

records on wood from the Niya Site one at least which belongs to the commencement of this period, bearing the date of the fifth year of the emperor Wu ti (269 A.D.). But otherwise I can trace no direct evidence of Chinese influence in the Khotan region. The compiler of the *Pien i tien* has nothing to quote about Yü-t'ien from the Tsin Annals, and only offers us a reproduction of Fa-hsien's notice. The pilgrim, who had reached Khotan about 400 A.D. after a trying journey apparently from Kuchā, found Buddhism in a very flourishing condition, and describes the glories of its monastic establishments in some detail¹⁸.

Of the territory he tells us that it was 'a pleasant and prosperous kingdom, with a numerous and flourishing population. The inhabitants all profess our Law, and join together in its religious music for their enjoyment. The monks amount to several myriads, most of whom are students of the Mahāyāna'. Fa-hsien specially refers to the hospitable arrangements made in the Saṅghārāmas for the reception of travelling monks, and notices the custom of erecting small Stūpas in front of each family's dwelling. His description of 'the houses of the people throughout the country standing apart like (separate) stars' is a manifest allusion to the widely scattered groups of homesteads which in Khotan, as in other oases of the Tārīm Basin, make up the villages.

The *Gomatī* monastery, in which Fa-hsien with his companions lodged, contained 3,000 monks of the Mahāyāna school, and appears to have ranked at that time as the first of the great religious establishments in the kingdom. Its position cannot be identified at present, but M. Sylvain Lévi has shown that *Gomatī* was an ancient designation of the Kara-kāsh river¹⁹. Fa-hsien specially praises the excellent order with which the inmates conducted themselves, and then treats us to a detailed description of the great procession of sacred images which was annually celebrated in the spring, and for the sake of which he prolonged his stay for three months. On successive days, from the commencement of the fourth month, the images of the fourteen great monasteries were solemnly conducted into the city²⁰. The splendidly adorned cars on which these images were moved are described as 'more than thirty cubits high' and looking 'like the great hall of a monastery'²¹. Outside the city gate each car was met by the king, who having put off his crown came barefooted to offer homage with flowers and incense, while the queen and her ladies gathered above the gate scattering flowers as the car moved through. The description of this religious festival, which lasted for fourteen days, vividly recalls the bygone splendours of Indian *rathotsavas*. Fa-hsien closes his account with a description of another great shrine, known as 'the King's New Monastery'. As its position can be determined with some probability we shall have occasion to recur to this in the next chapter.

The notices on Khotan which the *Pien i tien* furnishes for the period of the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534 A.D.)²², appear to be taken partly from Sung Yün's narrative, and to a still greater extent from the *Pei shih*, a work published about 644 A.D. Those relating to the character of the country, its people, sacred shrines, &c., were, as M. Chavannes has shown, mainly borrowed by the author of the *Pei shih* from the summary account of Hui-shêng, the companion of Sung Yün on his pilgrimage (circa 519 A.D.)²³. Leaving these to be discussed in connexion with Sung Yün's account, we may mention first some earlier historical facts

¹⁸ See *Fa-hsien's Travels*, transl. Legge, pp. 16-20.

¹⁹ See *Notes chinoises sur l'Inde*, iv. p. 40.

²⁰ The duration of fourteen days distinctly indicated for the festival shows that the number fourteen given by the Chinese copies of the text is more correct than the number four taken by Legge from the Korean version; see also

Rémusat, *Ville de Khotan*, p. 14.

²¹ Rémusat's version, p. 13, indicates the more modest height of three *chang* or 30 feet.

²² See Rémusat, *Ville de Khotan*, pp. 18-28.

²³ Compare Chavannes, *Voyage de Song Yun*, p. 2.