay. $2\frac{1}{4}'' \times 1\frac{1}{4}''$. **Nagh. 002.** Pottery fr. in hard fine red clay, with smooth inner and outer surfaces. $1\frac{1}{2}'' \times \frac{7}{8}''$. **Nagh. 003.** Pottery fr. of

base of hand-made vessel, in coarse reddish clay. $1\frac{3}{4}'' \times 1\frac{1}{2}''$. **Nagh. 004.** Fr. of terra-cotta. $2\frac{1}{4}'' \times 1\frac{1}{2}''$.

⁷ See *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 228 sq.

⁸ For a full account of the site and the peculiar working which its culture strata have undergone since the sixties of the last century, cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 191 sqq.

⁹ See *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 199.