

Khotan'. But though describing at length the discipline, &c., under which the prisoners worked, he gives no indication as to the position of these 'old cities'.

A vague recollection of Abā Bakr's treasures and the operations by which he secured them still lingers among the people in various parts of Eastern Turkestan¹⁷. But there does not appear to exist anywhere a genuine tradition about specific localities; and in the absence of all traces of ancient débris or of earlier evidence of such a tradition we may well doubt whether Halāl-bāgh was really among the places exploited by Abā Bakr, and whether it was not his reputation alone which induced local literati like Ibrahīm Mullah to connect his name with the supposed origin of the Aiding-Kul. The configuration of the marsh itself did not appear to me to lend any support to the assumption that it had an artificial origin. With its springs and low sandy hillocks it resembles closely the marshes observed by me adjoining the cultivated areas of the Keriya and Niya oases, and also north of Lop and of Tasmache in the Khotan oasis. Immediately to the east of the Aiding-Kul, a good deal of marshy ground is crossed by the road to Khotan town, while some three miles to the south the watercourse feeding it from the Yurung-kāsh is also flanked by water-logged areas about the village of Kācha (see map of Plate XXIII).

Alleged
origin of
Aiding-Kul.

In reality there seems good reason for believing that the marsh of Aiding-Kul existed long before Abā Bakr's time, and that we have a reference to it in a legend told by Hsüan-tsang. Close to the south-eastern shore of the marsh there rises a mound known as *Naghara-khāna*, which local tradition, as represented by Ibrahīm Mullah, assumes to have formed part of the wall enclosing the old city. M. Grenard was the first to recognize in this name, correctly pronounced as *Naghāra-khānah* and literally meaning 'the house of the kettle-drum', the trace of a local legend which Hsüan-tsang has recorded of a site in the vicinity of the ancient capital¹⁸. Though the conclusion he drew from this as to the position of the latter cannot be maintained in view of what has been proved above, I believe the identification of the site itself to be justified.

Mound of
*Naghāra-
khānah*.

According to the story told at great length in the *Hsi-yü-chi*¹⁹, there was once a great stream of which the people of Khotan took advantage to irrigate their lands; Julien's and Beal's versions make its course lie to the south-east of the capital and directed north-westwards; the distance is given as 100 li in the former and as 200 li in the latter translation²⁰. On the stream ceasing to flow, the king inquired as to the cause of this calamity, and he was told by an Arhat to propitiate the 'dragon', i. e. the Nāga, dwelling in the stream by sacrifices. When this had been done, a woman emerged from the stream and, explaining the arrest of the waters by the recent death of her husband, asked for a minister of noble birth to be given to her in marriage. On the Nāgini's desire being announced, a great officer of state offered to sacrifice himself for the restored flow of the water on condition that the king should found a convent. After a solemn leavetaking the minister, dressed in white and mounted on a white steed, entered the stream. When he reached the middle of the current he struck the water with his whip and immediately disappeared. A short time after his steed came to the surface again, carrying on its back a great drum of sandalwood. This was found to contain a letter to the king in which the minister asked him to suspend the drum to the south-east of the city²¹; on the approach of an enemy it would sound in advance. The waters of the stream have

Legend of
the Nāgini
and minister.

¹⁷ See *Tārīkh-i-Rashīdī*, p. 256.

¹⁸ See *Mission D. de Rhins*, iii. p. 138.

¹⁹ See *Mémoires*, ii. pp. 239 sqq.; *Sī-yu-ki*, ii. pp. 319 sqq.

²⁰ Rémusat's extract from the *Pien i tien* makes the

stream flow south-west of the capital and at a distance of 100 li; *Ville de Khotan*, p. 57. [Watters agrees with Julien.]

²¹ Thus Beal and Rémusat; Julien has 'Au sud-est du royaume,' a manifest oversight.