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IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE BUDDHA

TO

SUSUMU YAMAGUCHI,

Professor at the Ōtani University, Kyōto

RÉNÉ GROUSSET

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE BUDDHA

" L'âme enfin sur ce fâite
A trouvé ses demeures."
PAUL VALÉRY

LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, LTD.
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[*Photo Goloubev*

STATUE OF A BUDDHIST MONK, CHINESE T'ANG PERIOD
Formerly in the Goloubev Collection

Translated from the French by
/MARIETTE LEON

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FOREWORD

THE theory of great centuries is not a mere literary fiction. Græco-Roman classicism, extending over some thousands of years, not counting its further "renaissances", is undoubtedly summed up in the 150 years separating the first Persian war from the battle of Chaeronea. During this brief period of time, all the potentialities of the Greek genius came to be realized. The whole of the long history of Hellenistic civilization and of Roman civilization was to have its roots in this short period of creative activity. Similarly, is it not a fact that the French atmosphere, the French spirit, are found at their best in the great thirteenth century? Perhaps the old Indian tradition of the *Kalpa* does indeed correspond to the hidden nature of things. Periodically, humanity, after an infinite number of gropings, creates itself, realizes the purposes of its existence in one brief and rare moment of success, then destroys itself, loses itself once more, in an all-too-slow process of dissolution.

The Buddhist world appears to have experienced one of these favoured periods. It was in the early Middle Ages, about the seventh century of our era. Darkness brooded over our Western civilization which as yet guessed nothing of the approaching Romance dawn, and even extended to Byzantium where the great "Macedonian" *basileis* had not yet arisen. But away in the Far East, India and China were living with an intense political, intellectual, religious, and artistic life. Buddhism, in bringing them into contact with one another, had created a vast current of humanism, from Ceylon to the furthest isles of the Japanese archipelago.

The withering of Islam, the decline of Neo-Confucianism, and the retrogression of Hinduism, which were unfortunately close at hand, had not yet made themselves felt. After a thousand years of meditation, Buddhist mysticism had attained to undreamed-of psychic states, and Indian æsthetics had received fresh inspiration therefrom. In a China that was hospitable to new ideas and ready for innovations, Chinese force allowed itself to be softened by this gentle influence. The human spirit lived there a privileged hour, worthy of Athens or of Alexandria. It was the time of the Chinese epic in Central Asia, and of the great pilgrimages to the Holy Land of the Ganges, the time of Mahāyānist idealism and the plastic art of the Gupta dynasty.

It is this period of high culture that I should like to try to bring to life again to-day. I should like to sketch the portraits of some of the great characters of that time, from the founders of Chinese imperialism and of the T'ang dynasty to their contemporaries Hsüan-tsang and I-ching, the pious pilgrims whose travels across the Gobi desert and the Pamir plateau or along the shores of the South Seas equal in interest those of our most daring explorers—down to the thinkers and sages whose speculations attained, in the realm of metaphysics, horizons yet more vast. And for setting I shall have, as we cross the Himālayas and the Malay States, the whole of Buddhist art in its flowering-time, from the "Romance" statues of the Wei dynasty at Yün-kang to the supernatural apparitions of Ajaṇtā, Hōryūji, and Bōrōbudur.

Need I add that I do not propose to introduce any dogmatic ideas? If I am led to expound the philosophic or religious theories of Buddhism it will be, therefore, without any kind of bias in one direction or another. Without bias, but in all sincerity of heart, for whatever our particular opinions, how can we

withhold our sympathy from this immense effort towards goodness and beauty?

N.B.—For the chronology of the journeys of Hsüan-tsang in India, I have adopted the system of Vincent Smith (Watters, ii, 335), which to my mind is still the most likely, in spite of the large element of hypothesis it contains.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE BUDDHA

CHAPTER I

IN THE CHINA OF THE EPICS

SELDOM has there been so violent a state of ferment among mankind as in the Far East during the early Middle Ages, after the fall of the ancient national Empire of the Hans, the Chinese equivalent of our Roman Empire. During two centuries, the fourth and the fifth, the Turko-Mongol hordes, more or less related to our European Huns, succeeded one another in the provinces of north China. It was a spectacle analogous, on the whole, to that of our Western world in the fifth and sixth centuries. Manners also were fairly similar, for the Tartar Sons of Heaven combined the bestiality of primitives with the vices of old and decadent civilizations. M. Charles Vignier has pointed out the traces of this retrogression in the barbarism, sumptuous though it is, of the contemporary bronzes.

At length, at the beginning of the fifth century, one of these Tartar dynasties, more advanced politically than the others, that of the T'o-pa Turks, who called themselves kings of Wei, wiped out their kindred hordes, adopted Chinese culture, and reigned for nearly 150 years over Northern China, triumphant, powerful, and on the whole in comparative peace.

Now in the year A.D. 453 the ruler of these Sino-Tartars of Wei, T'o-pa Chün, was converted to Buddhism.

We must not fail to remember that Buddhism was not a newcomer in China, since it had already been preached there for nearly four centuries. It had known varying fortunes : considered for a long time a negligible quantity by the national emperors of Antiquity, then adopted by several of the barbarian races who invaded Northern China, it benefited by their ephemeral power, which at the same time brought it into conflict with cultured conservatism. The conversion of the T'o-pa kings of Wei was an event of far greater import. Although barbarians also in origin, these sovereigns were sufficiently assimilated for the Chinese of the north to look upon them as indigenous rulers. With them Buddhism really received its letters of naturalization. And as the southern emperors of Nanking followed the same religious current as their rivals in the northern provinces, Buddhism became throughout the whole of China, and almost in the space of a day, the State religion.

Its triumph, as we shall see, was to bear immortal fruit in the domain of art : the crypts of Yün-kang and Lung-mên, with their sculptured reliefs and their statuary, which anticipated already in their buoyancy, fervour, and sincerity the art of our own cathedrals. This vigorous renascence, which is so analogous to our Romance renascence of the eleventh century, developed yet further when a brilliant national dynasty, that of the Sui, had unified the two Chinas and re-established the great Empire of bygone times. During the few short years of its domination (589–617) the workshops of the Sino-Buddhist sculptors multiplied their output, and it is only necessary to turn the pages of M. Oswald Sirén's albums to

discover what an accumulation of masterpieces took place within this short period of time. Then once more, in consequence of the follies of the second Sui Emperor, Yang-ti, the Xerxes or Sardanapalus of China, came the sudden collapse, the revolt of the prætorians and the officers commanding the legions, war between province and province, between one body of mercenaries and another. We are well acquainted to-day with the cycles of these Chinese civil wars and their train of misery, to which had to be added, as an inevitable consequence, the reappearance of the Barbarians on the outskirts of the Gobi and on all the passes of the Great Wall.

The T'ang poets, such as Yang Ch'iung, tell us of their despair in the face of this recurrent return of the great convulsions after the transient unity of the Sui :—

"The fires of war have illuminated Ch'ang-an. There is no one to-day who is tranquil in his inmost heart. Horsemen sheathed in armour surround the imperial capital. The snowflakes lie heavy upon the frozen standards. The furious voice of the wind mingles with the noise of the drums. Lo, the time has come again when the leader of a hundred soldiers is held in higher esteem than a learned and talented man of letters."

Another contemporary poet, Wei Chêng (died 643), abandoned his desk in order to enlist in one of the fighting forces :—

"Since the Empire is again being fought for, I throw away my pencil and think only of chariots of war. Though many plans be overthrown, many hopes deceived, my energy at least remains unimpaired. With a stick for climbing, and a whip for riding, I set out and, spurring on my horse, go forth to offer myself to the Son of Heaven. I desire him to give me a rope to bind the leader of the rebels, I desire

that my weapons shall be victorious in crushing the audacity of our enemies. By winding paths I scale the heights and descend again to the plains. In old and stunted trees sings the bird icy with frost. In the lonely mountains I hear the cries of monkeys in the night. After the thrill of precipices that have no bottom, come roads that have no end. Other hearts would fail at such a test, but not the warrior who bears within him an unyielding will."

The leader whom Wei Chêng was going to join was the young general Li Shih-min, the future Emperor T'ai-tsung the Great. It was at that time that the warrior of genius appeared who was to restore the Empire with his mighty hand and for three centuries change the course of Chinese history and of civilization.

Li Shih-min's father, Li Yüan, Count T'ang and Governor of a military division in Shensi, was a gentleman of high birth, a general of repute, an honest official in so far as a person of his importance could be honest, and a timid soul, always afraid of compromising himself and retaining sufficient loyalty not to break his oath except in the last extremity. He was, moreover, full of Confucian wisdom and learned maxims. Li Shih-min also, in spite of his youth (he was born in 599 and was thus not quite twenty years old), had been brought up on historic memories and noble aphorisms. But the habit of camp-life (his father's domain was a kind of march, perpetually on the watch for Turkish raids), and the habit, too, of court-life (at the Sui court, the most magnificent, the most corrupt, and the most fantastic ever seen in the Far East) had taught the young man how to make Confucian wisdom serve his own purposes rather than to let himself become a slave to it. No matter what he may do later (and we shall come across some shady episodes in his career) he will always manage

to have morality on his side. Add to this an extraordinary dash, an almost infallible sureness in making a decision, cunning and bravery, audacity and commonsense in perfect balance, and we have the ideal of the all-round man as conceived by a Chinese at that time.

However, the Empire was plunged in military anarchy. The Sui emperor, Yang-ti, had retired to Yang-chou in the shelter of the estuary of the Blue River, and lived there in retirement and debauchery while his generals quarrelled over the provinces. The young Li Shih-min, who was assured of a solid military party in his domains in Shensi and was strengthened by ties of personal friendship with several Turkish *khans*, and had also engineered various useful intrigues with some Palace officials, chafed under his father's old-fashioned loyalism. In order to force the hand of the latter, he resorted to a characteristically Chinese proceeding. The *T'ang History* informs us that he had made friends with a eunuch from the Imperial harem. At the instigation of Li Shih-min the eunuch offered Li Yüan a girl who had been intended for the sovereign. The sequestered damsel must have been very pretty, for Li Yüan accepted the dangerous gift without reflecting on the consequences. Thereupon, Li Shih-min pointed out to his father that their family had put itself under the ban of the Empire, since the abduction of one of the girls from the Palace was legally punishable by death. Li Yüan was dumbfounded, but what could be done? It was too late to draw back. He summoned his faithful followers and mobilized the troops of his government at his residence at T'ai-yüan, the capital of present-day Shansi—at the same time quieting his own scruples by announcing that he was only taking up arms on loyalist principles in order to rid the emperor of other claimants.

This was all that Li Shih-min was waiting for. His army was ready. Just as he had managed to find accomplices even in the Imperial harem, so he had won the sympathy of the Turks by his military frankness, and these dangerous neighbours had placed at his disposal 500 picked mercenaries and 2,000 horses. At the same time his sister, Li Shih, a heroic young woman who could ride a horse as well as he, sold her jewels and with the money she realized enrolled 10,000 men, whom she brought to him. Li Shih-min soon had at his disposal 60,000 tried soldiers whose labours he shared, whose fanatical devotion he won by his example, and who would serve him faithfully even to death. For more than four years (618–622) he went about bringing order into the chaos of China, province by province, army by army.

At the outset, the scruples of his father were silenced by what was taking place : over on the Yangtsze, some prætorians, taking advantage of the general disorder, had assassinated Yang-ti, the rightful Emperor. Thereupon the Count of T'ang declared himself the avenger of the dynasty and on this score assumed the lieutenancy-general of the Empire, in the name of the last of the Sui, a preliminary to deposing this phantom sovereign some months later at the instigation of Li Shih-min and proclaiming himself Emperor (618).

The imperial capital, Ch'ang-an, our Si-an-fu, which plays something of the same part in ancient Chinese history as Rome in the history of the West, was the first to open its gates (618). Were not the T'angs natives of this province of Shensi where, ever since the Ch'in in days of yore, the great dynasties had always arisen ? Next, Li Shih-min laid siege to the second capital, Lo-yang, our Ho-nan-fu, where one of his father's most formidable rivals was in

command. This was a difficult undertaking, for the town was particularly strong and the other claimants, who were beginning to get uneasy at the successes of the T'angs, did not fail to come to the rescue. The young hero took away with him one of his recent opponents, Yü-ch'ih Ching-tê, whom he had won over to his cause after taking him prisoner, and to whom with his usual generosity he had given a command, in spite of the warnings of his followers.

Having arrived within sight of the place, Li Shih-min, as his biography relates, went to reconnoitre the approaches with a party of 800 horse-soldiers. But the garrison discovered him, made a sortie, and surrounded the little band. As he was trying to cut his way through, sabre in hand, an enemy officer recognized him and charged full at him, with lowered pike. The future Emperor was about to pay for his temerity with his life when Ching-tê, who had not let him out of his sight, struck the assailant down. At this moment the T'ang battalions fell into line and extricated their leader from this dangerous situation.

However, enemy forces under the command of one of the claimants were making their way down from the Pe-chih-li, to free Lo-yang. While they were still several miles from the place, Li Shih-min, taking the pick of the cavalry with him, set out at early dawn, galloped to the enemy's camp, and taking it by surprise, entered it, slashing right and left, even penetrating into the tent of the general, who in the midst of the general disorder was wounded by a pike and captured. A few days later Lo-yang capitulated. Li Shih-min set fire to the imperial palace, which was still full of the art treasures of the Sui, and returned in triumph to Ch'ang-an (621).

The Chinese annalists paint in colours more glowing than is usual with them the return of the

young conqueror. They show him to us as he slowly traverses the streets of the capital on a richly-caparisoned charger, wearing his coat of arms and golden cuirass, helmet on head, his bow slung at his side, his quiver full of arrows over his shoulder, and his sabre in his hand. His vanquished rivals marched at either side of his horse, near the stirrup. And this description of the *T'ang-shu* stands out before our eyes in remarkably clear relief, since the recent archæological discoveries have enabled us to conjure up the scene for ourselves. The funeral statuettes have made us familiar with all this T'ang cavalry, pawing the ground and wheeling. We are even acquainted with Li Shih-min's favourite mounts, with their appearance, their names, and their records of service, those sturdy animals with plaited manes, which he had sculptured at Li-ch'üan Hsien on the flags of his tomb. And there is a still more precise detail—the charger that took part in the triumph of Ch'ang-an was undoubtedly that same "Autumn Dew" who is famous as having been the trusty friend of his master at the time of the conquest of Ho-nan. As for the armour of the conqueror, we see the exact replica of it every day on the robust shoulders of warriors or *lōkapāla* in the Buddhist funeral portraits or statues of our collections.

By fire and sword Chinese unity was once more restored. It was high time, for the Turks were approaching.

Since the middle of the sixth century, when they had replaced the Avars in the empire of the steppes, the Turks had dominated the north of Asia, from the Manchurian forests to the banks of the Oxus. One of their khanates had been established in the

Mongol pasture-lands south of the Baikal, another in the plains of present-day Russian Turkestan. Shut in for a long time on the south-west by the Sassanid Persian empire, on the east by the Chinese dynasties of the Wei and the Sui, and driven into the desert or the steppes, they never ceased to cast envious glances at these ancient civilized empires and their riches. Their grey eyes—eyes of semi-nomad shepherds—were already alight with the Seljuqid dream and the dream of Jenghiz-Khan, the vision of entering in hordes the imperial towns of the Euphrates and the Huang-ho.

The military anarchy in which China seemed still to be floundering appeared to them to be an excellent opportunity. Consequently, Hsieh-li,[1] the Khan of the northern Turks, who ruled over the Orkhon in Mongolia, and Tu-li, his nephew, conducted a grand expedition which swept the frontier posts and penetrated into Shensi as far as the outskirts of Ch'ang-an. Old Li Yüan, in desperation, talked of evacuating the capital. Li Shih-min took no notice of him, but advanced with a hundred picked horsemen to take up the challenge of the Turks. Making a bold stand, he approached them, rode into their ranks, and began to harangue them : " The T'ang dynasty owes nothing to the Turks ! Why are you invading our kingdoms ? I am king of Ch'in, and you see me here, prepared to pit myself against your khan ! " At the same time he made a personal appeal to certain leaders such as Tu-li khan, to whom he was bound by old ties of military comradeship, and aroused in them the feeling of brotherhood in arms. So bold a countenance combined with such an understanding of the Turkish soul intimidated the

[1] M. Pelliot remarks that the actual pronunciation of this name in the T'ang epoch was probably Hsieh-li.

suggestible barbarian minds. The leaders of the hordes took counsel for a time, and then, without striking a blow, turned and rode away. Some hours later a torrential storm deluged the district. Li Shih-min at once summoned his captains. "Comrades," his biographer reports him as saying, "This is the moment to show what we can do. The whole steppe has become a sea. The night will soon come and be a very dark one. We must go forward—the Turks are only to be feared when they can shoot their arrows. Let us advance upon them sabre and pike in hand, and we will overcome them before they have had time to prepare to defend themselves."

And so it befell. At dawn the Turkish camp was taken by surprise and the Chinese cavalry fought its way to the tent of the khan himself. The latter asked for terms and retired into Mongolia (624).

The young hero asserted himself more and more as the protector of the empire. His two brothers, who were jealous of his fame, resolved to get rid of him. Even his father, who owed his throne to him, unconsciously resented his popularity and kept him from affairs of state. Then began one of those savage dramas of which the Forbidden City offers as common examples as the Sacred Palace at Constantinople ; we might think we were reading a page of the Byzantine epic when we follow, in the *T'ang History*, the account of those tragic days. At a banquet given in honour of his victories, Li Shih-mins' brothers have him poisoned. He takes an antidote. Then they lie in wait for him with hired assassins, near one of the palace doors. But a traitor warns him—all this history is embellished by treacheries as well as by murders and by virtuous speeches—and Li Shih-min gets the upper hand. Forestalling the

enemy's designs, his supporters post troopers at suitable spots. At the moment when the ambush against him is being prepared, he marches upon the enemy, behaving in the same way in this war of assassinations as on the field of battle. " He put on his breast-plate and helmet, took his quiver and arrows, and set out for the Palace." As soon as his two brothers caught sight of him from a distance, they let fly a volley of arrows at him. But they missed him, while Li Shih-min slew one of them with his first arrow. The second was killed by Li Shih-min's lieutenant. At that moment the soldiers whom Li Shih-min had placed in ambush appeared and, according to the *T'ang History* " no one dared move again". However, the chronicler continues, as the servants of the Palace and the populace were beginning to assemble, Li Shih-min removed his helmet, made himself known, and harangued the crowd before the bleeding corpses of his two brothers : " My sons, do not fear for me. Those who wished to assassinate me are dead ! " Then one of the followers of Li Shih-min, Ching-tê, cut off the heads of the two young men and showed them to the people.

There remained the task of announcing the execution to the emperor, whose partiality for the two victims had always been obvious. Li Shih-min entrusted this to Ching-tê. The latter, in defiance of the most sacred rules of etiquette, penetrated fully armed into the emperor's apartments, his hands no doubt still stained with the blood of the princes. We can read between the lines of the official account in the *Annals* what must have taken place—a fine display of Confucian hypocrisy, the murderers, still hot from the battle, pronouncing moral maxims, with only one concern—to save their faces and return within the pale of the law.

On learning the news, however, the old emperor could not restrain his wrath or his tears. His first act was to demand a strict inquiry. He did not yet understand that he was no longer master. Discreetly, one of his courtiers reminded him of the real position : " There is no longer any question of an inquiry. . . . No matter how the thing happened, your two dead sons are guilty and Li Shih-min is innocent." These words, worthy of Tacitus, put the finishing touch to this Neronian drama. Moreover, the same courtiers discovered monstrous crimes of which the victims were guilty : had not the two murdered princes had intrigues with several of their father's wives ? This was more than sufficient to justify their execution!

Li Shih-min announced his arrival. When the fratricide appeared and showed every sign of the most tender filial piety, the old monarch embraced him, shedding tears, and actually congratulating him on having saved their family. It was a touching scene. " The emperor," calmly writes the official chronicler, " had always hesitated between his sons. The death of the two eldest put an end to his doubts, and his former affection for Li Shih-min once more took possession of his heart. As soon as he saw him at his feet in the attitude of a criminal asking for mercy, he could not restrain his tears. He raised him up and embraced him, assuring him that, so far from believing him to be guilty, he was convinced that Li Shih-min had only acted in legitimate self-defence." Having thus spoken, the emperor abdicated, as he was expected to do, in favour of his son, not without further edifying scenes : in conformity with etiquette Li Shih-min refused the throne ; in vain did the assembly of the nobles unanimously declare itself in favour of the victor—he still refused, and " throwing himself at his father's feet, implored him with tears

to keep the power until his death". But the old man commanded, and Li Shih-min, as a faithful subject, was forced to obey. He therefore allowed his hand to be forced and at last ascended the throne. It was September 4, 626. In order to put an end to all feuds and bring about the final pacification of the empire, the new monarch caused his sisters-in-law and all his nephews to be put to death without delay. As for the former emperor, he retired to one of his palaces, where, says Father Gaubil, in his translation of the *T'ang-shu*, "surrounded by every honour, he led a life of peaceful pleasure, his son never causing him the slightest regret for the step he took in abdicating."

However, this Palace drama had given the Turks fresh hope. The new emperor was scarcely on the throne when the Mongolian hordes flung themselves upon the empire. One hundred thousand horsemen, in a bold raid, crossed the Gobi, entered Kansuh and Shensi, descended the valley of the river Wei, and advanced as far as Ch'ang-an. On September 23, 626, their squadrons appeared before the bridge of P'iên-ch'iao, opposite the north gate of the town. The courtiers once again besought the young ruler to abandon so exposed a capital. But Li Shih-min, whom we will in future call by his canonical name, the Emperor T'ai-tsung, was not the man to allow himself to be intimidated. The khan Hsieh-li had had the insolence to send one of his people to claim the tribute-money; failing its payment, a million nomads would come and sack the capital. T'ai-tsung replied with a threat to have the ambassador's head cut off. It was bravado, for he appears to have had but very few troops in Ch'ang-an at the moment. To throw the enemy off the scent, he ordered these to be led out by various gates and to be deployed at the foot of the walls, while he himself, with a handful of cavalry,

would steal a march on the enemy and go forward, according to his custom, to reconnoitre. In spite of his companions' advice, he thus advanced along the Wei, facing the Turkish squadrons and at the mercy of the first arrow. The truth was that he understood the psychology of the nomads better than his people did: "The Turks know me," his biographer reports him to have said. "They have learnt to fear me. The mere sight of me will fill them with terror, and when they see my troops defiling they will think them much more numerous than they really are." He continued, therefore, to approach the enemy, "as confidently as though he had been going to visit his camp." The Turks, at sight of him, "struck by the air of majesty and fearlessness which characterized his whole person, dismounted and greeted him according to the fashion of their country." And at the same moment the Chinese army was deploying on the plain behind him, its armour and standards shining in the sun. T'ai-tsung continued to advance towards the Turkish camp; then, holding his horse by the bridle, he signed to the Chinese army to retreat, remaining in battle array.

The emperor, raising his voice, called the two Turkish khans, Hsieh-li and Tu-li, and proposed a single combat, according to the custom of the warriors of the steppe: "Li Shih-min has not forgotten the use of arms now that he has become emperor!" And in the name of military honour, speaking their own language and appealing to them as warriors, he reproached them violently for having broken the truces and their sworn oath. Thus boldly confronted, the Turkish khans were both overcome by such daring and surprised by the deploying of the Chinese cavalry, and they asked for peace. It was concluded on the following day, on the

bridge of the Wei, before the north gate of Ch'ang-an, after the traditional sacrifice of a white horse. This time the Turks had learned their lesson. They would not return again.

Some weeks later three thousand horses and ten thousand sheep were seen arriving at the frontier. This was the first payment by the nomads. T'ai-tsung refused to accept them so long as the Chinese prisoners, taken captive in the recent wars, were not sent back from Mongolia. But when these had been returned he invited the emissaries of the hordes and "treated them as ambassadors of the greatest powers".

In order to avoid a recurrence of such alarms, T'ai-tsung was advised to restore or to strengthen the Great Wall. Smiling, he asked, "What need is there to strengthen the frontiers?" In fact, internal disorders, rebellions even, skilfully fostered by him, were undermining the authority of the khans of the Orkhon. In answer to an imprudent challenge on the part of the khan Hsieh-li, he sent out his cavalry troops on the other side of the Gobi sands, right into the Mongolian steppe. The hordes, taken by surprise, were cut to pieces, and the khan was taken prisoner with all his vassals (630).

The *T'ang History* describes with complacency the magnificent spectacle of the Turkish chiefs prostrating themselves at the feet of T'ai-tsung. The Emperor wished to see them all together, in public audience—both the enemies he had just conquered and the khans whom he had long since won over. "When they reached the audience chamber they paid their respects ceremoniously, striking the ground with their foreheads three separate times, and thrice on each occasion." The great khan Chieh-li was treated as a prisoner-of-war and ranked only after the leaders of the loyalist hordes. However, after this

humiliation, imperial policy was subtle enough to grant him pardon, and though still a captive he was given a palace at the court.

The whole of the former khanate of the Northern Turks—that is, the present Mongolia—was annexed (630). The Turkish inscription of Kosho Tsaidam dramatically sums up this catastrophe of a whole people. "The sons of Turkish nobles became the slaves of the Chinese people, their pure daughters became bondwomen. The nobles abandoned their Turkish titles, received the titles of Chinese dignitaries, and submitted to the Chinese *qagan*, spending themselves in his service for fifty years."

Indeed, the Turks found in T'ai-tsung a warrior of their own calibre. Having lived from his youth up among their mercenaries, he could speak to them, as we have seen, in the language they understood. As for them, they liked this Emperor who was always in the saddle, so unlike the timid Sons of Heaven of former days, and in whom they found once more a warrior chief like their old *qagans*, to lead them to battle and pillage. Soon half the khans of the steppe followed him with impassioned devotion. As the inscription of Kosho Tsaidam complains, they vowed him an unswerving fidelity and bound themselves to him by the military oath which was the foundation of Turkish society.

With such allies, T'ai-tsung first crushed the Mongolian Turks, and then during the twenty years that followed, made the Turks of Turkestan, the Indo-European oases of the Gobi, and even the various kingdoms of Central Asia as far as the Caspian Sea and the Indian frontiers, acknowledge him as overlord. Under him an unexpected China, an epic China, was revealed to an astonished Asia. So far from compounding with the Barbarians and buying their retirement with gold, this China made them tremble. The

realist art of this period, with its vigorous representations of animals and of soldiers in reliefs, statues, and funeral terra-cottas, with its almost exaggerated force (as in the athletic Lokapālas of Lung-mên) and with its taste for emphasis carried to the pitch of caricature, in its violence expresses this mentality very well. There is nothing, not even the T'ang ceramics, with their somewhat crude colouring of orange-yellow and bright green, that is not symptomatic of the age.

Viewing his own work and comparing it with that of the great conquerors of former times, T'ai-tsung was bound to recall the name of the most illustrious Emperor of Chinese antiquity, Han Wu-ti. After the interval of the barbarian invasions of the fourth century, the China of the Hans had in truth been re-established, and the bounds of the Han empire were soon to be surpassed by its newborn successor. Even Pan Ch'ao, the contemporary and rival of our Trajan, and the conqueror of ancient Kashgaria, had not had to his credit so many herds raided, so many hordes broken up, and so many thousands of heads severed, as had the T'ang generals. The fact is that China, subjected to the invasions of the barbarians for three centuries, had absorbed meanwhile the blood of the conquering hordes ; nourished and strengthened by it, she now turned against the people of the steppe the force she derived from them, adding to it the immense superiority of her ancient civilization.

Let us look at this nation of horse and foot soldiers as they appear in the collections of funeral statuary, wearing either the kaftan of the Turkish auxiliaries or the helmet of the T'ang legionaries, their rough-hewn faces always half-Tartar in type, their features set in a grimace. Firmly they stand there in their armour of waxed leather, reinforced on the breast and back with metal plates—a pauncher of leather

or metal scales, and a large round or rectangular shield decorated with figures of monsters—ready for the crossing of the Gobi or the scaling of the Altai mountains. Even in Buddhist works, such as the statues or paintings representing the Lokapāla, Vajrapāṇi, or Vaiśravaṇa, we still find this crustacean armour, this grim and forbidding look. And then there is all the T'ang cavalry, pawing the ground, whinnying, and snorting amidst the peace of the tombs, as it awaits impatiently the summons to a raid in the region of Kashgar or Kuchā. It is easy to understand why the Tocharish cities of the Gobi, so proud of their delicate Indo-Persian culture, were unable to withstand these galloping squadrons! For every adventurer of Upper Asia, from Turkish khans like A-shih-na Shê-êrh or A-shih-na Ta-nai down to Korean chiefs such as Kao-hsien-chih, was eligible for the command of the Imperial armies, provided he were sufficiently ardent and daring.

The western Turks themselves, who were the terror of the Sassanid empire, and later on were to be a menace to the growing Arab power, gave way before this cavalry which was so like their own. We shall see it rushing like a cyclone upon their camps, scattering their *yurtas* as far as the gorges of the Tarbagatai, pursuing them right up to the flat steppes of the Kirghiz tribes.

The master of the situation was henceforth "the man of the frontiers", he whom in the following century Li T'ai-po was to celebrate in verses through which there passes a breath of the T'ang epic. "The man of the frontiers during the whole of his life never opens a book. But he can ride to the chase, he is skilful, strong, and bold. In the autumn his horse is fat, the grass of the prairies suits it admirably, when it gallops its shadow disappears. . . . How magnificent and scornful his manner! His

resounding whip slashes the snow or clanks in its gilded case. Enlivened by heady wine, he summons his falcon and roams far afield. His bow, bent beneath his mighty effort, never misses its mark. Two birds often fall together, brought down by a single shot of his whistling arrow. Men draw aside everywhere to let him pass, for his valour and his warlike spirit are well known in the Gobi."

The beginning of the T'ang dynasty once more raised the religious question. With the education, the tastes and the interests we have seen to be his, with the surroundings we have just depicted, the emperor T'ai-tsung could at his accession have but little sympathy with such a religion of peace, idealism, and renunciation as Buddhism. "The Emperor Liang Wu-ti," he remarked one day, "preached Buddhism so successfully to his officers that they were unable to mount their horses to defend him against the rebels. The Emperor Yüan-ti used to expound the texts of Lao-tzŭ to his officers instead of leading them against the Huns who were ravaging his empire. Such facts speak volumes to one who is able to interpret them!" His confidant in these matters, the old Confucian scholar Fu I, had a veritable horror of Buddhism. It was Fu I who, in 626, handed the Emperor Li Yüan a petition in which were enumerated all the objections of Confucian positivism against Buddhist monasticism: "The doctrine of the Buddha is full of extravagances and absurdities. The fidelity of subjects to their prince and filial piety are duties that this sect does not recognize. Its disciples pass their life in idleness, making no effort whatever. If they wear a different costume from ours, it is in order to influence the public authorities or to free

themselves from all care. By their vain dreams they induce simple souls to pursue an illusory felicity, and inspire them with scorn for our laws and for the wise teaching of the ancients."

The positivism of the scholar is combined here with the instinctive anti-clericalism of the old soldier. Moreover, Fu I himself, addressing Li Yüan and Li Shih-min, did not fail to pick a quarrel with the Buddhists for their pacifism and their celibacy: "This sect," he exclaims, "numbers at the present time more than a hundred thousand male and as many female bonzes who live in celibacy. It would be to the interest of the State to oblige them to marry one another. They would form a hundred thousand families and would provide subjects to swell the numbers of the armies for the coming wars. At present, these people in their idleness are a burden on society, living at its expense. By making them members of this same society, we should make them contribute to the general good, and they would cease to deprive the State of hands which ought to defend it."

This curious military anti-clericalism was quite in keeping with the tendencies of the T'angs. Soon after receiving his minister's petition, Li Yüan caused a census to be taken, throughout the empire, of the convents and religious orders. He then commanded an almost universal secularization, allowing only three monasteries in his capital, Ch'ang-an, and one only in each of the larger towns. Furthermore, the licensed monasteries were placed under the strict supervision of the authorities. Hsüan-tsang's account will show us what difficulties from this quarter lay in the path of any new ordination.

Once on the throne, T'ai-tsung continued the same policy. In 631, for example, at the instigation of Fu I, his counsellor in such matters, he issued an edict compelling the monks to maintain the Confucian

rites of filial piety. This was mere petty tyranny, yet it revealed a systematic opposition.

An era of anticlericalism combined with brutal militarism seemed to be dawning in the Far East. But was it possible for the conqueror to turn back the tide of Chinese evolution? He might change the face of Asia, lead his people in an epic combat worthy of Macedonia or of Rome. Whatever may have been his personality—and it dominates three centuries of history—it was not in his power to stem the tide of mysticism that was spreading over the Chinese soul.

Chapter II

THE APPEAL OF BUDDHISM

The ages of the sword are often the ages of faith. In the midst of the ruin of the Germanic invasions in the Western world of the early Middle Ages, sensitive souls retired within themselves and there found the consolation that was essential to them in religious belief. The same thing happened in fifth-century China. In order to be convinced of the intensity of religious sentiment at this time, there is no need to have recourse to texts. It is sufficient to cast a glance at the Wei works of art—*stelæ*, reliefs or statues—in our museums and galleries.

We must not, however, be misled. In spite of the present enthusiasm, the Wei productions are not uniformly or necessarily beautiful in themselves. We consider, on the contrary, that in the majority of specimens the plastic qualities are very mediocre. Nor is it these that give them interest for us. What attracts us in the votive *stelæ* of the time—the great *stela* of 554 in the Boston Museum, for example—is the complete subordination of form to religious feeling. No doubt the pre-Buddhistic or at any rate the sensuous sources of this art are easily discernible, but how completely transformed are they by the great tide of the new idealism! There are obvious reminiscences of the "Confucian" funeral reliefs of ancient China—but without that strong tendency towards the fantastic which in the burial chambers of Shantung, under the Han rulers, affected the treatment of men, gods, and animals; divinities and lay figures have here found the immobility of

[*Photo Doucet*

CHINESE HEAD OF A BODHISATTVA, SUI PERIOD
Formerly in the Doucet Collection

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the great Buddhistic peace. There are also reminiscences of the Greek art of the Gandhāra, or the Indian art of the Gupta period, but with little or no trace left of Hellenic plasticity or of Hindu sensuousness and gracefulness. There are only elongated, rigid figures with their set smile, their conventional gesture of trustfulness or of compassion, their draperies stiffly divided into large angular pleats or childishly arranged in little rounded folds. In truth these creatures, beneath the immense pointed nimbus that surrounds them, crowning them with its tall flame, are no longer material beings, they are mere conventional renderings, without flesh or blood, of the monastic cloak.

Under the influence of what transcendant idealism, by what miracle of faith have the insipid Apollonian Buddhas of the Gandhāra, or the Indian Buddhas of the Gupta school, with the nudes still characterized by tropical sensuousness, managed to be transformed into these tall statues which dispense benediction? But how could the reliefs of the Christian sarcophagi have given birth to the pathetic Romanesque figures? For we must in this connection remember our early French sculpture, and M. Alfred Salmony is perfectly right in comparing Wei art with the high reliefs of our cathedrals—Saint Sernin of Toulouse, Saint Peter of Moissac, Saint Peter of Angoulême, Vézelay, Saint Lazarus of Autun, or again, with the Romanesque doorway of Chartres cathedral. And yet in the tympana of Vézelay, of Moissac, and of Autun there is a restlessness that is quite foreign to Wei art. On the other hand, there is already some element of Gothic mildness in the great reliefs at Yün-kang and in several contemporary statues, high-reliefs, or figures on *stelæ*. The severity of the old Sino-Buddhistic imagery has relaxed into a smile, but the time has

not yet come for the re-introduction of the realism which, during the T'ang period, is to rob art of almost all its fervour and mystery. Certain of the Buddhas of Yün-kang, or various *stelæ* such as that with three figures in the Gualino (formerly Vignier) collection, give us, in the tenderness of their softened lines, an impression of quiet freshness and candour, of restful simplicity, which is perhaps unique in the art of the Far East. It is the idealism of the Mahāyāna translated into the world of forms. Later, under the T'angs, there will come work which is perhaps closer to our own classicism, as at Lung-mên, and also to the original Indian art, as at T'ien-lung-shan. There will be nothing to equal the delicious simplicity of Wei art.

These great works must never be forgotten if we seek to enter into the soul of Buddhist China in the early Middle Ages. They alone will enable us to comprehend fully the vocation of a Hsüan-tsang.

In 618, the very year in which the future Emperor T'ai-tsung was undertaking the series of campaigns which were to win him the empire, a young Buddhist monk, fleeing from the civil wars which were decimating the countries of the north, arrived in Ssŭ-ch'uan. This far-off province, sheltered in its alpine valleys, was to offer him a comparatively peaceful retreat in which to await the end of the upheaval.

The fugitive, who was born at Lo-yang, the present Ho-nan-fu, in 602 no doubt, was only fifteen years old. The name by which we know him, his name

in religion, Hsüan-tsang,[1] was to become, together with that of T'ai-tsung, the most celebrated of the century, for history was one day to associate the conqueror and the pilgrim in a common renown. And yet could two spirits more opposite possibly be imagined? At the threshold of this age, towering over it, we have met the epic figure of the Chinese Cæsar. Now we behold a young monk for whom the world literally does not exist, who is consumed by a metaphysical and mystical fever, yet who is as profoundly Chinese as the other; this fervent Buddhist is heir to a long line of *literati* and mandarins steeped in the observance of Confucian wisdom and time-honoured etiquette, the politeness of the Chinese soul. He himself was brought up in the pure Confucian tradition. Even at eight years old he amazed his father by his observance of the rites, and every trait in him seemed to betoken that he would be one of the most famous *literati* of the time, when the example of his elder brother, who had just taken Buddhist orders, determined his vocation. The adolescent also came and knocked at the "Black Gate", in the monastery of Ch'ing-t'u-ssŭ at Lo-yang, and his precocious wisdom so astonished one of the heads of the community that he was admitted in spite of his tender age. He took his vows in this same monastery of Lo-yang. He was not yet thirteen years old.

Hsüan-tsang had chosen his path. He plunged into the study of Indian philosophy. The Buddhist schools, as we shall see later, were both numerous and varied, ranging from the sects, positivist

[1] The modern pronunciation in the Pekinese dialect is Hsüan-chuang (see Giles, *Chinese-English Dictionary*, n. 2758, page 346). But the ancient pronunciation was, very probably, Hsüan-tsang (see Pelliot, *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient*, v, 1905, 423–30). We keep therefore to the traditional transcription of "Hsüan-tsang".

in tendency, of the *Hīnayāna* or Little Vehicle, to the mystical doctrines of the *Mahāyāna* or Great Vehicle. It was to the latter that Hsüan-tsang at once turned. The mystic "nihilism" of the *Nirvāna sūtra*, the absolute idealism of the *Mahāyāna samparigraha śāstra* filled him with such passionate enthusiasm that he forgot to eat or to sleep.

But as we have seen, life at Lo-yang was scarcely conducive to such meditations. In the anarchy which followed the collapse of the Sui, in the midst of the civil wars between the T'angs and their rivals, "the imperial town had become the haunt of brigands, Ho-nan had turned into a cave of wild beasts; the streets of Lo-yang were strewn with corpses. The magistrates were massacred. As for the numerous Children of the Buddhist Law, they were faced with death or flight." [1]

But whither could they flee? Almost the whole empire was foundering in anarchy. It was a terrible time for so cultured, so fine-souled a man as Hsüan-tsang. "At that time," gloomily writes his biographer, "the dynasty of the T'angs was scarcely beginning to be established. All the troops were still under arms. The science of war alone occupied men's minds. There was no time to reflect on the teaching of Confucius or of Buddha . . ." It was at that time that Hsüan-tsang and his brother went and sought refuge in the mountains of Ssŭ-ch'uan.

At Ch'eng-tu, the capital of Ssŭ-ch'uan, the fugitives met with a little band of monks and philosophers who had been driven away like themselves by the civil war. Hsüan-tsang spent two or three years there in the monastery of Kung-hui-ssŭ, studying

[1] We have used, for the history of Hsüan-tsang, Stanislas Julien's translation, amending it where necessary according to the corrections of later Sinologues, notably M. Pelliot, *BEFEO*, 1905, 421–57, and the discoveries of Indianism.

the different Buddhist systems. It is interesting to note that from this time onward his philosophic opinions grow more defined, for although he studies the works of the positivist and realist school such as the *Abhidharmakośaśāstra* his preference is more and more for the idealism of the *Mahāyāna samparigraha śāstra*. Nevertheless, we are not nor will ever be able to find any trace of exclusiveness in Hsüan-tsang, and therein lies his strength. His familiarity with the doctrines of the most widely differing schools, at a time when so many other monks limited themselves to the teachings of their own sect, assured his superiority in dialectics ; in the course of his metaphysical discussions with the doctors of Central Asia and India, he will constantly be seen to overwhelm them by the weight of his erudition and the appositeness of his quotations. Throughout the vast Sanskrit territory which stretched at that time from the extremity of the Deccan to Nara, from the furthest part of Sumatra to Turfān, his biography constantly shows him gathering learned doctors round him and arguing with them as soon as he arrives. He was like those masters of knowledge who, carrying in their memory the twofold treasure of the Scriptures sacred and profane, journeyed six centuries later through the whole of the Latin world, from Salerno to Upsala, from Saint James of Compostella to the Abbey of Fulda.

And when one day Hsüan-tsang takes up the pen to write a metaphysical treatise in his turn, this same wide range of knowledge will provide the wealth of his *Vijñapti mātratā siddhi*.

On reaching his twentieth year, he whom we shall henceforth call the *Master of the Law* submitted to the full monastic " rule " at Ch'eng-tu. This was in 622. The civil war was beginning to draw to a close with the victory of the T'angs. Hsüan-tsang

left Ssŭ-ch'uan and went towards the capital of the new dynasty, Ch'ang-an, our Si-an-fu, in the present province of Shen-si. This famous city, the Rome of ancient China, was one of the chief centres of Buddhism in the Far East. Five centuries ago missionaries from India and Kashgaria had founded monasteries there. In these, ever since, the monks had been translating with unremitting toil, from Sanskrit into Chinese, the vast literature of the two Buddhist "Vehicles". At the time of Hsüan-tsang many masters were still teaching the doctrine of Śākyamuni. Unfortunately, they were far from coming to a common agreement. Divided as they were into as many schools as there were Buddhist sects, their teaching presented strange discordances. The gulf which to-day separates a "minimalist" of Ceylon from a "maximalist" theologian of Tibet gives us some idea of the state of affairs.

These discrepancies were of importance. Without going into details as to the various Buddhist sects, we will confine ourselves to recalling the fact that the most diverse interpretations of Buddha's teaching had sprung up in the course of the centuries. According to some, who held to what is known as the "Little Vehicle" of Salvation or *Hīnayāna*, Buddhism was more or less limited in its essence to the practice of the monastic rule for monks and of charity for the laity; as a philosophy it was confined to a sort of realistic positivism, and as final goal, to a theory of individual salvation by annihilation, the "nirvāṇa" of the human creature. The Great Vehicle of Salvation or *Mahāyāna* presented a more elaborate conception. According to its devotees, the Buddhist theory of salvation was crowned by a metaphysic. Some, the doctors of the "Middle Way", or *Mādhyamika*, by means of a curious and

radical criticism, reached that conception of "universal vacuity" which was itself soon to end in the most devout pietism; others, with the school of Idealism (*vijñānavāda*), also called the school of mysticism (*yogācāra*), professed an absolute Idealism bound up with a theory of mystical union.

As we have seen, the intellectual sympathies of Hsüan-tsang inclined him rather towards the last school. Nevertheless, the opposition of the various doctors, and also unfortunately the contradictions, at least in appearance, of the sacred books, did not fail to affect him. "The Master of the Law," as his biographer rather charmingly puts it, "realized that each of these doctors possessed some outstanding merit. But when he wished to verify their doctrines from the sacred books, he recognized the existence in them of serious discrepancies, so that he no longer knew which system to follow. He then made a vow to travel in the countries of the west, in order to question the wise men on the points which were troubling his mind."

Having come to this decision Hsüan-tsang, with several other monks, sent up to the Emperor T'ai-tsung a petition to be allowed to leave China. He received a reply in the form of an imperial decree—it was a refusal. T'ai-tsung, whose power was still far from secure and whose diplomacy was engaged in grappling with the hostility or the treachery of several of the peoples of central Asia, did not care to see his subjects venturing, except on an official mission, into these dangerous regions. Hsüan-tsang, however, had no illusions as to the difficulties that awaited him. "Knowing that the roads in the west were full of dangers, he questioned his heart and felt that, since he had been able to free himself from worldly life, he would be able to confront all obstacles without flinching." The emperor had forbidden

him to cross the frontier, and his companions were deserting him, but what matter? "He desired to walk in the footsteps of the saints and sages, to restore the religious laws and convert foreign peoples. He would have braved the winds and the waves without blenching and in the presence of the Emperor himself he would only have become more fortified in the strength of his character." Disdaining human aid, he retired into the seclusion of a sacred tower, "in order to reveal his intentions to the multitude of the saints and to pray to them to surround his faring forth and his return with their invisible protection."

A vision strengthened the apostle in his resolve. One night, in the year 629, he saw in a dream the holy mountain of Sumeru, towering in the midst of the sea. Desiring to reach the sacred summit, he did not hesitate to fling himself into the bosom of the waves. At that moment a mystic lotus appeared beneath his feet, and set him down without effort at the foot of the mountain. The latter, however, was so steep that he would not have been able to climb it. But a mysterious whirlwind raised him aloft and suddenly he found himself transported to the summit. There he beheld a vast horizon with nothing to hinder his view, a symbol of the countless lands that his faith was about to conquer. In an ecstasy of joy he awoke.

Some days later he set out for the Wide West.

Chapter III

THROUGH THE WIDE WEST

The pilgrim was about twenty-six years old when he set forth. He was very handsome, and tall, like many of the Chinese of the north. "His colouring was delicate, his eyes brilliant. His bearing was grave and majestic, and his features seemed to radiate charm and brightness." There is no doubt that a strong attraction emanated from his powerful personality, which combined strength with gentleness; many episodes of his journey bear witness to the fact. "His voice was pure and penetrating in quality and his words were brilliant in their nobility, elegance, and harmony, so that his hearers never grew weary of listening to him . . . He liked wearing ample garments of fine cotton and a broad belt which gave him the manner and appearance of one of the *literati*."

It may well be that the superiority of his genius consisted in this close association of ancient Confucian wisdom and Buddhist tenderness. He had all the qualities of the Confucian, not only the formal qualities in which lies the charm of Chinese or Japanese society —the hereditary politeness carried, when circumstances demand it, to the pitch of heroism—but also the deeper virtues, such as common-sense, prudence, moderation, discretion in everyday life, infinite delicacy in matters of friendship, and evenness of temperament. "A strict observer of discipline, he was always the same. His affectionate kindliness and his tender piety, his steadfast zeal and his unswerving devotion to the practices of the Buddhist Law were unequalled. Moreover, he was reserved in his

friendship and did not lightly form ties." And beneath all this, there was the radiance, the interior joy of the great mystics. "His bearing was mild and easy. He looked straight ahead of him, never glancing to right or left. He had the majesty of the great waters that surround the earth, the serenity and brilliance of the lotus that rises from the midst of the waters . . ."

Determined to fulfil his vow at all costs, he reached the high valleys and gorges of the present Kan-su, the westernmost of the Chinese provinces, which cuts like a wedge into the Land of Grasses, between the Gobi sands and the wild plateau of the Köko-nor. Liang-chou, the last town of importance in Kan-su, was already what it is to-day, the head of the caravan routes leading to Mongolia and Tarim. It was also a market frequented by all the peoples of the Wide West, from the bend of the Yellow River as far as Pamir. We can picture this cosmopolitan crowd, as it appears in some fresco of Bäzäklik, near Turfān, where in a praṇidhi scene we see a procession of bearded donors, very varied in type, some rather Turkish, others definitely Iranian, some of them wearing a kind of flat helmet, and all followed by their camels and their mules, "Buddhist Magi-kings," modelled doubtless on the Turkestan or Sogdian caravan traders whom the trade in silk attracted to the Chinese frontiers.

Hsüan-tsang availed himself of one of these fairs at Liang-chou, where so many different tribes thronged together, to begin his preaching. We are told that the worthy caravan traders whom he had converted pressed upon him in their gratitude gold and silver and white horses. He passed on nearly all these gifts to the Buddhist monasteries of the country "to provide for the upkeep of the lamps" and the other needs of the community.

Beyond Kan-su China ended and the Wide West began, with the stony or clayish and salt deserts of Gobi. It was a terribly inhospitable country. A century later, in spite of the conquests made in the interval by the T'ang armies, the poets of the court of Ming-huang expressed in their verse the age-old terror of the Chinese soul face to face with these hostile deserts.

"In the autumn," sings Li T'ai-po, "our neighbours of the frontiers come down from their mountains. We must pass the Great Wall and go to meet them. The bamboo tiger is divided and the general sets out on the march ; the soldiers of the empire will not halt until they reach the sands of the Gobi. The crescent moon, hung in the void, is all that can be seen in this wild desert, where the dew crystallizes on the polished steel of swords and breastplates. Many a day will pass before they return. Do not sigh, young women, for you would have to sigh too long."

Further on still came the snowy peaks of the T'ien-shan, of the K'un-lun, of the Pamir range, where greater perils still awaited the soldier and the pilgrim :—

"In the fifth month the snow is not yet melted in the T'ien-shan. Not a flower appears in so rigorous a climate. The spring-song of the willows is heard indeed on the flute, but the colours of gay spring-time are nowhere to be seen." (Li T'ai-po.)

Here, on the confines of two worlds, even the armies of the T'angs were never safe :—

"The dawn appears. The hour for battle has arrived, the hasty summons of bell and drum must be obeyed. Night falls, and men must take their sleep in the saddle, holding on to their horses' manes . . ." (Li T'ai-po.) What of the pilgrim who was about to venture into these solitary places, without even

the support of his government, but obliged, on the contrary, to hide from the last Chinese outposts ?

Beyond Liang-chou the frontiers were closed, and no one was allowed to pass them without an imperial authorization. Warned of the intentions of Hsüan-tsang, the governor of Liang-chou sent for him and ordered him to return to China. The pilgrim contented himself with showing extra prudence, and left secretly for the west, hiding by day and travelling by night. In this way he reached Kua-chou in the southern part of the oasis of An-si, about 7½ miles south of Su-lo-ho (otherwise Shu-lei-ho) or the river of Bulungir. In order to follow the track for Ha-mi, the first oasis of the Eastern Turkestan of to-day, he had first of all to cross the river. This was a difficult undertaking, for the Su-lo-ho, at one part of its course, was a rushing torrent between steep banks, not navigable by boat, and though it widened out further on, it was only to become a marsh on reaching Kara-nor. It was guarded, moreover, by the Chinese fortress of the Jade Gate or Yü-mên-kuan, which commanded the whole valley. Once on the northern bank, after following the only track which crossed the desert in a north-westerly direction, towards the present-day Ha-mi, it was still necessary to pass beneath the scrutiny of five Chinese watch-towers, the last sentinels on the threshold of another world.

On learning these details, Hsüan-tsang, his biographer tells us, was sorely grieved. His horse had just died, and as a crowning misfortune his departure had been noticed and messengers had just reached the frontier with orders to arrest him. Happily for him, the governor of the district happened to be a pious Buddhist who, instead of carrying out the orders he had received, did away with the official edict, warned the object of it, and urged that

he should depart as quickly as possible. But the two novices who had accompanied him thus far felt their courage flagging. The first took fright and went to Tun-huang, and Hsüan-tsang himself dismissed the second as incapable of enduring the fatigue of the journey.

The Master of the Law now found himself alone. He bought a new horse and besought the Bodhisattva Maitreya to send him a guide, to enable him to pass the last frontier posts. Shortly afterwards a young barbarian, a Buddhist by religion, presented himself and offered to be his guide. The pilgrim, believing in his expressions of piety, joyfully accepted his offer, and before nightfall he and his unexpected guide entered a steppe covered with thick scrub. A meeting with an old man who was a native of the district put his courage to the test. This man forcefully pointed out the whole extent of his rashness : " The roads in the West are bad and dangerous. At one time a man is held up by quicksands, at another by scorching winds ; and when these are met with not a soul can withstand them. Often large parties of travellers lose their way and perish. All the more then, O revered master, is it impossible that you who are alone should accomplish this journey. Take care and do not thus risk your life ! " As Hsüan-tsang reiterated his unshakeable resolve, the old man obliged him to accept his horse, an old roan who had already done the journey to Ha-mi more than fifteen times.

Hsüan-tsang and his guide thus came in sight of Yü-mên-kuan. Night had fallen. The guide cut down some trees, threw a little bridge across the Su-lo-ho, whipped up his horse, and made him go over it. On reaching the north bank, the Master of the Law, worn out, overcome by fatigue, stretched himself out on a mat on the ground and fell into a doze.

Suddenly he beheld a strange sight—his mysterious companion, who had lain down 100 feet away, was drawing his sword, rising, and coming softly towards him ; then, when he was less than ten paces away, he appeared to hesitate, and retraced his steps. As Hsüan-tsang, conscious of danger, also got up, recommending his soul to the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, his alarming companion definitely turned tail, lay down again, and went to sleep. There was no doubt that in the shifty and covetous mind of the barbarian the thought of a crime had arisen for a moment; then, either from superstitious fear or from a last remnant of piety, the man had changed his mind ; but no one could be less safe as a companion . . . !

With the first rays of dawn Hsüan-tsang, making no reference to this strange nocturnal alarm, ordered the guide to go and find some water. The young man obeyed, with a bad grace. Either from a secret feeling of shame at having been discovered, or because of a real fear of the Chinese outposts, he pleaded the difficulties of the route : "This track is terribly long and fraught with dangers. Neither water nor pasturage is to be found on it. But at the foot of the fifth signal-tower there is excellent water. We shall have to go and get it by night, secretly, and not tarry, for if we are seen from above we are lost. The surest way is to go back." The Master of the Law, however, refused firmly, and they advanced through the steppe, concealing themselves as best they could, now crouching, now raising their heads to get their bearings. Suddenly the young man drew his sword, bent his bow, and requested Hsüan-tsang to go ahead. Hsüan-tsang, who henceforth had no doubt as to his intentions, refused. The guide, frightened by his bold countenance, consented to go off and scout, but after a few miles he alleged his unwillingness

to infringe the imperial commands, and disappeared, abandoning the pilgrim.

Hsüan-tsang went on alone into the stony and argilaceous-salt desert of the Pei-shan and Kuruk-tagh, into the boundless Gobi that swallows up herds and caravans. Guiding himself by the heaps of bones and piles of camel-dung with which the desert was strewn, he made his way slowly and painfully. Suddenly he perceived what appeared to be hundreds of armed troops covering the horizon. "He saw them at times marching and at times standing still." All the soldiers were clothed in felt and fur, like the barbarians of the Gobi and of the Altaï. "On one side were camels and richly caparisoned horses; on the other, gleaming lances and shining standards. Soon there appeared fresh figures, and at every moment the shifting spectacle underwent a thousand transformations. But directly one drew near, all vanished . . ." The pilgrim believed himself to be in the presence of the army of Māra, the demon of Buddhism. He had been the victim of a desert mirage.

A more real danger was that he was approaching the first of the signal-towers, the extreme guardians of the Chinese frontier.[1] In order to escape the watchmen, he went and hid in a blocked-up canal and did not set out again until nightfall. When he came to the west of the tower he discovered the little spring that he had been told of, and went down to drink at it and to fill his water-skins. But just at that moment he heard the whistle of an arrow, which nearly wounded him in the knee. Then a second arrow followed, and buried itself in the ground beside

[1] This first tower has been located by Sir Aurel Stein at the halt of Pei-tan-chŭ, marked on Map 38 of the atlas of *Innermost Asia*. Cf. Sir Aurel Stein, "The Desert Crossing of Hsüan-tsang," *T'oung-pao*, 1921–2, p. 350.

him. He realized that he had been seen, and shouted with all his might : " I am a monk from the capital. Do not shoot at me!" Then leading his horse by the bridle he walked towards the tower. The guard opened the gate to him and took him to their captain. The latter, a native of the town of Tun-huang, professed Buddhism. He, too, pointed out to Hsüan-tsang the perils of his undertaking and tried at first to make him abandon it.

The worthy man advised the pilgrim to end his journey at Tun-huang, where there dwelt a monk full of wisdom. We can still feel the fire of his reply in the account given by his biographer: " From my childhood I have been a passionate believer in Buddhism. In the two capitals (Ch'ang-an and Lo-yang) the men who are conversant with the Buddhist Law, the most zealous of the monks, have never failed to flock to my lessons, in order to reflect deeply upon them and to gather the fruits of them. I have spoken, preached, argued in their midst. I will confess, though it shames me, that I am the most renowned monk of the day. If I wished to make further progress in virtue, and to work for my reputation, do you think that I should remain under the monks of Tun-huang ? "

After this severe diatribe, in which the celebrated preacher from the capital crushes the worthy provincial officer tucked away in an obscure colonial fortress, Hsüan-tsang appeals to the religious sentiment of his interlocutor :—

" I was deeply concerned to find that the books were incomplete, and that there were regrettable gaps in their interpretation. Forgetful of my own safety, undaunted by obstacles and dangers, I made a vow to go and seek in India the law that Buddha bequeathed to mankind. But you, a benevolent man, instead of encouraging me in my enthusiasm, urge me

to retrace my steps ! Will you dare to tell me, after that, that you share my compassion for the suffering of the world, and that, with me, you desire to help men to attain nirvāṇa ? If you insist on detaining me, I will allow you to take my life. Hsüan-tsang will not take a single step in the direction of China ! "

The captain, no doubt, had never heard such eloquence. Overwhelmed by this address, and touched in his religious feeling, he resolved to aid the pilgrim. After supplying him with provisions, he gave him an introduction to the next frontier station. As for the fifth and last watch-tower,[1] he advised him to avoid it, as the officer in command was hostile to Buddhism.

Here, then, we have Hsüan-tsang obliged, in order to avoid this last frontier post, to leave the Ha-mi route and follow a parallel track to the north-west, plunging into the heart of that desert of Gashun Gobi which the Chinese call the River of Sand ; "There is found neither bird nor four-legged beast, neither water nor pasturage." And the historiographer adds this admirable touch : " In order to find his way he endeavoured to observe, as he walked, the direction of his shadow, and he read with fervour the book of the *Prajñāpāramitā* (the Holy Wisdom of Buddhism)." Can we imagine this desert, and the man journeying through it alone, facing the unknown with all its perils in order to reach the distant land of India, and there to inquire into certain texts and compare the different metaphysical systems ? This pilgrim with no other guide but his own shadow, the shadow of his faith projected on the limitless sands, and no other comfort beneath the flaming heavens than the mystic flame of the Holy Wisdom ?

[1] The station of Sing-sing-hsia, according to Sir Aurel Stein.

He looked in vain for the fresh-water spring that he had been led to expect—"the Spring of the Wild Horse." "Tormented by thirst, he raised his water-skin, but being very heavy it slipped from his hands, and his whole supply of water was poured out on the ground. Moreover, the track wound about in long detours, and he was no longer sure of his direction." In despair he turned back to the Chinese frontier. This was the pilgrim's only moment of doubt. After retracing his steps for some eight miles he pulled himself together: "At the beginning I swore that if I did not reach India I would never take one step back towards China. I would rather die with my face towards the west than return and live in the east." Thereupon, says his biographer, "he turned his horse's head, and praying fervently to the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara he set out towards the north-west. He looked round him on all sides and could see nothing but a boundless plain with no trace of men or horses. During the night evil spirits burnt torches as numerous as the stars; during the day terrible winds raised the sand and spread it out like sheets of rain. In the midst of such cruel onslaughts his heart knew no fear, but he suffered from the lack of water and was so tormented by thirst that he had not the strength to take a single step further. For four nights and five days not a drop of water passed his lips. A burning heat consumed his entrails and he was within a very little of perishing. Unable to go on he lay down in the midst of the sand, and although worn out by weakness he never ceased to invoke the name of Avalokiteśvara."

"On this journey," he prayed, "I covet neither riches, nor praise, nor fame. My sole aim is to go and seek the higher Intelligence and the true Law. Your heart, O Bodhisattva, for ever yearns to deliver the creature from the pains of life. And were any

ever more cruel than mine ? Can you fail to perceive them ? "

"He prayed thus with unflagging ardour until the middle of the fifth night, when suddenly a delicious breeze came blowing through all his members, making them as supple and as fresh as though he had bathed in a refreshing pool. Immediately his weary eyes recovered their sight and even his horse had the strength to stand up. Thus revived, he was able to have a little sleep. But while sleeping he saw in a dream a tall spirit, several *chang* high, holding a lance and a standard, who called out to him in a terrible voice : ' Why do you still sleep instead of going forward with zeal ? '

" Awaking with a start, the Master of the Law set forth. He had gone nearly 4 miles when suddenly his horse turned in a different direction, and no effort of his could check the animal or make it return to its first path."

He let himself be guided by the creature's instinct, and soon caught sight of several acres of green pasture-land ; he alighted and allowed the horse to crop the grass as much as it liked. Near by was a shining pool in which the water was pure and clear as crystal. The pilgrim drank long and deep. Having refreshed himself he filled his water-skin, cut some grass for his horse, and started off again.[1]

After two days' journey Hsüan-tsang came out of the desert and at last reached I-wu, the present Ha-mi. This oasis, which had long been inhabited by a Chinese military colony, had accepted, during the troubles of the Empire, the suzerainty of the Turks. Some months after Hsüan-tsang's halt there, it went over to China (630). The pilgrim

[1] This stream of water has been located at the outpost of Chang-liu-chuei, 35 miles south-east of Ha-mi, by Sir Aurel Stein (Map 34 of his *Innermost Asia*).

stayed at a monastery there where three Chinese monks still lived. One of these, a poor old man, came to meet the Master of the Law and embraced him with tears. For a long time he clasped him to his breast with cries and sobs ; then he said : " Could I ever have hoped to see once more a man from my own village ? " The Master of the Law was likewise deeply moved and could not restrain his tears.

However, the king of Kao-ch'ang, the present Turfān, the nearest oasis on the west, had been warned of the presence of Hsüan-tsang at Ha-mi. He sent ten of his officers, mounted on first-rate horses, to that town, to invite the pilgrim to visit Turfān on his way. The invitation somewhat interfered with Hsüan-tsang's plans, for he had intended to go and visit the Turkish town of Beshbaligh or Pei-t'ing further northwest of the present Guchen, on account of the Buddhist *stūpa* which was erected there and which had won for it its surname of Qagan-stūpa. But the king of Turfān was a pious Buddhist and a powerful monarch, with great influence throughout the whole of the Gobi. Hsüan-tsang complied with his request, and after a six days' march through Taranchi, Ch'i-ku-ching, Hsi-yên-chih and Pi-chang, reached Turfān.[1]

[1] In order to follow in detail Hsuan-tsang's itinerary in Central Asia, readers are recommended to use the Atlas which forms volume iv of the last publication of Sir Aurel Stein, *Innermost Asia* (Oxford, 1928).

Chapter IV

PERSIAN PAINTINGS IN THE GOBI

The kingdom of Turfān—Kao-ch'ang, as the Chinese used to call it—was in the seventh century one of the most important States of Central Asia not only politically but from the point of view of civilization.

Situated in the central part of the Gobi, and sheltered by the two mountain ranges of Bogdo-Ola and Edemen Daba in the north, and of Chol-tagh in the south, the amphitheatre of Turfān curves round the northern bank of the old, partially dried-up lake of Aïdin-Köl, which is still fed on the west by the river Dabān-ching-su. Around this depression there was at that time quite a group of thriving centres corresponding to the present sites of Toqsun, Yār, Bäzäklik, Murtuq, Sängim, Subashi, Idiqut-Shähri, Khotsho, or Qara-Khoja, and Tuyoq ; the capital itself was situated at Qara-Khoja, 25 miles to the east of the present Turfān. These are names famous in the history of archæology since the recent discoveries of the German expedition under the direction of Von Le Coq and Grünwedel. All this region, which is practically dead to-day, had an intense economic, political, and cultural life, as is proved by the magnificent stucco-work and marvellous frescoes which Von Le Coq has brought back to the *Museum für Völkerkunde* in Berlin.

It is curious that the people who in the seventh century still inhabited this district lying so close to the Celestial Empire, and still closer to the Turkish hordes of the Altaï, were neither Chinese nor Turko-Mongol. It was an Indo-European population,

speaking a dialect of that Tocharish language which, among the languages of the same family, revealed unexpected likenesses not only to Armenian and Slavonic, but even to Italo-Celtic. The frescoes of Turfān depict, moreover, many men with blue-grey eyes and red hair, strangely akin to certain European types.

At the same time the people of Turfān, like all the inhabitants of Central Asia at that period, professed Buddhism, and their educated classes were, for this reason, deeply imbued with Sanskrit culture. Recent discoveries have taught us that hundreds of the monks there used to translate the sacred books of India from Sanskrit into Tocharish. On the other hand, their material civilization was largely borrowed from China and also from Persia. Sassanid Iran, through the intermediacy of the Sogdian caravan traders, had already taught the people of Turfān part of their art, an education which was to become intensified in the following century, with the great Buddhist frescoes and the Manichean miniatures of the Uighur period.

Although the majority of the archæological specimens found in the region of Turfān appear to date from the period of Uighur rule, between about 750 and 850, Hsüan-tsang must certainly have met with some of these celebrated works of art in the shrines and palaces of the later Tocharish period : Bäzäklik stucco figurines or frescoes, representing Buddhas or' Bodhisattvas, which are the final expression, in the eastern region, of the Græco-Buddhist art of Gandhāra—Idiqut-Shähri frescoes in which we have at times some feminine divinity with Grecian head-dress, draped in Greek *palla* and *peplum*—lunar divinities of Sängim whose Indian draperies present the happiest combination of Hindu suppleness, Hellenic eloquence, and Chinese charm. By a

spontaneous reaction we are moved by the semi-Grecian faces of the Gandhāran Buddhas, insipid as they are everywhere else. We delight in the still Apollonian purity and sweetness of their oval faces. For we have here what Herr Von Le Coq happily describes as the last "stray antiques", astray in time well into the Middle Ages, and in space as far as the heart of the Gobi. Inspired by an entirely different spirit which is curiously Iranian, the handsome knights of the Bäzäklik frescoes discovered by Von Le Coq are undoubtedly contemporaries or grandsons of those lords of Turfān whom Hsüan-tsang met; the *Parsifal of Bäzäklik* in the Berlin Museum, the charming young knight whom a monk is receiving into the Order, by imposing on him the tonsure, is clearly a compatriot of that king Ch'ü Wên-t'ai who showed such zeal for the Faith that he spent whole nights listening to Hsüan-tsang. A little further on, at Murtuq, we see the faithful likeness of Tocharish or Sogdian caravan traders, with their camels and mules, who must more than once have been the travelling companions of our philosopher; for the pilgrims' route was also the great route of the silk trade.

As for China, she had given the people of Turfān their dynasty, that of the Ch'ü, who had reigned since 507. The king Ch'ü Wên-t'ai, then on the throne (*c.* 620–40), who is indeed the best known of the family, appears to have had a fairly strong personality. Bearing in mind his Chinese ancestry, or merely realising how the wind was blowing, directly T'ai-tsung ascended the throne he offered the emperor a black fox fur. Whereupon T'ai-tsung offered the queen, his wife, an ornament of golden flowers. In response Ch'ü Wên-t'ai offered T'ai-tsung a little table with a jade top. Soon after Hsüan-tsang had come that way, in December, 630,

Ch'ü Wên-t'ai had to present himself in person at the Chinese court, where he was granted the signal honour of being adopted into the imperial clan. It was only later, at the end of his life, when these honours and the prosperity of his kingdom had made him vain, that he trusted to the support of the Turkish hordes and committed the folly of associating himself with the latter in refusing the homage due to the Empire and cutting off the caravans between China and Kashgaria. Later he died of fright on learning of the approach of the imperial armies (640).

As Hsüan-tsang describes him, Ch'ü Wên-t'ai answers to the character of the proud, imperious sovereign revealed in the T'ang annals. On hearing the news that Hsüan-tsang was staying at Ha-mi, he summoned him to appear before him, and despite the protests of the pilgrim, who would have preferred a different route, he almost had him carried off by force. Hsüan-tsang arrived at Turfān after sunset. In his anxiety to see him the king did not wait for daylight. He left the palace immediately by torch-light, went to meet the pilgrim, and housed him in a magnificently appointed pavilion in a tent made of precious stuffs.

This king Ch'ü Wên-t'ai was indeed a highly devout person in spite of his violent behaviour. The speech he made to welcome Hsüan-tsang enlightens us as to the fervour of his Buddhist convictions. "Master," his biographer makes him say, "ever since your disciple heard of your arrival, he has been so overjoyed as to forget to eat or sleep. Having calculated the route you had to traverse I was able to ascertain that you would arrive to-night. For this reason my wife, my children, and myself all forbore to sleep, but spent our time reading the sacred books while respectfully awaiting you."

A few minutes later the queen, accompanied

by some scores of servants, came likewise to visit the Master of the Law, and we can well imagine these royal processions as they rise up from the dim past in Herr Von Le Coq's albums, with all the princely donors and fair ladies of Bäzäklik and Sängim.

Such was the zeal of the king of Turfān that Hsüan-tsang was constrained to grant him an interview which lasted the rest of the night. Day dawned and the pilgrim was overcome by fatigue. He was forced to give the monarch a gentle hint and was at last able to enjoy a little rest.

The first meeting was symptomatic. The devotion of the king of Turfān, indeed, was to prove strangely exacting and his protection somewhat tyrannical. Certainly he showered gifts and honours upon the Master of the Law, and placed the most illustrious monks of his kingdom at his orders. But, happy to have received a visit from so learned a doctor, he was planning to keep him with him as the spiritual director of his family and the head of the Buddhist community at Turfān. In vain did the Master of the Law explain the reasons for his journey : " I did not undertake this journey in order to receive honours ! I was grieved to discover that in my country men had but a partial understanding of Buddhist Law and that the sacred texts had become rare and defective. Troubled by painful doubts, I determined to go myself in search of the pure and authentic monuments of the Law. It was for that purpose that I set forth, in peril of my life, to the countries of the West, in order to hearken to unknown doctrines. I desire that by my efforts the divine ambrosia should not only water Indian soil but should spread over the whole of China. How can you think to stop me halfway ? I beg you, O king, to abandon your project and cease to honour me with such excessive friendship ! "

The king's reply showed that he would never

yield : " Your disciple loves you with a devotion beyond all limit. I insist on keeping you in order to offer you my homage, and it would be easier to shift the mountains of Pamir than to shake my determination ! " Hsüan-tsang was dismayed, but his resolve was none the less irrevocable. He persisted in his refusal. " Then the king, reddening angrily and stretching forth a menacing hand, cried in a loud voice : ' Your disciple will now treat you in a different fashion and we shall see whether you can depart freely ! I am determined to retain you by force, or else to have you escorted back to your own country. I invite you to think the matter over ; it is best to yield.' " The discussion was taking a dramatic turn. " It is for the sublime Law that I have come," replied Hsüan-tsang heroically. " The king will only be able to keep my bones ; he has no power over my spirit nor my will ! "

The king Ch'ü Wên-t'ai remained obdurate. At the same time he loaded the pilgrim with special honours, even going so far as to serve him at table with his own hands. Hsüan-tsang, seeing that it was impossible to move him, threatened to starve himself to death. " He sat upright and motionless, and for three days not a drop of water passed his lips. On the fourth day the king discovered that the breathing of the Master of the Law was getting weaker and weaker. Ashamed and terrified at the consequences of his severity, he prostrated himself on the ground and offered him his respectful excuses." He swore before the statue of Buddha to let his guest depart ; only then did Hsüan-tsang consent to take some nourishment.

At the request of Ch'ü Wên-t'ai, however, Hsüan-tsang agreed to remain one month longer at Turfān in order to expound his doctrine to the court and the people. " The king had a tent put up

in which three hundred people could be seated. The queen-mother, the king, the head of the monasteries of the country, and the chief officials were assembled in separate groups and listened to him with respect. Each day, when the hour for the address arrived, the king, walking in front of him with a perfume box, escorted him to the foot of the pulpit. There, kneeling humbly, he insisted on serving as his footstool, and made Hsüan-tsang get up in this way into his seat."

Not having succeeded in attaching Hsüan-tsang to his person, king Ch'ü Wên-t'ai, with the same touching devotion and the same impetuosity, made all the necessary arrangements to facilitate his journey. He had prepared for him, for the crossing of the T'ien Shan and Pamir, all the clothing required to withstand the cold—masks, gloves, boots, etc. He showered gifts upon him—gold and silver, satin and silk, every kind of provision for his needs during the journey he was planning. He gave him thirty horses and twenty-five servants. As a climax he commissioned one of his officers to conduct him to the residence of the Great Khan of the Western Turks, with whom he was on terms of intimate friendship, being almost his vassal. This was an invaluable service, as we shall see, for the empire of the Western Turks at this time, when their power was at its zenith, extended from the Altäi Mountains to Bactriana, and the success of Hsüan-tsang's pilgrimage depended on their goodwill. Ch'ü Wên-t'ai, for the same purpose, gave the Master of the Law twenty-four letters of recommendation, with an equal number of presents, to the princes of Central Asia, beginning with his neighbour, the king of Kuchā. But it is evident that at this date Turkish protection was the most important thing, and outweighed everything else. Accordingly Ch'ü Wên-t'ai, in order to ensure

for the pilgrim the favour of the Great Khan, sent the latter on the same occasion what was a veritable tribute. "He loaded two chariots with five hundred pieces of satin, intended for the Khan. These gifts were accompanied by a letter which said: 'The Master of the Law is the younger brother of your slave; he intends to go in quest of the Buddhist Law in the country of the Brahmans. I eagerly desire that the Khan should show the Master of the Law the same benevolence as he would to the slave who writes these respectful lines.'"

From this moment Hsüan-tsang's journey was destined to be carried on under quite different conditions from those that had obtained heretofore. Having left China against the will of the Court, without any political support and without any kind of help, he was at the mercy of the smallest obstacle. On the other hand, the personal protection and diplomatic intervention of the king of Turfān gave him an official standing. It meant that all the petty courts of the Gobi were open to him. It meant above all that the power of the Western Turks was at his service, for the letter of the king of Turfān to the Khan leaves us in little doubt as to the nature of the relations between these two monarchs. The former was the vassal of the second, and it was in virtue of this vassalage that he had a right to claim help and protection for his friend. This protection, moreover, would take the pilgrim up to the very gates of India; for the monarch who ruled over Bactriana was both the Khan's son and Ch'ü Wên-t'ai's son-in-law.

Hsüan-tsang, whose journey had nearly ended in Turfān, had instead found there unexpected possibilities to lead him to success. On the day of his departure Ch'ü Wên-t'ai accompanied him out of the town with the whole of his court, all the monks of the country and the bulk of the people. With tears

he took leave of the Master of the Law ; the latter promised to come and spend three years in Turfān on his return, and we know that this was to be Hsüan-tsang's first thought fourteen years later on entering Kashgaria from India. But the tragic death of his benefactor which occurred in the interval was destined to bring the pilgrim's gesture to nought.

From Turfān, Hsüan-tsang turned his steps towards the town of Yen-ch'i—the modern Qarashahr —crossing a range of mountains celebrated for its silver mines. Although Turfān and Qarashahr were at this period both States possessing a very old civilization, and formed important halting places for the caravan trade—or rather because of the latter circumstance—the tracks connecting them were often cut by bands of brigands. Hsüan-tsang noticed the corpses of several rich foreign merchants who, in order to steal a march on their rivals, had parted from the main body of their caravan. He himself fell in with a party of brigands who held him to ransom.

After these dangers he reached a remarkably prosperous country. The pilgrim describes Qarashahr as a fertile oasis which was made easy of defence by its girdle of mountains and the gorges which gave access into it. "Several rivers, which unite into one, form a sort of girdle round it." The oasis is actually watered by a picturesque river, the Qaidu-gol or Yulduz, which comes down from the chain of the Boro Khoro in a closed-in valley, in a north-westerly direction—what is called the Little Yulduz—then makes a sharp turn and flows in a parallel line in the opposite direction towards the south-east—what is called the valley of the Great Yulduz—

until the river below Qarashahr hurls itself into Lake Baghrash-kul on the western shore of which the town is built. Irrigation, which has now been abandoned, then secured for the oasis great fertility and made possible the cultivation of rice, millet, corn, the vine, pear, prune, jujube, and mango-trees.

Like Turfān, Qarashahr was at this time an Indo-European Tocharish-speaking city. As at Turfān the excavations carried out by M. Von Le Coq on the actual site of the town or a little further south, at Shorchuq, have revealed a rich civilization of Buddhist origin, with a mixed art borrowed partly from India, partly from Sassanid Iran. Hsüan-tsang's account informs us that there were some ten monasteries there, with nearly two thousand monks belonging to the Hīnayānist sect of the Sarvāstivādin. Like the king of Turfān, the king of Qarashahr showed himself a very pious Buddhist ; he too came out to meet Hsüan-tsang with his ministers and conducted him to the palace where he offered him all that the traveller could need. This reception was accorded to Hsüan-tsang as a famous monk ; for the diplomatic recommendations with which he had been provided by the people of Turfān could do him nothing but harm here, since the inhabitants of Qarashahr, being next-door neighbours of those of Turfān, had always had to suffer from the encroachments of the latter. Hence, although Hsüan-tsang personally was given the best possible reception, lodging was refused to his Turfanian escort, who were not even provided with relay horses. In consequence, Hsüan-tsang spent only one night at Qarashahr. On the next day he set out once more in the direction of Kuchā.

Qarashahr and Kuchā, which on small-scale maps look like twin towns lying close together, are in

reality separated on the north by high mountains belonging to the main T'ien Shan range. Hsüan-tsang, after " crossing a great river " (the Yulduz or Qaidu-gol) must have followed the track which runs along the foot of the mountains, by Korla and Yangi-hissar, and entered the kingdom of Kuchā, probably by the oases of Bugur and Kīrish or Yaqa-āriq.

Kuchā, which is called by the Chinese Ch'u-che, better Ch'iu-tzŭ or Ch'ü-tzŭ, and in Sanskrit Kuci, was perhaps the most important town of Central Asia. Hsüan-tsang was struck by its material prosperity and the brilliance of its civilization. " The kingdom measures about a thousand *li* from east to west, and about six hundred *li* from south to north (it will be remembered that the *li* is 624 yards). The capital is from 17 to 18 *li* in circumference. The soil is suitable for red millet and wheat. It also produces rice of the kind known as *kêng-t'ao*, grapes, pomegranates, and a large quantity of pears, plums, peaches, and apricots. There are gold-mines, as well as copper, iron, lead, and tin. Its climate is mild. The morality of the people is high. Its alphabet has been borrowed from India, with certain modifications. The musicians of this country put all others in the shade by their skill on the flute and the guitar."

The Chinese secular historians complete this description. As early as the fourth century the *Chin-shu* declares with wonder and admiration : " The palace of the king of Kuchā possesses the splendour of an abode of the spirits." For the period following, and that of Hsüan-tsang, the *Wei History* and the *T'ang History*, which take more interest than did the pious pilgrim in secular affairs, give us a glimpse of the life of pleasure awaiting the caravan traders in this fertile oasis, when they came out of the desert. The charm of the women of Kuchā was famous, as were the cosmetics and perfumes

of Persia used by them, for which Kuchā was the market. The carpets of Kuchā were also vaunted; the beauty of its peacocks which came from a mountain valley north of the town was proverbial. But, as Hsüan-tsang says, it was the excellence of its musicians, according to the *T'ang-shu*, that made the town especially renowned: "These musicians were at that time so skilful that, after a little practice, they could reproduce an air heard only once. Four dancers were attached to this orchestra. The dance known as the Five Lions, which had a long success in China, was introduced by the choirs of Kuchā." A Kuchān orchestra had, in fact, been introduced at the Chinese court, and during the whole of the T'ang period, took part in the imperial fêtes. "The musicians," we read in the *T'ang History*, "wore a turban of black silk, a robe of crimson silk, embroidered sleeves, and crimson trousers." The very names of their airs have been handed down to us: *Meeting on the Seventh Evening*, *The Jade Woman hands the Cup round*, *The Flower Show*, *The Game of Hide-the-Buckle*, etc. The old poetical, fanciful titles waft down to us something of the soul of this bygone music, from this obscure oasis in the Gobi desert, where the ancient civilizations of India and Iran lasted far into the Middle Ages right up to the eve of the Turkish conquest.[1]

The population of Kuchā, like that of Turfān and Qarashahr, was still Indo-European at this period. The language spoken there, Kuchān, is one of the two known dialects of those Tocharish languages

[1] A charming legend, brought back by the pilgrim Wu K'ung (790), takes the melodies of Tocharish music for the transcription of the song of the waterfall. "In these mountains there is a stream which flows away drop by drop, producing the sound of music; once a year, at a certain date, these sounds are collected and made into a musical tune. . . ." (Translated by Chavannes, *J. A.*, 1895, ii, 364.)

which are not only related to Iranian and Sanskrit, but also, and perhaps even more closely, to our ancient Western languages, such as Latin and Celtic. So that certain scholars have gone so far as to consider Kuchā as " a forgotten Italo-Celtic oasis in the middle of the Gobi ".

However that may be, culturally Kuchā was saturated with Indian and Iranian influences. It was Indian in religion and art. One name alone suffices to recall the importance that Sanskrit studies had assumed there, owing to Buddhism—the name of Kumārajīva. This monk, " perhaps the greatest," says Sylvain Lévi, " of all the translators who transmitted to China the spirit and the writings of Indian Buddhism," had consecrated his life (between 344 and 413) to the same task as did the Master of the Law, Hsüan-tsang, two and a half centuries later. The son of an Indian who lived at Kuchā and of the daughter of a king of that country, he had gone when quite young to Kashmir, where he took orders and became an expert in the knowledge of Sanskrit literature from the Vedas to the texts of Hīnayānist Buddhism. Before he was twenty years old he returned to Kuchā and there was converted to the Mahāyāna doctrine by a son of the king of Yārkand. He remained in his native town until 383, when a Chinese invading army carried him off to Northern China. Both in China as well as in Kuchā he translated an enormous number of Buddhist treatises, notably the *Lotus of the True Law*, various metaphysical works of the Mādhyamika school, and the delightful Sūtrālaṁkāra. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that it was through the intermediacy of Kuchā that a large part of Sanskrit literature has been transmitted to the Farther East.

With the religion of Śākyamuni Indian art in its twofold form—Græco-Buddhist and Gupta—found at

Kuchā the land of its adoption. Amongst the stuccos of Qizil, Qumtura, and Duldur-Aqur we observe heads of Brahmans, of mlēchchas or yakṣas whose foreign appearance may have struck Hsüan-tsang, for they were, here as in Gandhāra, figures of Zeus, Herakles, or Silenus, adapted to Buddhist iconography. Further on we have classic draperies, nude ephebi worthy of a Greek vase, erotic scenes reminding us of a classic banquet, figurines reminiscent of Alexandria, charming feminine statuettes whose elegance might come either from Ch'ang-an or Myrina. And these delicious "stray antiques" are found again by M. Pelliot at Tumshuq on the road from Kuchā to Kāshgar, in the series of stucco heads which to-day adorn one of the windows of his room at the Musée Guimet ; a head of a bearded foreigner whose subtle smile might belong to an Athenian philosopher of the best period ; a Roman head of a monk — a thin, sharp, cunning, or fat Roman Vitellian head ; mlēchchas that are like satyrs or Socrateses, etc. With such works as these the Chinese pilgrims like Hsüan-tsang were able, unconsciously, to come into contact at Kuchā with the art of the Græco-Roman world, of that distant Ta-ch'in and Fu-lin (Rome and Roman Asia) of which the Chinese already had a fair notion. These stuccos, moreover, are almost contemporaneous with the Master of the Law, for they date for the most part from the sixth century of our era. We must remember that, at this period, Greek art at Byzantium was no longer anything but a memory ; its belated and almost posthumous glory still lived on, however, in Kashgaria. Thus the light from a star dead centuries ago continues to reach us across space and time.

Contemporaneously with Indo-Greek art, the Indian art proper of the Gupta studios was directly influencing the Kuchān district. It is enough to recall on this

subject a fresco in the grotto of Māyā at Qizil, earlier than the eighth century, in which, in a representation of the Four Great Miracles, a queen Māyā, in the attitude of a dancer before the tree of the Nativity, is directly related to the most supple female figures of Ajaṇṭā.

Iranian influences were no less obvious. If Kuchā, from the literary and religious points of view, formed an integral part of "Outer India", from the point of view of material civilization it was at the same time a province of "Outer Iran". Nothing is more suggestive, in this context, than the paintings brought back to the Berlin Museum by Von Le Coq.[1] We see in them the accentuation of the ethnic type of the Tocharish population, which still ruled in the town in the seventh century, and also the charm that Persian culture exercised on them.

The frescoes of Qizil and Qumtura (which certainly date for the most part from this very seventh century) show us with curious precision the brilliant Kuchān society with which Hsüan-tsang came in contact. And this is truly surprising, for here in this dead oasis of the Gobi we behold, resuscitated in all its freshness, a brilliant array of knightly heroes who seem to have stepped out of some page of Persian miniatures. Here there is no longer any touch of China or India—only an artistic Iranian province, forgotten on the threshold of the Farthest East, which, having escaped the Moslem catastrophe, forms the link between the Sassanid painting of Bāmiyān and Dokhtar-i Noshirwān and

[1] Excellent reproductions in colour in Von Le Coq's volumes, *Die buddhistische Spätantike in Mittelasien.*

Timurid or Safawid painting. But, by a curious coincidence, this Persia of the Gobi is found to be closely akin, in artistic conceptions and material culture, to our Western world of the Middle Ages ; in external appearance, general style, even atmosphere, the knighthood of Qizil and Qumtura is twin-brother to our own.

Here, in his youthful grace—like a page from Benozzo Gozzoli or Bihzād !—stands the artist of genius who painted his own portrait in the grotto of Qizil, called after him " the Grotto of the Painter ". Delicately holding his pot of colours in his left hand, he is drawing on the wall, with the zest and fervour of a Fra Angelico, the picture of some Bodhisattva, some scene from the " previous lives ", or some paradise of purity. He is nevertheless only a Kuchān of middle rank, as is shown by the weapon he wears at his waist, which, instead of the aristocratic sword, is only the broad, short dagger with handle fashioned in the shape of a rectangle or of a fleur-de-lys. And yet what elegance in the jerkin fitting closely to the waist and ornamented on the right of the collar by the large rectangular or triangular flap characteristic of Kuchān costume ! Moreover, the long knee-boots remind us of the fact that in this Indo-European isle of Kuchā, this true ethnic oasis in which the whole population composed a kind of aristocracy, the artists themselves were knights.

And here we have the aristocracy proper as they pass in procession before us, depicted on the walls at Qizil and Qumtura by our painter and his rivals. Here in the *Grotto of the Sixteen Swordbelts* we have a whole group of knights who might have formed part of Hsüan-tsang's escort, for they date from this same seventh century. What a surprise to find here men of our own race, with faces of a perfect oval, long, straight noses, and arched eyebrows.

They are truly of our race, for except when the complexion is henna-dyed, the majority are of a ruddy hue which has nothing Iranian about it. There is an extraordinary elegance in these delicate physiognomies, clean shaven except for an imperceptible moustache, and in the fashion peculiar to the district of parting the hair in two locks in the middle of the forehead, while the rest is brushed back to the nape of the neck and tied with a ribbon. Just as they were when Hsüan-tsang might have admired them one day in the year 629, so they appear before us to-day on the walls of the Berlin Museum, whither Herr Von Le Coq has transported their portraits — slender young gallants of good proportions, standing poised on tip-toe, in their parade dress.

For we know even their latest fashion in dress, even their favourite colours. We have watched them march past in their long, straight "frock-coats", drawn in at the waist by a metal waist-belt and widening out as they fall over the knees. We have observed, either on the right side only as in the case of *the Painter* above, or on both sides of the collar as in the case of nobles of the highest rank, the large lapel, highly ornamented and indeed most becoming, which remains the characteristic feature of Kuchān elegance. With the evidence before us we might assume the pleasant task (for it is certainly a feast for the eyes) of enumerating the trimmings, floral designs, lace insertion, embroidery, and ornamentation of various kinds which cover not only these lapels but the broad bands on the edge of the tunics. And that the picture may be more complete, let us note the colours, which time has scarcely at all toned down, and which, moreover, would not have needed any toning down, for all this Kuchān aristocracy appears to have had a preference for neutral tones

and modified tints. We need only look at these white tunics ornamented with borders of milky blue, or the pale blue tunics with white borders, or the brown jerkins decorated with little white flowers, bordered with a very soft olive green set off by medallions of pearly white. We seem to see here that Persian taste for symphonies in mild tones which is later revealed in the frescoes of the Chehel Sutūn or the pottery of the great mosque at Ispahan.

Sometimes the luxury of the Kuchān costumes reaches a degree of unparalleled splendour, thanks to the wealth amassed on the eve of its disappearance by this Indo-European oasis which commanded the Silk Route. We need but look at the group of donors at Kirish, Buddhist "magi-kings" kneeling before the Buddha: blue toques trimmed with fur and pearl-beading, olive-green cloak lined with ermine, with collar of brown fur, long grey jerkin with large white lapels edged with blue, drawn in at the waist by a crimson belt from which hangs the purse of the rich caravan traders; bell-sleeves from beneath which appear under-sleeves of blue, with green borders; the whole dotted with passementerie, flowers, and stars; it might be a costume for the festival of the Golden Fleece, in some manuscript of our fifteenth century.

Yet in spite of its refined civilization Kuchā was but an oasis in the Gobi, surrounded and coveted by all the Turko-Mongol hordes. Thus, on pain of being swept away, these elegant Kuchān lords were forced to remain warriors. Right up to the foot of the Buddhist altars, and even in their portraits of suppliants or of donors, it is as steel-clad knights that they appear before us. For here again the pious Buddhist painters of Qizil have not left us in ignorance of a single detail. Sometimes the coats of mail come

down as far as the knee, in the Sassanid fashion, more often they only cover the shoulders and breast, the abdomen being protected by a corselet of supple bands. As for the Kuchān sword, the long, straight sword with slender handle in the form of a cross, and pommel shaped like a ball, a mushroom, or a fleur-de-lys, we are familiar with it ; it is the great sword of our knights, their weapon for hacking and hewing, made to be brandished in both hands. Scabbards and handles are, moreover, wonderfully worked, in a design of roses, stars, coffers, and flowers, which bears witness to the taste of these noble lords.

As in our mediaeval armies, we see floating above the ranks of the Kuchān knights magnificent scalloped oriflammes (usually three points to each banner) attached to the ends of the lances and sometimes ornamented, close to the shaft, with a heraldic tiger or dragon. On the crest of the helmets—conical helmets that recall our Bayeux tapestry—stand other heraldic beasts, and even the horses carry on their foreheads plumes floating in the wind. Whoever sees such a be-plumed cavalcade in the grotto of Māyā at Qizil will be able to visualize the escort of the king of Kuchā, as it must have been when it went to meet Hsüan-tsang.

And here, finally, we meet the Kuchān ladies, in very truth the visions of beauty that we are led to expect by the *T'ang-shu*. Here they all stand, at Qizil and Qumtura, donors and devotees, thronging around the altars of Buddha with their quite worldly elegance. They pass before us in their rich bodices which mould the bust and fit tightly to the waist, cut on either side of the breast by the large triangular lapel of the Kuchān costume, their long trailing skirts, billowing and becoming very wide at the bottom as the fashion decreed, lapel,

belt, and borders of bodice and skirt being embroidered with the medallions, pearl ornaments and flowers so dear to Tocharish taste.

Naturally, the whims of fashion invent a thousand variations on this general theme. The Kuchān ladies at times wear long, narrow sleeves, at others bell-sleeves leaving room for the sleeve of an under-garment. The bodice may end in flaps, cut with sharp points, to which are attached tassels or little bells. As for the colours of the women's costumes, they are usually of the same shades as the men's—jackets of milky white, with pale blue lapel and brownish-purple border, and white skirts with violet stripes ; olive-green bodices with white borders, black bodices with a trimming of white and green, white bodices with black trimming, blue bodices with gilt border, green or pale blue skirts striped with yellow . . . colours of a bygone time, costumes of another age, worn by the fair ladies of a vanished race, in the heart of the Gobi desert, thirteen hundred years ago.

The majority of these donors are holding the precious articles which they have come to offer to Buddha : multicoloured scarves or jewelled collars, cups, and lamp-holders. Often, too, they are holding the stalk of a flower with an affected air which we shall meet with again later in the Uighur-Buddhist and Uighur-Manichean paintings of Turfān, as well as in classical Persian painting.

But for those who are interested in the period of Hsüan-tsang the frescoes of Qizil have an even more delightful surprise in store. The grotto of Māyā, which appears to date from the seventh and eighth centuries, has actually bequeathed to us the authentic portraits of a king and queen of Kuchā. Like the majority of his subjects, the king has reddish-brown hair with two forelocks divided

by a middle parting. He wears an upper garment which is open, and green in colour, with a broad brown border trimmed with gold embroidery. The sleeves, bell-shaped and ending in embroidery at the elbow, leave room for a green under-sleeve, long and narrow, finished off in its turn by a trimming in white, brown, and gold. The trousers are brown and the shoes white. As for the queen, she wears a green jacket with bell sleeves ; this bodice which, in conformity with Kuchān fashion, fits tightly at the waist and widens out at the hips, bears the usual large lapels, which are in this case navy blue, with a brown border dotted with white and gold. Beneath the bell sleeve appear long under-sleeves, striped in blue and brown. The skirt, cut very wide, is white with a pattern of blue and brown flowers. A round, gilt head-dress completes this royal costume.

Such, undoubtedly, was the appearance of the persons who, in the great Tocharish city, greeted the Chinese pilgrims of the seventh century. And no spectacle in history is more moving when we reflect that we have here, before our very eyes, the last representatives of that Indo-European population of the Gobi, so curiously like us in race and aspect, which some decades later was to disappear for ever in the Turkish conquest.

At the time of Hsüan-tsang's visit the throne of Kuchā was still occupied by a Tocharish dynasty. The names of several princes of this family contain a root translated in Chinese by the words Su-fa, corresponding to the Sanskrit Suvarṇa, which implies the notion of a " Golden Dynasty ". The king who was Hsüan-tsang's contemporary was thus called in Chinese Su-fa Tieh, or in Sanskrit Suvarṇa Dēva,

and in the native Tocharish Swarnatep, that is to say, "the golden god." He was the son and successor of King Su-fa Pu-shih, in Sanskrit Suvarṇa Pushpa, "flower of gold." Like all the petty Tocharish kings of the Gobi, he was an extremely devout Buddhist. His kingdom contained no less than five thousand monks to whom he gave active protection, beginning with their head, the venerable Mokshagupta, who was his spiritual adviser. On the other hand, Swarnatep was at this time on very friendly terms with China. As early as the accession of the T'angs in 618 his father Suvarṇa Pushpa had sent an embassy to pay homage to the court of Ch'ang-an. Swarnatep himself, shortly after Hsüan-tsang's visit, in 630, sent the emperor T'ai-tsung a tribute of horses, and received as recompense an imperial warrant of investiture.

Being a devout Buddhist, anxious to win the favour of the Chinese, it was quite natural that Swarnatep should give Hsüan-tsang a warm welcome. Indeed, at the news of the pilgrim's arrival he went out to meet him with the chief officers of his court and the monks of the district. When the procession came back into the town, a monk brought Hsüan-tsang a basket of newly-blown flowers, which the latter went and laid before the statue of Buddha. The Master of the Law visited the monasteries of Kuchā (there were a dozen of them) in turn, and in each he was presented with flowers and wine to offer to the Buddhist images.

Unfortunately, the Buddhism practised at Kuchā was that of the Lesser Vehicle, the *Hīnayāna*. The conversion of Kumārajīva to the Great Vehicle had borne no fruit. King Swarnatep invited the Master of the Law to his own table, but he refused, since the menu contained certain meats (the "Three Pure Dishes"), allowed by the tolerance of the *Hīnayāna*, but severely interdicted by the Mahāyānists. Among

the native monks the disagreement was rendered more serious by philosophical considerations. Their doctrine was borrowed from the ancient schools of the Vaibhāshika and Sautrāntika, the former definitely realist and even atomistic, the latter more phenomenalist, but with a phenomenalism still purely positivist. Hsüan-tsang, idealist as he was in his metaphysics, had nothing but scorn for such intellectual positions. In vain did the most revered doctor of Kuchā, Mokshagupta, refer to the fundamental texts of the *Vibhāshaśāstra* and *Abidharmakośaśāstra*. "In China," replied Hsüan-tsang, "we too have these two works, but since I saw with regret that their contents were commonplace and superficial, I left my own country in order to study especially the Mahāyānist texts, such as the *Yogaśāstra* (that is to say, the doctrine of mystic idealism)." Mokshagupta repeated the accusation brought against the doctrine of the *Mahāyāna* by the adherents of the Lesser Vehicle, namely, that it was a new teaching arbitrarily superimposed upon and in opposition to the precepts of Śakyamuni: "What is the use of inquiring into these books which contain only erroneous opinions? They are works which the true disciples of Buddha do not study!" For the moment Hsüan-tsang could not control his indignation: "The *Yogaśāstra*," he cried, "was expounded by a sage who was an incarnation of the Bodhisattva Maitreya. In calling it now an erroneous book, do you not fear to be hurled into a bottomless abyss?"

These discussions between philosophers were taking on the acrimonious tone of monkish quarrels. Hsüan-tsang, however, while protesting vehemently against the doctrine of the Kuchā monks, admitted loyally their erudition in the writings of the Lesser Vehicle, and the saintliness of their lives. On his

side, the old sage Mokshagupta, despite Hsüan-tsang's harangue, continued to visit him. The situation could not be avoided, since the snow that covered the T'ien-Shan on the Muzart side obliged the pilgrim to remain two months longer at Kuchā. But—and here we have the proof that these doctrinal discussions had not caused too much bitterness—on the day when the temperature allowed Hsüan-tsang to leave Kuchā, King Swarnatep gave him servants, camels, horses, a whole caravan, and accompanied him well into the outskirts of the town, followed by the monks and lay devotees of the town.

Chapter V

ON THE EVE OF THE SHATTERING OF THE HORDES

Leaving Kuchā by the Qizil route, Hsüan-tsang crossed the Muzart river, no doubt to the south-west of Bai, and then, by Aqsu, which he calls Po-lu-ch'ia, the Ku-mo of the *T'ang History*, he went in the direction of the T'ien-Shan. This district was governed by the western Turks, whose khan lived during the summer close by, at Aqtagh, "the White Mountain," to the north of Kuchā. It formed a Turkish kingdom, lying on either side of the T'ien-Shan mountains, and comprising on the one hand the present-day Chinese province of Ili, on the other the modern Russian provinces of Semiryechensk and Sīr-daryā. But this empire of the steppes, that had regular diplomatic relations with China, the Tocharish oases, the Sassanid empire, and Byzantium, afforded no protection against the insecurity of the roads. No doubt it had only a feeble organization. Indeed, two days after his departure from Kuchā, Hsüan-tsang met a party of two thousand Turkish riders who had just looted a caravan, and were still quarrelling over the spoils. "The matter had given rise to lively disputes which they settled by force of arms, and then dispersed." This pillaging of a caravan, and after the deed the brawl amongst the marauders, are the constant episodes of the steppe and the desert . . .

After this encounter the pilgrim, leaving the Tocharish valleys, went back along the Aqsu river, and then, passing round the south of the peak

of the Tengri Khan, 23,600 feet in altitude, crossed the chain of the T'ien-Shan on the side of the Bedal pass, which gives access from the basin of the Tārīm to the upper valley of the Naryn, that is to say to the basin of the Sīr-daryā. This slope of the T'ien-Shan is covered with glaciers, which Hsüan-tsang, in anticipation of the great modern explorers, describes very picturesquely: "This mountain of ice forms the northern angle of Pamir. It is most dangerous, and its summit rises to the skies. From the beginning of the world the snow has accumulated on it, and has turned into blocks of ice which melt neither in spring-time nor in summer. They roll away in boundless sheets of hard, gleaming white, losing themselves in the clouds. If one tries to look steadily at them their brilliance dazzles the eyes. One sees peaks of ice, leaning over the sides of the route, some of them as much as 100 feet high, others two or three dozen feet wide. The latter cannot be crossed without great difficulty nor the former climbed without peril. Add to this hurricanes of wind and whirlwinds of snow which attack one constantly, so that even with lined shoes and clothing trimmed with fur it is impossible not to shiver with cold. When you wish to eat or sleep, you cannot find a dry spot to sit down. There is nothing for it but to raise a support for the saucepan in order to prepare your food, and to spread mats on the snow." This crossing of the T'ien-Shan cost Hsüan-tsang's caravan thirteen or fourteen men, who died from hunger or cold, not counting a far larger number of oxen and horses.

Descending the northern slope of the T'ien-Shan, Hsüan-tsang turned towards the Issiq-Kul, going along its southern bank. The Issiq-Kul or "warm lake", in Chinese Jo-hai, is so called because it never freezes. "This lake," Hsüan-tsang notes, "is about a thousand *li* in circumference. It

is long from east to west and narrow from south to north. On all sides it is surrounded by mountains ; a great number of rivers flow into it. The colour of the water is a greenish-black and it tastes salt and bitter. At times its vast waves spread out in immense sheets, and at times they swell and heave violently." The comparative warmth of its waters and the fact that on its banks the snow is seldom thick made the neighbourhood the winter quarters of the Turkish chiefs. It was on the north-west of the lake, near the town of Sui-yeh, the Toqmaq of to-day, that Hsüan-tsang met the great Khan of the Western Turks, T'ung the *yabgu*, in Chinese T'ung Shih-hu, who was hunting at the time. This was at the beginning of the year 630.

The empire of the Western Turks had reached its zenith. Since the middle of the sixth century, when their khan Ishtämi had crushed the last Ephthalite Huns, they had ruled supreme from the Altaï to the Oxus and Badakhshan. For one moment dreams even more ambitious had haunted the imagination of the Turkish kings. Ishtämi had elaborated a vast scheme, for his own profit and to the detriment of Sassanid Persia, for a political alliance and commercial intercourse between the Far East and Byzantium. A Turkish ambassador, Sogdian by race, Maniach, had come to solicit the alliance of the Byzantines (567–8), and in the following year a Byzantine ambassador, Zemarchus, had visited the summer residence of the Khan, near Kuchā (568–9).

The Turko-Byzantine military alliance against the Persians had not materialized, but when we are surprised at the Mediterranean influences shown in the frescoes at Kuchā, it is well not to forget with what facility an imperial ambassador went, at the height of the Turkish hegemony, from Constantinople into a Tocharish country. On the other hand,

it is relevant to point out that this original Turkey was not entirely devoid of culture either. About 580 the Khan T'o-po, under the influence of the Gandhāran monk Jinagupta, had been converted to Buddhism, and his successor, T'ung the *yabgu*, showed similar religious sympathies at the time of Hsüan-tsang's visit.

This nomad king was a powerful ruler, his frontiers touching on the one hand Persia, on the other the Chinese empire. "He was valiant and prudent and excelled in warfare, both in attack and in defence," say the *T'ang Annals*. Profiting, no doubt, from the terrible war which had just broken out between Chosroës II, king of Persia, and the Byzantine emperor Heraclius, he had added to his predecessors' encroachments on the side of Bactria, and had established his hegemony as far as Gandhāra. In order to keep a better watch on Iran he had set up his capital at Chāsh, the present Tāshkent, the Shih of the Chinese. On the north-east, as the account of Hsüan-tsang bears witness, the king of Turfān was his client and almost his vassal. On the south, one of his sons reigned in Bactria. "He had the hegemony," says the *T'ang History*, "over the countries of the West. As for the kings of these countries, he sent *tudun* (Turkish dignitaries) to watch them and to levy taxes and dues. Never had the Barbarians of the West been so powerful." He was prudent withal, and coquetted with the T'ang court, which he treated with consideration in order to keep his hands free on the Iran side. In 620 he had solicited the hand of a Chinese infanta and a little later (627) had offered the court of Ch'ang-an a belt of fine gold, adorned with ten thousand jewels in the form of nails, and five thousand horses. On his side the emperor T'ai-tsung, who was still grappling with the Mongol Turks and who thought that "it is best

to ally oneself with those who are far off against those who are near", had been careful not to repulse these advances, and although he had managed to avoid sending an infanta, he treated the Khan of the West, for the time being, as a faithful friend.

The description that Hsüan-tsang has left us of the Turkish king reminds us of some Attila or Jenghiz-Khan. "The horses of these barbarians were exceedingly numerous. The khan wore a coat of green satin, and allowed all his hair to show; only his forehead was encircled by a silken band, 10 feet long, which was twisted round several times, and hung down behind. He was surrounded by about two hundred officers clad in brocade coats, all of them with their hair in plaits. The rest of the troops consisted of cavalry mounted on camels or horses, clothed in fur and fine woollen material and carrying long lances, banners, and straight bows. Their ranks stretched so far that the eye could not follow them. . . ." [1]

[1] Cf. this picture with the one drawn by Sung Yün, in 518, of another barbarian people, the Ephthalite Huns, who had preceded the Turks in the domination of the western steppes, before being wiped out by them between 563 and 567. "The Ephthalites do not dwell in walled towns; a movable camp is the seat of their government. Their dwellings are of felt. They move about in search of water and pasture, betaking themselves in summer to cool spots and in winter to mild districts. . . . The king has a large tent erected for himself, made of felt, and 40 feet square; the partition-walls all round are made of woollen mats. He wears garments of embroidered silk; he sits on a golden bed, the feet of which consist of four golden phœnixes. His principal wife also wears a garment of embroidered silk which trails on the ground for more than 3 feet. On her head she wears a horn 8 feet in height. On this horn are set ornaments of precious stones in five colours. . . . Of all the barbarians the Ephthalites are the most powerful. They do not believe in the Buddhist Law, but serve a great number of divinities. They kill living creatures and eat raw meat. The various neighbouring kingdoms offer them large quantities of jewels and of rare articles." (Translated by Chavannes.)

The appearance of this nomad cavalry evidently impressed Hsüan-tsang. Indeed, the vision he conjures up is one of a whole history on the march: in the high valley of Semiryechensk the Chinese pilgrim had just lighted upon the reserve forces of the Barbarians.

Can we not, in fact, picture to ourselves these hordes assembled in the expectation of coming onslaughts? The site is that wild region of the Issiq-Kul up there on the far side of the T'ien-Shan, one slope of which faces the Chinese world, the other the Iranian. The historical moment is the decisive hour in the destiny of Asia, that seventh century which was to see the Tocharish land conquered by the China of the T'angs, yielding in future without a struggle to the occupation of the Uighur tribes—an India still united under King Harsha giving place to a feudalism which was to be swept away by the first Ghaznevid onrush—the Sassanid empire, that barrier against which the Turkish expansion was flinging itself, broken by Islam and giving place to a Moslem Persia in which the Turkish *condottiere* was to make his fortune before the establishment of the Turkish Sultan; finally, behind Persia, Byzantium, the fabulous Rūm wounded by Islam with a wound which was only to heal in 1453. . . .

This gathering of nomads about the khan of 630 was a little like the farewell review of the Turkish empire of yore to its momentarily reunited tribes. For the Turkish empire, the old T'u-chüeh empire as the Chinese say, was about to be broken up. A few more years, and that very T'ai-tsung who had just defeated their brothers in Mongolia was to crush the Turks of Turkestan also; but only in appearance, for the tribes, recovering their liberty by the fall of the last centralizing khanate, were to exert once more,

against the neighbouring empires, their formidable freedom of action ; and the onslaught, which could be checked by the sword or by gold when it depended on one single leader, became irresistible as soon as it was a question of anonymous hordes, broken clans, anarchical troops, springing up from every quarter of the horizon of the steppe. The Kuriltai of the winter of 630, the assembly of the T'u-chüeh squadrons at which Hsüan-tsang was present, was in truth the final muster of all the Turks still gathered together in their native land before they separated their banners and set out for unknown destinies and heroic histories. We may imagine Hsüan-tsang seeing for the last time the ancestors of Seljūq gathered together with those of Mahmūd of Ghazna, of Mohammed of Khwārizm, of the Turks of the great army of Jenghiz-Khan, of Tīmūr, and of Mahomet II. And it is this terrible time of waiting, this formidable unknown element in the squadrons hidden away in a fold of the Ala-tau, that makes so powerful an impression on us in the pilgrim's narrative.

For the moment, however, these fierce swash-bucklers, kept in bounds on the east by the empire of the T'angs, and on the south-west by the great Sassanid kings, seemed in a fairly good humour. They showed, moreover, a great respect for things religious. Not that they themselves practised any very definite religion. Hsüan-tsang only credits them with a sort of fire-worship, no doubt inspired by Persian Mazdeism. But they also reverenced Buddhism. T'ung the *yabgu* had even had for some time as his guest an Indian missionary named Prabhākaramitra who had taken upon himself the task of converting the Turks. Prabhākaramitra had visited the court of the khan with ten companions, and had pleased his host so greatly that the latter had parted with him only with the greatest reluctance when,

in 626, the missionaries decided to go and carry on their apostolate in China. Thus, when Hsüan-tsang arrived four years later, this same khan must have remembered with emotion his former spiritual director.

When the hunting was over, the khan invited the pilgrim to his residence at Toqmaq. "The khan dwelt in a large tent decorated with golden flowers whose brilliance dazzled the eye. His officials had had long mats spread out, and on these they sat, in two rows, all wearing splendid costumes of brocaded silk. The khan's guard stood behind them. Although he was only a barbarian sovereign, living under a tent of felt, one could not look at him without a mingled feeling of admiration and respect." It is curious, when we read these lines, to recall the pages in which western travellers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries record, in almost identical terms, the impression of majesty produced on beholding the descendants of Jenghiz-Khan.

Another scene that we find later in Rubruquis is that of the drinking-parties which marked the occasion of the reception of foreign ambassadors. During Hsüan-tsang's visit the khan had to receive Chinese envoys and ambassadors from the king of Turfān. "He invited the envoys to be seated and commanded that wine be offered them, to the accompaniment of musical instruments. The khan drank with the foreign envoys; and he asked for raisin wine separately, which he offered the Master of the Law. The guests, growing more and more lively, then accosted one another, challenging one another to drink, clashing their cups together, filling and emptying them in turn; while this was going on, there sounded the crashing chords of the barbarian music from north and south, east and west. Although they were half-savage airs, they charmed the ear and rejoiced the mind and the heart. Shortly afterward, fresh

dishes were served—quarters of mutton and boiled veal, which were lavishly piled up in front of the guests. . . ."

The consideration shown to Hsüan-tsang during the course of this feast proves the respect of the khan for religion. The Master of the Law had been made to sit in an arm-chair of solid iron. He had had specially prepared for him "pure food", rice cakes, cream, milk, crystallized sugar, honey, and raisins. And at the end of the banquet the khan begged him to expound the Buddhist law. Before this assembly of the chiefs of the hordes the Master expounded, therefore, the essential principles of his faith : love for all living creatures, the means by which to reach the Other Shore and to obtain final deliverance. When the preacher had finished, "the khan raised his hands and prostrated himself to the ground ; then, with radiant countenance, he declared that he received this teaching with faith."

Having taken a liking for the pilgrim, he sought, as the king of Turfān had done before him, to dissuade him from continuing his journey. "Master," he said to him, "You must not go to India. It is such a hot country that the temperature is the same in winter as in summer. I fear your face might melt when you arrive there. The inhabitants are black. The majority are naked, and have no respect for the conventions, nor do they merit a visit from you." "Such as you see me," replied Hsüan-tsang, "I burn with longing to go and seek the Law of Buddha and consult the ancient monuments in order to follow lovingly in his footsteps."

The khan bowed. He ordered an interpreter to draw up letters of introduction to the petty princes of the Gandhāran region, who were his vassals. Then he ordered this interpreter to accompany the pilgrim with these letters as far as the frontier of Kapiśa

in the valley of Kabul. It was largely owing to the official protection of this powerful Turkish ruler that Hsüan-tsang was so easily to cross the passes of Pamir and Bactria. This, as it happened, was destined to be one of the last political acts of T'ung the *yabgu*. Soon after Hsüan-tsang's departure, in that same year 630, he met his death by assassination, and the ten Turkish tribes of the west were divided into two khanates separated by the Issiq-Kul, as a preliminary to the final disintegration.

Hsüan-tsang, after taking leave of the khan, set out again for the West. He crossed the plain, on the north of the Alexandra mountains, where the nine rivers that feed the Chu and the ten rivers that feed its tributary, the Kuragati, have their source. This is the region still called to-day the Land of the Thousand Springs or Thousand Pools (Ming bulak, Ming köl). "This country is about 200 *li* square. On the south it is bounded by snowy mountains, and on the other three sides by smooth plains. The ground is well watered and the forest trees are as remarkable for their height as for the wealth of their foliage. In the last month of spring, flowers of all varieties sparkle on the ground like a rich embroidery. There are a multitude of lakes and pools, whence has arisen the name of a Thousand Pools. The moisture that prevails there makes everything sweet and fresh. It is there that the khan retires every year to escape the summer heat. One sees there multitudes of stags, decorated with little belts and rings. They are used to men and do not run away at sight of them. The khan loves them and delights to see them. He has issued a decree to his subjects, announcing that whoever shall dare to kill a single one of them shall be punished by death. For that reason, all the stags are able to end their days in peace."

The pilgrim next crossed the Talas river, passed through the town of the same name (Ta-lo-ssŭ in Chinese, Auliata to-day), then went down again on the south-west towards Chāsh, the present Tāshkent, which the Chinese used to call the town of Shih ; he crossed doubtless where the present village of Chināz stands, the Sīr-daryā, formerly the Jaxartes, which he calls the Ye-ye. From there, in order to reach Samarqand, he had to cross the eastern spur of the Desert of Red Sands, Qizil Qum, which separates the lower reach of the Sīr-daryā from that of the Amū-daryā. "It is a great sandy desert where neither water nor grass is to be seen. The route stretches out of sight and it is impossible to calculate its limits. One has to look at some high mountain in the distance and search for abandoned skeletons in order to find out in what direction to go and to recognize the path to be followed." After about 156 miles in these solitudes he arrived at the Qarādaryā or Zarafshān, which is the river of Samarqand.

Samarqand, which the Chinese call Sa-mo-chien (or simply K'ang, the name of all the Sogdian region), was a very ancient city in the seventh century, since it is already found mentioned, under the name of Marakanda, nine centuries earlier, at the time of the expedition of Alexander the Great. Guardian of Iranian culture on the borderland of the North-East, it had managed even ethnically to preserve its Iranian nature. The language spoken there was an East-Iranian dialect, the "Sogdian" recently discovered by the Pelliot and Gauthiot expeditions, which had followed in the wake of the caravans from Samarqand across the tracks of the Gobi as far as Tun-huang. "The men of this country," we are told in the *T'ang History*, "excel in commerce and worship material gain. As soon as a man is

twenty years old, he goes away to the neighbouring kingdoms . . . Wherever there is money to be made, they go." It was precisely at the time with which we are concerned, between 627 and 649, that a Sogdian colony went and settled at the eastern issue of the Gobi, in the region of Lop-nōr, where M. Pelliot came upon the traces of it.

The economic importance of Sogdiana was clearly recognized by Hsüan-tsang. Being the terminus of the caravan routes between Iran and China, Samarqand, he tells us, "possessed an immense quantity of rare and precious merchandise." It was also one of the best cultivated oases of the Iranian East. "The soil is rich and fertile, all kinds of grain thrive there, the vegetation of the forests is magnificent, and there is a marvellous wealth of flowers and fruits." We may add, with the Chinese author, that the pasture lands of Qarā-daryā nourish a race of famous stallions : the Transoxianan chargers, before they carried the cavalry of Seljuq as far as the Marmara and the Timurid squadrons to the Ægean and the Jumna, were already celebrated in all the markets of the Far and of the Near East.

Culture in Transoxiana—an impression we gain strongly from Hsüan-tsang himself—leaned wholly towards Sassanid Persia. The alphabet of the country, the "Sogdian" alphabet, had been borrowed from Aramaic writing, to which Sassanid Persia also owed its own. The dominant religion was always that of Zoroaster, Mazdeism, the national religion of the Iranians and more especially of the Sassanid dynasty. In religion, however, these Sogdian caravan traders of Central Asia found themselves in daily contact with Buddhism. And politically, Transoxiana had for a long time (since the fall of the Achæmenids) kept itself apart from the Iranian federation. After belonging to the

Macedonians and the Græco-Bactrians (fourth to second century B.C.) it had passed over to the Indo-European Scythians, our "Indo-Scythians" (second century B.C. to fifth century of our era), and had then fallen into the hands of a Mongol horde, the wild Ephthalite Huns (fifth century), from whom it had been freed in the middle of the sixth century by the Turks of the Altaï, who were considerably more civilized. When Hsüan-tsang came that way in 630, it formed a Turko-Iranian kingdom with Samarqand for its capital. Indeed, in spite of the undeniably Iranian character of all the local culture, the king of the country, who bore the Turkish title of nobility "tarkhan", was more or less the vassal of the Great Khan of the Western Turks, to whom he was attached also by family connections.

But for this population of agriculturists and traders the suzerainty of semi-nomad hordes was not without its dangers. The Iranian culture of Sogdiana must have felt itself menaced by the extraordinary expansion of these *T'u-chüeh* nations who, before four centuries had passed, were to make a Turkestan of this detached Iran. Thus, shortly after Hsüan-tsang's visit, in 631, a Transoxianan embassy might be seen arriving at the Chinese court, come to urge the T'angs to establish a protectorate over Sogdiana. (Note that at this period there could be no question, for the Sogdians, of defending themselves against the Arab conquest, which had not yet overcome Persia : it was therefore a matter of breaking loose from the Turkish protectorate.) But the emperor T'ai-tsung, in spite of his love of conquest, possessed sound common-sense. Samarqand seemed to him too far away from the Great Wall. Satisfied with his subjugation of the Gobi, he refused to extend his military activities as far as Iran. "I do not care to harm the

people for the sake of adorning myself with empty titles. If Sogdiana became subject to me, it would be necessary to send troops to defend it, and these troops, in order to get there, would have ten thousand *li* to cover." He declined the offer, but instead of a complete territorial annexation, he established a diplomatic entente and commercial relations with the Sogdians, attested on both sides by the sending of regular embassies.

Hsüan-tsang, on arriving at Samarqand, seems to have had the feeling of being transplanted to another world. It was in very truth Iran, the world of Parseeism, instinctively on the defensive against the Sino-Indian beliefs. Doubtless there were ancient Buddhist monasteries in the town, dating probably from the days of Indo-Scythian rule, but in consequence of the Mazdean reaction which must have spread from Sassanid Persia, they had long been deserted. "The king and the people have no belief in Buddha's law. Their religion consists in fire-worship." On his arrival, Hsüan-tsang found that he was received by the king "with a sort of disdain". But the next day, the pilgrim having undertaken to explain to him the Doctrine of Salvation, the Sogdian prince declared himself touched by grace. Was it admiration for the zeal of the missionary and the influence of a strong personality? Or was it perhaps a desire on the part of this subtle Transoxianan to conciliate the great renascent China which was an essential counterpoise to the double attraction of the Turks and the Sassanids? It is a fact, as we have seen, that the king of Samarqand sent an embassy in the following year to pay homage to the emperor T'ai-tsung. Whatever may have been the reason for this change of attitude, the king took Hsüan-tsang under his protection, and when the Mazdean populace had the audacity

to pursue the pilgrim with burning brands he had the aggressors arrested, and would have had their hands and feet cut off had not Hsüan-tsang, faithful to the Buddhist practice of charity, had their sentence modified.

At bottom, this borderland country of Transoxiana had nothing uncompromisingly Iranian about it but its material civilization. In religion, like its its neighbours the Turks, it hovered, at the dictates of its commercial relations and its political interests, between Buddhism and Mazdeism. More or less Mazdean under the Achæmenids, more or less Buddhist under the Indo-Scythians, it had next undergone a Mazdean reaction during the Sassanid period. If Hsüan-tsang's account is to be trusted, his visit was marked by a partial restoration of the Buddhist faith. Indeed, according to the somewhat curious statement in his biography, when the king of Samarqand had had his persecutors beaten with rods, " men of all classes were inspired with fear and reverence, and demanded in large numbers to be instructed in the Law." Hsüan-tsang convoked an assembly at which he ordained a number of monks and restored for worship the old desecrated monasteries.

After Samarqand, Hsüan-tsang proceeded due south, and after Shebr-i Sabz or Kesh, which he calls Chieh-shuang-na (Kaśanna ?), came into the mountains of Kotin Koh, a detached chain of the Pamirs. " The roads in these mountains," we read in his *Life*, " are steep and dangerous ; scarcely has one set foot on them than one meets no longer either water or grass land. After going three hundred *li* through the midst of these mountains, one comes to the Gates of Iron." It is through this famous defile that the caravan track between Samarqand and the Oxus still passes to-day. " They are the gorges," says Hsüan-tsang, " of two parallel mountains which rise on the left and right, and

whose height is prodigious. They are only separated by a path which is very narrow and moreover bristles with precipices. These mountains form on either side great walls of stone whose colour resembles that of iron. The rocks here actually contain iron mines. At the entrance, double gates have been placed, and above them are hung a multitude of little bells in cast and wrought iron. And as the passage is difficult and well defended, it has been given the name it still bears to-day." The Gates of Iron formed at that time the southern frontier of the empire of the Western Turks. The Turks in this way controlled all the traffic between Central Asia and India.

Chapter VI

IN THE LAND OF GRÆCO-BUDDHISM

South of the Gates of Iron, Hsüan-tsang, after crossing the Oxus, the present Amū-daryā, by the ferry of Pata Kesar, opposite Tirmidh, entered ancient Bactria.[1]

Bactria, an old Iranian district ever since the dawn of history, had later become a Greek country. Conquered after a great struggle by Alexander the Great, it became for two centuries—from 329 to about 135—the bulwark of Hellenism in these countries. Under the Diodoti, the Euthydemi, the Demetrii, and the Eukratidæ, the Græco-Bactrian kingdom had valiantly defended its share of the Macedonian heritage against native risings and the pressure of the nomads. The Iranian reaction of the Parthians was already spreading over almost the whole of Persia when over yonder, on the confines of the two worlds, this epic Hellenism was still maintaining its tenacious vitality. And it is not without emotion that we handle to-day those medals with their pure lines which, in default of texts, reconstruct for us the characteristics of these heroic adventurers.

Then, in about 135 B.C., came the invasion of the

[1] Hsüan-tsang's itinerary in the Græco-Buddhist region has been verified by M. Foucher in the two following articles: (1) For the various cantons of the present Afghanistan, "Notes sur l'itinéraire de Hiuan-tsang en Afghanistan," in *Etudes asiatiques pour le 25e anniversaire de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient* (1925), i, p. 257–84. (2) For the Peshawar district "Notes sur la géographie ancienne du Gandhâra, commentaire à un chapitre de Hiuan-tsang," *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient*, i, 1901, p. 322–69. These two articles contain valuable archæological maps.

nomads, but fortunately it was only a question so far of the Yüe-chih or Indo-Scythians, that is to say, in all probability, of tribes of Indo-European Scythians, ready to receive at once the heritage of the ancient civilizations. Indeed, under the great Kushāṇa dynasty, these conquerors, having become masters of Eastern Iran and of North-Western India, had continued to a large extent the tradition of their Greek predecessors, and, by the union of the religion of Śākyamuni with Alexandrine art, had created the Græco-Buddhist civilization. But towards 425 real barbarians, the Ephthalite Huns, this time of Mongol race, had swooped down on the country. In their savage fury they had too often attacked the Buddhist Church and the Indo-Greek art that represented it. For more than a century ancient Bactria had submitted to their yoke, for it was only towards 566 that they had succumbed before the coalition of Sassanid Persia and the Western Turks. In the division of spoil, Bactria had fallen to the Sassanids, represented by the greatest of them, Chosroës I Anushirvan. But it was for a very short time, for, profiting from the wars between the Byzantines and the Sassanids, the western Turks took away Bactria from the latter. At the time of Hsüan-tsang, in 630, it formed, under the name of Tokhāristan (in Chinese T'u-ho-lo) a special fief of one of the sons of the Great Khan, the prince Tardu shad, who had his residence at Qunduz.

Hsüan-tsang, after crossing the Oxus, abandoned, therefore, the main route of the caravans between Samarqand and Balkh, in order to go to Qunduz and pay a visit to Tardu shad. This prince was not only the son of the great khan of the Turks, but also the brother-in-law of the king of Turfān. The pilgrim brought him both news of his father, the great khan, whom he had just left, and also letters from his brother-in-law, the King of Turfān. This Turkish king of

Bactria was an extremely pious man. He treated Hsüan-tsang with great consideration, and would have accompanied him into India had it not been for one of those harem dramas which are so frequent in Central Asia. At the time of the pilgrim's arrival, the princess, or, as the Turks say, the *Khatun* from Turfān had just died. Almost at once Tardu shad married again. Now the new queen had started an intrigue with a royal prince, a son of the first marriage. This Turkish Phædra poisoned the king and put her lover on the throne. The latter, however, gave Hsüan-tsang the assurance of the same protection as Tardu shad had given him ; as the pilgrim was thinking of making straight for the valley of Kābul, the new king invited him very judiciously to go round by Balkh. "Your disciple," said the prince, "reckons among his possessions the town of Fu-ho-lo (Balkh) ; it is called the little royal town. It contains a large number of religious monuments. I desire the Master of the Law to devote some time to visiting them and paying homage to them. After that, he will take a chariot and depart for the South."

Balkh, the ancient Bactria, still presented at this period the peculiarity of being both Iranian in its substratum and fervently Buddhist in its religion. No doubt the Buddhist evangelization dated back to the middle of the third century B.C., a period when Bactria must have been visited by missionaries from the great Indian emperor Aśoka. M. Foucher thinks that Buddhism was established here only by the Indo-Scythian king Kanishka (80–110 A.D.), but so solidly that, three centuries later, the Ephthalite suzerainty was not able to destroy it. As the explorations of M. Foucher and M. Hackin have proved, the country in our own day has declined strangely in importance. As a result of being devastated time after time, and of the abandonment of the ancient canals, it is to-day

a dead country. Modern travellers admit that they cannot but feel sad when they read Hsüan-tsang's description: "The plains and adjacent valleys are unusually fertile. It is indeed a favoured land." As for the "magnificent plateau" that Hsüan-tsang admired, and upon which the town and its suburbs are situated, the only marks it bears to-day of those centuries of Buddhism are a few stupas in ruins from which every trace of sculpture has been removed by the Mongol and Moslem devastations.

At the time of Hsüan-tsang, in spite of the passage of the Ephthalite Huns, there were still a hundred monasteries in the country, rich in relics of Buddha and inhabited by three thousand monks. These all followed the *Hīnayāna*, the Lesser Way, but this did not prevent Hsüan-tsang from being on very good terms with them. For the monasteries of Balkh gloried not merely in their ancient stupas and sacred relics, but were no less celebrated for their knowledge. Hsüan-tsang declares that he derived much benefit from his conversations with one of their doctors, Prajñākara, who, at his request, expounded to him several difficult passages from the fundamental writings of the *Hīnayāna*, such as the *Abhidharma*, the *Kośa* of Kātyāyana, and the *Vibhāshā Śāstra*.

After Balkh, our pilgrim undertook the crossing of the Hindu Kush, "the Snow Mountains," as he calls them. This was one of the most painful moments of his journey. "The route is twice as difficult and dangerous as in the region of the deserts and glaciers. What with the frozen clouds and the whirling snow, there is never a moment when one can see clearly. If occasionally one comes on a particularly easy place, it is at the most a few dozen feet of level ground. It was of this country that Sung Yü wrote of yore: 'The ice is piled up mountain-high, and the snow

whirls over thousands of *li*.'" (Trans. by M. Pelliot.)

By the passes of Qarā-Kottal and Dandān Shikan, Hsüan-tsang at length reached Bāmiyān, a town situated in the centre of the range, or rather in the longitudinal valley separating the chain of the Hindu Kush from that of Koh-i Bābā.

Like Balkh—perhaps even to a greater extent—Bāmiyān, the Fan-yen-na of Chinese writers, was a station of primary importance on the road from Central Asia to India. Convoys of merchants or groups of pilgrims—all the caravans—when they came down from the Hindu Kush, passed under its high cliff before reaching the valley of the upper Ghorband, in order to get to the capital of Kapiśa. The French archæologists who have recently been working in the district, M. Alfred Foucher, M. and Mme. André Godard, M. Hackin, were struck by the accuracy of Hsüan-tsang's description of the site. "Bāmiyān," he writes, "clings to the mountain-side and crosses the valley; its circumference measures from six to seven *li*. On the north, it leans against the steep rock. This country has winter-corn, but few flowers or fruits. It is suitable for cattle-breeding and abounds in sheep and horses. The climate is very cold. Manners are rough. Clothing is of fur and coarse woollen materials, which are also products of the country." (Trans. by M. Pelliot.) These proud Afghan mountaineers, who were at that time guardians of the Buddhist law, pleased Hsüan-tsang. They are hard and fierce by nature, he observes, but they are superior to their neighbours in the "candor of their faith."

Bāmiyān, at the time of Hsüan-tsang's visit, numbered ten Buddhist monasteries containing several thousand religious, all Hīnayānists. The pilgrim visited the grottos hollowed out of the northern cliff of the valley and converted into monastic cells. He

also mentions (attributing to them not more than 150 and 100 feet respectively) the two gigantic statues of Buddha, which measure actually about 170 and 115 feet, and are still standing in two clefts in the cliff. He even thought from the gilt surface of one of them that it was a statue of bronze.

It seems strange to us, this meeting between a pilgrim from distant China, and the last specimens of Gandhāran art, the final traces of Hellenism in those parts. For, as M. André Godard remarks, the great Buddha of 170 feet with its faultless drapery and the slight bend of its left leg, is nothing more than the enlargement on a gigantic scale of some Hellenistic statue.

Hsüan-tsang does not mention the frescoes of Bāmiyān. Yet these frescoes constitute for us the chief interest of the place. They are executed on the sides of the rocky corridor that had been pierced behind the heads of the giant Buddhas, and they appear to belong to two different periods. According to M. and Mme. André Godard and M. Hackin, who have studied them with care, they date, in the case of those in the niche of the 170 ft. Buddha, from the third century A.D., and in the case of the others, belonging to the 115 ft. Buddha, from the fifth and sixth centuries. In certain of these paintings, especially those of the 115 ft. Buddha, Græco-Roman influence reveals itself just as strongly as in the Buddhist frescoes of the Mirān district, south of the Lop-nōr, in the Gobi. In the treatment of certain nudes, and in the skill of the drapery, we have here almost a souvenir of Pompeii. Did the Chinese pilgrims, who could not have failed to visit these aerial shrines, guess that they were catching a glimpse here of the art of the distant Ta-ch'in, of that Roman empire of which their geographers had a fairly accurate conception? Other details, it is true, must have been more familiar to men who had just

crossed Central Asia. In the frescoes of the 115 ft. niche they might have recognized a special influence which they had already met with in those of Qizil near Kuchā, and which we know to have been Iranian.

Several figures in the paintings of the 115 ft. niche recall, in fact, the Iranian horsemen whom we have already seen in the Grotto of the Painter at Qizil. An example is the elegant lunar divinity which adorns the roof of the niche. Against the blue background from which stands out his immense halo with its crescent moon, he appears above his classical quadriga of winged white horses—Pegasi unexpected in this corner of Afghanistan ; his costume is in every detail similar to those of the noblemen of Kuchā ; the long cream-coloured or pale yellow tunic is drawn in at the waist by the usual belt, and widens out down to the knee ; it has on the right side the large Kuchān lapel which is sky-blue here, and also the wide border, also Kuchān, which is ochre. As at Qizil, once more the weapons are the long straight sword with cruciform handle, and the lance with its triangular pennon.

The same thing appears further on, in the row of donors, placed as if on a balcony, behind a balustrade ornamented with carpets. In their clinging tunics, opening on one side only, with a large triangular lapel, we have the " Knights of Qizil " once more. And the most interesting part of it, from our point of view, is that these heroes of Persian miniature stand on the same " balcony " as the bearded Sassanid kings of tradition, their tiaras decorated with sun and moon, and with Gandhāran Buddhas and Indian monks. Certainly it behoves us to remember in this context, that these cantons south of the Oxus had been for a moment, in the middle of the sixth century, attached to the Sassanid empire by Chosroës I. However that may be, the row of donors on the balcony is unique in

showing us on the same fresco the transition from Sassanid to Persian art. And that, to our mind, is a fact the historic importance of which it would be difficult to exaggerate.

On leaving Bāmiyān, Hsüan-tsang, as M. Foucher has ascertained, crossed the pass of Shībar which, at an altitude of 9,000 feet, gives access to the upper valley of the Ghorband, a sub-tributary of the Kābul river. While climbing the Shībar range, he was overtaken by a snowstorm and lost his way, but he had the good fortune to meet some local huntsmen, who set him on his path once more. He followed the winding, shut-in valley of the Ghorband as far as the meeting of that stream with the river Panjshīr. "At that point the two walls of hills opened out and at last the beautiful plain of Kapiśa revealed itself to him, in its magnificent setting of mountains."

The Kapiśa of antiquity—Chia-pi-shih or Chi-pin in Chinese [1]—is that part of modern Afghanistan which is situated north of Kābul. Nevertheless, Hsüan-tsang did not pass the actual site of Kābul, for the ancient capital of the country, Kāpiśī, was situated further north, on the middle reach of the Panjshīr, on the site of the village of Begrām. M. Foucher, who is responsible for this identification, confirms in every detail the description of the Chinese pilgrim: "The plain of Kapiśa covers sixty kilometres from north to south, and twenty from east to west. It only requires some lakes in order to resemble a little Kashmīr. As Hsüan-tsang well puts it, it leans on the north against the chain of the Hindu Kush with its everlasting snows, while the other three sides of the trapezium are bounded by the Black Mountains—

[1] Transcriptions of Giles (*Chinese-English Dictionary, No.* 1153, page 139, and 978, page 115). Other correct transcriptions are Kia-pi-shih and Ki-pin.

that is, by chains which completely lose their snow in the summer . . . "Thanks to its geographical position, Kapiśa commands the principal passes of the Hindu Kush, and consequently the great trade-route between India and Bactria; the pilgrim notes that it abounded in every sort of merchandise. Agriculturally it was no less rich. Watered by the rivers Ghorband and Panjshīr, not to mention their tributaries and the numerous streams which flow down from its belt of mountains, this vast basin, situated at a somewhat lower altitude and enjoying a rather milder climate than Kābul, is eminently fitted for the cultivation of cereals and fruit trees; from its vineyards and orchards large quantities of almonds, apricots, fresh and dried grapes, are exported to India. The worst defect of the country, which Hsüan-tsang likewise points out, is the frequency and violence of the north winds that sweep across it. But apart from this, its many blessings from heaven account for the number of religious institutions that the Chinese traveller has judged worthy of mention."

Kapiśa was just as important politically. Kāpiśī, the *Kapissa* of the Græco-Roman geographers, had been, in ancient times, one of the capitals of the Greek state of Kābul. "It is the divinity of the city of Kāpiśī," writes M. Foucher, "that is represented on certain coins of Eukratides, probably struck on the spot. It was there and not, as is commonly believed, at Kābul, that the last Indo-Greeks must have reigned." Kāpiśī served later as a summer residence for the great Indo-Scythian emperor Kanishka, who governed from there the whole of Eastern Iran and the whole of North-Western India. Although no longer the head of an empire, the King of Kapiśa in the seventh century was none the less ruler over the whole of the Gandhāra region. He possessed, in addition to his

own patrimony, Lampaka, Nagarahāra, and Gandhāra, kingdoms whose dynasties had perished and which had been annexed by Kapiśa. Thus his authority extended as far as the Indus. The reigning sovereign at the time when our pilgrim came there seems, moreover, to have had a strong personality. "He is of a brave and impetuous disposition," writes Hsüan-tsang, "and by his fearsome power he strikes terror into the neighbouring countries. He rules over a dozen kingdoms." Like the Emir of Kābul in the nineteenth century, the Rajah of Kāpiśī, master of the Asiatic trade routes, saw his friendship solicited by the most powerful monarchs. Precisely at the period with which we are dealing, the reigning rajah—as we know from the *T'ang History*—sent as tribute to the Emperor T'ai-tsung some of those magnificent Afghan horses for which the country was even then celebrated; and the Son of Heaven was so pleased with this gift that he at once despatched to the Kapiśa ruler an embassy with considerable offerings.

To what race did the kings of Kapiśa belong? Up to the eve of the Moslem invasion these princes on the Indo-Iranian borders all boast of being descended from Kanishka, the Indo-Scythian emperor who was the contemporary of the Cæsars or the Antonines. In actual fact, since the Gandhāra region had been conquered by the Mongol horde of the Ephthalite Huns, in the second half of the fifth century of our era, the dynasts of Kābul must have been of Turko-Mongol blood. When the pilgrim Sung Yün, Hsüan-tsang's predecessor, arrived at Gandhāra about 520, he had found on the throne one of these Turkish princes, a *tegîn*, descended for two generations from the chief appointed by the Huns. This ruler was still a barbarian with scarcely a veneer of civilization—"cruel and malicious by nature, he had many

put to death." In this essentially Buddhist country he remained pagan, and hence in profound disagreement with his subjects. A hundred and ten years later, on the contrary, when Hsüan-tsung visited Kābul, this Turkish element had had time to become Indianized. The King of Kapiśa who welcomed our pilgrim was a very devout Buddhist and a complete contrast to the *tegîn* of 520.

And so in the seventh century the valley of Kabul was already India. Thus Hsüan-tsang met at Kāpiśī the first Jains and the first Hindu ascetics of his journey, the former entirely naked, or rather "clothed in azure" lest they should break the vow of poverty by possessing a garment; the others (no doubt Śaiva ascetics) had their bodies rubbed with ash and wore a chaplet made of skulls. Nevertheless, the majority of the population still remained Buddhist. Numerous monasteries, some following the *Hīnayāna*, others adhering to the *Mahāyāna*, disputed with one another for the honour of housing the pilgrim from China. In order not to grieve his travelling companion, Prajñākara, who was a Hīnayānist monk, he decided in favour of a monastery of the Little Vehicle. This monastery, the site of which has been discovered by M. Alfred Foucher on the banks of the Panjshīr, dated from the Kushāṇa period, having been built, according to tradition, to serve as a residence for the hostages of Kanishka. "Formerly," relates Hsüan-tsang, "King Kanishka made his neighbours dread his power. By force of arms he extended his territory as far as the east of Pamir. The dependent princes who dwelt on the west of the Yellow River (in Kashgaria) sent him hostages. He treated them with the utmost respect. The palace of which we speak had been built for their summer residence." Hsüan-tsang even had opportunity to superintend excavations in search of the treasure buried in this

place by one of the hostages, and had the good fortune to discover it.

Although staying in a Hīnayānist monastery, it was at Kapiśa that Hsüan-tsang seems to have felt for the first time in complete harmony with the ideas of the Buddhists of the country. It will be remembered that in Central Asia and in Bactria the majority of the monks followed the Lesser Way. The King of Kapiśa, on the contrary, like Hsüan-tsang, was a fervent Mahāyānist. At his request the pilgrim took part at Kāpiśī in an assembly of the different sects, which lasted five days. It is interesting to notice the attitude taken by Hsüan-tsang in this matter, an attitude which he maintains generally throughout his travels in India; thanks to his knowledge of the various theories, to his skill in metaphysics, and also perhaps because he was unfamiliar with the argumentations of the Indian dialecticians, he tended to rise above their verbal disputes to find in his mystic idealism a higher synthesis of the different doctrines. His philosophic treatise, the *Siddhi*, was in conformity with this intellectual position.

After passing the summer of 630 in the "monastery of the Hostages" (the Sha-lo-chia), Hsüan-tsang took the road to the East again. He followed the valleys of the tributaries, on the left side of the lower Panjshīr as far as its confluence with the Kābul river, then went down following the course of the latter, and passing on its left bank through the province of Lampaka, the present Lamghān, up to Jalālābād, the ancient city of Nagarahāra. This was a decisive stage in the journey. "Gradient by gradient," observes M. Foucher, "one comes down from the high altitudes of the Iranian plateau. Immediately the unusual mildness of the winter, the torrid heat of the summer, the palm and orange groves, the fields of rice or sugar cane—everything, even down to the chattering *maïna* and the

capering monkeys—tells you that you are already on Indian soil."

Hsüan-tsang well describes this contrast: "At Lan-po (Lampaka) the ground is suitable for the cultivation of rice, and produces a large quantity of sugar cane . . . The climate is fairly mild. There is some frost but never snow." He also makes a racial contrast with the proud Afghan warriors whom he has just been showing us at Balkh, at Bāmiyān, and at Kapiśa: "The inhabitants live in ease and happiness, and love song. They are, moreover, effeminate, pusillanimous, and given to fraud. They treat one another with arrogance and scorn, and one never sees a single individual giving way to another. They are short in stature, and their movements are brisk and impetuous. The majority are clothed in white cotton, and like to adorn their costume with brilliantly coloured ornaments." Could there be anything more graphic than the description of these light, restless Hindus, which forms a pendant to the picture painted for us above by Hsüan-tsang of the fierce courage, hardihood, and chivalrous loyalty of the mountaineers of the Hindu Kush? At the time of Hsüan-tsang, moreover, the semi-Hindus of Lampaka had become dependents of the more purely Afghan kingdom of Kapiśa.

South-east of Lampaka, in the district of Ningrahar, was the ancient town of Nagarahāra, the site of which has been discovered by M. Foucher and his collaborators, corresponding to the present Jalālābād, to the south-west of the confluence of the Kunar and the Kābul-rūd.[1] The importance of the town of Nagarahāra during the Buddhist period is attested by the number of its ruins. "Whether on the north," writes M. Foucher,

[1] The country of the ancient Nagarahāra is known as the historical district of Ningrahar.

"at the foot of the high mountains of Kafiristān which descend as far as the opposite bank of the river, or on the west along the Black Mountains (Siyāh-Koh), behind which lies hidden the high country of Kabul, or on the south, on the fringe of cliffs which end so abruptly the long line of the White Mountains (Safed-Koh), numerous stūpas, monasteries, and more or less ruined grottos bear witness to the magnificence of the golden girdle with which Buddhist piety formerly adorned the ancient city."

Hsüan-tsang mentions certain of these ancient monuments. Thus he cites a great stūpa, two *li* to the south-east of Nagarahāra, measuring three hundred feet, and built in bygone days by the Indian emperor Aśoka. Connected with this place is one of the most venerable legends of Buddhism ; it was there that, in an earlier cosmic cycle, a young man—the very same who, in his final incarnation, was to become Buddha Śākyamuni—had met the Buddha of that time, Dīpankara ; impelled by a strong presentiment, the youth had prostrated himself at the feet of Dīpankara, spreading out his flowing locks before him in the mud, like the most wonderful of carpets ; and the Buddha of this far-distant period had predicted for his worshipper his future attainment of the state of a Buddha. An illustration of this episode has been discovered by M. Foucher on the Græco-Buddhist reliefs in Gandhāra. Other stūpas and monasteries at Lampaka contain the bone of the top of Buddha's head (called the relic of the Ushṇīsha) his monastic cloak (the relic of the Saṃghāṭī) and the staff of the Blessed One "the rings whereof are of tin and the haft of sandal wood". All this district, in consequence of the piety of Aśoka, the religious opportunism of the Indo-Greeks, and the devotion of Kanishka, had in fact become a kind of new Holy Land for Buddhism. If the countries of the Ganges boasted of having been

[*Photo Musée Guimet*

GREEK HEAD OF A BODHISATTVA IN STUCCO

Discovered by M. J. Barthony at Hadda (Afghanistan). Musée Guimet, Paris

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the scene of the earthly life of Śākyamuni, the Valley of Kābul had acquired an almost equal prestige by locating in its monasteries and its stūpas a number of episodes from his legendary life or his previous existences. Thus no one at Lampaka cast a doubt on the fact that the country had formerly received a visit from the Blessed One, who had arrived and departed through the air.

In spite of the details with which Hsüan-tsang furnishes us on this subject, we are nowadays better provided with documents than he seems to have been with regard to ancient Nagarahāra. Or rather, the school of Buddhist art which flourished in this town inspires us with feelings which could not touch the pilgrim. The stūpa facings, carvings, and stucco high reliefs which the French archæological expedition of M. Barthoux has just brought to light eight kilometres south of Nagarahāra, on the site of Hadda (the Hi-lo of Hsüan-tsang), and which are now exhibited at the Musée Guimet, are not for us merely pious images. They are the unexpected, most exciting, almost incredible revelation of a new art of which Græco-Buddhist art hitherto discovered gave us no idea.[1] By the side of the Apollonian Buddhas, whose charm is sometimes somewhat insipid, which the district

[1] We should like to be allowed to pay tribute to the archæological divination of M. Foucher who here as at Gandhāra (as is proved by his correspondence of 1924) marked and pointed out the sites rich in future harvests. The provisional bibliography of the excavations of Hadda consists of the article of M. Godard, "Expositions des récentes découvertes et des récents travaux archéologiques en Afghanistan et en Chine," Musée Guimet, 14th March, 1924 (pp. 1–36), and J. Hackin, "Les Fouilles de la délégation archéologique française à Hadda (Afghanistan), Missions Foucher-Godard Barthoux," 1923–8, *Revue des Arts Asiatiques*, v, 2. Especially the forthcoming volumes of M. Barthoux (Vanoest).

of Gandhāra had given us by the hundred, the figures of Hadda in the state in which they may now be admired in the Musée Guimet, present us with types marked by far greater individuality. In the representation of the soldiers of Māra, the demon army assailing the Buddha, we are presented with a series of exquisite racial studies. There is no doubt that here we are faced with real portraits depicting the different rulers or barbarian neighbours of the Gandhāra district, such as the predecessors of Hsüan-tsang or he himself might have known them ; heads of hooded Persians of old, very similar to those of the mosaic of Arbela ; living portraits of Indo-European Scythians, Gaulish in type with their long drooping moustaches, doubtless the ancient comrades of a Kadphises and a Kanishka (we must not forget that, according to M. Hackin, the majority of these stuccos date from the second and third centuries, that is to say, exactly from the Kushāṇa period) ; sometimes, but more rarely, on certain late pieces which may be as late as the fifth century—for example, a wonderful Māra, twenty-seven centimetres high in his nomad shepherd's cloak, and the Chandaka of the "Great Departure" — we notice flat-nosed Mongolian types with prominent cheek-bones, perhaps modelled on some Ephthalite Hun.

Even the most unprepared receive this impression ; we might imagine ourselves in the presence of Gothic works of art. The head of some solemn and bearded ascetic almost recalls our "Beau Dieu" of Amiens ; some of the heads of "barbarians" might remind us of the Saints on the south-west door of Rheims. Certain heads in the army of Māra treated grotesquely are akin, not to Greek art, but to the contorted, caricaturist demons of our Hells, the decorative heads and gargoyles of the thirteenth century. Other bearded demon heads might suggest some

"king David". On certain diminutive heads of monks in stucco we see again the witty, sharp, hairless "smile of Rheims". And that again is almost an angel of Rheims, emerging with no transition stage from a Græco-Roman divinity, that tall figure carrying flowers in a fold of its garment to throw in the footsteps of Buddha. Other "angels", free from all pagan sensuality, fold their hands with so much simplicity and candour, with such tender piety, that were it not for the locality of the discovery, one would swear they belonged to our own country. Further on we are arrested by some very curious beardless faces, whose solidity of construction, intensity of expression, value as portraits, even the head-dress—a kind of hood forming a cape—have no longer any affinity with the antique, but bear a specifically mediaeval character. They are like the pages or clerks of our Burgundian school, or else, in a similar vein, "genre" figures, recalling the Nuremberg school.

It is a very revelation. At a time when it was believed to be almost exhausted and reduced to cheap imitation (like the Roman art of the period) Græco-Buddhist art was in process of becoming completely renewed. Or rather, in these sheltered cantons of Afghanistan which the human spirit had selected for the performing of this miracle, the Hellenistic schools of Gandhāra had just been replaced by an art which, while issuing from their workshops, was yet quite different. An art as distinct from its first models as our Roman and Gothic art was one day to be distinct from the Græco-Roman art of the West. It is in fact a quite similar phenomenon. The Græco-Roman of Kābul and the Punjāb, brother to Romano-Syrian and Palmyran art of the same period, was now followed by a kind of Gothico-Buddhist art, starting from new bases and opening a new cycle.

And this art had everything necessary to give it life. It was already acclimatized, as is proved by the racial types met with, and it was original, for nothing of the kind is found in the Syrian, Palmyran, Parthian, or Sassanid Orient. If the religious and political conditions that gave it birth—Buddhism and a comparative autonomy, or at least the presence of liberal and tolerant masters—had been maintained, if these ancient Græco-Buddhist provinces of Kapiśa, Lampaka, and Gandhāra had not become Islamic territory, we can suppose that the curve of artistic evolution would have continued. It might perchance have been there that the human spirit, after adumbrating the transition from Græco-Roman to Gothic, would have realized this latter and brought it to maturity nine centuries before us.

But let us imagine the Huns and the Arabs bearing down on Gaul just before the rise of Rheims and Chartres, at the moment when the genius of our artists was preparing to soar aloft. That is what happened to the Gothicizing art of Kapiśa and Lampaka ; after 475 the Valley of Kabul was invaded by the Ephthalite Huns, the most iconoclastic of the barbarians ; then after the respite lasting from the middle of the sixth to the middle of the seventh century, the Arabs arrived. From 652 to 664 their bands raided the country and their pious vandalism in no way lagged behind the savage vandalism of the Huns. A ray of the genius of humanity was extinguished almost ere it had appeared . . .

The mischief was already done at the time of Hsüan-tsang's visit. Lampaka and Nagarahāra remained strongly Buddhist, even Mahāyānist. But the ravages of the Ephthalite Huns had ruined monasteries and works of art : " The inhabitants are full of respect for the Law of Buddha, and few among them have faith in Brahman doctrines. Nevertheless, although

there are a great number of monasteries, one meets with but few religious. The stūpas are in ruins and covered with wild vegetation." The Arab invasion, twenty years later, only dealt the final death-blow.

On leaving the canton of Nagarahāra, that is to say, the district of Jalālābād, Hsüan-tsang desired to go by way of the southern cliffs bordering the Kābul-Rūd as far as the cutting of Siyah-Sang, and to visit one last famous place : the cave in which Buddha, after quelling the Nāga or dragon-king Gopāla, had left the trace of his shadow.

This cave, located by M. Foucher near the present village of Chahār Bāgh, was dangerous of approach. The roads were deserted and infested by brigands. For the past few years scarcely a pilgrim had returned from that neighbourhood. The companions of Hsüan-tsang did their utmost to induce him to abandon this expedition. In vain ! " It would be difficult," he replied, " even in a hundred thousand *kalpas* to meet once the real shadow of Buddha. How could I come so far without going to adore it ? As for you, you can go slowly ahead. As soon as I have spent a little time there, I will hasten to rejoin you." And dismissing the faint-hearted Indians, he set off alone for the cave.

At the nearest monastery no one would act as his guide. Only an old man, whom he met on the road, agreed to show him the way. " They had only gone a few *li* when five brigands came towards them, sword in hand. The Master of the Law removed his cap and revealed his religious habit. ' Master,' said one of the brigands, ' where do you wish to go ? ' ' I desire,' he answered, ' to go and worship the shadow of Buddha.' ' Master,' replied the robber, ' have you not heard it said that there are brigands in these parts ? ' ' The brigands,' replied the saint, ' are

men. I am now going to adore Buddha, and even though the road were full of savage beasts, I should walk without fear! How much the less should I fear you who are men who have the gift of pity in your hearts!'" "When they heard these words," the *Life of Hsüan-tsang* adds, "the brigands were touched, and opened their hearts to the faith."

After this dramatic encounter, Hsüan-tsang was able to go and make his devotions at the Grotto. "It is situated on the east of a stream which flows between two mountains. In a wall of rock out of which it is hewn, one sees a sort of door which opens on the west. When he had gazed into the Grotto it appeared to him to be gloomy and wrapped in darkness, and he could see nothing. "Master," said his aged companion, "go straight in. When you touch the eastern wall, take fifty paces backwards and look straight towards the east; that is where the shadow lies."

"The Master of the Law entered the Grotto and advanced without his guide. After fifty paces he struck the eastern wall, and then, obeying the old man's directions, he drew back and stood still. Then, animated by the deepest faith, he bowed a hundred times, but he saw nothing. He reproached himself bitterly for his faults, and with loud sobs and tears abandoned himself to his grief. Then again, with a heart full of sincerity, he devoutly recited the *sūtras* and the *gāthās*, prostrating himself after each verse."

Then the miracle took place: "After he had thus made about a hundred salutations, he saw a glow appear on the eastern wall, the size of a monk's alms-bowl, which disappeared in a moment. Filled with joy as well as with sorrow, he recommenced his salutations, and once more he saw a light as large as a basin, which gleamed and vanished like a flash. Then, in an ecstasy of ardour and love, he swore never to leave the spot

until he had seen the sacred shadow . . . He continued his devotions, and suddenly the whole grotto was flooded with light and the shadow of the Blessed One appeared majestically upon the wall, brilliantly white, as when the clouds part and reveal suddenly the marvellous spectacle of the *Golden Mountain*. A dazzling splendour illuminated his divine countenance. Hsüan-tsang contemplated in joyful ecstasy the sublime and incomparable object of his admiration. The body of Buddha and his monastic robe were of reddish-yellow; from the knees upward the beauties of his person shone forth with a clear light, but his *lotus throne* below was somewhat obscured. On the left and right and behind Buddha were wholly visible the shadows of the Bodhisattvas, and of the holy Śramaṇas, who formed his suite.

"After witnessing this miracle he ordered from a distance six men who stood outside the gate to bring some fire and to come in in order to burn perfumes. When the fire had been brought in, the Shadow of Buddha turned and disappeared. Immediately he ordered the fire to be put out, and at once the Shadow reappeared before him. Of the six men, five were able to see it, but there was one who saw absolutely nothing. This lasted only an instant—Hsüan-tsang, having distinctly seen the divine phenomenon, prostrated himself reverently, uttered praises to Buddha, and scattered flowers and perfumes ; after this, the celestial light disappeared. Then he made his farewells and went out.

On leaving Lampaka, Hsüan-tsang descended the Kābul-Rūd along the southern bank of the river, and by Dacca and the Khyber Pass entered the province of Gandhāra.

Gandhāra is one of the most famous regions in the history of the East. It was already familiar to the

Macedonians under the name of Gandaritis, and it became one of the strongholds of Græco-Bactrian power. It was there that the Greek kings, after their expulsion from Bactria, took refuge and maintained their existence for nearly a century longer. One of their capitals in this part seems to have been Pushkarāvatī, well known to classical geographers under the name of Peukelaotis. When the Indo-Scythians who came down from Central Asia had replaced the Greeks they seem to have shown the same preference for Gandhāra. Indeed, it was at Purushapura or Peshawar that their great emperor Kanishka had his winter residence, while Kāpiśī in the Afghan mountains served as his summer residence. The character of the civilization of Gandhāra at this period is revealed by the statues, bas-reliefs, and also the coins which are found by the hundred everywhere on this classic soil—at Charsadda, at Sahri-Balol, at Hoti Mardan, at Shāhbāz Garhi.

Such a plentiful yield will surprise only those who forget that for nearly six centuries without interruption this old province of Peshawar had been a kind of second Hellas, miraculously protected by its girdle of mountains and rivers from the upheaval of the invasions. First of all came two centuries of direct Greek rule under pure Hellenes, such as Heliokles and Antialkidas, sovereigns who, as their coinage testifies, were as completely of our race as the Antiochi of Syria or the Ptolemies of Egypt. Next came nearly four centuries of Græco-Roman imitation, under the Indo-Scythian kings of the Kushāṇa family, Kadphises, Kanishka, Huvishka, Vāsudeva, and their successors, who were decidedly the most faithful phil-hellenists that the East has ever known ; was it not under their rule and at their court, much more than under their Græco-Bactrian predecessors, that the Græco-Buddhist school blossomed forth ? The reliquary of Kanishka,

found in 1908 at Shah-ji Kī Dhērī near Peshawar, bears, together with the portrait of the "Indian Clovis", the name of the goldsmith who struck it, the Greek Agesilas. The innumerable Gandhāran Buddhas who have come to inhabit our museums are likewise faithful witnesses to this touching phil-hellenism. Here are profiles of Apollonian purity, framed by their waving locks and faultless draperies, so pleasing often in their fluid treatment. Could the Chinese pilgrims, who must have seen them there still in their places, suspect that they had before their eyes the first images produced by the hand of man of the apostle of their religion? Did they know that formerly—six centuries earlier, without doubt—at a time when as yet no one dared represent the Buddha, except by difficult symbols, one of these *Yavana* artists, as the Indians called them, a man from far-off *Ta-ch'in*, as they said in China, had dared for the first time to represent in human form the image of the Blessed One? And all the Buddhist images had sprung from this one, from those that were worshipped in the shrines of Ceylon to the statues of China and Japan themselves, to Lung-mên and Nara . . .

The Buddhist pilgrims were not so learned. But Gandhāra, Chien-t'o-lo as they called it, had other attractions for them. Barely two centuries before Hsüan-tsang's journey it was in Gandhāra that two of the greatest philosophers of Mahāyānist Buddhism had arisen—Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, both natives of Peshawar, a fact which Hsüan-tsang particularly loved to remember, for these two masters were precisely the two chief authors of the mystic idealism that he professed.

Unfortunately, when Hsüan-tsang visited Peshawar in A.D. 630, a century had elapsed since the invasion of the Ephthalite Huns had almost entirely destroyed

the brilliant civilization of Gandhāra. The Attila of India, the Hun Mihirakula, had dealt the Græco-Buddhist workshops a blow from which they had never recovered. "The royal race is wiped out," writes Hsüan-tsang sadly, "and the country has been annexed to the kingdom of Kapiśa. Towns and villages are almost empty and abandoned, and only a few inhabitants are seen in the country. One corner of the royal town (Peshawar) contains about a thousand families . . . There are a million Buddhist monasteries which are in ruins and deserted. They are overgrown with weeds and they make only a mournful solitude. The majority of the stūpas are also in ruins." The disaster that had befallen the Buddhist communities of the district was so great that the relic of relics, the alms-bowl of Buddha, preserved until then in a Peshawar monastery, had been removed and, after many vicissitudes, had been taken away into an infidel land, Sassanid Persia.

Hsüan-tsang visited the relics which still remained. At Peshawar (which he correctly transcribes as Pu-lu-sha-pu-lo) they showed him, beside the *peepul* tree beneath which four of the Buddhas of bygone days had sat, the ruins of a gigantic stūpa built by the emperor Kanishka. While hunting, the Indo-Scythian Clovis, at that time unfamiliar with Buddhism, had been miraculously conducted to this spot by a white hare. There he found a young shepherd, who had repeated to him a prophecy of Buddha that concerned him : "Four hundred years after my death there will be a king who will win glory in the world under the name of Kanishka . . ." Thereupon the Indo-Scythian monarch had been converted and had erected on the spot a stūpa filled with relics. M. Foucher, in 1901, suggested looking for this monument on the heights of Shāh-jī Kī Dherī, in the eastern suburbs of the town. His surmise was

confirmed in 1908, by the discovery, on the very spot, of the reliquary of Kanishka.

On leaving Peshawar, after crossing the Kābul river (the bed of which, as he observes, is particularly broad just there) Hsüan-tsang went to visit the second city of Gandhāra, which he calls Pu-shê-chieh-lo-fa-ti, that is to say, Pushkarāvatī, which is the Peukelaotis of Greek geographers and the Charsadda of the present day. He was taken to pay his respects to a great stūpa attributed to the Emperor Aśoka (the mound of Bālā-Hissar, according to M. Foucher) which was built on the site where Buddha, in a previous existence, had made " the gift of his eyes ".

From Pushkarāvatī Hsüan-tsang went on a two-days' expedition to the north-west, on the middle reach of the Swāt, to visit some sites with which several of the most important *jātakas* had been identified. The gaps in his narrative have been filled by M. Foucher, who has succeeded in identifying these positions. According to this learned Indianist, the two places visited by Hsüan-tsang are represented to-day by the mound of Sarè-Makhē-Dhērī, where there must have stood a stūpa of Hāritī, the ogress transformed by Buddha into a madonna, and by Periāno-Dhērī, where was the stūpa of Śyāma, the young hermit of the woods, the support of his two blind old parents, who fell beneath the arrows of a cruel king. A little further to the east, in a small city of Gandhāra which the Chinese pilgrims call Po-lu-sha, the legend of Viśvantara, one of the most celebrated of Buddhism, had its location.

Viśvantara or Vessantara was a young prince with a passionate zeal for charity. He possessed a white elephant which had the magic power of causing rain to fall. A neighbouring monarch whose country

suffered from drought asked for the animal. Vessantara gave it ; his fellow-citizens, furious, demanded his punishment. The charitable prince had to go into exile, accompanied by his wife Mādrī, who wished to share his fate, and by their two children. On the way, two Brahmans asked for the horses from his vehicle ; he gave them up ; a third asked for the vehicle itself ; he gave that too. The exiled family, at the cost of countless sufferings, at last reached the forest which they had chosen for their dwelling-place. They lived there in a hut, feeding on roots and wild fruits. The trees, moved by compassion, bent their branches of their own accord to offer their fruit to the two sons of Viśvantara and Mādrī. But again a Brahman appeared and asked the father to give him his sons for servants. In spite of their terror and his own grief, he gave them. The god Indra, disguised as an ascetic, finally came and asked him for his wife as a slave ; he gave her also. In the end Indra revealed his identity, and gave back to the charitable hero his family and his possessions.

The forest hermitage which was the scene of the most touching and the most human of the prefigurations of Buddha is celebrated by all the Chinese travellers, by Hsüan-tsang as well as by his predecessor Sung Yün, as one of the most delightful spots in the district : "Gentle streams and delicious fruits," writes Sung Yün, "are found on the hillside. Its ravines are pleasantly warm and its trees remain green during the bad season. At the time of our visit, it was the first month of the year. A temperate breeze fanned us. The birds were singing in the spring foliage, butterflies were hovering about the flowery grass . . ." M. Foucher has been able to locate at Shāhbāz Garhī the Po-lu-sha of the Chinese writers, the hermitage of Viśvantara. But he has not been able to discover, in a place laid waste by the Moslem

shepherds, " those woods where the exiled prince used to wander beneath arching foliage, that enchanted and flowery land the charm of which fills the soul of Sung Yün." Islam, in stripping the country of its woods, here as everywhere has dried up the springs and killed the very land itself. In revenge the site of Shāhbāz Garhī has yielded us the splendid statue of the Bodhisattva—a young Rajah of supreme elegance—which is the pride of the Alfred Foucher collection at the Louvre.

Hsüan-tsang seems now to have left the main road from Peshawar to India for a new and longer excursion to the north, this time in the province of Uḍḍiyāna (the Wu-ch'ang-na of the Chinese).

All this country of the upper Swāt and Bunēr is already Himalayan, contrasting with the mildness of the climate of Peshawar. " One frequently sees ice during the spring and summer. Often the snow flies in whirling storms, mingled with rain, and reflecting the five colours. It looks like flying clouds of flowers.[1] "

Hsüan-tsang's biographer describes in particular the mountain route which, in the high district of Bunēr, runs along the right bank of the Indus. " The roads were very dangerous and the valleys gloomy. Sometimes one had to cross on rope bridges, sometimes

[1] A previous pilgrim, Sung Yün, who in 520 had occasion to visit the district of the Uḍḍiyāna at a more favourable time of the year, has left us a rather different description of it. " The land," he tells us, " produces a number of extraordinary flowers which bloom continuously, winter and summer. Monks and laity gather them to make offerings of them to Buddha." He gives the same enchanting country for the district which was the scene of the " gift of the body " which Buddha made to a hungry tigress (near Mount Mahāban, south of the Bunēr?). " The mountains rise high there, steep and with giddy peaks, losing themselves in the clouds. The *Kalpa* trees and wonderful mushrooms grow in abundance in these mountains. The woods and streams there are delightful. The motley brilliance of the flowers dazzles the eye " (Sung Yün, trans. Chavannes).

by clinging to iron chains. Now there were gangways hanging in mid-air, now flying bridges flung across precipices ; elsewhere were paths hewn out with the chisel or ladders for climbing ". The interest of this region also lay in its Buddhist souvenirs. Though it may not be certain that Hsüan-tsang at that time visited it thoroughly, he mentions at least a certain number of celebrated sites.

On one of these sites, located by M. Foucher at the hamlet of Palai, rose the stupa of the monk Unicorn, whose spicy story Hsüan-tsang does not fail to relate : On account of his sylvan innocence, this young anchorite, the son of a rishi and a she-goat, found himself defenceless against the wily attacks of a courtesan disguised as a nun, to such an extent that the latter was able to get herself carried off by him, riding astride his shoulders, to the king's palace. The tale was popular throughout India, and appealed to the malicious sense of humour of the Buddhist monks, as well as, under a slightly different form, to the sarcastic spirit of the Hindu ascetics. Further north, at the source of the Swāt, was shown the place where Buddha had overthrown the dragon king Apalāla who was harassing the country with his inundations, and the mountain of Hsi-lo (Mount Ham, 8,500 feet high, in the Bunēr district) where he had made " the gift of his body " to five *yakshas*.

Finally, on another site, discovered by Sir Aurel Stein near the village of Girārai, was located the " gift of flesh ", the offering made to a vulture for the ransom of a dove, according to the account in the *Śibi-jātaka*. " The king of the Śibi was a charitable king. To test him, the god Indra took the form of a falcon pursuing a pigeon, or rather pursuing another god disguised as a pigeon, a pigeon with a body as blue as the heavens and with eyes like red pearls. Chased by the falcon, the pigeon took refuge in the

bosom of the king of the Śibi. The falcon came and demanded his prey, or at least an equal quantity of fresh meat, pleading his own right to live. The king, by a sublime act of sacrifice, himself cut the flesh from his thighs. But—wondrous miracle!—in the scales in which the pigeon had been placed, the latter always weighed heavier than the flesh given in exchange, until finally it was his entire body that the king had to put into the scales in order to save the animal. Then Indra made himself known and the king was reincarnated in the body of Buddha Śākyamuni."

But in Uḍḍiyāna even more than in Gandhāra, the invasion of the Huns had caused terrible havoc, for the Buddhist sanctuaries were for the most part in ruins. On the banks of the Śubhavastu, the present Swāt," there were formerly fourteen hundred Buddhist monasteries which contained eighteen thousand monks[1]; now they are mostly abandoned or the number of their inhabitants is greatly reduced." Not that the country ceased to be Buddhist. Hsüan-tsang himself remarks that the people of Uḍḍiyāna are divided between the *Mahāyāna* and Hinduism. But obviously the *Mahāyāna* they professed roused in him but a mediocre sympathy. He tells us the reason for this: "They give themselves over especially to the doctrine of Dhyāna (or ecstasy). They like reading the texts of this doctrine, but they do not seek to penetrate its meaning and spirit . . . The study of magic formulæ is their principal occupation."

It was, in fact, about this time in Uḍḍiyāna and in the other Himalayan districts, that in the neighbourhood of the Śaiva sects a certain form of Mahāyānist

[1] A hundred and ten years earlier, in about 520, Sung Yün also noted that the sound of the Buddhist bells was heard during the whole night, and filled the valleys.

Buddhism was in process of turning into sorcery, magic, demonology, and all the abnormal practices which are grouped under the general designation of Tantrism. So large a part was Uḍḍiyāna to play in this regrettable transformation that the very name of the country in its Tibetan transcription—U-rgyan—was soon to denote in Tibet spiritism and Tantric magic. This was a development of the *Mahāyāna* which could only revolt such a purely intellectualist metaphysician as Hsüan-tsang. We know how dear the *Mahāyāna* was to him. It is all the more interesting to note that he shows far greater sympathy for his Hīnayānist opponents (those of Kapiśa, for example), than for his so-called co-religionists, the Tantrists of the Swāt and the Bunēr.

Besides, Hsüan-tsang was in a hurry to plunge into the interior of India. Leaving Uḍḍiyāna and Gandhāra, he crossed the Indus opposite Udabhāṇḍa (Und, north of Attock) and entered the Punjāb. He visited first the great city of Takshaśilā—our Taxila—which he calls Ta-ch'a-shih-lo.

Taxila, the ancient metropolis of the Punjāb, already known to the Greeks in the time of Alexander the Great as the capital of king "Taxilus", had later been embellished by the Indian emperor Aśoka, who had made it the centre of his provinces in the north-west. According to Buddhist tradition he had appointed as its governor his beloved son Kuṇāla, and it was Taxila, according to Hsüan-tsang, that was the scene of the touching legend of the torture of this prince, the Indian Hippolytus.

Kuṇāla had rejected the advances of his mother-in-law, Aśoka's new favourite, and she had sworn to avenge herself. She forged a letter in the name of Aśoka, and took advantage of the slumber of the king to seal it "with the imprint of his teeth", according

to the current practice. This letter contained an order to put out the young man's eyes. On receiving the royal command, Kuṇāla's servants hesitated. But the hero offered himself voluntarily to the executioner : " Since my father has condemned me, how should I dare to disobey ? " Having been blinded, he went along the highways of India, begging alms. His wanderings led him towards Aśoka's residence, near the royal palace. During the last watch of the night he began to sing of his misfortunes, to the accompaniment of the *viṇā*. On a terrace above the king trembled at the sound of that voice. He had the blind man brought to him and recognized his son. A holy Buddhist monk restored the latter's sight, and the Indian Phædra was condemned to the supreme penalty.

Shortly after the death of Aśoka, Taxila had once more become Hellenist as capital of one of the Indo-Greek kingdoms under the dynasty of Eukratides, Heliokles, and Antialkidas. Thus the town stood on ground that was saturated with historical associations. The recent excavations of the Archaeological Survey of India have revealed, on the modern side of Saraikala, no less than three cities in juxtaposition : the ancient Indian town of king " Taxilus " on the mound of Bhīr, the Greek town of Eukratides and his successors on the site of the present hamlet of Sirkap, and finally, at Sirsukh, a third town, perhaps founded by the Indo-Scythian emperor Kanishka. For, here as at Kābul, the Indo-Scythians of the Kushāṇa dynasty had faithfully carried on the work of Hellenization begun by their Greek predecessors. The Græco-Buddhist stucco figurines which Sir John Marshall found by the hundred in the ground at Taxila, show us that the image-makers of that town continued, up to the eve of the Hun invasions in the fifth century,

the great tradition of Gandhāran art. But here again the Huns had played havoc everywhere. "There are many monasteries, but they are very dilapidated"—such is the ever-recurring theme in Hsüan-tsang's narrative when he tells us of the Buddhist communities of the north-west which had not yet recovered from the Hun invasions at the time when the Moslem menace was already imminent. The Chinese pilgrim was able at least to admire at Takshaśilā a stūpa erected by the emperor Aśoka on the site where, in one of his previous existences, Buddha had made "the gift of his head", or rather his heads, through a thousand successive incarnations. Close to this sanctuary was shown the monastery which had been the home, no doubt in the later second century of our era, of the Buddhist philosopher Kumāralabdha, or better, Kumāralāta, one of the principal theorists of the Hīnayānist and phenomenalist school of the *Sautrāntikas*.

Note that, politically, Taxila, in the seventh century, after having depended for a long time on Kapiśa, had passed under the rule of the kings of Kāshmīr.

At this point the pilgrim, instead of going towards the basin of the Ganges, turned back in order to visit the site of one of the most celebrated *jātakas*, to the north-west of Taxila, on the right bank of the Indus: the spot where Prince Mahāsattva, the future Buddha, had made the gift of his body to a hungry tigress and her seven cubs. "Originally," writes the pious historiographer, "the land had been dyed with the blood of the prince. To-day it is still red, and the plants as well as the trees preserve the same tint."

Kāshmīr attracted Hsüan-tsang. "He climbed heights abounding in precipices, crossed a bridge of iron, and after going a thousand *li*, reached the kingdom of Chia-shih-mi-lo." He himself has left us a very picturesque description of this "aerial paradise". "The country has a circumference of

seven hundred leagues, and its four frontiers have a background of mountains of a prodigious height. It is reached by very narrow passes. That is why none of the neighbouring princes has been able to attack it successfully. On the western side the capital adjoins a large river (the upper course of the Vitastā, the Hydaspes of the Greeks, our Jhelum). The country is suitable for the cultivation of grain and produces a great abundance of flowers and fruits . . . The climate is cold and glacial; much snow falls, but there is little wind . . . The inhabitants are very good-looking, but they are too crafty in disposition. They wear woollen caps and white cotton clothes."

In these Himalayan valleys, strange legends were handed down, magnified under the influence of the mountain solitudes. "One sees (on the heights) stūpas which contain relics of great saints. The wild animals and mountain apes gather flowers to pay them homage. In all the seasons of the year they continue their pious offerings ; it seems as though they were fulfilling a prescribed duty." Spirits were seen riding on the summits : "On this mountain many things are seen which smack of the miraculous. Sometimes a wall of rock appears to be split across ; or, on a high summit, one discerns the tracks of a horse ; but all these things have a deceptive appearance. They are the *arhats* or *śramaṇas*, out in a body on a pleasure expedition, who have traced drawings with their fingers, or, galloping on horse-back, have left the tracks of hoofs. It would be difficult to give detailed information about all these strange occurrences . . ."

Kāshmīr has indeed been at all times the home of an intense religious life. In the ninth century it was to harbour one of the principal philosophic schools of Śaiva Hinduism. At the time of Hsüan-tsang the Buddhists still preponderated for a while.

They owned a hundred monasteries with five thousand religious and pointed with pride to the three stūpas built by the Indian emperor Aśoka, and to the souvenirs of the Indo-Scythian Emperor Kanishka, the Constantine and the Clovis of Buddhism. It was in Kāshmīr that the legend was everywhere told of the monk Madhyāntika, who had rendered the country habitable by drying up the lakes and converting the dragons. When Hsüan-tsang approached the capital —Pravarapura, the present Śrīnāgār—the King of Kāshmīr, with his whole court, came in person to meet him. "The road was covered with parasols and standards, and the whole route was strewn with flowers and drenched in perfumes." To honour his guest the Indian monarch "spread before him on the ground an immense quantity of flowers. Then he begged him to mount a large elephant, and walked in his train". The next day, after a feast in the palace, the rajah invited Hsüan-tsang to begin courses on the difficult points in the Doctrine. "After hearing that the love of study had brought him from distant lands, and that when he desired to read, he found himself without texts," he put twenty scribes at his disposal, to obtain for him copies of the Buddhist gospels, as well as of later philosophic treatises" (*sūtras* and *śāstras*).

Hsüan-tsang found in Kāshmīr, in addition to these bibliographical resources, a master after his own heart, in the person of a venerable Mahāyānist doctor, aged 70. The biographer of the Chinese pilgrim imparts to us an echo of the joy felt by these two great minds in meeting one another. The old man was delighted to find in his Chinese pupil a thinker capable of carrying on the line of the fifth century philosophers, like Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, and Hsüan-tsang, for his part, felt himself recompensed for all his pains since, through this

master, he was able to receive in all its purity the tradition of the idealist school. And what a beautiful picture he has drawn of him! "This master, of outstanding virtue, observed the rules of discipline with a rigorous purism. He was gifted with a profound intellect and his vast learning embraced every branch of knowledge. His talents and his enlightenment partook of the divine, and his benevolent heart was full of affection for the sages and of respect for the lettered. Hsüan-tsang questioned him without reserve and gave himself up, night and day, to study with him, with untiring zeal."

As well as the idealist doctrine, which answered to his personal tendencies, Hsüan-tsang found at Kāshmīr the traditions of another Buddhist school, equally famous and far more ancient, that of the integral realists or *Sarvāstivāda*. It was not far from the Kāshmīr district, at Jālandhara, that the Indo-Scythian Emperor Kanishka, with the collaboration of two celebrated patriarchs, Pārśva and Vasumitra, had summoned a council of 500 doctors who codified the Buddhist canon according to the Sarvāstivāda. With his catholicity of knowledge and the comparative eclecticism of his tastes, Hsüan-tsang at Kāshmīr divided his labours between these opposing systems.

The Chinese pilgrim remained thus in Kāshmīr for two full years, from May, 631, to April, 633, studious and fruitful years in which he completed his philosophic training, and years of inner contemplation, before undertaking his pilgrimage proper. At length, in possession of the sum total of the religious and metaphysical texts, he came down from the high Kāshmīr valleys to the holy land of the Ganges, to discover there the traces of Buddha.

Chapter VII

TOWARDS THE HOLY LAND OF THE GANGES

One of Hsüan-tsang's first halting places on coming down from Kāshmīr was the town of Śākala, in Chinese Shê-chieh-lo, the Sialkot of to-day, the capital of Eastern Punjab. It was an old classic city, for the Alexandrine geographers mention it under the name of Sangala, and it became the capital of one of the Indo-Greek kingdoms, that of Demetrius, Apollodotus, and Menander. Was there still some memory at Śākala, in Hsüan-tsang's day, of that "Milinda"—as the Indians called King Menander—who had fought his way, for a moment, as far as Oudh and Bihar, and had all but subdued the whole of Northern India? His memory as a conqueror must have been wiped out, as was that of Alexander, and as were to be the names of so many other princes of that age in this land without memory, which scorns temporal memories, remembering only the visions of the eternal. But it so happens that the name of king Milinda remained associated with a famous text, the Milindapañha, which is undoubtedly the first in order of time of the writings of Buddhist philosophy. It is indeed a work of capital importance for the Buddhists, since it contains an exposition made by the monk Nāgasena to the Greek king of one of the fundamental questions of their doctrine, the purely phenomenal and illusory nature of the ego. It is also a book of no less interest for us, since it brings us, across the ages and through successive translations, an echo, as it were, of the curious philosophic dialogues that must have taken

place between the last Hellenist adventurers and the first Buddhist metaphysicians, at the time when the Macedonian greatness was waning.

If Śākala no longer remembered the days, already far distant, when she had been one of the centres of Hellenism, she was still proud of having more recently —about two centuries before Hsüan-tsang's visit— provided a shelter for the meditations of the illustrious Buddhist philosopher, Vasubandhu, whose transition from Hīnayānist scholasticism to absolute idealism was rightly held to be one of the greatest triumphs of the *Mahāyāna*.

Since the death of Vasubandhu, all this region of the Punjāb had, it is true, suffered like the Gandhāra country from the ravages of the Ephthalite Huns. In the first quarter of the sixth century the Huns had destroyed the last great united Indian empire, that of the Guptas of Magadha, and had plunged India once more into chaos.

Their king, the fierce Mihirakula, the Indian Attila, chose Śākala as his residence, and held all the provinces of the north in terror of his arms. "Mo-hsi-lo-chü-lo (Mihirakula)" Hsüan-tsang tells us, "was remarkable for his tempestuous nature and his invincible courage. Among the neighbouring kings there was not one who did not obey him trembling." He carried on a terrible persecution of Buddhism, destroying monasteries and stūpas on all sides, and massacring the monks. Hsüan-tsang relates his struggle against the last Indian emperor of the Gupta dynasty, Bālāditya, king of Magadha. The latter was a very devout Buddhist. Being outraged by the persecutions organized by the chief of the Huns against religion, he refused the tribute demanded by the barbarians. Mihirakula sent his hordes out against him. Such was the terror inspired by the Huns that at their approach Bālāditya and his officers

fled into the jungle. However, it appears that the invaders fell into an ambush and were repulsed. Tradition even has it that Mihirakula was taken prisoner. According to other sources he was beaten by Mālva Yaśovarman (between 530 and 545). However that may be, he had to retreat from the Ganges district and set out with his hordes for Kāshmīr, where he established himself, after massacring the king. From there he continued his reign of terror in the basin of the upper Indus. Thus, " in order to chastise " the king of Gandhāra (who had no doubt refused to pay tribute) he invaded the country, exterminated the royal family, destroyed all the Buddhist monasteries, and overthrew all the *stūpas* within his reach. He then returned to Kāshmīr, carrying off with him all the wealth of the country, and dragging in his train troops of prisoners whom he massacred on the banks of the Indus. After his death Kāshmīr drove the Huns out, but they continued to camp in the upper Punjāb and were only got rid of, on the very eve of Hsüan-tsang's pilgrimage, by the kings of Thānesvar, of the house of Harsha. These terrible memories were still fresh at Śākala at the time of the visit of our pilgrim, who has left us a detailed account of them.

After leaving Śākala, Hsüan-tsang and his companions met a band of fifty brigands in a forest of *palāśa*. These brigands, after robbing them of their clothes, pursued them, sword in hand, as far as a dried-up pond. " Fortunately the bed of the pond was all covered with thorny bushes and climbing plants. The monks who were accompanying the Master of the Law managed to see through the dense undergrowth, on the south bank of the pond, a cave that had been hollowed out by the waters, large enough to hold several people. They informed the Master of the Law

of this by signs, and plunged into the cave with him. When the brigands had lost their tracks, the travellers ran at top speed to the next village, where they related their misadventures. A Brahman, no doubt the chief of the village, who was ploughing, assembled the inhabitants by blowing his horn and beating the drum, and when he had collected about fifty peasants, he went off to punish the robbers. But these had already dispersed into the depths of the woods." The travellers, robbed of their baggage, bewailed their fate, Hsüan-tsang alone keeping a cheerful countenance, " for his soul was like a pure river whose waters may be disturbed on the surface, but which is never troubled in its depths."

Indeed, they had scarcely arrived at the next town when an old Brahman, friendly to Buddhism, assembled the people and made Hsüan-tsang and his companions accept the equivalent of what they had lost. To crown this stroke of fortune, the Brahman was versed in the doctrines of the *Mādhyamika* system, a Buddhistic critical system so radical that it is often looked upon (wrongly as it happens) as a kind of Nihilism. Hsüan-tsang spent a month with him, studying the masters of this school, Nāgārjuna and Ārya Deva, a fruitful study for him, for it is impossible, in our opinion, to obtain a real insight into the *yogācāra* or *vijñānavāda* doctrine, the mystic idealism so dear to Hsüan-tsang, without having previously assimilated the dialectic of the *Mādhyamika* critical philosophy. In the same way Fichte and Schelling cannot be fully understood except by following the thought of Kant.

The pilgrim made his way henceforth through a veritable Land of Promise. At each stage he found libraries full of indispensable treatises, and doctors versed in all the philosophic secrets of the Great Way. He spent fourteen months between the years 633 and 634 at Cīnabhukti on the left bank of the Bias, so

numerous there were the texts of the *Mādhyamika* and the *Hīnayāna*, then four months of the rainy season of 634 with an eminent religious at Jālandhara, the last big town of eastern Punjāb, and moreover an important Buddhist centre, since the district contained no less than fifty monasteries.

In his journey towards the south-east, the pilgrim now arrived at the valley of the Jumna. He went at once to the principal town of the district, the ancient city of Mathurā, the Mo-t'u-lo of his account. Here he was on the confines of tropical India. "The climate," he observes, "is torrid and the soil is so rich and fertile that the mangoes of which each man plants as many as he chooses, form a kind of forest." Like all the great towns of the Ganges, Mathurā was full of sacred souvenirs, Hindu as well as Buddhist. The Hindus regarded it as the fatherland of the hero Krishṇa, the divine cattle-drover, whose gentle worship was one day to replace that of Śākyamuni. The Buddhists preserved at Mathurā the relics of several disciples of the Master: Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, apostles of the first days; Upāli the erstwhile barber, accounted superior in religion to the sons of princes, Ānanda the tender-hearted, who was the favourite disciple, and finally Rāhula, the son of the Bodhisattva according to the flesh, who by his deserts became his son according to the spirit. It was also near Mathurā that the delightful legend of the offering of the monkey originated, in the form in which the Sacred Writings present it to us; This monkey had come one day to offer Buddha a bowl of wild honey; in his joy at seeing his offering accepted, he made such a wild leap that he killed himself—a providential accident, for, as a reward for his charity, he was immediately reborn in the body of a saint.[1]

[1] A small fragment of relief in schist, from the latest Hadda finds, in the Musée Guimet, shows us a charming effigy of the pious monkey.

We are able to complete Hsüan-tsang's reminiscences by what we have learnt from recent discoveries. Buddhist art, from the time of the Indo-Scythians, had produced at Mathurā a series of stūpa reliefs and of statues in which we see the Greek art of Gandhāra giving place little by little to an Indian reaction that nothing could check. It was at Mathurā again, in the fourth and fifth centuries, under the great Gupta dynasty, that this effort towards artistic freedom had culminated in an unparalleled harvest. Indian classicism, known by the name of "Gupta art", has left us in this town one of its purest works, the great Buddha of the fifth century, standing in his diaphanous robe, beneath his immense circular aureole, which is to-day the pride of the Mathurā Museum. We like to picture to ourselves what must have been the devout wonder of the pilgrim philosopher if he was brought into the presence of this statue whose lofty and serene sweetness remains undoubtedly the highest expression of Mahāyānist idealism. It is doubtless not due to chance that such a work should be contemporaneous with the fluid and, as it were, aerial metaphysic of an Asaṅga and a Vasubandhu. Never, indeed, did Indian art express more directly, beneath the etherealized and spiritualized beauty of its forms, the idealism which inspired it.

On leaving Mathurā, Hsüan-tsang went up the course of the Jumna to visit Sthāneśvara, which he calls Sa-t'a-ni-ssü-fa-lo, the modern Thānēsvar. It was a very important place owing to its strategic and commercial position in the middle of that ancient land of Kurukshetra which forms a kind of isthmus, shut in between the basin of the Indus on the west and that of the Ganges on the east, between the Himalayas on the north and the desert of Rājputana on the south. On this narrow strip all the quarrels of history had been settled. In legendary times it

was there that epic placed the great war of the *Mahābhārata*, the clash of the Kaurava and the Pāṇḍava over the hegemony of the Ganges. Hsüan-tsang's account even contains a sort of echo of the most celebrated episode of the epic, that in which the demi-god Kṛishṇa, disguised as the charioteer of the hero Arjuna, encourages the latter to abandon all hesitation and humane scruples and give the order for attack : "Life and death," Hsüan-tsang makes his hero say, "are like an ocean without shores, and they flow in an endless alternation ; intelligent beings cannot escape from the eddy in which they are swept away . . ." Can we not imagine that we are hearing the Kṛishṇa of the poem, who finds in his serene acceptance of the cosmic catastrophe in his wisdom that rises above petty humane considerations, in his divine indifference to all contingency—beyond joy and grief, beyond pity and hate—a transcendental justification for the brutalities of action ?

The same reasons that had made of Kurukshetra the battlefield of the Epic, had won for the Thānēsvar of the seventh century a role of primary importance. The great Hun invasions which had destroyed the united Indian empire of the Guptas were scarcely at an end. The hordes of the Huns remained encamped on the upper Indus. Opposite them, the principality of Thānēsvar had become a frontier-district accustomed to the part it had to play. Owing to the failure of the last Gupta emperors, henceforth reduced to their patrimony of Bihar, the kings of Thānēsvar, of the Vardhana dynasty, had become the champions of Indian independence. One of them, Prabhākara Vardhana (died 605), had vanquished the terrible Huns in several encounters. His eldest son, Rājya Vardhana, who had only managed to reign for two years, had nevertheless had time to conquer the people of Mālva,

the assassins of his brother-in-law, the king of Kanauj, when he was assassinated himself, in the midst of his victories, by a king of Bengal. But Harsha Vardhana, brother of the victim, was to avenge him. Having become king in his turn in these tragic circumstances, he was to carry out during the course of his long reign (606–47) the programme of his house, and establish a hegemony over the territory of the Ganges. Nevertheless, having attained to this degree of power, he deprived Thānēsvar of its primacy and transferred his capital to the middle Ganges, to Kanauj, a town that was in a better position to be the centre of a great empire.

Resuming his journey eastward, Hsüan-tsang reached the upper course of the Ganges. He observed the popular devotion of which from time immemorial the " sacred Gaṅgā ", the divine river descended from heaven to earth, had been the object on the part of the Hindus. " Near its source this river is three *li* broad; at its mouth its width is ten *li*. Its waters are bluish, but they often vary in colour and its waves are immense. A large number of marvellous creatures live in it, but they are harmless to man. The water has a sweet and pleasant taste, and carries along with it very fine sand. In the Indian texts it is called ' the Water of Felicity '. Those who bathe in it, we are assured, are purified of all their sins. Those who drink of it or merely rinse their mouths with it, find that all the evils that threaten them disappear. Those who are drowned in it are reborn among the gods. Multitudes of men and women constantly gather on its banks." But the worship of the sacred river, which played so large a part in the beliefs of Brahmanism, was, for this reason, opposed by the Buddhists. Hsüan-tsang recalls the way in which the Buddhist doctor, Āryа Deva, dared of old, in the midst of the crowd that

was thronging on the banks of the Ganges, to attack this "superstition".

Let us here point out in parentheses what an incomparable observer of Brahman society our pilgrim was. Let us consider, for example, his exposition of the caste system, which is astonishing in its scientific accuracy.

"The different families in India are divided into four classes or castes. The first is that of the Brahmans (in Chinese *Po-lo-mên*). These are men of spotless life. The most rigorous purity is their rule of conduct. The second caste is that of the *Kshatriyas* (in Chinese *ts'a-ti-li*). This is the royal race. For centuries they have reigned in unbroken succession. The third is that of the *Vaiśyas* (*fei-shê*). These are the merchants, given over to commerce. The fourth is that of the *Śūdras* (*shu-to-lo*). These are the labourers. In these four families the purity or impurity of the caste assigns to each a separate place." Finally, the inferior castes, the outcastes and untouchables: "The butchers, fishermen, executioners, etc., are banished out of the towns. When they come and go in the villages, they walk apart on the left of the path."

But, in spite of the growing influence of Hinduism on the masses, the principalities of the upper Ganges still contained numerous Buddhist communities. Hsüan-tsang spent the spring and summer of 635 at Matipura, in the present district of Bijnor, occupying himself with the study of the texts of the Little Vehicle, especially those of the realist school of the Sarvāstivādas; a proof once more of the eclecticism of his mind and the close interdependence of the various philosophic schools of Buddhism.

While descending the course of the Ganges, Hsüan-tsang passed through the rich Mesopotamian country, situated between the river and its two tributaries on the right and left, the Kālīnadī and the Rāmgangā. This was the country of Kapitha, the

ancient Kāmpilya. There he worshipped the sacred spot where Buddha, after going to the heaven of the Thirty-three Gods to preach to his mother there the law of salvation, descended to earth again. Before the eyes of the pilgrim there hovered the marvellous images which, ten centuries later, still haunted the imagination of Tibetan artists ; the Buddha, tall as the world, descending the stairway of the heavens in the midst of a multi-coloured blaze of light. "In the middle the stairway was of massive gold, the left side was of crystal, and the right of silver. The Buddha descended by the middle steps at the head of the *devas*. The god Brahma, with a white fly-catcher in his hand, walked on his right, down the steps of silver. Indra, holding a parasol adorned with precious stones, kept to the left on the crystal steps. A hundred thousand *devas* and the host of the *Bodhisattvas* followed Buddha down the steps, strewing flowers and reciting verses." Near this spot was shown a stone on which the footsteps of Buddha were imprinted in the form of broad lotus flowers. We should add, however, that the real Buddhists, rather than marvel at these miracles, preferred their doctrinal moral. A charming parable, related by Hsüan-tsang, reminded the faithful of this: "A nun named 'Colour of the Lotus-flower' who passionately desired to be the first to see Buddha on his descent from heaven, was allowed to transform herself for this purpose into the Universal Queen, a sort of aerial divinity having the power of ubiquity. But meanwhile another faithful soul, the disciple Subhūti, was concentrating his thoughts on the universal vanity of things. And the Buddha taught 'Colour of the Lotus-flower' that she had been forestalled, for while she had only discovered his material body, Subhūti had been the first to perceive his 'spiritual body' and to penetrate his thought."

Hsüan-tsang reached the great metropolis of

Doāb, Kanyākubja, our Kanauj, which he calls Chie-jo-chü-shê. He was struck by the beauty and riches of this town. "It has lofty walls and solid trenches. On all sides are seen towers and pavilions. In several places, also, there are flowery groves and limpid ponds, crystal clear. In this country there are found in plenty the rarest wares of other lands. The inhabitants live in happy prosperity." Above all, Kanauj, as we have seen, was at this time the chief residence of the great emperor Harsha Vardhana, and hence the political capital of India. Hsüan-tsang, who gives Harsha his eulogistic surname of Śīlāditya, Sun of Virtue, began at Kanauj to be deeply impressed with the glory and the virtue of the Indian monarch.

Indeed, Harsha combined in his person all the qualities of the warrior and the statesman. During the course of his long reign (606–47) he had restored to the Ganges country the unity and peace which it had lost since the fall of the Gupta.

At his accession a sacred cause had obliged him to take up arms. He had, as we have seen, to avenge his elder brother, Rājya Vardhana, who had been treacherously massacred by a prince of Gauḍa, or Gaur, or Bengal, named Śaśāṅka. We have little information as to the details of this war, for all the praises of the poet Bāṇa, his historiographer, are not worth as much as a few positive facts would be. He must have entered on the struggle with all the more ardour for the fact that while he himself was a fervent adherent of Buddhism, Śaśāṅka, his enemy, was openly persecuting the Church, even going so far as to lay sacrilegious hands on the Tree of the Bodhi at Gayā. Harsha was to be victorious everywhere. Hsüan-tsang tells us that after going to avenge his brother's murder "he marched from west to east, to chastise the insurgent kings. For six years the elephants never had their saddles off nor the men their

breastplates". No doubt Harsha found allies in the persons of the last Guptas of Magadha, who had become his clients and his protégés. At any rate we find his possessions extending shortly afterwards as far as the Gulf of Bengal, and even further towards the east, since the king Kāmarūpa, that is to say, the King of Assam, accepted his suzerainty of his own accord. Presumably Harsha also succeeded in wreaking vengeance on the people of Mālva, who some years earlier had killed his brother-in-law, the former king of Kanauj, and imprisoned his sister Rājyaśrī. Mālva was, in fact, annexed to the empire of Harsha. The latter even obtained in fief the rich kingdom of Valabhī, south-west of Mālva, which comprised Gujarāt and the peninsula of Kathiawar. According to the account of his historiographer, the poet Bāṇa, he also continued the exploits of his father, Prabhākara, and of his ancestors, against the last of the Hun hordes, north of the Punjāb, since we hear of him advancing his arms "as far as the inaccessible country and the snowy mountains of Tokharistan". The Deccan alone had escaped his conquest, the king of Mahārāshṭra, the Chalukya Pulakeśin, having repulsed all his attacks in this quarter, so that his empire was still bounded on the south by the chain of the Vindhya mountains.

Now this conqueror, this peacemaker, this last emperor of independent India, was the most devout of Buddhists. Like Aśoka of old, he was a saint upon the throne. Once his wars were over, Hsüan-tsang tells us, he thought of nothing but the material and moral welfare of his peoples. His ideal of kingship was to introduce into the laws and customs the gentleness and charity of Buddhism—a praiseworthy endeavour on the eve of the great wave of Sivaism and its accompanying outbreak of violence. "His rule," says Hsüan-tsang, "was just and humane. He forgot to eat and drink in the accomplishment of good

works." Like Aśoka, he tried to forbid the slaughter of animals. Like him, he erected thousands of *stūpas* and monasteries. "In the towns and villages, in public squares, at cross roads, he had houses of public relief built, where food, drink, and medicines were kept to be given in charity to travellers, and to the poor and needy."

No man took his task of ruler more to heart. "When the kings of the petty kingdoms adjoining his own," writes Hsüan-tsang, "or their ministers and high officials, did good and sought after virtue, he would lead them by the hand and make them sit on his throne, calling them his good friends." Except in the rainy season, he constantly visited the provinces of his empire, inspecting everything himself, and redressing wrongs.

Like Aśoka and Kanishka of old, Harsha took an active part in the life of the Buddhist Church. Every year he assembled in council the monks of the whole of India, discussing points of doctrine with them, strengthening their faith, and showering gifts on the deserving. He invited the most learned and the most saintly among them to sit on his throne, and he himself received from them what they had to teach.

On the other hand—and this, too, is a trait which he shares in common with his saintly predecessor Aśoka—it must be affirmed that this royal monk showed a spirit of tolerance which was a credit to Indian Buddhism. Every day he fed personally five hundred Brahmans, in addition to a thousand Buddhist monks. And every five years he summoned an "Assembly of Deliverance" to which he invited the poor of every creed and the clergy of every cult to a general distribution of alms.

Hsüan-tsang, during his visit to Kanauj, did not meet king Harsha, who was no doubt absent from the

town. Nevertheless, he spent there three months of the year 636 in the monastery of Bhadravihāra, in order to re-read the commentaries of the collection of the Three Baskets (*Tripiṭaka*) which constitute the body of the Buddhist scriptures.

When he had set out once more on his journey, the pilgrim crossed the Ganges and entered the province of Oudh, the ancient country of Ayodhyā (*A-yü-t'o* in Chinese). The capital, also called Āyodhyā, the same town as ancient Śāketa, was still full of the fame of the two great Mahāyānist doctors, the two brothers Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, founders of the idealist school beloved of Hsüan-tsang. He visited with special reverence the old monastery, five or six *li* to the south-west of the town, in a mango-grove, where the two brothers, two centuries earlier, had thought out and taught their system. Having come into Oudh from Gandhāra, they had not at first followed the same line of development. While Asaṅga, the elder, at once embraced the doctrine, new at that time, of absolute idealism, the younger, Vasubandhu, remained faithful to the old Hīnayānist systems, notably to the Vaibhāshika school, which was realist to the extent of holding of a kind of atomism. Vasubandhu even drew up the Vaibhāshikan philosophic compendium, the enormous *Abhidharma kośa śāstra*, which remains, all things considered, one of the most imposing monuments of Buddhist philosophy. But the hour of grace was about to strike for him also. According to the *Life of Vasubandhu*, translated about 560 by Paramārtha, this conversion was brought about by Asaṅga himself.

The great idealist had appointed a meeting-place with his brother at Ayodhyā in the monastery of the mango-trees. At nightfall he led him on to a terrace which overlooked the river, and then withdrew. It was a cloudless autumn night, and the moon was

shining on the water. A voice rose, an unknown voice reading a Mahāyānist treatise. Doubtless it was speaking of the freeing of the spirit for its flight on the wings of idealism. According to this fluid and luminous theory, the world of forms was destined to vanish away, as at this moment the appearances of earth and water were floating in the lunar haze of the Gogra. Above vain material things, beyond all that was concrete, a dream was filling the Indian night; objects were no more than this—the dream of a dream. The ideality of the universe was taking the place of the material cosmos, and under this new aspect all was becoming intelligible, accessible, and possible . . . Vasubandhu, stirred to the pitch of ecstasy, understood at last the beauty of the *Mahāyāna*. He wished to cut out his tongue which until now had opposed the Great Doctrine. Asaṅga, hidden in the shade, rushed out to prevent him. The two brothers were henceforth closely united, and went forth to fight together for the triumph of idealist doctrines.

Another legend, the scene of which was at Ayodhyā, told how the two brothers and their disciple Buddhasiṃha had one day taken an oath together that the first to die would come and teach the others. And in fact, after the funeral of Vasubandhu, one night when Asaṅga was meditating, the glorified body of the deceased appeared to him, and revealed to him the marvels of the paradise of Maitreya. The Bodhisattva Maitreya, the Buddha of the future, plays an important part in the formation of the idealist school. Hsüan-tsang himself tells us how Asanga at night was caught up to the heaven of the Blessed Gods, where Maitreya dictated to him the texts of his doctrine. And so it comes about that for numbers of Chinese and Japanese believers, the school of Asaṅga and of Vasubandhu is still at the present time placed under the direct protection of the Buddhist Messiah.

Hsüan-tsang left Oudh and continued once more along the course of the Ganges. He went on board a vessel with a score of companions and travelled as far as Prayāga, the modern Allāhābād. Here took place one of the most dramatic episodes of his biography, one which nearly put an end to his journey. The pilgrim had gone about ten miles on the Ganges when his boat reached a spot where the river was shaded on both sides by a forest of Aśoka trees, with particularly dense foliage. Now these trees concealed half a score of pirate boats. The pirates, rowing hard, bore down on the pilgrim and his companions and cut them off. Several of the passengers, panic-stricken, hurled themselves into the river. Hsüan-tsang's boat was surrounded by the robbers, who brought the pilgrim to the bank. All the passengers were searched and stripped of their clothing. As a crowning misfortune, the robbers were worshippers of the Śaiva goddess Durgā, a cruel divinity who demanded of her followers human sacrifices. Every year, therefore, in the autumn, they sought a victim, preferably a well-built handsome man, whom they immolated, offering his flesh and blood to the goddess. "When they had inspected the Master of the Law, whose noble proportions and distinguished features made him a suitable subject for their cruel purpose, they exchanged joyful glances. 'We were going,' they said, 'to allow the season for the sacrifice demanded by our goddess to pass by, for lack of a subject worthy of her; but here is a religious of noble form and pleasing countenance. Let us kill him and gain good fortune.' Hsüan-tsang answered them thus: 'If this vile and contemptible body could fulfil the purpose of your sacrifice, then indeed I would not grudge it; but as I come from distant lands to pay reverence to the Sacred Places, to obtain the sacred books, and to be instructed in the

Law, and as I have not yet accomplished my desire, I fear, O men of generous heart, lest in taking my life you may bring down upon yourselves the worst misfortunes.' All the passengers besought the pirates with one voice, and some even offered to die in his place ; but they obstinately refused.

"Thereupon the chief of the pirates sent men to fetch water from the midst of the flowering aśoka grove, and ordered them to build an altar of clay from the mud out of the river ; then he commanded two satellites to draw their sabres, drag Hsüan-tsang on to the altar, and sacrifice him immediately. But the Master of the Law showed no sign of fear or emotion in his countenance. The pirates were surprised at this, and almost touched. Hsüan-tsang, however, seeing that he could not escape his fate, begged the brigands to grant him a few moments respite, and not to jostle him roughly. 'Let me,' he said, 'enter nirvāṇa with a calm and joyous mind.'

"Then the Master of the Law thought with love of the Bodhisattva Maitreya, and turned his whole mind to the Heaven of the Blessed, earnestly praying to be born again there, in order to offer this Bodhisattva his respects and homage, to hear the excellent *Law* expounded, and to attain perfect Understanding (the state of a Buddha) ; then to descend and be reborn on earth again in order to teach and convert these men, that they might practise deeds of high virtue and abandon their infamous calling ; and finally to spread abroad all the benefits of the *Law*, and to procure peace and happiness for all creatures. Then he adored the Buddhas of the ten countries of the world, sat down in the attitude of meditation, and firmly fixed his thoughts on Maitreya Bodhisattva without allowing any alien idea to rise up.

"All at once, in the depths of his ecstatic soul, he seemed to be rising up as high as Mount Sumēru, and

after passing through one, two, and three heavens, he seemed to see, in the palace of the Blessed, the venerable Maitreya, seated on a resplendent throne, and surrounded by a multitude of gods. At this moment he was floating with body and soul on an ocean of joy, not knowing that he was near the altar of sacrifice nor thinking of the pirates who thirsted for his blood But his companions were giving way to cries and tears when suddenly a furious wind arose on all sides, breaking the trees, whirling clouds of sand about, lashing the river into waves which engulfed all the boats. The pirates were seized with terror, and questioned Hsüan-tsang's companions : 'Where does this holy man come from, and what is his name ?'

"'He is a renowned religious,' they answered, 'and he comes from China to seek the *Law* ; if you kill him, sirs, you will bring upon yourselves endless penalties. Do you not see already, in the anger of the winds and the waters, the terrible signs of the vengeance of the spirits of heaven ? Hasten then to repent !'

"The brigands, terror-stricken, threw themselves at the feet of Hsüan-tsang. But the Master of the Law, caught up in ecstasy, had seen nothing of what was going on around him. When one of the robbers touched the hem of his garment with respect, he opened his eyes and asked gently whether his hour had arrived. When he perceived the change that had taken place he received the news of his being spared with the same serenity as that with which he had but now heard his death announced, and invited the penitent bandits definitely to change their way of life. They promised, and in proof of their repentance, threw their weapons into the Ganges. Soon the winds and the waves calmed down. The pirates, overcome with joy, saluted the Master of the Law and took leave of him."

After this dramatic incident, Hsüan-tsang reached the confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna, where stood the town of Prayāga, the Po-lo-yeh-ch'ieh of his text, the modern Allāhābād. Prayāga, which had been, in the fourth and fifth centuries, one of the capitals of the Gupta emperors, was still a very populous city. But although there was a stūpa of Aśoka there, and in spite of the memories of the Mahāyānist philosopher Ārya Deva, who had preached there in the third century, the Buddhists were in the minority. The two monasteries they possessed—which, moreover, were Hīnayānist—could not vie with the hundreds of Hindu temples frequented, so Hsüan-tsang tells us, by an astounding number of believers. It was a famous town, however, if only for its "field of charity". This was the name given to a spacious plain on the east of Prayāga, where from time immemorial the princes and great men of the country came to do a deed of piety by distributing alms to the monks, the needy, and orphans.[1]

Hsüan-tsang remarks at Prayāga, as well as higher up, how the Ganges was worshipped by crowds of Brahmans. Multitudes of people sought to die in the sacred waters, hoping by this means to be reborn in the heaven of the gods. Even herds of stags and families of monkeys would gather on its banks, bathing in the river for many hours on end, and sometimes these animals, so Hsüan-tsang assures us, would refuse to go away, and remained devoutly fasting there until they died. The pilgrim quotes as an example the story of a monkey who settled in a tree close to the water's edge and allowed himself to die of hunger, in the reign of king Harsha,

[1] M. Foucher thinks that it is the immense sandbank, uncovered by the water from November to May, which stretches above the confluence of the Ganges and of the Jumna.

an incident which caused an increase of zeal among the members of the sect who were given to austerities. Long poles had been fixed in the stream at this spot, each with a peg or a projection near the top, which served as a foothold for the pious. From sunrise Hsüan-tsang could see one of them in mid-stream practising this strange exercise: supporting himself on the pole by one hand and one foot, the other arm and leg stretched out horizontally, his body hanging in mid-air, the Hindu followed with eager eyes the sun's course in the heavens. He only came down from his column when the sun had disappeared in the west, and then only to begin again at dawn on the following day. The object of these painful austerities was to deliver the soul from transmigration, and they were carried out each day, with no respite, for scores of years.

Hsüan-tsang points out, in connection with Prayāga, the demoralization which accompanied certain devotions of some Hindu sects. It reads like one of the most exciting pages in Kipling: "There is in the town a temple of the gods, of dazzling wealth, in which a great number of miracles takes place. Whoever gives even a single coin there acquires more merit than if he gave a thousand anywhere else. Moreover, if one commits suicide in this temple, one gains the paradise of the gods. In front of the principal hall there is a great tree, the branches and dense foliage of which cast a thick shade. A man-eating demon lives there. Hence the piles of human bones lying on the right and left of the tree. As soon as a man enters this temple, he sacrifices his life. He is impelled to this deed, both by the glamour of error and by the temptations of the spirit. From antiquity down to our own times, this senseless custom has never ceased for a single instant."

At the time of Hsüan-tsang's visit, a tragic example

had recently served to show the danger of the strange mental contagion that haunted the temple of death. A Brahman of great intellectual power had resolved to put an end to this murderous superstition. Scarcely had he entered when the mania for suicide seized him. "He climbed into the tree, and leaning down cried to his friends : 'I am going to die. I used formerly to say that their doctrine was only a lie, but now I recognize its truth. The *ṛishi* and the musicians of heaven, hovering in the air, are calling me at this moment to their side. In this privileged spot it behoves me to cast down this vile body,'" and he cast himself into the void.

We must never forget such scenes as these, nor lose sight of all the strange and dangerous superstitions that swarmed on Hindu soil, if we would appreciate at its true value the moral gain that Buddhism brought. The human spirit presents such contradictions as these. The highly theological religion and fervent ontology of Brahman circles did not prevent the development of the most cruel and immoral practices ; the history and iconography of several Śaiva sects are sufficient proof of this. Buddhism, on the contrary, in theory supposed to be "nihilistic", maintained, at least in its authorized forms, a simplicity in its customs, a moral equilibrium and a happy moderation which recall the Greece of Socrates rather than the mediaeval manifestations of Hinduism. Hsüan-tsang's reaction to the excesses of Hinduism was that of a European.

From Prayāga the pilgrim, passing through a belt of forests full of wild beasts and elephants, went in a south-westerly direction, to visit another ancient Gupta capital, on the lower Jumna, Kauśāmbī, which he calls Chiao-shang-mi, the present Kosam. There, too, were shown souvenirs of Buddha's visit, a stūpa of Aśoka, the two-storied pavilion

where Vasubandhu had written one of his works, and the grove of mangoes where Asaṅga had lived. But only ten Buddhist monasteries were to be found there, and these were partly in ruins and deserted, with only three hundred monks, all Hīnayānists. On the other hand, Kauśāmbī counted nearly fifty Brahman temples, frequented by the multitudes. Thus at the very hour which seems to mark for us the apogee of Buddhist thought in India, its reconquest by Hinduism was daily becoming a more definite menace, in the eyes of an intelligent observer.

Chapter VIII

IN THE SACRED PLACES OF BUDDHISM

After Kauśāmbī, Hsüan-tsang changed the direction of his itinerary. Instead of descending the Ganges as far as Benares, he went up due north by the tracks leading to northern Oudh and Nepāl. For the pilgrim did not want to put off any longer his visit to the birthplace of Buddha Śākyamuni.

Travelling in this direction, Hsüan-tsang first came to the town of Śrāvastī, in Chinese Shih-lo-fa-si-ti, to-day the hamlet of Sahet-Mahet, on the right bank of the Rapti. In the time of Buddha it was the capital of the ancient country of Kośala, the present Oudh, and of its king Prasenajit. But in the seventh century the place was already practically deserted, and the ancient capital contained scarcely more than ruins.[1]

And yet what a host of memories were associated with this dead town! It was at Śrāvastī that the park of Jetavana was to be seen; offered to the budding Church by the rich merchant Anāthapiṇḍika, and many centuries later its clear ponds, luxuriant verdure, and innumerable flowers were still the admiration of the first Chinese pilgrims. Aśoka had once marked the spot by pillars with inscriptions, bearing the Wheel of the Law and the Bull, but at the time of Hsüan-tsang these two columns alone remained standing next the ruined monastery. It was at Śrāvastī again that Buddha had worked what

[1] On the present state of the place, see Ph. Vogel, "Excavations at Sahet-Mahet" (Archæological Survey of India, especially *Report* of 1907–8, p. 81).

is called the "Great Miracle", celebrated over and over again since then through the whole of the sacred iconography, according to the traditional account of it : King Prasenajit had organized a contest of miracles between Buddha and three opposing ascetics, when the scene changed to the apotheosis of the Blessed One : he rose in the air, reached the region of light, and was no sooner there than multicoloured rays escaped from his body ; from his shoulders darted forth whirling flames, at his feet flowed a stream of cold water ; soon after, he was seen seated on a lotus created by the "Nāga kings", with Brahmā on his right and Indra on his left ; then by a miracle of his omnipotence, he caused more lotus flowers to appear, in countless numbers, filling the heavens, and each bearing a magic Buddha similar to himself.

Hsüan-tsang saw the tower which marked the site of a convent of nuns founded by Prajāpati, the aunt and mother by adoption of Buddha—Prajāpati who, supported by Ānanda, had at last after protracted refusals, obtained of Buddha the admission of women into the Community.

A little further on there was shown the stūpa of Aṅgulimāla, which was connected with one of those conversions of malevolent beings that occurred so frequently in the life of the Blessed One. Aṅgulimāla was a fanatical robber, doubtless connected with some homicidal sect such as the modern Thugs, who assassinated people in order to cut off their fingers with which they made a "sacred garland" for themselves. He only needed two more specimens in order to complete his horrible trophy. He was about to kill his own mother for the purpose when Buddha, seized with compassion, substituted himself for her. "Brandishing his sword the robber rushed upon the Blessed One ; the latter slowly retreated, and Aṅgulimāla pursued him without succeeding in reaching

him." In spite of such blackness of heart Buddha condescended to convert him, and the former head-hunter ended his life in the habit of a pious and faithful monk.

Near the ancient park of Jetavana Hsüan-tsang saw the stūpa of "the healing of the monk". The memory of one of the most human and most tender characteristics of Buddha's life had become associated with it: Once upon a time there was a sick monk who had given up hope, and was living in isolation, apart from the Community. The Blessed One, seeing him thus, asked him the reason for this withdrawal. The monk replied: "I am so indolent by nature that I have not even the courage to consult a doctor. I am very ill, and have no one to care for me." The Buddha, moved by compassion, said to him: "My friend, I myself will be your physician." Thereupon he touched the sufferer with his hand, and the disease disappeared. Buddha then carried him out of the room, made his bed, washed him, dressed him in new garments, and left him, bidding him be zealous and active.

Further on, a little stūpa recalled the charming story of Maudgalyāyana and Śāriputra, two of the earliest and most illustrious disciples of Śākyamuni; one day when Buddha was preaching to the crowd, near the Lake of Anavatapta, he noticed that Śāriputra was absent, and charged Maudgalyāyana to go and fetch him. Maudgalyāyana had received from the Blessed One supernatural powers; in a few seconds he transported himself through the air to Śrāvastī. He found the saint in his monastery, very busy mending his monastic cloak. In vain he tried to take him back with him. Not having succeeded, he returned by air to the gathering at the lake. To his surprise, on arriving, the first person he saw next to Buddha was Śāriputra. This story, Hsüan-tsang

tells us, teaches us that, in Buddhism, the supernatural powers granted to saints, however great they might be, counted far less than spirituality.

Thus the holy places at Śrāvastī were innumerable. Each of them was marked by some commemorative stūpa. One of these stūpas showed the place where the Brahmans, after assassinating a courtesan, accused Buddha of the crime ; a certain pit was that through which Devadatta, the Judas Iscariot of Buddhism, had been cast down into hell ; another pit showed where the earth had swallowed up a girl who had calumniated the virtue of the Blessed One. Elsewhere was the spot on which Buddha had for the first time saved his country. Virūḍhaka, king of Kośala, wishing to wreak his vengeance on the Śākya people, marched against them with an enormous army. Buddha placed himself in his path, seated on a dead tree. When he saw him the king got down from his chariot, saluted him, and asked him why he had chosen as shelter for his meditations, instead of the generous shade of the neighbouring trees, a withered tree-trunk. "My clan," replied Buddha, "was my branches and my leaves. Now that you are going to strike it down, I shall be like a bare tree-trunk." The king, touched by the parable, turned back for the time being. Later on, it is true, he repeated his attempt, destroyed the Śākya country, and brought back from his expedition five hundred girls, whose hands and feet he had cut off, and their bodies thrown into a ditch, on their refusal to give themselves to him. As they were about to die, they appealed to Buddha. The latter appeared to them, announced the true Law to them, received their last breath, and caused them to be born again in the heaven of the gods. Hsüan-tsang made his devotions at the stūpa that commemorated their martyrdom.

Four or five *li* from Jetavana, the stūpa of "the

recovered eyesight" was also held in reverence. The traditional story was that five hundred Awadhi brigands, having been captured by the king of Kośala who had their eyes put out, were then abandoned in this state in the midst of a dense forest. In their agony their thoughts turned to Buddha. Their crimes were innumerable, but the expiation had been terrible and the merciful kindness of the Master was infinite. He had pity on them. From the snowfields of the Himalayas a refreshing breeze began to blow towards Śrāvastī, and the victims recovered their sight.

Turning towards the north-west, the Chinese monk at length reached "Chieh-pi-lo-fa-su-tu", that is to say, Kapilavastu, Buddha's native town. It is well known with what difficulty the archæologists have identified this famous spot with the wretched site of Tilaura Kot, in the depths of the Nepalese Terai.[1] In the seventh century the region had already been abandoned. "It is estimated that there are ten deserted towns there, with their ground covered by wild vegetation. The capital is in such a state of ruin that it is impossible to determine what its extent was. Nevertheless, the walls of the royal palace are easily distinguishable; they were built of brick and their foundations are still standing solid."

[1] The site of Kapilavastu has been definitely located, thanks to the discovery at Rummindei, near the Nepalese village of Paderia, two miles north of Bhagvanpur, of an inscribed pillar of Aśoka. Rummindei is the modern name for Lumbinī, the garden where Buddha was born, at the gates of Kapilavastu. Cf. Purma Chandra Mukerji, "Antiquities in the Terai, Nepal, the region of Kapilavastu" (Archæological Survey of India, 1901).—*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1914, pp. 391, 751.—Jarl Charpentier, "Note on the Pandaria or Rummindei inscription," *Indian Antiquary*, January, 1914, p. 17.

Near this ancient palace there was a monastery in which dwelt thirty Hīnayānist monks. What was this compared with the thousand monasteries the ruins of which were to be seen everywhere throughout the jungle? "As this country has been abandoned and uninhabited for centuries, only a few rare inhabitants are met with in the villages. There is no longer any prince or supreme ruler, but each hamlet has its local chief." And yet Hsüan-tsang himself remarks that the land is fertile and well watered, with a climate temperate all the year round, and with very regular seasons. What then was the curse which hung over this other Holy Land, and which blighted so much wealth, and made a desert of this fertile soil?

Hsüan-tsang calls up devoutly and with poignant sadness the sacred memories which clung to these ruins. Near the foundations of the royal palace which had belonged to king Śuddhodana, Buddha's father, was shown the site of the room in the women's quarters wherein queen Māyā, warned by a strong presentiment, had retired to spend in meditation and prayer the hours preceding the Conception. Hsüan-tsang might still have seen a pictorial representation of this famous scene; no doubt the Bodhisattva was portrayed, as on our reliefs at Bhārhūt and Amarāvatī, in the guise of a young elephant descending from the heaven of the blessed gods into the bosom of the chosen queen. And there were other sites on every hand where were enacted the various episodes of the Infancy and the Adolescence. To the north-east of queen Māyā's chamber a stūpa marked the place where the saintly old man, Asita, had foretold to the parents of the divine infant his future greatness; near the southern gate of ancient Kapilavastu stood a stūpa on the spot where, as a young rajah at the age for marrying, the Bodhisattva vanquished the other suitors in a tournament. Elsewhere could be seen the place where, having started off

in his chariot for a ride across country, the young prince met for the first time Old Age, Disease, and Death, a symbolic meeting which was to decide his vocation. At the south-eastern corner of Kapilavastu a pathway worn in the scrub was the passage by which, after leaving the sleeping harem in order to go and embrace the religious life, he went furtively out of the town, riding his good steed Kaṇṭhaka, whose hoofs the spirits themselves upraised in their hands, that the alarm might not be given to the guardians at the gates.

The suburbs of Kapilavastu were no less rich in associations. Four *li* to the south of the town a stūpa of Aśoka indicated the site where a touching scene had taken place. It was many years after the great departure. Buddha had attained perfect wisdom, and had founded his religion. But from his native town his father, now an old man, sent him message after message to see him again before his death. Buddha yielded to this desire. As he was approaching Kapilavastu, king Śuddhodana came out to meet him, and it was this meeting of father and son that the stūpa of Aśoka commemorated.

Another monument marked the place where there occurred the first meditation described to us by the poet of the *Buddhacarita*. The Bodhisattva was only a youth. He had gone into the country to help with the work of the fields. "Seeing the young grass torn up and scattered by the plough, and covered with the eggs and the young of the insects that had been killed, he was filled with profound sorrow, as if it had been a question of the massacre of his own dear ones. And seeing the labourers with their skin dried up by the dust and the strong sun and the wind, he felt a deep compassion." He sat down beneath a pink apple tree and entered into meditation. It was the middle of the day. The sun sank, and he was still in meditation. But the shadow of the pink apple tre

had not moved and continued to shelter the divine youth.

The most sacred place in this region was the garden of Lumbinī, which had witnessed the nativity of the Bodhisattva, in the north-eastern suburb of Kapilavastu. It was there that queen Māyā, in the attitude popularized by Buddhist iconography—standing and holding in her right hand a branch of an aśoka tree—had given birth to the hero of charity. The divine infant had come forth from her right side, and was received into the arms of Indra and Brahmā, the supreme god of Vedism and the supreme god of Brahmanism, come to greet him. Two spirits, Nāga kings, half-appearing in the sky, had caused two streams of warm and cold water to appear, in order that Brahmā and Indra might give the child the ritual bath. The child had taken possession of the world by taking seven steps to each of the four quarters. Celestial music had been heard and perfumed breezes had blown over the place. An inscribed pillar of king Aśoka stood in the middle of the garden, and it is this pillar, still standing, which has quite recently made it possible to locate the park of Lumbinī on the site of the present Rummindei.[1]

Penetrating further east into the heart of the Nepalese *terai*, into a belt of wild forests which are still infested by tigers and herds of elephants, Hsüan-tsang went to visit the stūpa of Rāmagrāma. This was a venerable monument wherein a former king of the country had enclosed relics of Buddha. Abandoned by men, its very memory forgotten, lost in the depths of the jungle, this stūpa was preserved for centuries by wild elephants. The monk who rediscovered it was able to witness the following miracle: "The elephants gathered

[1] Good photographs of the country round Rummindei will be found in Perceval Landon's book, *Nepal*, London, 1928, vol. i, pp. 1–10.

flowers and came and placed them before the shrine ; they tore up the weeds round about and watered the ground with their trunks." A little further on stood another stūpa, built by Aśoka at the opening of a forest where the Bodhisattva, after leaving his father's house, took off his princely garments, his jewels, and his royal turban, and bade his farewell to his weeping groom and to his horse which, no less moved than the groom, licked his feet. Saintly king Aśoka had erected in this clearing a stūpa called the stūpa of Chandaka, after the groom. To the east of this monument another stūpa marked the spot where the Bodhisattva had exchanged his rich garments for the rags of a poor huntsman, and where he had cut off his hair, throwing it up into the air, where it was gathered up by the gods.

Later, as we have seen, Buddha, having attained to wisdom, was obliged to return to visit his native country, in response to the supplications of his father. Hsüan-tsang was shown the spot where he descended from the sky—for the journey was made by air. "Eight Vajrapāṇi formed his escort, and the four celestial kings led the way. Indra was on his left, and Brahmā on his right with the heavenly host. Buddha stood forth in the midst of the multitude like the moon shining out in the midst of the stars. Shaking the three worlds by his divine power, and eclipsing the seven planets by his dazzling brilliance, he traversed the heavens and arrived at his native kingdom. When king Suddhodana and the ministers accompanying him had finished paying him homage, the whole procession entered Kapilavastu . . ."

The sacred places of Buddha's death were in this same district where his youth had been passed. Hsüan-tsang, when he left the province of Kapilavastu, went to Kuśinagara, which he calls Kiu-she-na-chie-lo,

the site of which has been identified with the present site of Kasiā on the right bank of the middle reaches of the Gandak.[1] He saw there the country in the midst of which the Blessed One had entered into nirvāṇa. He recalled that page of the Pāli scriptures, that reads so movingly across the centuries, and amidst the vanity of things : On the banks of the river Hiraṇyavatī in a grove of śāla trees, Buddha had a bed prepared for himself between twin trees, which immediately burst into flower. He gently consoled his disciple Ānanda, who was lamenting bitterly : "Do not groan, do not despair, O Ānanda. From all that he loves man must part. How could it be that what is born, what is subject to instability, should not pass ? . . . Maybe you were thinking: 'We have no longer a master.' That must not be, O Ānanda ! The doctrine I have preached to you is your master." He repeated: "In truth, O disciples, all that is created is perishable. Fight without ceasing." These were his last words. "His spirit," says the Buddhist catechism, "sank into the depths of mystic absorption, and when he had attained to that degree where all thought, all conception, has disappeared, when the consciousness of individuality ceases, he entered into the supreme nirvāṇa. Before the gate of Kuśinagara which opens on the east, the nobles of the Mallas burned the body of Buddha with royal honours."

Hsüan-tsang visited the site of the nirvāṇa at the beginning of the year 637 of our era. It was about eleven hundred and twenty years since Buddha's death. Several stūpas marked the successive phases of this great drama. Here was the site of the house of

[1] Archæological maps of this famous site, as well as photographs of the country round Kuśinagara, and of the ruins of its monasteries, will be found in the articles of Ph. Vogel, Hirananda Sastri, etc., "Excavations at Kasiā" (*Archæological Survey of India*, 1904–5, pp. 42–58; 1906–7, 44–67; 1911–12, 134; 1924–5, plate iv, etc.).

Cunda, the smith, with whom the Blessed One had taken his last meal. Further on, the site of the śāla grove, beneath which he had fallen asleep, the place where the gods had adored his remains for seven days, with celestial song and showers of flowers ; the place where they had put the Saint's body in the coffin, the place where they had burnt it on a funeral pyre of precious spices, the place where over the distribution of his remains there had almost arisen " the War of the Relics "; and finally, the place where the relics had been distributed. Like the Vajrapāṇi who had fainted from grief at the death of the Blessed One, the pilgrim was to utter the threnody he quotes : " To cross the vast sea of life and death, who will provide us with a boat and with oars ? To walk in the shadow of a long night, who will henceforth be our guide and our torch ? "

And since, in Indian Buddhism, our brethren the animals must not be absent from any of the great scenes of our salvation, quite close to these stūpas of the historic Buddha appeared the monument erected to the memory of the " charitable stag "—the Bodhisattva in one of his previous existences—who, on the occasion of a forest fire, had perished in saving the people of the jungle.

" There was formerly in this place a vast forest. One day a fire broke out in a wild plain which was in the centre of it. The birds and quadrupeds were reduced to the last extremity. In front of them flowed a rapid torrent which checked them. Urged on by the fierceness of the fire, they threw themselves into the water, and lost their lives. The stag, touched by compassion, placed himself across the torrent which tore his skin and broke his bones, and did his utmost to save them from drowning. A lame hare was the last to arrive, and the stag, defying fatigue and pain, still mustered strength to help him over to the other bank.

But his forces were spent, and plunging into the water, he died. The gods gathered up his bones and raised a stūpa to him."

The "miracle of the francolin", connected with the same spot, also had as its theme a forest fire. "There was a vast and dense forest, full of birds and four-legged animals, the former living in nests, the latter in caves. One day a terrible wind arose, and fire raged through the forest. At this moment there was a francolin, who, moved by pity, plunged into a stream of pure water; and then, rising into the air, sprinkled the forest with his wings." The god Indra noticed the little bird and laughed at his efforts: "How can you be so stupid as to tire your wings thus? Already the fire is consuming the trees of the forest, and the grass of the plain. How could so mean a creature as yourself quench it?" Then the francolin made the god feel ashamed of his sloth; taking some water in the hollow of his hand, the god flung it on the fire, which was at once quenched. "The flames ceased, the smoke cleared off, and all the birds and beasts were saved." There was a stūpa to commemorate this miracle also.

From the sacred places of the nirvāṇa the pilgrim went through the vast forests that separate the Gandak from the Gogra and the Gumti, and came to Benares.

Benares, the ancient Vārāṇaśī, and the Po-lo-na-ssŭ of our author, was already the sacred city of Hinduism. Hsüan-tsang gives a curiously modern description of it. After mentioning the luxuriant vegetation of the district, he remarks on the denseness of the population, the wealth accumulated in this metropolis of the Ganges, the ancient civilization of the town, and above all the number of Brahman temples. "These temples, which are in several storeys, are embellished with a wealth of sculptural decoration, and the parts

made of wood are painted in a variety of dazzling colours ; they are situated in leafy parks and surrounded by pools of clear water." He also notes the increasing numbers of ascetic sects that flourish within the bosom of Brahmanism and Jainism. " The greater part worship Śiva. Some cut off their hair, others pile it up on the top of the head. Some there are (the Jains) who are naked. Others rub their bodies with ash, or practise cruel mortifications in order to gain exemption from transmigration . . ."

In one of these Brahman temples at Benares, Hsüan-tsang noticed particularly a colossal statue of Śiva, " full of grandeur and majesty. At sight of it one is overcome by awe, as though one were in the presence of the god . . ." These lines from the pen of a Buddhist writer are very curious. Are they not more or less a definition of that Gupta sculpture of the early Middle Ages, in which Indian art had just realized its ideal ? And does not the description of Hsüan-tsang directly recall, in default of the Śiva of Benares, whom we shall never know, the Śiva of Elephanta, the god three and one represented in Maheśamūrti, undoubtedly the most lofty image of the god of pantheism that has ever issued from the hand of man ?

Near Benares itself in the outskirts of Sārnāth, the pilgrim might have admired another marvellous statue, this time a Buddhist one. We mean the Buddha of the Museum of Sārnāth, dating from the fifth century of our era, seated in the attitude of preaching or, according to the traditional phrase, " turning the wheel of the Law," a work whose seriousness, simplicity, and sweetness make it, in our opinion, the purest incarnation of the Gupta ideal.[1]

[1] On Buddhist Sārnāth—plans of monasteries, photographs of ruins, statuary, etc.—see the articles of Sir John Marshall and Sten

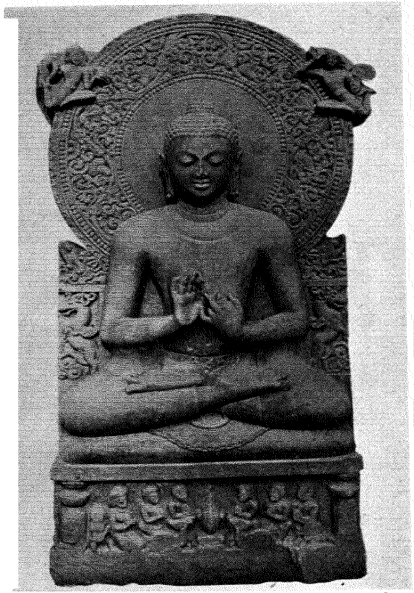


Photo A.S.I.

INDIAN STATUE OF BUDDHA, GUPTA PERIOD
(Sarnath Museum)

INDIAN STATUE OF BUDDHA, GUPTA PERIOD
(Mathurâ Museum)

For in spite of the numerical superiority of the Hindus, Benares had not forgotten the souvenirs of Buddha. In the suburbs of the town, in that same Sārnāth, stood the Park of the Antelopes, commemorating the first preaching of the Blessed One, or, as the texts put it, of the starting of the Wheel of the Law. It was there that the five earliest disciples of Buddha formerly lived in their proud asceticism, after they had left him, scandalized because on the eve of his Enlightenment he had given up all mortifications as exhausting and useless. But Buddha came to Benares after the Enlightenment and stood before them. "His whole person breathed serenity and spread abroad a divine radiance. His hair had the brilliance of jade, and his body was like fine gold. He advanced with tranquil step, moving all beings by his majesty." The five ascetics had sworn to treat him with scorn, but an irresistible force made them prostrate themselves before him. And it was then that he pronounced—for them—the Sermon of Benares, one of the most beautiful that purely human lips have ever framed.

The Master said: "There are two extremes, O monks, which must be avoided: a life of pleasure, which is low, ignoble, contrary to the spirit, base, and vain; and a life of mortification, which is gloomy, base, and vain. From these two extremes, O monks, the Perfect One kept away, and he discovered the middle way that leads to rest, to knowledge, to Enlightenment, to nirvāṇa . . . Here, O monks, is the sacred truth about pain: birth, old age, sickness, death, separation from those we love are pains. Here is the origin of pain: it is thirst for pleasure, thirst for existence,

Konov, "Excavations at Sārnāth" (*Archæological Survey of India*, 1904–5, pp. 59–104; 1906–7, pp. 68–101; 1907–8, pp. 43–80; 1914–15, pp. 97–131, etc.)

thirst for impermanence. And here is the truth about the suppression of pain : it is the extinction of this thirst by the stilling of desire."

With his heart full of these great memories, Hsüan-tsang paid a lengthy visit to the Park of the Antelopes. He did not fail to notice the inscribed pillar raised by the Emperor Aśoka, the bell-shaped capital of which, with its freize of animals, delightful in its naturalism, and the four lions back to back which surmount it, is the first in date of the masterpieces of Indian art. Not far from there was a stūpa marking the place where Maitreya, the Buddha of future ages, had received from the Blessed One the announcement of his Messianic role. To the east of the Park of the Antelopes there could still be seen the pool in which Buddha, during his visits to Benares, was accustomed to bathe, the pool in which he washed his clothing, and the one in which he cleaned his sacred vessels. These holy places were piously tended, for the Park of Antelopes sheltered a vast monastery, the galleries of which Hsüan-tsang praises as being propitious for meditation, and in which there lived fifteen hundred Hīnayānist monks.

At Benares also it was that tradition placed several of the previous existences of Buddha, notably some of those *jātakas* with animal themes, in which the universal tenderness of Buddhism stands out in so touching a fashion. One of the most famous of the *jātakas*, that of the elephant with six tusks, had taken place in the forest close by the sacred pools, as if the Blessed One had taken pleasure in seeing again, in his last human form, the country in which had been passed one of the most moving of his animal existences. In a previous existence, the Bodhisattva was a king of the elephants, a white elephant, armed with six marvellous tusks " resembling the roots of a water-lily ". " One day, while he was

walking with his two wives, he struck against a flowering tree. Chance directed towards one of the queens the pollen and petals, while the other received only the twigs and dead leaves." Consumed by jealousy, the latter, in order to avenge herself, obtained leave to die and be reborn in the body of a queen of Benares. She then sent a huntsman to kill the elephant and take his tusks. The huntsman, who had treacherously disguised himself as a harmless monk, found the divine animal "like a moving mountain" at some distance from the herd, near a lake covered with lotus. He let fly a poisoned arrow at him. So great was the pain of the elephant that he was on the point of killing his enemy. But he controlled himself, and even prevented the herd from crushing the huntsman. When he learnt of the task with which the latter was entrusted, he tore out his tusks himself with his bleeding trunk, and, trembling with pain, offered them to his executioner. Thereupon he died, and was reborn in the body of a future Buddha. What of the queen? When she received the tusks and learnt of the sacrifice of him whom she had loved so much in a former life, she was seized by such remorse that her heart broke . . .

In this country round Benares, so full of tender and marvellous legends, there was also the clearing, in the midst of a forest, where the jātaka of the king of the stags had taken place. He also had been a prefiguration of Buddha. He led a herd of five hundred stags. The king of Benares sent out beaters who encircled the whole herd. The king of the stags went to him and obtained the liberation of the captives on condition that a stag should be sent daily to the slaughter-houses of Benares. It happened that a hind that was about to have young was marked down to be sent for slaughter. She went and found the king of the stags, and "kneeling before him on her

fore-legs, she said : Wait but until I have brought forth my young, then I will offer myself repining." Moved by compassion, the king of the stags took her place, and went to offer himself to the king of Benares. The latter, touched by such magnanimity, renounced his cruel enaction. And the story in the *Sūtrālaṃkāra* ends with some verses that are quite Franciscan in their tenderness : " All these forests and woods, all these springs and lakes, I give to the stag-people, and I command that no harm be done to them."

A little further on a stūpa commemorated the story of the good hare, as the scriptures made Buddha himself tell it. " And in another life I was a hare, and lived in a forest on a mountain. I lived on herbs, leaves, and fruit, and I did no creature harm. A monkey, a jackal, and I lived together.[1] I instructed them in their duties and taught them what is good and what is evil." One day an old Brahman, who was really Indra disguised as a Brahman, came up to the three friends. " My children," he said, " are you happy in this peaceful retreat ? " " We tread on soft grass," they replied. " We walk in a thick forest, and although we are of different species, we enjoy each other's company. We live in peace and happiness." " When I learnt," answered the old man, " that you were bound by such close ties of friendship, I forgot the burden of my years, and came from afar especially to see you. But at the moment I am consumed by hunger. What can you give me to eat ? " The four friends immediately went off hunting. The jackal caught a fresh carp in the stream, the monkey gathered fruits and flowers of rare kinds. " Only the hare returned empty-handed, and began to gambol here, there, and everywhere." When the old man

[1] The Pāli Scriptures add a fourth companion : a young otter.

expressed surprise at this behaviour, the animal replied : "A noble gift, a gift such as has never yet been given—that is what I intend to give you to-day. Gather wood and light a fire!" "When the wood began to burn," the parable continues, "I sprang into the air and threw myself upon the fire. As fresh water soothes the torment of heat in him who plunges into it, so this flaming fire soothed all my torment. Skin and bone, flesh and blood, my whole body with all my limbs, did I give to the Brahman."

After paying homage to all these sites, historical or legendary, Hsüan-tsang left the province of Benares, and went to visit a little further north, on the lower Gandak, the town of Vaiśālī (Fei-shê-li), the present Besarh. Vaiśālī, a city famous for its banana and mango trees, had been one of the favourite residences of Buddha. It was at this time a dead city. Hsüan-tsang paid a long visit to the Park of the Mango trees in the southern suburbs, formerly offered to the Community by Amrapālī, the holy dancing-girl. He was shown the "monkey-pool" which had been dug out for Buddha by his friends the monkeys ; near by a stūpa recalled how the monkeys had taken away Buddha's alms-bowl and brought it back to him filled with wild honey.[1] It was a town full of tender memories, of sad memories too, for in it was shown the hill from which Buddha, setting out towards the place of his death, had turned round to look once more upon those familiar horizons, and had gazed long and for the last time at his favourite town and monastery. But for a theologian like Hsüan-tsang, Vaiśālī offered yet another interest. It was there that the second Council of the Buddhist Church had been held, a hundred years after Buddha's death.

[1] The exact traditional localization of the monkey's offering is in fact at Vaiśālī. Later this legend was also localized at Mathurā.

Of all the Indian provinces, the most important for the pilgrim, as much from the point of view of its sacred associations as from that of Buddhist lore, was still the ancient kingdom of Magadha (the Mo-chieh-t'o of Chinese writers), in southern Bihar. An essentially imperial country, it had twice given or restored to India her political unity, under the Maurya dynasty and under the Gupta dynasty. Hsüan-tsang, with a geographer's accuracy, has left us some information about the country of "South-Bihar" which is still up-to-date: "The towns have few inhabitants, but the villages are thickly populated. The soil is rich and fertile, and grain grows abundantly. An extraordinary species of rice is grown there, the grain of which is very large and the taste exquisite. The land is low-lying and moist, the villages are built on high plateaux. After the first summer months, and before the second month of autumn, the plains become flooded and one can go about by boat."

The historic capital of Magadha, of which Hsüan-tsang first tells us, was Pāṭaliputra (in Chinese Po-t'o-li-tzŭ), the site of which corresponds to the present town of Bankipor and to the village of Kumrahar near Patna, between the Ganges and the ancient branch of the Sone. It was a famous city. There, once, the first Maurya emperor, "Sandrocottus," had received the Greek ambassadors; from it his grandson Aśoka had governed the whole of India. It was likewise at Pāṭaliputra that Aśoka had summoned his famous council, reckoned as the third, at which he had determined on the evangelization of the world; and then those missionaries had gone forth who, according to the evidence of inscriptions, were to carry the faith to the Greek princes, the Seleucidæ of Syria, the Lagidæ of Egypt, the descendants of Antigonus of Macedonia. The old city was at that time the rival of Alexandria and Antioch; and recent excavations

have actually brought to light there the remains of a hypostyle which recalls the colonnades of Persepolis. After a period of eclipse, Pāṭaliputra had for a moment become again the capital of India, in the fourth century at the beginning of the Gupta dynasty, only to fall back definitely, later on, into obscurity. At the time of Hsüan-tsang's visit its decadence seems to have definitely set in. At any rate, all that was seen of its ancient palaces were the foundations, and of its hundreds of ancient monasteries scarcely more than two or three were still standing.

Hsüan-tsang visited these monasteries. He saw a stūpa of Aśoka—one of the 84,000 monuments of this kind with which the pious monarch had covered the land of India. He paid homage on the bank of the Ganges to the stone of farewell of Buddha, on which the imprint of the sacred feet still remained : Buddha, knowing that his time was at hand, was leaving that old country of Magadha where he had fought, suffered, and triumphed, to take once more the road to the North, the road to death. " Then, on the southern bank of the river, standing upright on a great square stone, he looked at Ānanda with emotion, saying to him : ' For the last time I gaze upon the diamond throne and the royal town.' " Such emotion, involuntary sadness at the approach of death, is infinitely precious in the Master of Renunciation. It is doubly moving in the apostle of nirvāṇa, as a confession of earthly attachment which suddenly renders so human to us the character of the perfect Sage . . .

The country to which the aged Buddha addressed this final farewell was, in fact, the principal theatre of the great mystic drama of his life. It was the real Holy Land of Buddhism.

Hsüan-tsang's emotion reveals itself in every line in which he describes to us the road between

Pāṭaliputra and Bodh-Gayā. Bodh-Gayā was indeed the very heart of Buddhism, the sacred spot where Buddha had achieved wisdom. The pilgrim saw the river Nairañjanā, now the Līlājan or Phalgū, "with its pure waters, its noble flights of steps, the beauty of its trees and groves, and the pasture-lands and villages which surround it on all sides"—a restrained scenery which Buddha, in search of a hermitage, had selected for its gentle character.[1] Hsüan-tsang arrived at the Divine Tree beneath which the miracle of the Enlightenment had taken place. And he called up the sacred scene according to the memory handed down by the scriptures with each detail immutably fixed :—

The Bodhisattva, renouncing useless mortifications and all the practices of Hindu asceticism, had just taken once more the physical sustenance necessary for his thought. He had accepted the rice-milk prepared for him by a pious maiden Sujātā from the neighbouring village. He had refreshed his weary limbs in the pure waters of the Nairañjanā. Then he had gone to Bodh-Gayā, to the sacred fig-tree which was to provide the setting for the principal scene of the Buddhist gospels.

The Bodhisattva—here the texts are peculiarly precise—sat down at the foot of the Tree, on a handful of freshly mown grass, with which he covered a seat that had miraculously sprung up in that place—the Diamond Throne, the centre of the Buddhist world. Then had begun the "sublime meditation" from which was to result the salvation of the creatures. In vain did Māra, the Buddhist devil, attack the meditating sage with all the hosts of hell. The arrows, pieces of

[1] A photograph of the village of Urēl, the former Uruvelā, where Buddha's hermitage stood, will be found in Th. Bloch's article "Notes on Bodh-Gayā" (*Archæological Survey of India, Report* 1908–9, p. 143).

rock, and darts of burning flame changed into garlands of flowers and into a halo of light around the Blessed One. In vain did the daughters of Māra resort to all their wiles: the Bodhisattva changed them into decrepit old women. Against all these assaults he appealed to the Earth to bear testimony to the excellence of his efforts, and the Earth, emerging from the waist up amidst the open furrows, paid him solemn homage.

"Having triumphed over temptation, the Bodhisattva, motionless and still seated at the foot of the Tree, concentrated his thoughts on universal suffering and the means of abolishing it. His vision embraced the totality of the worlds. He saw the endless cycle of rebirths unrolling itself to infinity, from the infernal world and the world of the animals to the gods themselves, across eternal time. And all birth, all life, all death, was suffering.

"Then the Bodhisattva, with his thought thus concentrated, and completely pure, at the last watch of the night, when dawn appeared, at the hour of the beating of the drum, attained to the possession of wisdom. Tracing back the chain of causes he discovered that the cause of universal suffering is the thirst for existence, and that this is fostered by our false notions about thought, the 'I', and the material world. To suppress the thirst for existence by suppressing its intellectual causes was therefore to suppress suffering . . . Such was the inner Enlightenment, the revelation of the perfect wisdom by which the Bodhisattva had at length become a supreme Buddha."

After the Enlightenment, Buddha still remained for four weeks by the Tree. In the fifth a terrible storm swept the country. But a divine serpent, Mucilinda, had come, and had wound its coils under Buddha's body, thus raising it above the floods, while with the hoods of its seven heads it shielded the head of the

Blessed One from the hurricane. Then at the request of the gods Brahmā and Indra, who had come to entreat him, Buddha went forth to evangelize the world, or as the texts say, "to set the wheel of the Law in motion."

These were the sacred scenes which Hsüan-tsang lingeringly conjured up. The Tree of the Bodhi first received his homage. He carefully noted every aspect of it: "The trunk of the Tree is of a yellowish white, and its leaves, which are green and glossy, fall neither in summer nor in winter. Only when the anniversary of nirvāṇa comes round do they drop off, to reappear next day as beautiful as ever. On that day the kings and nobles assemble beneath its branches, sprinkle it with milk, light lamps, strew flowers, and retire after gathering some of its leaves."

Since Aśoka's time—as we learn from a relief of Sāñchi, representing the visit of the saintly emperor to Gayā—the Tree was protected by an enclosure in brick. "The principal door of the enclosure opens on the east, opposite the river Nairañjanā. The south door is next to a large pool covered with lotus flowers. On the west a belt of rugged knolls protects the entry. The north door communicates with a large monastery, in the interior of which are seen, at every step, sacred monuments, sometimes vihāras, sometimes stūpas, which kings, ministers, and rich private individuals have built for love of the saints, in order to preserve and to honour their memory. In the middle of this convent we see the Diamond Throne, so called because it is firm, solid, and indestructible, capable of withstanding all the shocks of the world. Every Bodhisattva who wishes to quell the demons and achieve Buddhahood must sit on this throne. The place where Śākyamuni attained to Buddhahood is also called the Seat of Understanding. When the world trembles to its foundations, this place alone remains unshaken."

Near the Bodhi Tree stood a statue of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. An old prophecy declared that when this statue should have disappeared into the ground, the religion of Buddha would disappear from India. Now it had already sunk as far as the breast. Hsüan-tsang himself could see that it would not be more than a hundred and fifty or two hundred years before the whole would be swallowed up. It is a strange coincidence that it is precisely from the eighth to the ninth centuries that Buddhism was practically eliminated from India, save for Magadha and Bengal.

What makes Hsüan-tsang so living and so true, and explains the fact that one cannot read him without loving him, is the combination in this powerful metaphysician of a tender piety with the deepest speculative tendencies. Take, for example, the scene which concludes his pilgrimage to the Bodhi Tree: "After contemplating it with passionate faith, he prostrated himself to the ground, uttering groans, and abandoning himself to grief: 'Alas!' he said, 'at the time when Buddha achieved perfect Understanding, I knew not under what conditions I was dragging out my wretched life. Now that I am here at this spot, in the last days of the statue, I cannot remember without blushing the immensity and the depth of my faults!' As he spoke these words a stream of tears poured from his eyes. At the same moment several thousands of monks who were just coming out of the summer retreat arrived in crowds from every quarter. None who saw the Master of the Law in this attitude of suffering could refrain from sighing and weeping."

Hsüan-tsang worshipped one by one at all the sacred spots of Bodh-Gayā. He saw the pool, made by Indra, in which Buddha washed his garments, another pool which was the dwelling-place of the serpent king Mucilinda who shielded with the parasol of his seven heads the meditation of the Blessed

One, the hermitage in which the Bodhisattva, before the Enlightenment, had given himself over to such austerities that the gods themselves had feared for his life ; they showed him in the Nairañjanā the place where the Blessed One had taken a bath before walking to the Tree of Wisdom, the place where the gods came to offer him successively alms-bowls made of the most precious metals, which he refused, accepting only the stone bowl of the poorest beggars ; he saw finally at Uruvelā the clearing where there stood the hermitage of the Kāśyapa brothers, the most famous of the Brahman ascetics of the past, whose pride Buddha quelled to such an extent as to make of them the pillars of his church.

Here once more there were *jātaka* stories, parables with animal themes. In a forest on the banks of the Nairañjanā near a pool, a stūpa commemorated the touching adventure of the young " elephant of the perfume ". This young elephant fed his blind mother with lotus roots which he gathered for her. When captured and taken to the royal stables, he refused all nourishment, until the king, touched by his filial piety, set him free.

In the neighbourhood of Gayā, Hsüan-tsang crossed a region of forest and jungle to go and climb the mountain of the Cock's Foot, a wild mountain where, according to tradition, Mahā Kāśyapa, the great disciple of Śākyamuni, has been awaiting for several centuries, in ecstatic immobility, the coming of Maitreya, the future Buddha. " There rugged peaks and deep grottos are seen. Rapid torrents bathe the foot of the mountain, and gigantic forests clothe the valleys. Three bold peaks rise in the air, and their imposing mass is on a level with the clouds." When the patriarch Kāśyapa had grown very old he wished to retire from the world. " He went to the mountain and climbed it from the north, going by tortuous

paths. When he had reached the chain on the south-west, he found himself checked by the wall of rock. He struck it with his stick and split it in two. After opening up this route across the mountain he reached the centre of the three peaks. By the power of his desire the three peaks drew closer and hid him from the sight of men . . ." Further on, on the same mountain, five hundred *arhats* (or Buddhist saints) had fallen asleep, also awaiting a mysterious awakening.

To the north-east of Bodh-Gayā lay Nālandā. This was a veritable monastic city, consisting of some ten monasteries, within a brick wall enclosure, and comprising, along with the dwelling-places of the monks, a number of halls for meetings and prayer. Hsüan-tsang describes with pleasure the appearance of the *saṃghārāma*, its towers arranged symmetrically, its forest of pavilions and harmikās, and the many temple-tops which "seemed to soar above the mists of the sky." From the monks' cells "one could watch the birth of the winds and the clouds". The pilgrim's description takes on a new interest for us since the recent excavations of the Archæological Survey of India have reconstructed for us the topography of all these monasteries, with their stūpas, their verandas, their cells, and their courtyards.[1] "Round the monasteries there flowed a winding stream of azure water, made more beautiful by blue lotus flowers, with wide-open calyxes ; within the temple, beautiful *karnikāra* trees hung down their dazzling golden

[1] Cf. *Archæological Survey of India Report*, 1922–3, p. 104, and plates xix, xx, which are striking photographs of the walls that have been unearthed. *Ibid.*, 1923–4, plate xxix ; 1924–5, pl. xxviii. Thanks to this series of methodical excavations and articles, the plan of the various monasteries described by Hsüan-tsang has been almost completely verified to-day. This is one of the results which do the greatest credit to Sir John Marshall and his colleagues of the *Archæological Survey*.

blossoms, and outside, groves of mango sheltered the dwellings with their thick shade."

The space between the monastery buildings was divided into eight courtyards. The monks' houses in the various courts were each of four storeys. "The monasteries of India," says Hsüan-tsang's biographer, "can be counted to-day by the thousand, but there are none that equal these in their dignity, wealth, and the height of their buildings. The religious, both internal and external, always reach a total of ten thousand, and they all follow the doctrine of the Great Vehicle. The adherents of the eighteen sects are all united there, and all kinds of works are studied, from the popular books, the Vedas, and other writings of the same kind, to medical works, the occult sciences, and arithmetic. Within the convent a hundred pulpits were filled every day and the disciples followed zealously the lessons of their masters, without losing a moment.

"Amidst all these virtuous men there naturally prevailed serious and strict habits of life, so that in the seven hundred years during which this convent has been in existence, not a single individual has infringed the rules of discipline. The king respects and honours it, and has put aside the revenues of a hundred towns in order to provide for the upkeep of the monks. Every day two hundred families send them regularly several hundred bushels of rice, and large supplies of butter and milk. Hence the students ask nothing of any man, procuring without difficulty the four necessary things. Their progress in study and their brilliant successes are due to the liberality of the king."

Hsüan-tsang received a brotherly welcome at Nālandā. Two hundred monks and a thousand of the faithful came out in procession to meet him, with standards, parasols, incense, and flowers. When they

reached the town they were joined by the whole body of monks. "When the Master of the Law had finished greeting them, they placed on the president's platform a special armchair and begged him to be seated in it. The body of monks and faithful followers also sat down, after which the assistant-director was ordered to strike the gong and to invite the Master of the Law aloud to stay in the convent, and to make use of all the utensils and belongings of the religious there assembled." Hsüan-tsang was solemnly conducted into the presence of the man who might be considered the superior of the enormous monastery, the saintly old man, Śīlabhadra, surnamed the Treasure of the Good Law.[1]

"Hsüan-tsang followed his guides and entered in order to greet him. As soon as he came into his presence, he paid him all the homage of a disciple, and went through all the ceremonies showing respect. Conforming to the rules and customs prevalent among them, he walked on his knees and elbows, clapping his feet together and striking the ground with his forehead. After questioning him and lavishing praises upon him, Śīlabhadra had seats brought, and begged the Master of the Law and the monks to be seated. When they had done so, he inquired about the intentions of the Master of the Law. 'I am come from China,' the latter replied, "in order to study under your direction the philosophy of Idealism.'"

"At these words, Śīlabhadra could not restrain his tears, and he bade them tell Hsüan-tsang of the extraordinary presentiment he had had of his arrival: Some time before, when suffering from a cruel

[1] In 637, the date of Hsüan-tsang's arrival at Nālandā, his biographer makes Śīlabhadra 106 years old. The date of the holy monk's birth would thus be about 531. But it should be noted that Hsüan-tsang himself simply tells us that his master was very old, without giving us any exact number of years.

disease, he had desired death. One night he saw in a dream three divinities. Their bodies were beautiful, their faces full of dignity, and they were clad in ceremonial robes as light as they were brilliant. The first was the colour of gold, the second lapis-lazuli, the third silver. They were the Bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, and Maitreya. They appeared to him, commanding him to live in order to spread abroad the sacred Law with the idealist doctrine, and for that purpose to await the arrival of a monk come from China whom he would instruct in the science. 'Since my arrival,' replied Hsüan-tsang, 'accords with your dream, be so good as to instruct and enlighten me and crown my joy by permitting me to show you the regard of a docile and devoted disciple!'"

The Chinese pilgrim had at length found the omniscient master, the incomparable metaphysician who was to reveal to him the last secrets of the idealist systems. For with him Hsüan-tsang attained to the pure tradition of the School, handed down from master to pupil by a line of metaphysicians of genius. The founders of Mahāyānist Idealism, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, whose works belong, according to MM. Sylvain Lévi and Takakusu, to the fifth century of our era,[1] had had as their disciple the logician Dignaga; Dignaga had trained Dharmapāla, the head of the School of Nālandā (died about 560); Dharmapāla in his turn had been the master of Śīlabhadra. And thus it was, indeed, the entire heritage of Buddhist idealism that Śīlabhadra was about to ensure for the Sino-Japanese world, and the *Siddhi*, the great philosophic treatise of Hsüan-tsang, which we shall speak of later, is nothing less than the *Summa* of this doctrine, the culmination of seven centuries of Indian thought.

Hsüan-tsang spent the rainy season of the year 637 at Nālandā with Śīlabhadra. He lived at first in

[1] Between about 420 and 500, according to M. Takakusu.

a two-storeyed pavilion, in the midst of a convent built by the king of Magadha, Bālāditya, and then in a house situated quite close to the former residence of the philosopher Dharmapāla. "Every month the king of Magadha sent him three measures of oil, and every day the necessary quantity of butter, milk, and other provisions. By order of the king, every day a monk and a Brahman took him for a drive in a chariot, or for a ride on horseback, or in a palanquin."

Hsüan-tsang interrupted his philosophic work for a while to go and visit the former capital of Magadha, Rājagriha (Rājgir),[1] to the north of Nālandā. It will be remembered that this was the metropolis of the country in the time of Buddha, who so often collected alms there, in the reign of the pious king Bimbisāra, his protector and friend. Long abandoned in favour of Pāṭaliputra, it was scarcely more than a dead city, with only its great souvenirs of Buddha to give it still a little life.

Hsüan-tsang has left us a melancholy description of this city of the past, in which he shows us the luxuriant vegetation of tropical India in process of covering the ruined stone work. "On its four sides rise hills which seem to be hewn out perpendicularly. On the west one enters by a narrow path; on the north a wide gate gives access to it. In the interior (of the ancient city) there is still a small town whose foundations cover a space of thirty *li*. On every side one sees groves of *kanaka* trees which bloom without interruption at every season of the year, and whose petals are the colour of gold."

[1] Actually the Buddhist Rājagriha was not at Rājgir itself, but a little further south, on the site of Kuśāgārapura, as Hsüan-tsang indicates most accurately. I refer my readers to the excellent map and fine photographs published by Sir John Marshall in his article "Rājagriha and its Remains" (*Archæological Survey of India, Report* 1905–6, pp. 86–106).

The pilgrim was shown the place where the Judas of Buddhism, Devadatta, and his accomplice, prince Ajataśatru, the unworthy son of king Bimbisāra, had let loose across Buddha's path a furious elephant who, quelled by the power of his lovingkindness, had stopped in front of him and had worshipped him. On the north-east of Rājagṛiha, Hsüan-tsang went and paid a visit to the Vulture's Peak. This was one of the most picturesque spots in the district. "This mountain," notes the biographer, "has fresh fountains, extraordinary rocks, and trees covered with the richest foliage. Formerly, when Buddha was in this world, he often dwelt in this mountain, and it was here that he taught his disciples the *Lotus of the Good Law*, the *Sūtra of transcendent wisdom*, and many other *sūtras*. It was also in the neighbourhood of Rājagṛiha that the Bamboo Garden was situated, one of the most famous monastic enclosures of the Scriptures. The holy man Kalanta, or rather king Bimbisāra himself, had formerly given it to Buddha, who had made it one of his favourite residences. It was typical of the convents described in the texts: "Neither too far from nor too near the town, easily accessible, not too lively by day, silent by night, removed from the tumult and crowds of men, places of retreat and dwellings favourable to meditation in solitude."

There was also shown, near Rājagṛiha, the place where king Bimbisāra and all the townsfolk had poured forth to meet the Blessed One—a scene that has become so living for us since we have been able to read the account of it on the reliefs of Sāñchī and Bhārhūt.

Rājagṛiha also possessed the Tower of the Relics. The king of Magadha, Ajataśatru, had shut up his share of the Sacred Remains there, after the Master's death. Later the Emperor Aśoka, wishing to build stūpa-reliquaries in the four corners of India, removed

a portion of the precious relics, but left the remainder in the sacred tower, which, so Hsüan-tsang assures us, still emitted an extraordinary radiance. Another monument close by called up quite a different order of memories ; this was the stūpa of a wild goose. But this wild goose was no other than one of the incarnations of the Bodhisattva—and here, once more, we may note the close bond that Buddhism establishes between us and our brothers the animals. The legend as Hsüan-tsang reports it is delightful : There was once upon a time, in a convent of Rājagriha, a good monk charged with the duties of housekeeping, who had been unable to obtain the necessary provisions, and was in great perplexity. As a flock of wild geese was passing overhead, he cried laughingly : " To-day the daily portion of the monks is utterly lacking. Noble creatures, it is for you to see to this ! " Scarcely had he finished speaking when the leader of the flock fell from the clouds as though his wings had been cut, and came rolling to the feet of the monk. All the brethren ran up ; the bird was a Bodhisattva who had given its life for them. A tower was built for its corpse, ornamented with the inscription which relates this story.

For a theologian like Hsüan-tsang, Rājagriha had another interest. It was there that the first Buddhist council had been held. On the day after the death of the Blessed One, his disciples had met there in order to fix, so tradition assures us, the texts which later composed the *Three Baskets*. The council had opened with a scene in which is reflected the whole soul of primitive Buddhism. Kāśyapa, who was presiding, refused admittance to Ānanda, who had been the cousin and favourite disciple of the Master, but who had been guilty of a grave blunder. " Your faults, O Ānanda, are by no means wiped out. Do not sully by your presence the purity of this august assembly ! "

Ānanda retired, covered with confusion. "During the night he sought with all the strength of his soul to shatter the bonds which attached him to the world, in order to obtain the rank of *arhat*. Then he returned and knocked at the door: 'Are your bonds all broken?' Kāśyapa asked him. 'All,' replied Ānanda. 'If that is so,' answered Kāśyapa, 'there is no need to open to you; enter wherever you like.' Ānanda then entered by a slit in the door, greeted the monk, and kissed his feet. Kāśyapa took him by the hand, saying: 'I desire to see you wipe away all your faults, and obtain the Fruit of the *Bodhi*. That was why I kept you away from the assembly, as you must know; do not bear malice because of it.' 'If there were malice in my heart,' replied Ānanda, 'how could I say that I had broken all my bonds?'" Then he saluted Kāśyapa, expressed his gratitude to him, and took his place in the council. Then at the invitation of Kāśyapa himself, he mounted into the arm-chair, and recited the discourses of Buddha. The whole assembly received them from his lips, and wrote them on palm leaves.

After paying his respects to these great memorials, Hsüan-tsang returned to the Nālandā monastery. For more than a year—fifteen months, his biographer declares—the saintly old man Śīlabhadra expounded to him the texts of the idealistic and mystic philosophy of the *Yogācāra*, which he had already studied at Kāshmīr, but which he was anxious to inquire into a second time in order to resolve his difficulties and dissipate his doubts; his treatise of the *Siddhi* was to be the outcome of this instruction. He also studied the texts of Brahman philosophy and perfected himself in the reading of Sanskrit. His biographer even inserts, at this point in his narrative, a very accurate résumé of Sanskrit grammar.

Hsüan-tsang was obliged, however, to tear himself away from such an abode of peace and knowledge as Nālandā was for him, and take up once more the pilgrim's staff along the highroads of India. Setting out for Bengal, he stopped for some days at the monastery of Kapota, built upon a charming site. "Two or three *li* from the convent there is a lonely mountain, going up in terraces, whose summit is adorned with rich vegetation, pools of clear water, and sweet-smelling flowers. As the place is remarkable for its beauty, a large number of sacred temples have been erected there, in which remarkable miracles and marvels are often seen. In a convent occupying the centre of the plateau there stood a sandal wood statue of Avalokiteśvara, whose divine power is the object of the deepest reverence."

Its worship was among the most popular in the whole country. The statue was protected by a balustrade from which the faithful flung flowers at the Bodhisattva. Those who succeeded in throwing their garlands on the hands of the statue so that they stayed there considered that their prayers had been heard. Hsüan-tsang expressed three wishes, which reveal the purity of his heart: "First, after having studied in India, I desire to return to my native country. As a presage of my success in this, I desire that these flowers may rest on your venerable hands. Secondly, I desire to be born again one day in the heaven of the Blessed Gods, and to serve Maitreya. If this wish is to be fulfilled, I desire that these flowers may hang on your two venerable arms. Thirdly, I, Hsüan-tsang, have doubts about myself, and do not know whether I am of the number of those who are gifted with the nature of Buddha. If I possess this nature, and if, by practising virtue, I can in my turn become Buddha, grant that these flowers may attach themselves round your venerable neck." He spoke,

flung his garlands, and had the joy of placing them according to his wishes.

Hsüan-tsang spent the summer of 638 in Western Bengal, in the kingdom of Iraṇa. Tradition staged there the story of the conversion by Buddha of a man-eating *yaksha* who afterwards became a saint. In Hsüan-tsang's day there were ten monasteries, with about four thousand monks all belonging to the Little Vehicle and, within the Little Vehicle, to the realist system of the Sarvāstivādin. It was the doctrine furthest removed from the idealist system which he professed. Nevertheless he put himself under the tuition of the doctors of the country in order to make a study of their texts. The time that he devoted to this shows us how he could temper his dogmatic preferences with liberalism.

The Chinese traveller then plunged into the heart of what is now Bengal, the ancient Campā. It was a tropical country, bordered on the south by a belt of dense and gloomy forests where herds of wild elephants roamed by the hundred, remarkable for their strength and their height, as well as rhinoceros and wild beasts of every kind. Hsüan-tsang notes in this context that the kings of Bengal possess a vast number of elephants of war, and elephant hunters beat the forests all the year round to furnish their stables.

Hsüan-tsang next crossed the Ganges and made straight for Eastern Bengal (Pundravardhana and Karṇasuvarṇa). Then he came down again to the Samataṭa, that is to say, into the delta of the Ganges, " a low, damp country, where grain grows abundantly and where one finds an extraordinary quantity of flowers and fruits, and the people of which have a black skin, and are of small stature and of a hard and cruel disposition." He descended finally to the gulf of Bengal, and reached the harbour of Tāmralipti, now Tamluk, whence he intended to embark for the island of Ceylon.

Chapter IX

A JOURNEY IN THE DECCAN IN THE TIME OF AJAṆṬĀ

Tāmralipti, as the memoirs of I-ching will prove, was the great emporium of India on the side of the Indian archipelago and Indo-China. Hsüan-tsang must have questioned the Bengali sailors or Malay navigators whose ships were lying in the harbour, for he indicates with great precision the countries for which they embarked from there. "Setting out in a north-easterly direction along the sea-coast, one comes to the kingdom of Śrīkshetra," which is actually the name of an ancient capital of Burmah. "Further to the east is the kingdom of Dvāravatī," and this is, in fact, the name of an ancient Mōn kingdom of the Siam of to-day, recently discovered by M. Coedès and his pupils. "Further east is the kingdom of Iśānapura," and Iśānapura was indeed, before the founding of Angkor, one of the capitals of Cambodia, possibly situated on the ruins of Sambor Prei Kuk, which is being excavated at the present time by M. Victor Goloubev. "Further east is the kingdom of Mahā Campā"; the "great kingdom" of Campā, then in all its splendour, occupied, as the traveller points out, the whole of the southern and even central coast of present-day Annam.

But what interested Hsüan-tsang among all these kingdoms which were the destinations of the vessels of Tāmralipti was Ceylon, the holy island, centre of the Hīnayānist church—especially of the realist school

of the Sarvāstivādin—to know which was indispensable in order to get a complete idea of Indian Buddhism.

The biographer of Hsüan-tsang shows him to us, on the shores of the sea of Bengal, dreaming of the relics of the ancient Singhalese sanctuaries. Letting his thoughts wander, in the warm tropical night, over the vast expanse of the waters, he thought he could already perceive, beyond the liquid horizon, the Tooth of Buddha, shining like a star of the sea. "Every night when the sky is clear and cloudless, two hundred leagues to the south of Ceylon, the precious diamond placed above the stūpa of the Tooth casts a dazzling light that can be seen from afar, and which in its radiance resembles a planet hanging in mid-air." However, some monks from the south, on their way through Tāmralipti, dissuaded Hsüan-tsang from embarking. They proved to him that in order to go from Bengal to Ceylon it was in no way necessary to expose himself to the perils of a long crossing, but that it was better to go by land to the south-east point of the Carnatic, from which the island could be reached in three days by sea.

Hsüan-tsang, yielding to this advice, undertook the crossing of the Deccan from north to south, keeping along the eastern coast of the peninsula. He thus crossed Odradeśa, which is the present Orissa, and the Kaliṅga or coast of the Circars, where he remarks on the burning heat, the tropical fertility, and luxuriant vegetation. The forests harboured in particular a breed of wild elephants of a deep black, held in special exteem by the Indian rajahs. As for the natives, Hsüan-tsang describes them as having a dark complexion, tall figure, a harsh, fierce disposition, and savage customs ; it is a fact that the bulk of the population is still composed of aboriginal tribes, Muṇḍa and Telugu, very superficially Indianized.

In spite of the presence of several small Buddhist

islands, this region in general was closely attached to the various sects of Hinduism. Hsüan-tsang points out the number of Hindu temples in Orissa and Kaliṅga, frequented by a multitude of natives. The Vaishṇava or Śaiva sanctuaries of Bhuvaneśvar, Konārka, and Jagannātha Puri, with their forest of curvilinear and convex towers, and their vigorous groining, springing straight up to the sky, testify to the accuracy of this remark. If the majority of these temples of Orissa were constructed between the ninth and twelfth centuries, the temple of Mukteśvara at Bhuvaneśvar seems to have been contemporaneous with Hsüan-tsang's journey. Did the pilgrim guess that this dense growth, emerging out of the tropical soil, would one day stifle the seed of Indian Buddhism ?

Hsüan-tsang's itinerary next diverges towards the south-west. He visited Mahā-Kośala, a region of woods and prairies situated in the heart of the Deccan, and inhabited by the primitive tribes of the Gonds, aborigines with " black skin, tall figure, and harsh, violent ways, brave and impulsive by nature "—a wild country where Rudyard Kipling was to stage his *Jungle Book*. The land of Mowgli, however, had seen the rise, in the second and third centuries A.D., of two of the greatest metaphysicians of Buddhism, Nāgārjuna and Ārya Deva, the former a native of a neighbouring district (Berar), the latter of Singhalese origin, both founders of the powerful and subtle critical philosophy of the *mādhyamika*. Such contrasts were habitual in this Indian land at once so complex and so homogeneous, which shows us side by side the barbarism of the brute and the genius of an eastern Kant.

Crossing the vast forests watered by the river system of the Godāvarī, the pilgrim reached the ancient kingdom of Andhra, which corresponds more

or less to the modern state of the Nizam, between the course of the Godāvarī and that of the Krishnā. At the time of his visit this country had been conquered, a very few years earlier, by a clan of the Calukyas, from the country of the Mahrattas, who had established their capital there at Vengipura. It is really the Calukyan state of Vengipura that is mentioned by Hsüan-tsang under the name of the Andhra kingdom. The south-east of ancient Andhra, with Bezvāda and Amarāvatī, towns situated on the two banks of the lower Krishnā, formed in the seventh century the separate kingdom of Dhanakataka. Upstream from Amarāvatī and on the same southern bank of the Krishnā were two other sites famous in archæological history—Goli and Nāgārjunikonda. The historian of Southern India, M. Jouveau-Dubreuil, has ascertained that at the time of Hsüan-tsang a Cola, that is to say a Tamil, clan had settled in this district, which was essentially Telugu, between Krishnā and Pannar, so that it is there that we must look for the Cola kingdom mentioned by the pilgrim. Hence, in spite of the Sanskrit culture that permeated the whole of the upper classes, one entered here into the domain of the Telugu language, and Hsüan-tsang notes the difference between it and the Indo-Aryan dialects. But Andhra had none the less played a considerable part in the history of Buddhism. In the first centuries of our era, at the time when Northern India was being subjected in art as well as in politics to the domination of foreign peoples—Greek and Scythian—Andhra had preserved inviolate, as well as its political independence, the tradition of Indian æsthetics: Amarāvatī, Goli, Nāgārjunikonda had from the second to the fourth century A.D. become covered with stūpas of which the sculpture serves as a link between the "primitive" Buddhist art of Sāñchī and the Gupta workshops of the fourth to the seventh centuries.

We are already familiar with this great school of sculpture from the specimens in the Museum of Madras and the British Museum. It has become still more familiar to us since a fine set of reliefs, from this same region of Amarāvatī, dating from the second, third, fourth, and fifth centuries, came to the Musée Guimet in 1928. It is sufficient to look at the scenes of Buddhist legend, chiselled on this pure marble by the loving hand of the old masters of Andhra, to understand the prominent position of the School in the development of Indian æsthetics. They are Buddhist work, certainly, in the gentleness of their inspiration, but of so delicately pagan a composition that we feel in them a breath of the eternal youth of the Hindu nature. What springlike freshness and life, what a feeling of the play of living forms, what innocent joy of life, what bloom, in the scene of the Bodhisattva's life of pleasure in the gynæceum, faithfully modelled on the text of the *Lalitavistara* itself! "Reveries of a pagan mystic," which show us to what extent the Buddhist doctrine of renunciation could adapt itself, in practice, to a mentality very similar to that of ancient Hellas—and that not the Hellas of the tragic writers and philosophers, but that of the Anthology. Moreover, Græco-Roman art itself made its influence felt to a certain extent in Amarāvatī, as one could expect from the commercial relations existing at the time of Pliny between the "Andaræ" and the classic world, and as is proved by the coins of the Cæsars and the head of Buddha with imperial mask found by M. Jouveau-Dubreuil in this same region.

In the realm of doctrine also, ancient Andhra had done much for Buddhist culture. In the second half of the fifth century the illustrious philosopher Dignaga had composed at Amarāvatī part of his treatises on logic and the critique of knowledge. At the time of

Hsüan-tsang eminent doctors, attached to the doctrine of the Great Vehicle, were still to be found there. The pilgrim spent the rainy season of 639 with them at Amarāvatī or Bezvāda.

From Amarāvatī Hsüan-tsang went south-west by Nāgārjunikonda and the forest of Kurnul, then turned off south by the basin of the Pennar and arrived at the Carnatic, a tropical region with a hot, damp climate. This old Tamil country was the Dravidian land par excellence, the "Drāvida" as the pilgrim calls it. It belonged at that time to the dynasty of the Pallavas, whose capital was Kañci-puram, the present Conjiveram, and the chief port, Māvalipuram or Seven-Pagodas, towns which were both situated on the north bank of the lower Palar.

This dynasty of the Pallavas is one of the most glorious in Indian history. After succeeding the kings of Andhra in the hegemony of Eastern Deccan, it had now to hold its own against another Deccan house, that of the Calukyas of the country of the Mahrattas who had just taken away from it the Mesopotamia of the lower Krishnā and Godāvāri. In spite of this loss, the Pallavas were to continue to take terrible revenge on their Mahratta enemies. The Pallava king, Narasiṃhavarman, whose name was so obviously Vaishṇava, and who reigned from 625 to 645—and thus at the time of Hsüan-tsang's visit—in 642 conquered and killed the powerful king of Mahārāshṭra, Pulakeśin II.

At the same time, the Pallavas are one of the dynasties that have done the most for Indian culture. From an early date they created an architecture of their own which was to be the basis of all the styles of the South, and at the time of Hsüan-tsang's visit, their metropolis, Māvalipuram, began to be filled with those admirable works of art that have made it one of the

chief centres of Indian art. The good work of M. Victor Goloubev has brought to light this collection which is perhaps unique in India ; monolith temples which cover the whole shore, challenging their replicas of Cham or the Malay Archipelago, rocks sculptured in the shapes of animals, with a wonderfully broad and powerful naturalism, whole cliffs worked in stone frescoes, in immense pictures which were unparalleled until that time in all India in their order, movement, and lyrical value.

Hsüan-tsang no doubt had the opportunity of seeing some of these masterpieces. Among the sculptures of Māvalipuram there are at least two, those in the grottos of Yamapuri and Valadalandha, with their fine reliefs representing the incarnations of Vishṇu, which date from the seventh century. Perhaps the pilgrim even saw the beginning of the cliff of the Descent of the Ganges with its people of gods, genii, ascetics, and animals in adoration before the life-giving waters. And doubtless such a glorification, such a deification of natural forces, good or bad—or rather all good, since they are the very expression of Life, and are comparatively humanized here, since the inspiration in general is Vaishṇava—doubtless such an outbreak of vital lyricism could not but shock the apostle of Buddhist renunciation. But it is not without interest for us that the idealistic speculations of a Śīlabhadra and a Hsüan-tsang were contemporaneous with the outburst of naturalism at Māvalipuram—to such an extent was this great seventh century in India, in the æsthetic as well as in the metaphysical sphere, borne along by a current of creative forces of eternal value.

Hsüan-tsang seems to have stayed a fairly long time, during the year 640, in the Pallava country. He found there, at Kañcipuram, the souvenir of one of the most illustrious Mahāyānist metaphysicians,

Dharmapāla (died about 560), who had been Śīlabhadra's master. Now as we have seen, Śīlabhadra, the saintly sage who had become the dean of the monastic city of Nālandā, was himself Hsüan-tsang's master. The pilgrim, therefore, visited with peculiar emotion the country of the great philosopher. He tells us how Dharmapāla had refused the hand of a princess of Kañcipuram in order to embrace the religious life, a decision which had provided the Mahāyānist literature with some of its most famous works.

However, the pilgrim had only pushed so far south in the hope of embarking from there for Ceylon. But a serious disappointment awaited him. The sacred island, after going through palace revolution, was a prey to civil war as well as to famine. So far from being able to go and make a peaceful retreat there, Hsüan-tsang saw the arrival at Kañcipuram of some Singhalese monks who were forced to flee, and who seem to have counselled him to abandon the journey.

Hsüan-tsang therefore gave up his visit to the island, and started once more on his journey round the Deccan. He went through the country that he calls Malakottai, that is to say the Tamil country of Tanjore and Madurā, which had once formed, and was some day again to constitute, the powerful empire of the Colas. With its torrid and humid climate, its tropical vegetation rich in rare essences, and the pearl fisheries and spice-trade with the Indian archipelago that enriched its territories, the Cola country nevertheless did not reach its full development until much later, in the tenth century. The population spoke the Tamil tongue, and was black. Buddhism had formerly reached it, but the people had returned almost immediately to Hindu cults, especially to Śivaism ; it contained also numerous Jain groups.

Hsüan-tsang had gone down to the Deccan by

the coast of the Gulf of Bengal. He came back by the side of the sea of Oman, crossing the Koṅkan and the Mahārāshṭra, the present Mahratta country. This region formed at that time the empire of the Calukyas.

The Calukyas, who play a part of the greatest importance in the history of this period, were a vigorous clan of warriors of Rajput origin who had organized the Mahratta peoples at the end of the sixth century. At the time of Hsüan-tsang's journey they ruled over the whole of the north-west Deccan. The description given us by Hsüan-tsang of their country is remarkable in its accuracy. He notes the climate which is relatively mild and temperate, thanks to the close vicinity of the sea and the altitude of the Ghāt mountains. He remarks on the warlike character of the Mahratta race, and his observations hold good for all time from Pulakeśin, the Calukyan king, victorious over the Emperor Harsha, to Sivaji, the Rat of the Mountains : " The inhabitants are tall of stature, and though simple and straightforward in their ways, they are proud and passionate in disposition. They esteem (above all things) honour and duty, and scorn death. Whoever does them a kindness can count on their gratitude, but he who offends them never escapes their vengeance. If anyone insults them they at once risk their lives in order to wipe out the affront. But if anyone comes to beg their help in distress, they forget their own needs in succouring him. When they have a wrong to avenge, they never fail to warn their enemy in advance, after which each man prepares his arms and fights, lance in hand. In battle they pursue those who are fleeing but do not kill those who have surrendered. If one of their own generals has been conquered, they inflict no corporal punishment on him ; they merely wrap him up in

women's garments, and he often kills himself in order to escape dishonour." In short, it was one of the strongest military races of India, and also one of the most chivalrous. The brief sketch drawn by Hsüan-tsang already foretells us of the Rajput epic of the middle ages, the Mahrattan epic of the eighteenth century.

The king of Mahārāshṭra was that Pulakeśin II who had succeeded in victoriously repulsing every attack of the north-Indian Emperor Harsha. He was then at the zenith of his glory, having come to the throne about 608, and was nearing the end of his reign, which was to come to its close in 642. In spite of Hsüan-tsang's religious sympathy with Harsha, who was his protector and friend, he does full justice to the merits of the Mahratta sovereign.

"His views," Hui-li tells us later, "are broad and deep, and his benevolence and kind deeds are lavished far and wide. His subjects serve him with complete devotion . . . He has warlike tastes and puts the glory of arms before everything. For this reason the infantry and cavalry in his kingdom are equipped with the greatest care and the military regulations are strictly observed." "The state," remarks Hsüan-tsang himself, "supports a body of intrepid champions who number several hundred. Every time they prepare for battle they drink wine until they are intoxicated, after which a single one of these men, with lance in hand, would defy ten thousand of the enemy. If, when in this state, he kills a man who happens to be in his path, the law does not punish him. Each time the army enters the field, these valiant men march in the vanguard, to the sound of the drum." Also, the king of Mahārāshṭra kept in his stables several hundred fierce elephants of war. When the moment for battle came, they were given strong liquor to drink, until they became furious.

They were then let loose like a cataract on the enemy, and charged heavily forward, crushing everything in their path.

With such a military organization as this, king Pulakeśin was more feared than any other prince in the peninsula of India. The good fortune of the other Indian potentate, Harsha, Emperor of the region around the Ganges, had had no effect on him. "At the present time," writes Hsüan-tsang, "the Emperor Harsha is victorious from east to west. He subjugates the outlying peoples, and makes the neighbouring nations tremble, but the men of this kingdom are the only ones who have not submitted. Although he has put himself several times at the head of all the troops of the Five Indias, he has never been able to break down their resistance."

It is possible that Hsüan-tsang spent the rainy season of 641 at Nāsik, in Pulakeśin II's capital. In any case the Chinese pilgrim, after speaking of the political state of the country, remarks with good cause on the intellectual ability of the Mahratta race: "The inhabitants have a passion for study." The Calukyan dynasty was Hindu, and especially attached to the various forms of Śaiva worship, but the two religions existed peacefully side by side, and Hsüan-tsang mentions at the same time about two hundred Buddhist convents and several hundred Brahman temples, in the Koṅkan and Mahārāshṭra.

The progress of Indian archæology allows us to-day to put names to this all too brief enumeration. And what glorious names! Was not the capital of Mahārāshṭra Vātāpī or Bādāmi, where the greater part of the temples, like the Mālegitti Śivālaya, date from the very time of Hsüan-tsang (about 625)? And further north, do not the first masterpieces of Ellora, like the Cave of the Avatars, Ravāṇa Ka Khai,

Dhumar Leṇā, and Rāmeśvara go back to the seventh century? Here, no doubt, even more than at Māvalipuram, the ideal was peculiarly foreign to Hsüan-tsang's thought, for nothing was more opposed to the transcendent idealism of the *Mahāyāna* than these Śaiva beliefs, this tempestuous torrent that carried with it in its course all the monstrosities and all the cruelties as well as all the gentleness of Being, a desperate effort, a superhuman, almost inhuman effort, to attain, by a complete and joyous adherence to life in its entirety, to the heights of mysticism.

And yet, to the untrained eye, was there so great a distance from the Buddhist art of the Gupta workshops to the Hindu works of the Mahratta country? Is not the triumphant Śiva of the caves of Ellora or of Elephanta once again one of those Bodhisattvas to whom we were introduced by the painters of Ajaṇṭā as well as by the sculptors of Bōrōbudur? The bodies are just as harmonious, as pure, as graceful as those of yore, but free, henceforth, from all idea of renunciation, recovered from their pensive disillusionment in order to plunge straight into the heart of things, into the intoxication of Life, by turn mystic and sensuous.

Travellers could also find in the Mahratta country some of the masterpieces of Buddhist art. Near Kalyāṇī, one of the chief towns of the district, one could admire monuments of the first Śuṅga and Andhra schools, such as the vihāra of Bhājā and the caitya of Bedsā, going back to the second century A.D., or the great caitya of Kārlī which undoubtedly dates from the beginning of our era. But above all, it was in the states of king Pulakeśin, in the heart of Mahārāshṭra, that the famous catacombs of Ajaṇṭā were to be seen, with their subterranean monasteries and their immortal frescoes. It is a curious fact that Hsüan-tsang tells us nothing of these sanctuaries. And yet it was in

his day, in the first half of the seventh century, that the finest of the Ajaṇṭā frescoes were produced, those of Grottos I and II. But what does his silence matter? The important thing, in our opinion, is the profound harmony there revealed between the passionate idealism expressed in his work, and the supernatural apparitions with which the walls of Ajaṇṭā are adorned. And is not the vision with which the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī shortly afterwards favoured the pilgrim the same as that which is granted to the visitors to Ajaṇṭā by this "Bodhisattva of the blue lotus"—perhaps indeed Mañjuśrī himself—a figure so ardently mystical in its slightly bowed attitude, beneath the tiara of pure gold, that it has even been compared to Leonardo's drawing of the Christ of the Last Supper? And in truth it is when we see in Victor Goloubev's faithful reproduction these tender, wonderful images, born in the decline of Indian Buddhism, in a lost part of the Mahratta country, that we summon up most clearly the ideal of Hsüan-tsang's contemporaries, the object of their fervent devotion and the soul of their dreams.

When he left Mahārāshṭra, Hsüan-tsang stopped for some days on the other side of the Nerbudda, on the shores of the sea of Oman, at the port of Bharoch, the Barygaza of Greek geography, the economic importance of which he mentions. Indeed, Barygaza is quoted by Greek and Byzantine writers as the great warehouse of the trade of the Indian world with the province of Egypt.

Further north Hsüan-tsang did not fail to visit Mālva, one of the most civilized and most cultivated places in India, and one which holds a position of honour in the history of Sanskrit literature. From this point of view Hsüan-tsang compares it justly with Magadha. Mālva was remarkable as being the fatherland of Kālidāsa, perhaps the greatest of the

Sanskrit poets, author of *The Gratitude of Śakuntalā* and of many immortal dramas, the fame of which must still have been in all its freshness, for he lived in the fifth century, a hundred years before Hsüan-tsang.

On the west Mālva touched the kingdom of Valabhī in the peninsula of Gujarāt. This country, like the adjoining province of Surāshṭra (Surat) lived then, as it does still, on its maritime trade with the Persian gulf and the Mediterranean Orient : " One sees in this kingdom," writes Hui-li, " piles of precious merchandise from foreign lands. There are more than a hundred families whose fortune amounts to over a million ounces of silver." From the beginning of the sixth to the last quarter of the eighth century, this rich country belonged to an energetic dynasty, that of the Maitrekas, whose memory is preserved among us by its beautiful coins. Between 633 and 640 the king of Valabhī had been obliged to recognize the suzerainty of the north-Indian Emperor Harsha. At the time of Hsüan-tsang's visit, the reigning prince Dhruvasena had openly entered Harsha's political sphere by becoming his son-in-law. Although the Valabhī dynasty had until then been Hindu, Dhruvasena followed Harsha's example and personally adopted the Buddhist faith. " Every year," remarks Hsüan-tsang, " he holds a great assembly for seven days, during which he distributes to the multitude of monks exquisite dishes, the Three Garments, medicaments, the Seven Precious Objects, and jewels of the highest value. He esteems virtue and honours the wise. Monks from distant lands receive special honour and veneration from him."

From this maritime province Hsüan-tsang was able to gather some information about Persia. And though he did not venture into Iran, his notes are full of interest if we consider the date at which they were

written—the very eve of the fall of the Sassanid Empire. Hsüan-tsang points out the importance of the canal system for the life of this high plateau, part of which is desert ; and all who have followed from Teheran to Isfahan and Shīrāz, by the Persian tracks, the subterranean canals that are marked at intervals by the line of ancient royal wells, will be struck by the truth of his remarks. The *Avesta*, moreover, the sacred book of ancient Persia, cites as a work of piety the upkeep of the irrigating canals. Hsüan-tsang mentions also the excellence of the Iranian fabrics : " They can weave brocaded silk, stuffs, and various kinds of carpet "—and this has remained the principal Persian industry from the Sassanids down to our own day.

If the Chinese pilgrims halted at the frontiers of the Persian Empire, they must have noticed, at the time when they were passing through Central Asia, those rich Iranian fabrics, the remnants of which, discovered by Von Le Coq's expedition, reveal themselves so definitely as Sassanid. If the fancy had taken them to push on into the heart of Iran, they might have discovered there the origin of the decorative themes of the Kuchā country. On the robe of the equestrian Chrosroës of Tāq-i-Bostān, near Kirmānshāh, they would have met once again the heraldic bird so popular as a design for the brocades of Kuchā and Turfān.

From the commercial point of view Hsüan-tsang, in common with all the travellers who follow him, notes the quality of the Iranian horses and camels. He mentions, as one who has certainly seen them, the beauty of the Sassanid silver coins, and there is not a numismatist, not a traveller who, after handling these admirable coins of the Chosroës and the Shāpūrs, would not be ready to confirm what he says. Marriages between brother and sister, recommended by Parseeism, naturally inspire him with some severe

reflections. He is no less shocked by the Parsee custom of exposing corpses to the vultures, on the "towers of silence": "When a man is dead, his body is thrown in a ditch." The *T'ang History* makes the same observation: "Every man who dies is left in the mountains," adding that "the vultures of Iran are so enormous that they can devour sheep."

Although Parseeism was a state religion, the Sassanid Empire was fairly tolerant towards Buddhism, at least on the Afghan borders, and to Nestorianism in the district of Mesopotamia. Hsüan-tsang notes that two or three Buddhist monasteries existed in Persia, with several hundred monks belonging to the Hīnayānist school of the Sarvāstivādin. Recent discoveries in Afghanistan confirm this statement. The frescoes of Bāmiyān, restored by Monsieur and Madame André Godard, which date from the third to the fifth century, show some purely Sassanid characteristics, although in general inspiration they are Buddhist. In view of the amazing revelation of a Sassanid king, with beard and tiara—a veritable Shāpūr, an authentic Chosroës—cheek by jowl in these frescoes with Buddhist monks and a Buddha of Gandhāra, ought we not to surmise the existence here of something like a budding Sassano-Buddhist school, following on the Græco-Buddhist schools of the past? In actual fact, M. Hackin did find a little further on, at Dokhtar-i Noshirwān, other frescoes, purely Sassanid this time, royal frescoes traced by the hand of some Indian Buddhist.[1] This

[1] Herr Herzfeld thinks indeed that these Persian figures (chiefly at Dokhtar-i Noshirwān) represent Sassanid lords. But Monsieur Foucher remarks that these personages (chiefly at Bāmiyān) are perhaps simply Iranized Turks. Both are undoubtedly in the right. Dokhtar-i Noshirwān and the provinces in the north of the Hindu-Kush were for a time in the power of the Sassanid Persians, and Bāmiyān and the provinces in the south of the Hindu-Kush in the power of Iranized Turks.

is an irrefutable proof, in these Afghan marches, attached to the Sassanid monarchy at a late date, of the good understanding between the Mazdean Empire and the Indian communities. And moreover, we should certainly find this same Indian influence spreading as far as the west of Sassanid Persia, in the hunting elephants of Chosroës II at Tāq-i-Bostān.

From the political point of view, Sassanid Persia at the time of Hsüan-tsang's pilgrimage was the scene of profound upheavals.

While the T'ang dynasty in the Far East was rebuilding, as far as the T'ien-Shan and the Pamir, the great Chinese Empire of the former Han Emperors, the Sassanid dynasty of Persia, under Chosroës II (590–628) had at one moment all but restored the great Achæmenid Empire of former times. The Persian armies, between 611 and 616, had conquered Syria, Egypt, and Asia Minor, and in 626 had come and laid siege to Constantinople. But the counter-attack of the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius in the Caucasus and in Assyria had broken Chosroës' power in 627. And then, in the south-west of the exhausted Empire, the Arab invasion swept down. A first victory at Qādisiyā in 636 had won over to the Arabs the plains of Mesopotamia, including the Persian capital, Ctesiphon, which they occupied in the following year. A second victory in 642, at Nehawend, was to win them the plateau of Iran itself, from Zagros to Khorassan. The last Sassanid, Yezdegerd III, hiding on the frontiers of Transoxiana, at Merw, implored the help of China in vain. He died in 652, without having obtained the help he hoped for. Persia was too far off for the T'ang armies to be able to bear their standards there. At any rate the Court of the T'angs received the exiled Sassanids. Thus Chinese hospitality was the

melancholy end destined for that dynasty which for four centuries had rivalled the fortunes of Rome, and for a moment had restored the glory of the houses of Darius and Artaxerxes.

The onslaught of Islam, shattering in its effect, was about to change all the ideas of culture in Middle Asia. Let us congratulate ourselves on the fact that, on the very eve of the great upheaval, a witness of Hsüan-tsang's calibre was able to study on our behalf this threatened civilization.

Chapter X

THE MONASTIC CITY OF NĀLANDĀ

Hsüan-tsang made his way westward as far as the middle Indus. After visiting Sindh and Multān he returned towards Magadha and made a second stay at Nālandā, which was as fruitful as the first had been. His visit to the Holy Places was over, and he could devote the rest of his time to inquiring into the teaching of the masters of Indian philosophy. Having found out that a learned monk of the Sarvāstivādin sect, called Prajñābhadra, lived in another monastery, twenty-five miles from Nālandā, the pilgrim went to visit him, and spent two months there. Even more famous was a Buddhist hermit named Jayasena, living near Nālandā, on the mount of Yashṭivanagiri. He was one of the most notable philosophers of Mahāyānism. But in spite of having profited by the teaching of Śīlabhadra, he had been trained by Sthiramati, the head of another branch of the idealist school that had remained closer to the critical philosophy of the *Mādhyamika*. In Hsüan-tsang's notes and in those of his biographer, he appears as a philosopher of truly eclectic attainments, and as an encyclopædist for whom the Vedas, Indian science, and even the Hinduist teachings, contained no secret. His hermitage, to which pupils flocked by the hundred, was one of those " schools of wisdom " such as India has always known. Hsüan-tsang spent many months with him, studying the texts of the idealist school.

Here there occurs in the narrative left us by the disciples of Hsüan-tsang a curious "revelation". The Master of the Law was transported in a dream to the monastery at Nālandā. "The cells were empty and deserted, and the courtyards, which were dirty and disgusting, were full of buffaloes that had been tied up there. Neither monks nor novices were to be seen . . . The Master of the Law entered and saw on the fourth storey above a courtyard an individual of a golden hue, whose grave and stern countenance shed a dazzling light." The Bodhisattva Mañjuśri—for he it was—pointed out to the pilgrim the horizon, where an immense fire was destroying towns and villages. Raising his voice, he predicted the death in the near future of the North-Indian Emperor Harsha, and also the revolutions into which the country was to be plunged by this catastrophe.

Hsüan-tsang soon afterwards was granted another supernatural vision. One night when he had returned from a pilgrimage to Gayā, to the foot of the Bodhi Tree where the festival of the Relics of Buddha had been celebrated, he saw the stūpa where these were exposed blazing with light, and from the top, an immense flame rising up till it touched the skies. "Heaven and earth were bathed in light as though it were high noon ; neither stars nor moon were to be seen, and the air one breathed was full of a sweetness and fragrance that permeated all the monastery precincts. After a few moments this brilliant light gradually diminished and then sky and earth returned to darkness, and the stars shone with their former brightness."

In this mystic atmosphere the pilgrim continued his metaphysical researches. At such a level the discussions of the schools seemed to him a trifle empty. Mahāyānist thinkers were divided, as we know, into two groups ; on the one hand there was the

idealist and mystic school (*Vijñānavāda* and *Yogācāra*), to which Sīlabhadra belonged, and which depended on the two great metaphysicians of the fifth century, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu ; on the other there was the school of Nāgārjuna, or of the Middle Way, which in spite of its modest title of *Mādhyamika* showed itself much more radical in its criticism. Certainly these two systems issued from the same principles, the preliminary critique of the data of pure reason and of experience, with an affective mysticism most efficacious for consolation to compensate for its speculative negations. But while Nāgārjuna and his pupils, clinging to this attitude, ended in a kind of Buddhist Kantianism, the disciples of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, under cover of absolute idealism, finally transformed the prolegomena of the old master and almost completely rehabilitated metaphysics.

Hsüan-tsang, according to the evidence of his biographer, could not keep away from these discussions; he even had to take part in them. But at this moment in his career his dream seems to have been to harmonize the two great systems in a more comprehensive and eclectic Mahāyānism. Such was his attitude towards a saintly monk named Siṃharasmi who professed the doctrines of Nāgārjuna while opposing *Yogācāra* idealism. Siṃharasmi rejected especially the notion of Absolute Nature (or *bhūta tathatā*) of which we shall speak later, and which was, as it were, the crown set by the idealists on the *Mādhyamika* critical philosophy. "The Master of the Law," says the biographer, "had studied the treatises of Nāgārjuna, and besides this was proficient in the understanding of the *Yogācāra*. He considered that the holy men who had composed these different works had each followed his own particular ideas without, however, being in opposition to one another. Even if we cannot bring them into perfect harmony, he would say, we have

no right for that reason to consider them as contradictory to one another. The blame ought to be laid on those who commentate these writings. Such divergences of opinion are of no consequence for the faith." Hsüan-tsang composed on the spot a treatise "on the harmony of the principles" (*Hui-tsung-lun*), which was received with approval by the Masters of Nālandā.

The Master of the Law reserved the shafts of his polemics for the Buddhists of the Little Vehicle, of the Reduced Way, as the members of the Great Church designated the somewhat old-fashioned pietists who refused to crown Buddhism with a First Philosophy, and confined their efforts to the study of monastic discipline. Nor did the latter moderate their attacks on the faithful of the Great Church. The Hīnayānists of Orissa, appealing to king Harsha, roundly accused the monks of Nālandā of being nihilists, partisans of the universal Void, Buddhists in name only. As we shall see later, the effort of the idealist metaphysicians of Hsüan-tsang's school consisted precisely in clearing the *Mahāyāna* of this charge, by imperceptibly correcting the negative element in the *Mādhyamika* critical philosophy by metaphysical and mystical data of a kind able to satisfy the mind and the heart.

At Nālandā Hsüan-tsang opposed in particular the various schools of Brahmanism.

The two principal philosophic systems of Hinduism that were opposed to Buddhism were, at that time, the Vaiśeshika and the Sāṃkhya. The Vaiśeshika was a realist system, direct and immediate in its realism, resting on the acceptance of the data of experience and consciousness as such : in short, it was a combination of atomism and monadology. The Sāṃkhya, a metaphysical poem of a very different calibre, and based, moreover, on much more

elaborate data, also assumed the dualism of Spirit and Nature. Such doctrines were in absolute contradiction to the acosmic idealism of the Buddhism of the *Yogācāra*, which rejected equally the objective existence of matter and the substantial entity of the ego. Therefore, Hsüan-tsang opposed them without mercy, as he opposed the system of Jainism.

As far as the Jains were concerned, nothing was more opposed to the phenomenalist and monist idealism of Hsüan-tsang than their atheistic monadology. But what exasperated the pilgrim more than anything was the kind of caricature of Buddhism which Jainism constituted in his eyes. In fact, since the days of Buddha himself, Buddhism and Jainism had been foes of one household. "These sectarians," writes Hsüan-tsang somewhere, "give themselves up to extreme austerities. Day and night they display the most ardent zeal without a moment's respite. The law expounded by their founder (Mahāvīra) has been largely stolen from the books of Buddha, and on these he guided himself when laying down his precepts and rules. In their religious observances and exercises, they follow almost entirely the rule of the Buddhist monks. They keep a little hair on their heads, however, and also go naked. If they happen to wear clothes, these are white. The statue of their teacher, by a kind of impertinent imitation, resembles that of Buddha."

Hsüan-tsang's biography has preserved for us the memory of a discussion in which the pilgrim sought to destroy *en bloc* all the doctrines he was combating, Hindu as well as Jainist, by opposing them one to another. With his genius for dialectic, he pointed out especially the divergences that separated the two great systems of Brahman philosophy then in vogue, the Sāṃkhya and Vaiśeshika. Then he ridiculed the extravagant asceticism of those different sects

which made religion consist in eccentricities of costume and practice. "Certain ascetics rub their bodies with ashes and imagine they have thereby accomplished an act of great merit. Their skin is a livid white all over, like that of a cat who has slept on the hearth. The Jains think they gain distinction by leaving their bodies entirely naked, and they make a virtue of tearing out their hair. Their skin is all broken, and their feet are horny and cracked ; they are like those rotten trees that are found close to a river." Here are the eccentricities characteristic of true Brahman asceticism, exposed to the ridicule of Chinese positivism : "Some wear a peacock's-feather plume, others cover their body with squares of plaited grass, some of them tear out their hair and cut their moustaches, or else wear shaggy side-whiskers and knot their hair on the top of their heads." And finally we have the excesses and follies of Siva-worship : "Others make themselves chaplets with the bones of skulls, decorate their heads with them, and hang them round their necks ; they live in the hollows of rocks, like the *Yaksha* that haunt the tombs. Certain of them go so far as to wear garments soiled with dirt and to eat rotten food and bad meat. They are as filthy and as disgusting as a pig in the middle of a drain. And yet you Hinduists consider these things as acts of virtue. Is not that the height of stupidity and folly ?"

This is a very curious passage, for it reveals plainly the attitude of Buddhist wisdom—so moderate, so good-tempered, so human that it recalls at times the temper of mind of a Socrates or a Plutarch—in presence of the follies of Brahman yogism. Did not Buddha himself, in the Sermon of Benares, attach the same blame to macerations as to voluptuous pleasures ? And indeed one need only think of all the exaggerations, all the monstrosities, the ascetic and fleshly lack of balance to which the disappearance of Buddhism

was soon to leave a free field in India, in order to understand how much Indian reason was to lose in losing it. But the discourse attributed to Hsüan-tsang shows something else as well. In spite of his whole-hearted adherence to the religion of Śakya-muni, the pilgrim had none the less preserved the mental habits of Chinese education—innate positivism, solid sense, a religion of social conventions—and there is no doubt that it was this old Confucian background that revolted within him at the excesses of Hindu mysticism.

Another passage from the Life of Hsüan-tsang shows us better still to what an extent the Master of the Law maintained his Confucian sense of citizenship in the midst of Indian Buddhism. The monks of Nālandā considered him so much one of themselves that they wanted to dissuade him from returning to China : " India," they said, " has seen the birth of Buddha, and although He has left the earth, His sacred traces still remain here. To visit them one after another, to adore them, and to sing His praises is the way to bring happiness to your life. Why come here to leave us all of a sudden ? Besides, China is a land of barbarians. They have a scorn for monks and for faith. That is why Buddha did not will to be born there. The inhabitants' views are narrow, and their sins go deep. That is why the sages and saints (of India) have not gone there . . ."

Hsüan-tsang's reply, from the pen of his biographer, is an outburst of national pride. At first he protests with justice in the name of Buddhist charity : " Buddha set forth his teaching that it might be spread everywhere. What kind of a man is he who would slake his own thirst with it and neglect those who have not yet received it ? " Then follows, from this subject of the great T'ang dynasty, a protestation of imperial pride which is the *ego sum*

civis sinicus of a subject of T'ai-tsung. "In our kingdom the magistrates are serious and the laws are observed with respect. The prince is remarkable for his great virtue and his subjects for their loyalty, fathers for their affection, sons for their obedience." This is pure Confucianism, the state religion of filial piety. Next follow the praises of Confucian traditionalism, humanitarianism, and humanism: "(Amongst us) humanity and justice are esteemed, and old men and sages are given the first place. That is not all—Science holds no mystery for them. Their perspicacity equals that of the Spirits; the heavens are a model for them, and they can calculate the movements of the Five Heavenly Bodies. They have invented all kinds of instruments, divided the seasons of the year, and discovered the hidden properties of the six tones and of music. That is why they have been able to drive away or subdue wild animals, to reach and bring down the demons and Spirits, to counteract the malign influences of the *Yin* and the *Yang*, and to procure peace and happiness for all creatures."

There are doubtless in this apostrophe, composed long after by an official panegyrist, all the features calculated to satisfy Chinese pride. But it is none the less a splendid rhapsody. With what forcefulness are the precision, the scientific spirit and the organization of the Chinese opposed to the political incapacity and the pragmatic indifference of the Indian race!

Returning after this to the sphere of religion, Hsüan-tsang shows the immense progress accomplished by the Chinese church: "Ever since the Law given by Buddha reached China, all men reverence the *Mahāyāna*, and their light is as pure as limpid water; their virtue is shed abroad like a cloud of incense; they devote themselves with love

to righteous practices, and have no other desire than to arrive, by meritorious deeds, at the ten degrees of perfection. With crossed hands and absorbed in deep meditation, they aspire to reach the Three Bodies of Buddhahood. If the Saint came down of old to earth, it was solely in order that he might himself spread the beneficent influence of the Law. I have had the good fortune to hear his marvellous words, and to see with my own eyes his countenance of gold. How can you say that this country is to be despised because Buddha did not go there ?"

And the speech attributed to Hsüan-tsang concludes with a sort of Platonic allegory : "Why does the sun go round the world ? To dissipate the darkness. Now it is precisely for this same purpose that I wish to return to my own country !"

Chapter XI

HARSHA, THE POET KING

Hsüan-tsang's successes in his philosophic and religious controversies had attracted the attention of several Indian potentates. The taste of the Hindu, from the proudest rajah to the lowest outcast, for doctrinal subtleties and religious speculations is well-known. The king of Kāmarūpa—the present Assam —asked Hsüan-tsang to come and spend some weeks at his court before returning to China.

This Bhāskara Kumāra, king of Assam, was a highly cultured ruler. Although a Hinduist himself, he would never have ceased to regret it if he had allowed a Buddhist doctor of Hsüan-tsang's calibre to depart without having talked with him. Better still, some years later, when he had the opportunity of meeting the Chinese ambassador Li I-piao, he went so far in his philosophic curiosity as to ask the latter for a Sanskrit translation of the Taoist work *Tao-tê-ching*. Nothing shows more clearly both the religious syncretism of the time, and the philosophic open-mindedness of all these Indians, before the triumph of Hinduism and the invasion of Islam.

The notes made by Hsüan-tsang on Assam are remarkably accurate. It was a country of streams and rice-swamps, abundantly irrigated by the Brahmaputra, whose wide reaches engulf the trade-winds, and even then belonged both physically and ethnographically less to India than to the adjacent Indo-China. " The land is low-lying and damp. The towns are surrounded by rivers, lakes, and ponds. The bread-tree and the coco-nut tree flourish there. The

people are short in stature, with a dark skin. They are violent and savage in disposition. They worship the spirits and do not believe in the Law of Buddha. That is why, from his birth till the present day, not a single monastery has been built in this kingdom. If a few true believers are found by chance, they confine themselves to thinking of Buddha in their secret hearts. About a hundred Brahman temples are to be found there. The present king is descended from the god Vishṇu (Nārāyaṇa) ; he is of the Brahman caste, his name is Bhāskara Varma, 'Breastplate of the Sun.' He has a passion for study. Men of talent from far-off lands are attracted by his renown, and like to travel in his kingdom. Although he does not believe in Buddha's Law, he shows great respect for the monks."

Further east, Hsüan-tsang continues, the country was nothing but a succession of mountains and hills, with no important town. It bordered on the regions inhabited by the aborigines of South-west China, Man and Lolo. The pilgrim learnt from the natives that the frontiers of the Chinese province of Ssŭ-ch'uan were only a two months' journey further on. Perhaps he thought of going back this way to his native land, but this alpine chain, deeply cut into from north to south by the steep valleys of the upper Saluen and the tributaries of the upper Yang-tsze, was too difficult to cross. Moreover, the country was infested with marsh-fever, and on the south-eastern side ravaged by troops of wild elephants. Hsüan-tsang, therefore, did not yield to the temptation of reaching the neighbouring Chinese frontiers by this dangerous route, but obeyed the summons of the Emperor Harsha, from the Ganges.

Harsha, surnamed Śīlāditya or the Sun of Virtue, reigned, as we have seen, over almost the whole of

Northern India, from the Brahmaputra to Gujarāt and the Vindhya mountains. Having transported his capital from Thānēsvar to Kanauj, he had succeeded, either by war or by the sole power of his reputation, in getting his suzerainty recognized by the oldest dynasties, such as that of Assam, the last of the Guptas and the Maukharis of Magadha, and the Maitrekas of Valabhī. At the same time, Harsha was one of the most polished men of letters of his age. His name holds a place of honour in Sanskrit literature. He had attracted to his court a whole group of writers, such as the poet Mayūra and the novelist Bāṇa. The latter has left us an epic and romantic account of his master, the *Harshacarita*, which is unfortunately unfinished. Harsha was himself a poet, and several Sanskrit dramas are commonly attributed to him, notably *Priyadarśikā*, *Ratnāvalī*, and *Nāgānanda*.

Above all, Harsha represents in India the last of the great Buddhist rulers. In spite of the material prosperity and the intellectual efflorescence to which Hsüan-tsang's account bears witness, it is undeniable that Buddhism was slowly declining under a Brahminist revival which was pacific but continuous. The Bengali emperors of the Gupta dynasty who had governed almost the whole of India during the fourth and fifth centuries were already more or less Hindu ; in spite of their tolerance or even their sympathy towards Buddhism, the majority of them attached themselves in preference to the Vishnuite sects. This was still merely a matter of personal taste, neutralized by the philosophic syncretism and eclectic religious feeling of the time. But the hour of brutal persecution was at hand.

Already in the north-west, in the first quarter of the sixth century, the Hun leader Mihirakula had aunched terrible persecutions against the church of

Śākyamuni ; the monasteries of the Punjāb still showed the traces of its violence. More recently still, in the first years of the seventh century, a king of Gaur or Karṇasuvarṇa, in Bengal, called Śaśāṅka, a fierce Śaiva worshipper, had gone so far as to lay sacrilegious hands on the Bodhi Tree at Gayā. On this spot, for ever sacred, he had dared to substitute for the statue of Buddha one of Śiva, and it was only with some difficulty that the king of Magadha, Pūrṇavarman, succeeded in repairing the havoc made by his impious hands.[1]

In view of such symptomatic incidents which only too plainly foreshadowed the great storm in which Buddhism was to founder, a century and a half later, the protection of such a conqueror as Harsha was of inestimable value to the Church of Śākyamuni.

Certainly Harsha never broke with official Brahmanism, nor even with the Hindu sects, any more than the other Indian sovereigns of his time. Hsüan-tsang depicts him as loading the Brahmans with gifts, and in his works he himself declares that he is a worshipper of Śiva ; his confidant and friend, the novelist Bāṇa, was, moreover, Brahman by caste and Hindu by religion. But the personal sentiments of the monarch were clearly Buddhist, and of the

[1] M. Th. Bloch thinks that the attempt on the Bodhi Tree made by Śaśāṅka does not necessarily imply a desire to persecute, just as Pūrṇavarman may very well have restored the Tree without being himself a Buddhist. As the pilgrimage to Gayā constituted an important source of revenue for the king of the country, the Bengali ruler, Pūrṇavarman's enemy, was perhaps simply trying to injure the latter by stopping the pilgrimages, just as Pūrṇavarman was endeavouring to re-establish them by restoring the Tree. Cf. Th. Bloch, " Notes on Bodh-Gayā ; The Bodhi Tree " in *Archæological Survey of India Report*, 1908–9, pp. 140–1. It must not, however, be forgotten that, on the (contemporary) evidence of Hsüan-tsang, Śaśāṅka did try to replace the statue of Buddha by a Śaiva statue. This fact certainly points to a religious war.

Mahāyāna school. In the *Mahāyāna* even, his sympathies appear to have attached him to the idealism of the *Yogācāra* school, as it was taught in the monasteries of Nālandā, and as Hsüan-tsang professed it. This tells us how close was to be the bond between these two. Indeed, during the few weeks they spent together, a firm friendship grew up between the Indian maharajah and the Chinese pilgrim.

At the request of Harsha, who was already growing impatient at the tardiness of his vassal, the king of Assam accompanied Hsüan-tsang to his court. The king of Assam's train went up the Ganges with twenty thousand elephants and thirty thousand boats, as far as "Kajughira" (Känkjol), where Harsha's camp was situated. When the Assam escort arrived at this meeting-place night had just fallen, but Harsha would not wait until next day to present his respects to the Master of the Law. "Messengers came to inform Hsüan-tsang and the king of Assam, his companion, that thousands of torches could be seen in the middle of the river, and that the noise of drums could be heard. Immediately the king of Assam ordered torches to be carried, and went out to meet (Harsha) with his high officials." It was indeed the Indian Emperor who was approaching, for, as Hsüan-tsang tells us, when he travelled he was preceded by a hundred metal drums which were beaten at every step ; this was a privilege reserved for Harsha, which none of the vassal kings had the right to imitate.

As soon as Harsha arrived he greeted the Master of the Law by bowing to the ground, and kissed his feet with respect. Then he scattered flowers before him and, contemplating him in a kind of ecstasy, praised him to the skies. As the monarch asked him why he had not come sooner in response to his invitation, Hsüan-tsang answered, with the noble independence of the sage, that he had not been able,

being at the time occupied in studying a treatise on the *Yogācāra* philosophy. The historiographer here puts into the mouth of Hsüan-tsang, in reply to a question of Harsha's, an eloquent encomium of the Chinese Emperor T'ai-tsung: "At his accession, heaven and earth were profoundly agitated; the people had no longer any master, the fields were littered with corpses, the rivers and canals ran with blood; during the night strange stars shed a sinister light; during the day deadly mists gathered; the banks of the Three Rivers were ravaged by voracious boars and the Four Seas (the Celestial Empire) were infested by verminous snakes. Then the imperial prince (Li Shih-min, the future T'ai-tsung) obeyed the orders of Heaven. Filled with noble zeal, he put forth his invincible strength and wielding the axe and the lance in turn, he delivered the troubled provinces and restored peace to the world . . ."

Harsha eagerly examined into the treatises that Hsüan-tsang had just written against the opponents of the *Mahāyāna*, both Hīnayānist and Hindu. The monarch's sister, no doubt the former queen of Kanauj, Rājyaśrī, who had lost her husband by the treachery of Saśāṅka, was also a devotee of the *Mahāyāna*. This princess who shared the power with Harsha, to the extent of sitting behind him on the occasion of the second audience granted to Hsüan-tsang, warmly congratulated the Master of the Law on having combated the Little Vehicle. Harsha then decided to bring about a grand philosophic tournament in the course of which Hsüan-tsang should "dissipate the blindness" of the "heretics" of the *Hīnayāna*, and "shatter the overweening pride" of the Brahmans and Hindu sectarians.

This assembly was convoked in Harsha's capital of Kanauj itself. Harsha and Hsüan-tsang went up the Ganges "in the midst of a great forest of flowering trees", in the first days of the year 643.

The two kings led the procession. Their four army corps formed an imposing escort for them. Some arrived by the Ganges in boats, others followed the river path, mounted on elephants; all advanced to the sound of drums, conches, flutes, and guitars. The whole country, including all the vassal kingdoms, flocked to meet the sovereign prince. "Eighteen kings from Central India were seen to arrive, as well as three thousand monks versed in the Great and Little Vehicles, two thousand Brahmans and Jains, and about one thousand monks from the monastery of Nālandā. All these sages, who were as renowned for their vast learning as for the richness and ease of their discourse, had come eagerly to the place of assembly. They were all accompanied by large suites. Some were mounted on elephants, others were carried in palanquins, each group was surrounded by banners and standards. The crowd swelled by degrees, like the clouds that gather and roll past in the skies, and they covered several leagues of ground. The king had ordered beforehand the erection on the assembly-ground of two vast buildings, covered with thatch, in which to place the statue of Buddha, and to receive the multitude of monks." Harsha's travelling tent was set up five *li* west of this site.

On the first day Harsha had a golden statue of Buddha carried about on the plain, on a large elephant bearing a costly dais. He himself, holding a white fly-catcher and dressed as the god Indra, walked on the statue's right, while the king of Assam, holding a parasol of costly material, walked on the left in the costume of Brahmā. "Both wore as head-dress the divine tiara from which hung garlands of flowers and ribbons, weighted with precious stones. Besides this, two large elephants had been equipped to follow the Buddha, laden with baskets of rare flowers which were scattered at each step."

Before and behind the statue a hundred elephants carried musicians beating drums.

The Master of the Law took his place in the fore-front of the royal procession. "He and the palace officials," writes his biographer, "each received an invitation to mount a large elephant, and to draw up in line behind the king. Then three hundred great elephants were given to the rajahs, ministers, and monks of the other kingdoms, who were lined up on both sides of the road, and chanted praises as they went. These preparations began at early dawn. The king (Harsha) personally conducted the procession from his travelling tent to the assembly-place. When they reached the gate of the enclosure he commanded everyone to dismount, in order to carry the statue of Buddha into the palace destined to receive it, and to place it on a costly throne." "The king," writes Hsüan-tsang himself, "scattered, at every step, in honour of the Buddhist Trinity, fine pearls, precious stones of every kind, and flowers of gold and silver. He mounted first of all on to the altar, which was made of rich materials, and washed the statue in perfumed water. The king took it upon his own shoulders and carried it to the top of the tower." After paying his respects to the statue, in Hsüan-tsang's company, Harsha commanded the eighteen rajahs to bring in the most illustrious and the most learned monks, to the number of one thousand, the Brahmins and "heretic" doctors renowned by their deeds, to the number of five hundred, and the ministers and high officials of the different kingdoms to the number of two hundred. As for the monks and laity who had not been able to be admitted into the interior, he ordered them to rank themselves in separate groups outside the gate of the enclosure.

He then ordered food to be given to everybody, outside as well as in. He gave rich presents to

Hsüan-tsang and the other monks ; a golden bowl for the service of Buddha, a golden cup, seven gold pots, and three thousand garments of fine cotton.

"After this distribution, Harsha had a richly upholstered seat placed by itself, and begged the Master of the Law to be seated on it, to preside over the solemn conference, pronounce the eulogy of the *Mahāyāna*, and set forth the subject of the discussion." A monk from Nālandā acquainted the company with the propositions of Hsüan-tsang. Harsha had a copy of them made and hung it on the gate of the enclosure, in order that all present might examine it. He himself added at the foot that "if anyone found a single erroneous word in it, and could show himself capable of refuting it, he would have his own head cut off in token of his gratitude". It need hardly be said that no one came forward to refute a text guaranteed by the head of the Emperor.

Hsüan-tsang was therefore able to argue in favour of the *Mahāyāna* without encountering any serious contradiction. Nevertheless, the royal intervention was not accepted without some impatience by the adversaries of the Great Church. The biography of Hsüan-tsang itself informs us that on the fifth day of the assembly "the heretics of the Lesser Vehicle, seeing that the Master of the Law had overthrown the principle of their teaching, conceived a violent hatred for him, and formed a plot against his life". Such was the sad consequence of the sectarian quarrels among the disciples of universal charity ! Thus the Chinese pilgrim, who had come so great a distance in order to fortify his belief in the very fatherland of Buddha Śākyamuni, had braved so many dangers and shown so much faith and zeal, only to risk perishing at the hand of his fellow believers themselves ! The Emperor Harsha was obliged to publish a threatening proclamation : "If a single man among all the

company is found attacking or wounding the Master of the Law, I will cut off his head, and I will have the tongue of anyone who is guilty of calumniating or insulting him cut out. All those who trust in my justice and desire to express themselves in a fitting manner, will on the contrary enjoy complete liberty."

"From that moment," adds Hui-li naïvely, "the supporters of error took to flight and disappeared, with the result that eighteen days went by without anyone daring to open his mouth for argument."

According to the biographer, the sermons of Hsüan-tsang at the assembly of Kanauj were followed by the wholesale conversion of the Hīnayānists. "They left the paths of error and entered the right way, abandoning the narrow views of the Lesser Vehicle to embrace the sublime principles of the Great."

It is somewhat melancholy to observe the distance that always separates pure ideas from the reality of human passions. On the day after Buddha's death the kings of India, forgetful of the lessons of peace and mercy that had ever been on his lips, had almost come to blows over the distribution of his relics. And now one of the greatest metaphysicians of mediaeval Buddhism, expounding to Buddhists the doctrines of their faith, was risking his life at their hands for the sake of such Byzantine discussions as that of the "Three pure Aliments" . . .

The threats to Hsüan-tsang had alarmed and angered Harsha. The ambassadorial visits which he exchanged regularly with the court of the T'angs show us how highly the Indian monarch prized Chinese friendship. In 644–5 he had just received two of T'ai-tsung's envoys, Li I-piao and Wang Hsüan-ts'ê, who took advantage of their visit to put up a commemorative inscription in the temple of the Bodhi at Gayā. Certainly there was nothing of the official ambassador about Hsüan-tsang, since he

had left China against the wish of the court. But his assassination must inevitably have harmed the excellent relations that had been established between Kanauj and Ch'ang-an. However, there was no need for such considerations. Obviously Harsha had been captivated by the superior intelligence of the pilgrim. "He gave the Master of the Law 10,000 pieces of gold, 30,000 pieces of silver, 100 garments of fine cotton. He ordered one of his officers to have a large elephant richly equipped and covered with costly trappings, and then he begged the Master of the Law to mount it. Finally, he ordered the most eminent of his dignitaries to form his train, and to make the round of the people in this fashion, announcing aloud that he had expounded the principles of truth, and had established them securely, without being defeated by anyone." This was the traditional form of the Indian triumph, "accorded to whoever has gained a victory." In vain did Hsüan Tsang try to escape such an honour. The king's wish was a command. "Holding the Master of the Law by his religious habit, and addressing the multitude, he cried: 'The Chinese Master has brilliantly demonstrated the doctrine of the *Mahāyāna*, and overthrown all the errors of the dissenters. For eighteen days there has not been found a single individual bold enough to argue with him. Such a triumph must be made known to all!'" All those present then praised Hsüan-tsang to the skies, burnt incense before him, scattered flowers, and respectfully retired.

Thus speaks Hui-li in the account he has left us of the life of his master. But Hsüan-tsang himself gives us, in his *Hsi-yü-chi*, certain details about this assembly which are rather disturbing. We learn that the shrine set up by Harsha was set fire to by a criminal hand, and that the king himself almost fell a victim to an attempt on his life.

Harsha, as we know, had had a tower erected at Kanauj in which to place the statue of Buddha. "On the last day of the assembly this tower caught fire, and the two-storeyed pavilion which rose above the gate of the convent was consumed by the flames." Hsüan-tsang then puts into the mouth of his hero some melancholy reflections: "I have exhausted the wealth of my kingdom in almsgiving. Following the example of the kings of old, I have built this monastery, and have tried to win distinction by meritorious deeds. But my feeble virtue has found no support. In view of such calamities and such sad omens, what need have I to live any longer?" There is a similar melancholy among his court: "We had hoped that the sacred monument you have just completed would endure to future ages. Who would have thought that on the first day it would be reduced to ashes? Moreover, the Brahmans are rejoicing in the occurrence from the bottom of their hearts, and are congratulating one another . . ." The fire, however, was extinguished, and Hsüan-tsang saw a miracle of Buddha. Harsha seems, moreover, to have recovered himself speedily. "By that which has just happened, we may recognize the truth of Buddha's words. The Brahmins maintain obstinately that everything is eternal. But Buddha has taught us the instability of all things. As for me, I have completed my alms-giving, I have satisfied the wish of my heart." But the Brahmins—for they were in fact the authors of the mishap—were to go even further in their audacity. Harsha, still much disturbed by the disaster, had gone up, followed by the vassal kings, to the top of the great stūpa. "When he reached the top he gazed in all directions, and then came down the steps again. Then all at once a strange man ran to meet him, with a dagger in his hand. The king, hard pressed, retreated a few yards,

and went back up the staircase. Then, bending down, he managed to seize the man and hand him over to his officers." The scene had been so rapid that the members of the royal suite had not had time to come to the help of their master.

Without betraying the slightest anger in his expression, Harsha questioned the assassin. The latter admitted that he had been hired by the Brahmins. It was indeed a case of a plot among the priestly caste, who were displeased with the preference shown by the king for the Buddhist monks. After setting fire to the tower, they had hoped to put the king to death in the general confusion of the conflagration. When their attempt failed, they had commissioned a paid assassin to stab Harsha.

The conspiracy was severely put down. "The king punished the leaders, but had mercy on their supporters. Five hundred Brahmins were deported beyond the Indian frontiers."

This episode, surely, is peculiarly symptomatic. Harsha, the poet king, came too late. In spite of his personal sentiments, which seemed to bring back the days of Aśoka, the Brahmin reaction was becoming more threatening every day. The triumph of Hinduism was at hand. The hour was approaching when the monks of Ajaṇṭā, driven from their cells, were to be replaced by the followers of Śiva or Vishṇu. Another century and a half and all would be over . . .

Harsha again invited Hsüan-tsang to another assembly which was held in the great plain of Prayāga, the present Allāhābād, at the confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna. Following an ancient custom, the Indian monarch made a general distribution of alms there. "For thirty years now I have been ruling over India," he is made to say, with a tinge of melancholy, in the *Life of Hsüan-tsang*. "I was growing anxious because I saw I was not making (sufficient) progress

in virtue. In despair at the futility of my efforts in well-doing, I amassed at Prayāga an immense quantity of riches, and every five years I distribute them . . ." The time for the "Distribution of Deliverance" of the year 643 had just arrived, and Hsüan-tsang was thus able to be present at this peculiarly Indian ceremony, of which he has left us a vivid picture.

"On the west of the confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna," writes his biographer, "lies a vast plain, smooth and even as a mirror, fourteen to fifteen *li* in circumference. From ancient times the rajahs of the country have gone there to distribute alms. Tradition has it that it is more meritorious to give one piece of money in this place than a hundred thousand elsewhere. The king (Harsha) had a square space arranged, set with reed hedges a thousand feet long, and had constructed in the middle of it several dozen rooms covered with thatch, in which to place an immense quantity of precious objects, gold, silver, fine pearls, red glass, precious stones, etc. He also had several hundreds of sheds built in which to place silk and cotton goods. Outside the hedge he had an immense refectory built. In front of the buildings, which contained riches of every kind, he had a hundred more sheds put up, arranged in a row like the shops in our market at Ch'ang-an. Each was long enough to house a thousand people."

When Harsha, followed by Hsüan-tsang and the eighteen vassal rajahs, arrived at the Plain-of-Alms-giving, he found a crowd of five hundred thousand people there, collected by his officers. He set up his tent on the north bank of the Ganges; one of his vassals from the south put up his on the west of the confluence of the two rivers. The king of Assam took up his quarters in a flowery grove south of the Jumna. "On the following morning the army corps of Harsha and the king of Assam embarked in boats,

and that of the southern monarch mounted elephants, and all set out in imposing array to assemble near the Place-of-Almsgiving. The rajahs of the eighteen vassal kingdoms joined them, and each took his place on the spot assigned to him.

"On the first day the statue of Buddha was installed in one of the temples covered with thatch, and precious objects and garments of the highest value were distributed ; exquisite dishes were served, and flowers scattered, to the strains of harmonious music, and when the evening everyone retired to his own tent.

"On the second day the statue of the sun-god (the Brahman god Āditya, identical with Vishṇu) was placed there, and precious objects and garments were distributed, but only half as many as the first day.

"On the third day the statue of the god Īśvara (that is to say Śiva) was placed there, and the same gifts were made as for Āditya.

"On the fourth day alms were distributed to about ten thousand monks, who were seated in rows, and formed about a hundred separate lines. Each of them received a hundred pieces of gold, a cotton garment, various beverages and meats, as well as perfumes and flowers.

"The fifth time gifts were distributed to the Brahmins, for twenty days.

"The sixth time alms were given for ten days, to the 'heretics'.

"Then for ten more days alms were given to the Jain beggars from distant countries.

"Finally alms were distributed to the poor, the orphans, and those without family. This lasted a month. When this period was over, all the wealth that had been accumulating for five years in the royal treasury was found to be completely exhausted. Nothing remained to the king but the horses, elephants,

and weapons of war that were necessary in order that he might maintain order in the kingdom."

In this Indian faery setting the feast of alms—the "Feast of Salvation" as the Buddhists called it—ended with a strange scene. A kind of fever of charity seized Harsha, the poet king. Like the Viśvantara of the Buddhist legend, prototype of Buddha Śākyamuni, who had given away in charity his possessions and his family, the Emperor of Kanauj wished to strip himself of everything: "The garments he wore, his necklaces, ear-rings, bracelets, the garland of his diadem, the pearls that adorned his neck, and the carbuncle that gleamed above his head—all these did Harsha give away in charity, keeping none of them . . .

"After he had exhausted all his riches, he asked his sister for a common, worn-out garment, and when he had donned it, he worshipped the Buddhas of the ten countries." Then, folding his hands, he abandoned himself to transports of joy: "Formerly," he exclaimed, "when I accumulated all this wealth, I went perpetually in fear of being unable to hide them in a sufficiently safe place. But now that I have been able, by charity, to deposit them in the land of happiness, I regard them as safely preserved for ever! May I, in my future existences, be able thus to amass immense riches in order to give alms to men and obtain by this means the ten divine faculties in all their fullness!"

It was no doubt in a similar transport that Harsha composed the poem with which his *Suprabhātastotra* opens:—

"Hail, O Buddha! Hail, O Law! Hail, O Community! He, the Noble One, the Enlightened One, He who is praised by the multitude of the gods, the Siddhas, the Gandharvas, the Yakshas in heaven and on earth, and by the principal ascetics with manifold and varied praises, Him also do I hail,

taking this power upon myself. But do not the bees fly to the heaven traversed by Garuḍa ?"

And the Buddhist litany goes on, in changing images, like a stanza from the *Lalitavistara*. Buddha is proclaimed as "He in whom all tendency to evil is annihilated, in whom every fault has disappeared, who is the colour of molten gold, whose eyes are as long as the full-blown lotus, whose garments are resplendent and whose splendour is like a shining orb, He who is conqueror over Māra's power, destroyer of the ways of evil, doer-of-good in the Three Worlds, He who frees us from the entwining bonds (of temptation), and who gives us the fruits of beatitude."

Once the mystic exaltation had abated, the descent to earth had to be made. Hsüan-tsang's biographer tells us himself that the eighteen vassal kings "gathered together a fresh supply of precious objects and large sums of money from among the peoples of their kingdoms, ransomed the rich necklace, the carbuncle of the headpiece, and the royal garments given away by king Harsha, and brought them back and offered them to him". The same procedure was repeated more than once. Perhaps this religious romanticism explains the ephemeral and almost transient character of Harsha's empire. In any case there is a striking contrast between the poet king, the lyrical and impassioned Indian, and his Chinese contemporary, so full of Confucian prudence and positive wisdom, the robust T'ai-tsung.[1]

We can imagine how Harsha must have longed to keep such a man as Hsüan-tsang. He insisted so strongly that in order to free himself the pilgrim had "to address him in terms which betrayed the bitterness

[1] Yet M. P. Mus remarks that this universal donation of Harsha must have been a traditional and official function, rather than a romantic gesture. "The artifice of repurchase made it not much more than a raising of taxes for the benefit of the clergy."

of his heart" : " China," he exclaimed, "is separated from India by a vast distance, and was very late in learning of the Law of Buddha. Though she may have a superficial knowledge of it, she cannot embrace it in its entirety. That is why I am come to be instructed in foreign countries. If I desire to-day to return there, it is because the Sages of my country are sighing for my presence and are summoning me with all their prayers." And he reminded the pious monarch of the words of Scripture : " Whosoever shall conceal the Law from men shall be struck with blindness in all his existences." Harsha yielded. He offered to have Hsüan-tsang escorted by official envoys if he returned by the Indian Ocean and the China seas. But the pilgrim had decided to go back by Central Asia ; he had made some precious friendships there, and, in particular, could not neglect his promise to the king of Turfān to pass through his kingdom on his return ; this was a kind of debt of honour, when we recall all that the king of Turfān had done to facilitate the pilgrim's journey in Tocharish and Turkish lands.

After loading Hsüan-tsang with gifts, Harsha allowed him to depart, but not before he had handed him over to an escort entrusted with the duty of conducting him to the Indian frontier. This escort was to be of great use to the pilgrim in crossing the sub-Himalayan zone, which was infested with robbers. Furthermore, Harsha gave Hsüan-tsang one of his best elephants to ride. And finally he sent out couriers with letters patent " written on pieces of white cotton and sealed with red wax ", in order that the rulers of the countries through which he passed should give the traveller a good reception. As to the books and statues taken away by Hsüan-tsang, they had been entrusted to a rajah of Northern India, who undertook to have them transported by short stages on

horseback or in army waggons. The king of Assam, for his part, had offered Hsüan-tsang a garment of fine fleecy wool intended as a protection in the mountains against damp and rain. "The two kings, with a numerous suite, accompanied the Master of the Law some score or so of *li* into the country of Prayāga; when the moment of farewell arrived, each shed tears and uttered deep sighs."

Three days after the pilgrim's departure, Harsha and the king of Assam gave him a fresh and touching surprise. They mounted their horses with some hundred knights, galloped off, and caught him up, so as to get one last glimpse of him, and escort him some leagues further before the final separation. We can read between the lines of the notes of Hsüan-tsang's life, how deeply he was moved when he took leave—this time for good—of the two kings.

And we too feel a certain regret at saying farewell to the Indian monarch. We are now in April of 643. Four years later Harsha disappears, replaced by a usurper who commits such deeds of robbery that the Sino-Nepalese army of Wang Hsüan-ts'ê comes to take him captive. Henceforth there is chaos in Northern India. The Rājput feudatories seize the thrones of Mālva and the Ganges without being able to reconstitute the united empire of which Harsha has been the last defender. With these rulers comes the triumph of all the reactions of the non-Aryan element, the revenge of Sivaism and Tantrism. Then falls the Moslem avalanche, rushing down from the Khyber pass, with its squadrons of Mameluk iconoclasts.

With Harsha's death ends what is certainly the finest and most glorious period of Indian history. This last prince of the house of Thānēsvar, to whom no successor is known, is really the last of the Āryas, of the men of our own race, in what has once more become a stranger world.

By Kauśāmbī (Kosam) on the Jumna, Hsüan-tsang reached the region of Bilsar (Etah), north of Kanauj, where he spent two months of the rainy season of 643. He crossed the Punjāb by way of Jālandhara and Taxila, taking in the opposite direction the route he had followed ten years earlier. These defiles in the Upper Punjāb were infested by brigands. Hsüan-tsang had been warned of it, but this saintly soul found the necessary words to disarm them. He sent off one of the monks as scout, bidding him say to the brigands : " We are monks come from a very far country to learn more of the Law. All we have with us is some holy books, relics, and statues. We ask your help and protection, as generous men." The Master of the Law followed at a distance with his disciples and travelling companions. His appeal to the hearts of the brigands was answered. He often met bands of them, but they did him no harm.

At the beginning of the year 644 Hsüan-tsang crossed the Indus. It was a crossing fraught with adventure : " The books, the statuettes, and the travellers were put on board a large boat, and the Master of the Law crossed the river on an elephant. He had given orders to one of his people to watch over the books and the seeds of rare Indian flowers on board the boat. But just as they reached the middle of the stream there was a heave, and the boat was violently shaken and on the point of sinking. The guardian of the books was filled with terror, and fell into the water ; he was pulled out by his companions, but he lost fifty manuscripts and the flower-seeds, and it was with much difficulty that the rest was saved."

This was undoubtedly one of the greatest sorrows of Hsüan-tsang's journey. Very fortunately the king of Kapiśa, whose kingdom he was entering, and who had come as far as Udabhāṇḍa (Und) on the Indus to meet him, sent as far as Uḍḍiyāna to have

the lost books copied for him. The king of Kāshmīr, hearing that the route of the pilgrim's return journey did not allow of his crossing Kāshmīr, also came to bid him farewell in the district of Udabhāṇḍa.

Hsüan Tsang then left for Nagarahāra and Lampaka, escorted by the king of Kapiśa, who here appears very clearly as the ruler of all these little Gandhāra principalities. The inhabitants came in procession to await the caravan, with banners and standards. At Nagarahāra, the present Jalālābād, the king of the country made a distribution of alms in his honour. Hsüan-tsang was lodged at Nagarahāra in a monastery of the Great Vehicle, doubtless near one of the stūpas recently excavated by M. and Mme. André Godard and M. Barthoux. The king of Kapiśa, who had accompanied him from India, also prepared for him in his own kingdom, at his capital of Kāpiśī (Begrām) a particularly warm welcome, again with the spectacle of a distribution of alms.

The interest which the petty princes of the Gandhāra region took in the great Chinese is to be explained not only on religious, but also on political grounds. In order to be convinced of this, we need only consult the deeds of the T'ang Chancellery. These kings of Kāshmīr and Kapiśa were seeking the help of the Chinese court to defend them from the menace of the barbarians all around them, and of all the hordes of central Asia. Could they suspect that a peril of a very different order was threatening them from the depths of Arabia? For the Turko-Mongol invasions were only attacking their material existence, and moreover the Turkish hordes at this time always ended by being converted to the Law of Buddha. Islam on the contrary was about to alter the very soul of the country, and destroy, in this land impregnated with historical associations, the very memory of the Græco-Buddhist civilization.

Chapter XII

FROM PAMIR TO TUN-HUANG

After taking leave of the king of Kapiśa, Hsüan-tsang followed the caravan-track which led across the Hindu Kush and Pamir to Kāshgar.

The crossing of the Hindu Kush had been carefully arranged by the king of Kapiśa. The latter had sent one of his officers with a hundred men to accompany the Master of the Law while he was going over the mountains, and to transport fodder, eatables, and travelling-equipment for him. The crossing—which was to begin in July, 644—was nevertheless difficult. "After a seven days' march they reached the top of a high mountain which presented a mass of dangerous summits and terrifying peaks, rising here, there, and everywhere in the most strange and varied shapes. On the one hand a plateau was to be seen, on the other a slender spire; the scene altered at every step. It would be difficult to describe the fatigues and perils which confronted them in crossing these heights. From this moment, the Master of the Law, being unable to ride any longer, went on foot at the head of the company, leaning on a stick.

"After another seven days they arrived at a mountain pass, at the foot of which was a village composed of a hundred families who bred sheep as large as asses. On the first day he slept in this village and left in the middle of the night, after commissioning one of the inhabitants to take a mountain camel and act as his guide. In this country one comes across a multitude of streams covered with snow and frozen rivers into which one might fall and perish unless

guided step by step by natives. They walked from morning till night in order to cross all these ice-clad precipices. At that time there only remained seven monks, twenty servants, one elephant, ten asses, and four horses. The next morning they arrived at the foot of the mountain pass. After that, by following tortuous paths, they were able to climb a summit which from a distance had the appearance of snow ; when they reached the top, they found that it only consisted of white stones.

" This peak was so lofty that the frozen clouds and snow driven by the wind did not come as far as the top of its crest. The daylight was fading when the travellers reached the summit, but they were cut by an icy wind which did not leave them the strength to stand upright.

" This mountain showed no trace of vegetation ; nothing was to be seen anywhere but rough piles of stones and groups of arid peaks, rising as far as the eye could see, like a forest of bare trees. So high was the mountain and so stormy the wind that even the birds could not fly over it ; only some distance further south and north, away from the summit, could they take their flight. The Master of the Law, after descending several miles on the north-west, found a little flat ground where he pitched his tent and spent the night. The following day he set out again."

When he was north of the Hindu Kush, Hsüan-tsang went north-east by way of Andarāb and Qunduz—Ngan-ta-lo-po and Huo in Chinese—across Tokharistan and Badakhshān (T'u-ho-lo and Pa-t'o-shan). It will be remembered that these provinces formed the fief of a *yabgu* or Turkish prince of the family of the Khan of the Western Turks. Hsüan-tsang spent a month in the camp of this chief, who gave him an escort to cross the Pamir. Thus protected, the pilgrim again went up the valley of the Penj,

which is no other than the upper reach of the Oxus, along a track bordered the whole way by precipices between the Shugnān chain on the north and that of the Wakhān on the south (the Shih-ch'i-ni and the Hu-mi of Chinese geography). "These sombre valleys and dangerous peaks are covered with eternal snows and ice, and a cold wind rages around them," writes Hsüan-tsang.[1] At this height vegetation is sparse : "The forest trees are few and far between, and flowers and fruits are rare." On the other hand, the soil produced large quantities of onions, whence the Chinese name for Pamir, Ts'ung-ling, "Onion Mountains." This description is confirmed by what Sung Yün tells us of Wakhān : "The country is so cold that the natives live in caves. To protect themselves against the wind and the snow, beasts and men huddle one against the other. The horizon is blocked by great snowy mountains ; the snow melts in the morning and freezes towards evening ; from afar these mountains look like peaks of jade . . .

[1] In the memoirs of another Chinese pilgrim, Wu-k'ung (751–90) we have the romantic account of a storm in these regions. The action takes place in the district of Ku-tu, the present Khottal. Wu-k'ung was returning from India to China, taking back with him some sacred books and one of Buddha's teeth, given him by the superior of a monastery in Gandhāra. "As he was going along the side of a deep lake the *nāga* or dragon of the waters learnt that he was carrying a relic. The earth trembled, black clouds gathered, while a storm burst in thunder and lightning-flashes, and hail and rain fell heavily. A large tree stood not far from the edge of the lake. Wu-k'ung sheltered beneath this tree with his whole caravan. Branches and leaves fell, while from the heart of the tree fire gushed forth. Then the leader of the caravan said to his companions : 'It must be that one of you possesses a relic, otherwise why should the dragon of the waters be angry because he cannot get it ? Let him who is keeping it throw it into the lake in order to save all our people.' But Wu-k'ung began to pray, and succeeded in touching the heart of the spirit of the waters. The storm abated, the relics were saved . . ." (Sylvain Lévi and Chavannes, "L'Itinéraire d'Ou-k'ong," *Journal Asiatique*, 1895, vol. ii, p. 361.)

As for the king's citadel, it has the mountains themselves for its ramparts." Hsüan-tsang notes in passing that in certain of these valleys of Pamir the inhabitants have eyes of greenish blue. Possibly we have here some tribe of those "Yaghnobi" who are nearly related to the ancient Sogdians, whose language Gauthiot went to study on the spot, in 1913. In the Shugnān, Hsüan-tsang had the joy of discovering a miraculous statue of Buddha.

Further east began the valley of the Pamir proper—the Po-mi-lo of our traveller—which is the valley of the upper Penj, as far as its source. "This valley," we read in Hui-li, "is situated between two snowy mountains, and forms the centre of the mountains of Pamir (Ts'ung-ling mountains). Here one has to battle against hurricanes of wind, and the whirlwinds of snow never cease even in spring and summer. As the ground is almost always frozen, the vegetation is poor and scanty; the whole of this country is nothing but a lonely waste, with no trace of human life." Hsüan-tsang himself remarks in almost the same words but, as usual, with greater precision: "The valley of Pamir is about a thousand *li* from east to west, and a hundred *li* from south to north. In the narrowest parts it is not more than ten *li* in breadth. It is situated between two snowy mountains. The cold there is glacial, and the wind furious. Snow falls even in spring and summer, day and night the wind rages furiously. The soil is full of salt and covered with multitudes of small stones. Grain and fruit cannot grow there, and the plants and trees are few and far between. One soon reaches uncultivated desert land, with no trace of inhabitants."

We should remember that the chain of Wakhān, through which winds the Pamir valley, is in actual fact of an average height of from thirteen to fourteen hundred feet. "In the middle of the valley," says

Hsüan-tsang, "is a large lake (Lake Sar-i Kul or Victoria) situated in the centre of the world (literally of the 'Jambudvīpa') on a plateau of a prodigious height." How strange to find this expression equivalent to our "Roof of the World" from the pen of the Chinese traveller!

"The basin of this lake, situated in the midst of the Pamir mountains," continues Hsüan-tsang, "lies extraordinarily high. Its waters are as pure and clear as a mirror, and no one has ever been able to sound their depths. They are blue-black in colour, and are sweet and pleasant to the taste. In their depths live dog-fish, dragons, and tortoises. On the surface are ducks, wild geese, cranes, etc. Eggs of a large size are found in the wild plains of this district, sometimes also in the swampy fields and on the sandy islands." Hsüan-tsang has taken careful note of the fact that the Lake Sar-i Kul serves as watershed between Kashgaria and Transoxiana, the waters that flow from it towards the west going to form the rivers of the Upper Oxus, and those which flow eastward descending towards Yārkand-daryā and Tarim.

It is interesting to compare the account of Hsüan-tsang with the description of another Chinese pilgrim, Sung Yün, who had crossed the Pamir 120 years earlier (522), but had entered it from the east. "From the moment one enters the Pamir mountains, one mounts gradually with each step. In four days one reaches the summit. It seems as though in relation to the plain one were really half-way to heaven. From one side all the rivers run east, from the other all west. It is commonly said that this is the centre of heaven and of earth. Neither grass nor trees grow there. In the eighth month the temperature was already low, the north wind was driving away the wild geese, and there was whirling snow over an area of a thousand *li*."

Further east, after scaling peaks full of precipices and following tracks covered with ice and snow, Hsüan-tsang found more open valleys, some of them fairly sunny, with a little corn, in spite of the altitude, and some fruit trees. He calls these districts of the Pamirian east the "Ch'ieh-p'an-t'ö" and the "Wu-sha". Probably he means, as Watters suggests, the region of the Istigh, the Bozai, and the Wakhjir. Soon, however, the solitudes began once more. "On the mountain sides, as in the valleys, one still finds in spring and in summer enormous heaps of snow, and whirlwinds and icy cold prevail. The fields are soaked with salt and grains do not grow. Trees are entirely lacking, and only a few stunted plants are to be seen. Even in midsummer there is much wind and snow. Scarcely have travellers entered these cantons when they find themselves surrounded by fog and clouds." Hsüan-tsang was told the story of a caravan of several thousand merchants and camels who had perished with all their goods in the snowstorms.

Strange apparitions haunted these lofty solitudes. When passing in front of a rock as straight as a wall which overhung the track, the caravan-leaders would tell the travellers that up there in two chambers hewn in the rock two *arhats* or Buddhist saints had lived for seven hundred years. "Having stilled all concrete thought, and arrived at complete ecstasy, they sit there, upright and motionless. You would take them for men extenuated by fasting, but although they have been there for seven hundred years their skin and their bones show no sign of decomposition."

A little further on, a similar legend caused the profane to tremble and the mystic to fall into reverie. "Two hundred *li* west of Chieh-p'an-t'ö one comes to a mountain wrapped in mists and clouds. The sides of it are extremely high. They appear to be on the

verge of falling to pieces, and as though hanging in mid-air; some years ago the thunder caused one side of the mountain to crumble away. In the grottoes thus exposed to view, a monk was found seated, with eyes closed. He was of gigantic stature, with a withered frame, and his flowing beard and hair fell over his shoulders and about his face." Some huntsmen and woodcutters saw him, and ran off to tell the king. The latter hastened to the spot; then, when the news had spread, the whole population came thronging to the place. A monk explained what ought to be done. "He who enters the ecstatic state can remain in it for an indefinite time. He maintains his body by mystic power and escapes destruction and death. After being worn out by so long a fast, if he were to come suddenly out of his ecstasy he would perish instantaneously, and his body would be in danger of falling to dust. His limbs must first be rubbed with butter and oil to loosen them, and then a gong must be sounded to awaken him." This was done. At the sound of the gong, the saint at last opened his eyes and looked about him. Then—after a long pause—he asked those present: "Who are you, who are so short of stature?" One of the monks replied, whereupon he asked for news of his master, Buddha Kāśyapa, the forerunner of Śākyamuni, dead for hundreds of thousands of years. "It is long," replied the monks, "since he entered the great *nirvāṇa*." "When he heard these words," continues Hsüan-tsang, "the saint closed his eyes, like a man in despair; then all at once he inquired again: 'And Śākyamuni? Has he appeared in the world?' 'He has been incarnate,' replied those present, 'he has directed the world, and has entered in his turn into *nirvāṇa*.' At these words the saint again bowed his head. Then he pushed aside his long hair and rose majestically into the air. By a divine miracle he

transformed himself into a ball of fire, which consumed his body and let his charred bones fall to the ground." The king of the country had a stūpa raised to him in the midst of the mountains.

These marvellous tales alternate with dramatic adventures in the pilgrim's journey. In a frozen gorge between Pamir and Mustagh his caravan met a band of robbers. The merchants who accompanied them took flight into the mountains. Several of the elephants in the caravan, pursued by the robbers, fell to the bottom of the ravines and were killed. Once the alarm was past, Hsüan-tsang and his companions came down the mountain again on another side and continued their painful journey.

Hsüan-tsang at this moment was following a track that went in a north-westerly direction. Probably this track passed the post of Tāsh-Kurghān (of the sites bearing this name, the one that is to-day in Chinese territory), then went along the western slopes of the Mustagh chain. He must thus have arrived close to the "little Qarā-kul", at the river Gez, a tributary of the Qizil-daryā or river of Kāshgar. Following the course of the Gez in a north-easterly direction, he next reached Kāshgar, the "Shu-lê" of the *T'ang History*, which he calls Ch'ia-sha, after the Sanskrit name that the Indians gave the town (Kasha).

According to Hsüan-tsang the major part of Kashgaria proper was nothing more, at this date, than a desert of sand and stones. But thanks to the mildness of the climate and the regularity of the rains, the cultivated ground that remained—the oasis itself—still produced grains in abundance, and a vast quantity of flowers and fruits. "One gets from this country felt and cloth of excellent quality, as well as fine woollen materials. Moreover, the inhabitants are clever at

weaving various kinds of fine, fleecy carpets." Hsüan-tsang remarks, as does also the *T'ang History*, on the fact that the people of Kāshgar have green pupils—a valuable piece of evidence, it appears, as to the Śaka or Sogdian (that is to say, " East Iranian ") origins of a section of the population. He also mentions the Indian origin of the local writing (no doubt a derivative of Kharoshṭī). From the religious point of view, the whole country professed Buddhism, but, to Hsüan-tsang's great regret, it was the Buddhism of the *Hīnayāna* ; and although the country contained a hundred monasteries, housing nearly ten thousand religious, the doctrine professed by these monks was that of the realist school of the Sarvāstivādin. Thus they earn for themselves this final brief sentence from the lips of the pilgrim : " They read the texts without studying the principles underlying them ! " We should add to this that Iranian Mazdeism, as well as the Buddhism of the Little Vehicle, must have had numerous adepts at Kāshgar, since the *T'ang History* assures us that the " celestial god ", that is to say the Zoroastrian Ormuzd, was worshipped there.

On leaving Kāshgar, Hsüan-tsang crossed the Qizil-daryā and its southern tributaries and reached the kingdom of Yārkand. The capital of the country was not the same as the oasis that bears this name to-day, but the rather more southern town of Cho-chü-chia, which the *T'ang History* calls So-chü, the present Karghalik. It was, we are told, an oasis protected by an amphitheatre of mountain chains, and assured of a remarkable agricultural prosperity by its river, a tributary of the Yārkand-daryā ; a land of grain, grapes, and fruit trees. In contrast to the inhabitants of Kāshgar, those of Yārkand belonged to the *Mahāyāna* Buddhists. Hsüan-tsang depicts them for us, rather quaintly, as

" violent, impulsive, with a tendency to cunning and fraud, and openly addicted to robbery ", but when all is said and done, " with a sincere religious faith and given to the practice of good works."

Moreover, the country was sanctified by the presence of supernatural beings. " On the southern frontiers of the country (that is to say, at the foot of the Chung-Kyr mountains which are a continuation of the K'un-lun), there is a chain which has very high passes and peaks piled one above the other. The plants and trees grow close together because of the cold. From spring to autumn, the mountain streams flow down the valleys from the heights on all sides. One sees niches in the sides of the mountains and cells in the rocks. They are arranged in a regular system among the grottoes and woods. Many of the holy persons of India after obtaining the dignity of *arhat* spring into the air and are transported to this spot by means of their supernatural powers, in order to make their abode here. Thus there are many who have entered here into silence and extinction. At the present moment there are still three *arhats* (Buddhist holy men) who dwell in these steep grottoes, and who, after having extinguished the principle of thought, have entered into complete ecstasy. As their hair and beards gradually grow long, the monks of the neighbourhood come from time to time and cut them." Here we see the appearance of the type of ascetic, ageless and lost to memory, hidden away for years, perhaps for generations, on the slopes of the Himalayas, a type that is later multiplied by Tibetan Buddhism and of which Milarepa, in the excellent translations of Bacot and Laufer, remains for us the most striking example.

Hsüan-tsang, following in this respect the customary stages of the caravan route in the southern

zone of Chinese Turkestan, next passed Khotan, which he correctly calls Chü-sa-tan-na, from the Sanskrit name of Kustana. The site thus indicated by him corresponds to the present hamlet of Yotkān, in the Chinese of the T'angs Yü-t'ien, some kilometres north-west of the present Khotan.

The "Kingdom of Khotan" was likewise a fertile oasis in the midst of a desert of sand and stones. Part of the wealth of the country consisted of plantations of mulberry trees, the origin of which is told us by the *T'ang-shu*. It was the period when China was jealously guarding the secret of silk-making. But the king of Khotan had won the hand of a Chinese infanta, and she brought him, hidden in the wadding of her head-dress, some mulberry seeds and silk-worms. Hsüan-tsang was shown some venerable tree-trunks that bore witness to this first mulberry tree plantation. From that time the cultivation of silk-worms became a national industry of Khotan. It was from Khotan that this industry was brought to Byzantium about 552. Khotan added further to its wealth by the manufacture of woollen carpets, fine felts and taffetas, and by the extraction of black and white jade. The *T'ang History* quotes in this context the legend which makes the jade of Khotan come from crystallized moonlight: "The natives watch during the night for the places where the light of the moon is the most intense, and it is there that they find the finest jade." Let us add that all these caravan halts on the east of Pamir were famous for their luxury and the amusements they provided. The *T'ang-shu* cites the courtesans of Khotan for the same reason as those of Kuchā. The music and dances of Khotan were also highly spoken of.

The Khotanese population, or at least one of the elements of this population, belonged as we have seen to the Oriental group of the Iranian nations. At the

same time the whole country was profoundly Buddhist, and Sanskrit served as the religious and literary language.

There were about a hundred monasteries, containing some five thousand monks, belonging as a rule to the *Mahāyāna*. The Khotanese ascribed their conversion to the Mahāyānist Bodhisattva Vairocana, who had come expressly from Kāshmīr. The Khotanese dynasty prided itself on descending from the Celestial King, Vaiśravaṇa, the Buddhist divinity of the northern region. Nevertheless, according to the *T'ang-shu*, Mazdeism was also professed at Khotan, thus showing how true it is that all these oases of of Central Asia shared in a mixed Indo-Iranian civilization.

Amongst all the peoples whom he visited, Hsüan-tsang assigns a special place to Khotanese culture. This was obviously an old and civilized country, worthy of the admiration of Confucian scholars. "The inhabitants," we read in his biography, "observe justice and the rites; they esteem scholarship and love music. Their customs are characterized by probity and honesty, and in this respect they differ greatly from other barbarians. Though their language is very different, the characters of their writing, with the exception of a few modifications, are the same as those of India."

The *T'ang History*, as well as the pilgrim's account, praises the urbanity of the Khotanese. It likewise recalls the importance which the kings of Khotan, since the time of the Han dynasty, always attached to their traditional friendship with the Chinese. However, on the accession of the T'angs, the reigning family in the oasis — in Chinese the Wei-ch'ih dynasty—were not entirely free from anxiety. Like all the oases of Kāshgaria, Khotan had had to accept the overlordship of the powerful khanate of the

Western Turks. In 632, however, the king of Khotan, seeing that the power of the Emperor T'ai-tsung was becoming established in China, sent an embassy and presents to the court of Ch'ang-an. Three years later he sent his own son, who entered the imperial guard. But would T'ai-tsung be satisfied for long with these protestations of vassalage? In proportion as the Turks were beaten and dispersed, the hand of the great Emperor fell more and more heavily on the Indo-European oases which had hitherto accepted their alliance. The storm was to burst in 648. The imperial General A-shih-na Shê-êrh had just crushed the other great principality of the Gobi, Kuchā, and his lieutenant Hsieh Wan-pei said to him: "After this stroke, the countries of the West will all be seized with terror. Let us take the light cavalry and go and pass the halter round the neck of the king of Khotan in order to offer him on our return to the Emperor in the capital!" No sooner said than done. Hsieh Wan-pei fell upon Khotan, taking it by surprise. The king, Fu-tu Hsin, trembled. The Chinese captain, so the *T'ang History* tells us, "pointed out to him the prestige and supernatural power of the T'angs and exhorted him to come and present himself before the Son of Heaven." Fu-tu Hsin complied with this suggestion. Moreover, he was to lose nothing by it, for after a visit of several months, the Chinese court permitted him to return home, but not before conferring upon him a robe of honour and five thousand pieces of silk.

When Hsüan-tsang arrived at Khotan, about September, 644, this act of violence had not yet taken place, but as it was already being feared, the Chinese passing through were shown all kinds of attentions and courtesies. Thus the welcome given to the pilgrim by the king and the people was so hearty that Hsüan-tsang spent from seven to eight

months in the town while he was waiting to replace the manuscripts lost during his voyage by others from Tocharish territory, and also while he awaited the permission of the Chinese government to return home to his country. He spent this time in explaining to the king and the monks of the country the texts of the idealist school, the lessons of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.

Hsüan-tsang then resumed the road to China, by way of the chain of oases which extends in a semicircle from the northern border of K'un-lun and the Akkar Chekyl-tagh the southern border of the Taklamakan desert. Amongst the details he has left us about this region, we would mention the large number of Buddhist grottoes, hermitages, and statues that he saw or that were pointed out to him. Let us remember that the *T'ang History* informs us that the king of Khotan inhabited "a house all decorated with paintings".

It is a fact that this region, which to-day has become so impoverished, was formerly an artistic centre of considerable importance. It is not without reason that in the nomenclature of the first Chinese painters we come on several names of Khotan artists. The frescoes, or paintings on silk or wood, discovered by Sir Aurel Stein at Dandān Uilik, east of Khotan, confirm the facts thus deduced—paintings dating some from the seventh, others from the eighth century, and consequently contemporaneous, on the whole, with Hsüan-tsang. Several of the characters represented in them might stand as illustrations of the pilgrim's narrative. In the course of his expeditions along the routes of Central Asia, the latter certainly had as travelling companions some of these curious nobles, half Turkish, half Iranian in type, mounted on sturdy Kirghiz horses or tall Bactrian camels. Again, what Hsüan-

tsang has told us of the existence of some Buddhist communities in the Persian Empire, is found to be curiously corroborated by the discovery on this same site of Dandān Uilik of an authentic Bodhisattva (of the Vajrapāṇi variety), represented in the guise of a Sassanid king, with aquiline nose and black beard, a tiara on his head, clad in a green coat and heavy leather boots ; quite a Buddhistic Chosroës. No spectacle could recall to our minds more opportunely the fact that from the point of view of material culture, and doubtless also of race, the Khotanese region until the Turkish conquest formed part of outer Iran. And as, from a religious point of view, Khotan was thus an integral part of outer India, we see here in these same works the Indian influence that reveals itself in a naked Nāgī emerging from a lotus pond, a charming Khotanese Aphrodite, sister to the more suave statues of Ajaṇṭā.

A little further east, at Niya, and then at Mirān, Hsüan-tsang's contemporaries could perhaps still admire works of quite another inspiration, this time purely Græco-Roman. At Mirān, in the miraculously preserved frescoes which date at the latest from the fourth century, we see a Buddha followed by his monks, and surrounded by winged spirits, who might quite well come from Pompeii. Perhaps these "Roman" paintings, in a forgotten corner of the Gobi, in the now dead region of Lake Lop-nōr, are due to Mediterranean artists. We know that Sir Aurel Stein has discovered at Mirān the signature of a "Tita" which might well be Titus.

Again, on arriving in the neighbourhood of the Lop-nōr lake, in the dependencies of what at that time was called the kingdom of Shan-shan, the ancient Lou-lan, the pilgrim may perhaps have met with another great traveller, a desert wanderer like himself. We mean the Sogdian whom we only know by

his Chinese name of K'ang Yen-tien, whose history M. Pelliot has restored and who, during the period 627–49, came from distant Samarqand to found a commercial colony at this junction of caravan routes.

But the country on the east of Khotan, once so prosperous, as all these archæological remains prove, was by way of becoming desert again. A hundred *li* south-east of Khotan, Hsüan-tsang mentions the existence of a great river which formerly flowed in a north-westerly direction, and whose course had one day been checked. The story, however, ends in a fairy tale, namely that the waters reappeared in consequence of the marriage of the *nāgī* of the river with a Khotanese noble ; but these stories of dried-up *oued* must have been common in that region. Even since the end of our classical antiquity—as Sir Aurel Stein's discoveries prove—several sites that were once fertile had had to be abandoned. Hsüan-tsang thus mentions a former Khotanese city which he calls in Chinese Ho-lao-lo-chia, which had been completely covered by sand. Further east, in the longitudinal valley of Niya, where Sir Aurel Stein's excavations have brought to light so remarkable a series of Græco-Roman Buddhistic works, the waters of the Niya-daryā were in process of becoming marsh, preparatory to the approaching desiccation. In consequence of the drying-up of the river, the ancient city of Niya, so interesting to us by reason of its Hellenistic intaglios and seals, had had to be abandoned from the end of the second century because, situated as it was on the lower river, the water had ceased to reach it. The medieval town, built three days' march south, on the upper reach and nearer to the mountains, was menaced in its turn by a similar fate. " The town of Ni-jang," writes the pilgrim in this context, " is situated in the centre of a big swamp. The soil

of this swamp is warm and damp, and covered with reeds and wild plants, without roads or paths. There is only one road to the town that is at all practicable."

Still further east, the Gobi had killed all water and all vegetation. "On leaving Ni-jang," say both Hsüan-tsang and Hui-li, "one enters a vast desert of moving sands. The sands accumulate and are dispersed by the wind, which blows them about in whirlwinds. This desert extends on all sides as far as the eye can see, and no one can find his way there. Travellers have only the bones of men and animals left by preceding caravans to guide them. Nowhere is there a spring nor pasturage. Frequently a burning desert wind blows, and then both men and animals fall stunned to the ground. One hears at times a kind of singing and whistling, and at times what sound like mournful cries. After looking round and listening one feels disturbed and incapable of finding the way. Travellers often lose their lives there."

Hsüan-tsang's caravan, however, reached Chö-mo-t'o-na, which is the present Cher-chen, without hindrance. Then by Charkhlik and the sands of Qum-tagh, between the hollow of the Lop and the chain of the Altin-tagh, it reached Tun-huang or Sha-chou, the first Chinese post on the western side.

Hsüan-tsang rested some time at Tun-huang while waiting for a favourable reply to the request he had addressed to the Emperor T'ai-tsung. This town was an important centre where the travellers from the Great West could recover from their sufferings. It was also a Buddhist centre of the first rank, as is proved by the series of frescoes and paintings on silk banners brought to the Musée Guimet by M. Pelliot and to the British Museum by Sir Aurel Stein, and which

come from the Grottoes of the Thousand Buddhas or Ch'ien-Fo-tung, situated about eight miles to the south-east of the town. We have only to study these venerable works, dating for the most part from the T'ang dynasty or from the period immediately following, to discern the interest for the history of civilization offered by the journey of Hsüan-tsang. At such a decisive moment in the history of Chinese thought and culture, in this outpost passed by all the caravans coming from India or Iran, we have a vivid picture of the way in which the China of the T'angs received, interpreted, and adapted foreign influences. Beside a Bodhisattva with naked torso and the transparent drapery of the Indian, we have another, already Chinese in type and costume. These banners are frequently no less interesting æsthetically. What a riot of imagination in the representation of the Assault of Māra with its army of multi-coloured demons, its phantasy worthy of our mediaeval hells, and its colour, pre-Raphaelite in its *naïveté* ! What majesty, on the other hand, in these great Mahāyānist Paradises, where, in the midst of the glitter of faded golds, dulled blues, and flaming reds, the Bodhisattva stretches his hand over us in a gesture of compassion as he stretched it over the suppliants of the year One Thousand ! And we find ourselves recalling, when we stand before these works, the pages in which Hsüan-tsang describes for us the processions organized for his return, with their ikons and their flying banners. What light is shed on the old text to-day, since these very banners have come to display their flaming imagery upon our walls !

The intellectual bond that Hsüan-tsang had gone forth to establish between the mystic land of Magadha and the great China of the T'ang Emperors, was definitely secured by the artists and artisans of Tun-huang in their own sphere.

In art as well as in thought, the Far East was linked with Indian culture.

When he arrived in Tun-huang, Hsüan-tsang must have experienced some anxiety. What reception awaited him from the imperial government, whose orders he had formally transgressed by leaving the country? But the Emperor T'ai-tsung was too broad-minded to be harsh with regard to this act of disobedience. Moreover, ten years had gone by since an obscure monk had crossed the Chinese frontiers by night. The bad feeling at the Court had had time to die down, and here was a pilgrim returning, covered with glory, after a marvellous voyage, who had been received as a friend by the greatest of the foreign rulers, and whose renown redounded to his country's honour.

The news of Hsüan-tsang's arrival had spread throughout the Empire, and this extraordinary Odyssey excited general curiosity and admiration. The intrepid pilgrim, who had crossed the Gobi, the T'ien-Shan, the Hindu Kush, the Indus, the Ganges, and the Pamir, was to be the hero of the hour in this China of the T'angs, at once so ready to expand and so hospitable. When, on a spring day in the year 645, he approached Ch'ang-an, the imperial capital and the modern Si-an-fu, "the rumour of his arrival spread like lightning, and the streets were filled by an immense multitude, eager to gaze upon him. When he had landed, he tried in vain to get through the crowd, and decided to pass the night on the Canal."

By order of the court, which was temporarily absent from the capital, the magistrates of Ch'ang-an had prepared for the pilgrim a reception worthy of his labours. At the instigation of the governor, the monks of the town were invited to gather in the Street of the Red Bird, in order to transfer solemnly to the

monastery of Great Happiness (Hung-fo-ssŭ), the relics, statues and manuscripts brought back by the pilgrim.

"With redoubled ardour and zeal, all made magnificent preparations. They came forth from every monastery with banners, carpets, daïs, precious tables, and rich palanquins, which they arranged in orderly fashion. The monks and nuns walked in ceremonial robes. At the head of the procession religious chants were sung. Bearers of caskets filled with incense closed the procession, which soon reached the Street of the Red Bird. The books and statues were distributed here and there in the midst of the procession, which advanced at a calm and majestic pace. One heard the clink of belts set with precious stones, and one saw a number of golden flowers which shed a dazzling radiance. The monks who walked at the head or formed the escort celebrated in song this extraordinary event, and a crowd of the laity shared their joy and admiration.

"The procession, starting at the Street of the Red Bird, only ended before the door of the monastery of the Great Happiness, thus covering several leagues. The inhabitants of the capital, literati, and magistrates, were lined up on both sides of the road, standing in an attitude that bespoke both love and admiration. Men and horses formed a dense mass of vast extent. The magistrates in charge of the ceremony, fearing lest a large number of people should be crushed in the crowd, ordered everybody to stand still, and to burn incense and scatter flowers. Along the line of the procession one saw a sweet-smelling haze floating, and heard from one end to the other the cadenced tones of religious hymns. On that day the whole multitude saw at the same moment clouds of five colours, which shone in the sun and spread themselves in sparkling sheets over an area of several *li*

above the books and statues, and seemed now to precede, now to accompany them."

Some days after this ceremony the Master of the Law was allowed to present his respects to the Emperor. This reception took place in the palace of the Phoenix at Lo-yang—now Ho-nan-fu—the second imperial capital, where the Court was in residence at the time.

T'ai-tsung asked Hsüan-tsang why he had left China, in former days, without letting him know of it—a euphemism referring to the transgressed command. It was a delicate question. Hsüan-tsang evaded it like a true Chinese literatus, pleading the fact that he had addressed several petitions to the court, but that on account of the obscurity of his name they had omitted to submit them to the Son of Heaven. With his customary frankness, he also added that he had not been able to restrain his impassioned zeal for Buddhism.

Such sincerity was pleasing to so superior a type of man as T'ai-tsung. So far from reproaching him, the Emperor congratulated him on having exposed his life for the salvation and happiness of all men, "and he showed his astonishment at the fact that, in spite of the obstacles in his path, in the shape of mountains and rivers, the great distances and the differences of customs, he had been able to achieve successfully the object of his journey."

Indeed, the expedition accomplished by the pilgrim could not fail to excite the interest of the Chinese conqueror. It might be of peculiar service, both as informative and as a precedent, in the plans of the Chinese protectorate on the Indo-Iranian borders. And here it is essential to sum up the recent changes in Chinese history.

Chapter XIII

THE GLORY OF THE T'ANGS

At the time of Hsüan-tsang's return we are in the year 645. Grave events have occurred since the pilgrim's departure. The Far East is not the same on his return as it was when he left it. The authority of the T'angs, quite new and still more or less precarious when he left, has definitely established itself in the interior. And outside their prestige has increased to an extraordinary extent. While the Master of the Law was gathering up the heritage of Wisdom in the holy places of Buddhism, T'ai-tsung the Great had conquered Central Asia. The history of this epic is too intimately bound up with that of Buddhism for us to avoid recalling briefly its principal phases.

It will be remembered that, from 630, the Chinese legions had thrown back the redoubtable Turks of the North into the Mongol prairie, on the Onon and the Kerulen, and in two encounters had destroyed their Empire. A hundred thousand Turks were massacred. The herds that constituted the wealth of the hordes were dispersed or captured. It was the end of a world.

The Indo-European towns of the Gobi had yielded in their turn, with a good grace or by force. Kāshgar had acknowledged the duty of paying tribute in 632, Yārkand in 635. Next came the turn of the king of Turfān, Ch'ü Wên-t'ai, the ruler who had sheltered Hsüan-tsang. This prince, who had long been a faithful vassal of China, in 640 committed the folly of allying himself with

the Turkish bands to cut off the caravan route between China, India, and Iran. He counted on the sands of the Gobi to protect him. But the imperial general Hou Chün-chi crossed the desert with his cavalry and appeared without warning before Turfān. Ch'ü Wên-t'ai, at the first rumour of this raid, died of fright. After a bloody contest the Chinese laid siege to Turfān. "Hou Chün-chi advanced his engines of war, and flying stones fell like hail." The new king, quite a young man, came and presented himself at the Chinese camp, demanding terms. "Before his explanations had become entirely humble," one of the Chinese generals rose and said: "The town must first of all be taken; what need to discuss with this child? Let the signal be given and let us march to the attack!" The young king, "bathed in sweat," prostrated himself to the ground, and accepted everything. The Chinese generals took him prisoner, and came to "offer" him to T'ai-tsung in the Kuan-tê hall. "The rite of the libations of return was celebrated, and for three days distributions of wine were made." The sword of the king of Turfān, ornamented with jewels, was given by the Emperor to the Turkish condottiere A-shih-na Shê-êrh.

Thus in the Tocharish country, north-west of the Gobi, the kings of Qarashahr and of Kuchā alone continued to resist. Hsüan-tsang's account has acquainted us with the high culture and pride of these two Indo-European oases, which had defied for so many centuries the Chinese power and the Turkish menace.

The people of Qarashahr, however, had helped China to crush their enemy Turfān. Turfān once annexed, they took fright. On the morrow of the catastrophe, we find the king of Qarashahr, Tu-ch'i-chih, giving his daughter to a Turkish chief, and concluding a close alliance with the hordes of the west. The affair was

serious. T'ai-tsung sent a fresh army into the Gobi, commanded by the general Kuo Hsiao-k'ô, a warrior full of resource. "The site of Qarashahr," says the *T'ang History*, "had a circumference of thirty *li*. On the four sides were high mountains, and the waters of the lake (Baghrash) which surrounded it exactly. For this reason the inhabitants were convinced that they could not be taken by surprise. But Kuo Hsiao-k'ô, advancing by forced marches, crossed the river, and arrived by night at the foot of the ramparts. He waited for dawn before launching the attack, amidst the shouts of the multitude. The drums and horns sounded loudly, and the T'ang soldiers gave free rein to their violence. The inhabitants were seized with panic. A thousand heads were cut off." T'ai-tsung, from his capital, had directed everything. "One day the Emperor said to the ministers around him: 'Kuo Hsiao-k'ô set out for Qarashahr on the eleventh day of the eighth month; he should have arrived on the second decade, and have destroyed the kingdom on the twenty-second day; his envoys will shortly arrive.' Suddenly the courier with the news of victory was seen appearing." (644).

However, when the imperial army had retired, the anti-Chinese party again got the upper hand, and its candidate, Hsieh-p'o A-na-chih, seized the power, dethroning the ruler invested by the T'angs.

T'ai-tsung resolved to put an end to the independence of the Tocharish cities, for he had a punishment to inflict upon both Qarashahr and Kuchā. The old king of Kuchā, Swarnatep, who had formerly received Hsüan-tsang, had at first shown himself a well-behaved vassal. Thus he had offered the court in 630 a team of those Kuchān horses that are thought so much of in the Far East; but afterwards, frightened by the power of the T'angs, he had submitted to the western Turks. In 644 he had refused tribute, and

aided the men of Qarashahr in their revolt against the Empire.

From this moment T'ai-tsung had prepared his punishment. Swarnatep meanwhile died (646) and was replaced by his young brother, Ho-li-pu-shih-pi—in Sanskrit Haripushpa, " divine flower ".

The new king, sensing the coming storm, hastened to send protestations of devotion to the Court (647). It was too late. The Turkish condottiere in the service of China, A-shih-na Shê-êrh, was setting out for the west with an army of Chinese regulars and Tartar mercenaries.

The inhabitants of the two Tocharish cities were awaiting the attack from the south-east, on leaving the Gobi. It came from the north-west. A-shih-na Shê-êrh started by going into their prairies and mountains, and crushing two Turkish tribes allied to the rebels, who were roaming one near Guchen, the other on the Manas, near the present Urumtsi. Descending next by the track leading from Urumtsi to the little Yulduz, he fell unexpectedly on Qarashahr and Kuchā. At Qarashahr, A-na-chih, who was hastily fortifying the country, tried to resist. But A-shih-na Shê-êrh captured him and " in order to make example of him", beheaded him (648). Then he fell upon Kuchā.

In the place of their Qarashahr allies and of the Turkish reinforcements they were awaiting, the terrified Kuchāns watched the Chinese squadrons deploy in the stony desert which stretches to the north of the town. A ruse of war completed their defeat. King Ho-li-pu-shih-pi had left the walls, to go and meet the invaders, when the Chinese, following the old tactics of Mongol wars, pretended to yield, drew the Kuchān cavalry into the desert, and there destroyed it. It was the Crécy and Agincourt of the lords of the Qizil frescoes. A-shih-na Shê-êrh, the Turkish

swordsman in the pay of the empire, entered Kuchā as conqueror, and as the king "Divine flower", with the remnants of his army, had taken refuge in the hamlet of Aqsu, he ferreted him out there and after a forty days' siege took the place by storm. However, one of the Kuchān generals collected a body of deserters and attempted a retaliatory attack upon Kuchā. A Chinese general was actually killed in this surprise attack, and this time the rising was crushed without pity. A-shih-na Shê-êrh cut off eleven thousand heads. "He destroyed five large towns with several thousand men and women. The countries of the west were filled with terror . . ."

This was the end of the Tocharish country, the end of a charming and elegant world, the belated survival of earlier races. The brilliant civilization of Qizil never recovered from the catastrophe. After a century of direct Chinese domination, when China, in the second half of the eighth century, once more lost interest in Kuchā, it was not the Tocharish aristocracy of yore that took up the power again ; as at Turfān, it was the Uighur Turks. Ancient Tokharia became an eastern Turkestan.

After the north of Kashgaria it was the turn of the southern Gobi. As has been seen above, a detachment of the Chinese army of A-shih-na Shê-êrh fell back on Khotan from Kuchā, and obliged the king of the country to come and pay his respects as a vassal at the Court of Ch'ang-an, previous to a forced stay of several months (648).

Even before finishing with the Tocharish cities, T'ai-tsung had settled the account of the Western Turks. It will be remembered how powerful these masters of the steppe were, and how profound an impression Hsüan-tsang had carried away from his stay among their tribes. T'ai-tsung had kept friendly with them so long as he had had to fight the

Turks of Mongolia, according to the wise maxim that "we must make allies of those who are far off in order to dominate those who are close at hand", and in view of his advances the khan of the western hordes might have thought himself the equal of the Son of Heaven. Once the Turks of Mongolia were put out of action, the Chinese forces fell upon those of the west. In 641 the latter were wiped out by the T'ang army in a great battle at Khatun Bogdo-Ola, in the present region of Urumtsi. The imperial policy, achieving what arms had begun, instigated the division of the Turkish empire of the west into several rival hordes, which it handled as it liked. It was with the support of China that one of these hordes, that of the Uighurs of the Barkul, began at this time to play a part of the first importance in the Gobi. For two centuries the Uighurs, the most civilized of the Turkish tribes, were to prove themselves devoted auxiliaries of imperial policy. In recompense China, in the middle of the eighth century, favoured or tolerated their establishment in the oasis of Turfān, where their rule was marked by a renascence of the ancient schools of Tocharish painting.

The king of Tibet, the enterprising Srong-bcan-sgampo, had himself returned into the orbit of the empire. In 641 he had obtained from T'ai-tsung the hand of an imperial infanta, the princess of Wen-ch'eng, who, as we shall see in the following pages, so happily favoured the journeys of the Buddhist pilgrims. Even the states of the Indo-Iranian borders submitted to the rising star of the great emperor. The Turko-Iranian rulers of Bokhārā, Samarqand, and Kapiśa henceforth send their tribute to the court of Ch'ang-an.

We understand from this rapid sketch the importance of Hsüan-tsang's journey in the eyes of

the Emperor T'ai-tsung. Religious missions such as this of the Master of the Law, prolonged the reach of Chinese influence to places where arms could not penetrate. T'ai-tsung questioned the pilgrim at length on the observations he had made, the climate, products, and manners of the countries south of Pamir. The statesman was so satisfied with the information provided by the missionary, that he wished to entrust to him on the spot the functions of minister. We shall not be surprised at such a proposal if we consider that, about this period, T'ai-tsung, whose empire now touched the Pamir, doubtless desired to attract the India of the north into his political sphere. In 643, as we have seen, he had already sent a first embassy to the Indian king Harsha, composed of Li I-piao and Wang Hsüan-ts'ê. On the morrow of Hsüan-tsang's return, he once more sent Wang Hsüan-ts'ê to India in 647.

To the imperial offer to become minister, the Master of the Law had replied by a refusal. "Having entered in infancy the Black Gate (of a convent), and having embraced with ardour the Law of Buddha, he had never heard of the doctrine of Confucius which is the heart of the administration. If he were to relinquish the principles of Buddha in order to follow the world, he would resemble a vessel, in full sail, which leaves the sea in order to travel on solid ground; not alone would it not succeed, but it could not fail to be shattered and destroyed . . ."

On the other hand, it was not with mere courtier's flattery that Hsüan-tsang replied to T'ai-tsung's congratulations that the imperial victories had facilitated his journey: "Since your Majesty has occupied the throne, you have brought peace to the Four Seas, and your power has been felt as far as the regions lying beyond Pamir. That is why when the princes and chiefs of the barbarian tribes perceive a

bird arriving from the east, borne on the wings of the clouds, they imagine that it has come from your empire, and greet it with respect. Hsüan-tsang, whom the Celestial Power (Your Majesty) protected, could likewise come and go without difficulty." It is, as a matter of fact, incontestable that, in countries like Samarqand, it was his status as a Chinese subject which had earned for him the protection of the local princes. And the ambassadorial relations which the north Indian Emperor Harsha exchanged with the Chinese conqueror must likewise have played their part in the particularly warm welcome that the pilgrim met with in India.

The task to which the Master of the Law was henceforth to devote himself was the translation of the six hundred Sanskrit works which he had brought back from India. For this purpose he would have liked to retire to the monastery of the Little Wood, the Shao-lin-ssŭ, situated in the country on the southern slopes of the Sung-shan mountains, "a monastery far removed from the noise of markets and villages, where, amidst cypresses, pines, and willows one found silent grottoes and limpid fountains." But T'ai-tsung, who had taken a liking to him, and wished to enjoy his presence frequently, preferred to see him established closer to himself in the Convent of the Great Beneficence, which had just been built at Ch'ang-an, the capital.

In this residence Hsüan-tsang set up a veritable staff of translators, all versed in the knowledge of Sanskrit. For several months this industrious group worked in silence at the creation of correct equivalents for the delicate terminology of Indian metaphysics. The first collection was completed in the autumn of 648, and presented at once to the Emperor T'ai-tsung. The latter, "taking up his divine pen, wrote a preface of which the sublime ideas will shine like the

sun and the moon, and the writing, precious as silver and jade, will endure as long as heaven and earth." At the same time, Hsüan-tsang handed to T'ai-tsung the account of the journey that the latter had enjoined him to write.

T'ai-tsung had conceived such friendship for Hsüan-tsang that, at the request of the Master of the Law, he authorized fresh monastic ordinations (the ordinations were always regulated by the State). During the day the Emperor often sent for him. In the evening the monk returned to his monastery, to translate another collection of philosophic texts of the *Yogācāra* school. As we have seen, a new monastery, the Convent of the Great Beneficence (*Ta-tz'ŭ-'ên-ssŭ*) had just been completed for Hsüan-tsang and his companions. Their installation there was the occasion of a great solemnity, in which the Emperor took part.

"At the twelfth moon, on the day *Mou-shin*, the Emperor ordered the various bodies of musicians to assemble, and banners and carpets to be prepared, and brought on the following day to the An-fo-mên gate, the Gate of Peaceful Happiness, in order to go and meet the holy man. The procession lined up in the streets of the town ; it included fifteen hundred chariots decorated with brocade curtains and banners on which were painted fish and dragons, and three hundred parasols of costly material. They brought out two hundred images of Buddha, embroidered or painted on silk, two statues of gold and silver, and five hundred banners woven of silk and gold thread. The sacred books, statues, and relics that the Master of the Law had brought back from India were likewise brought out. They were placed on pedestals, carried along on numerous chariots, in the midst of the procession. On either side of the statue two great chariots were seen advancing, on each of which had been set up a mast surmounted by a rich

banner. Behind the banners floated the image of the 'Lion of the Śākyas' which headed the procession. Besides this, they decorated in magnificent fashion fifty chariots in which were seated fifty persons of eminent virtue. Next came all the monks of the capital, carrying flowers and chanting religious hymns. After them marched all the civil and military magistrates ranked in correct order. And the nine bodies of imperial musicians walked on each side, closing the procession. The sound of bells and drums was heard and rich standards were seen floating in the air. All the inhabitants of Ch'ang-an came thither. A thousand of the Palace guards made an imposing escort. The Emperor, with the Prince Royal and all the women of the harem, mounted to the top of a pavilion which looked out over the An-fo-mên gate, and holding a casket of incense, followed with a look of ecstacy the windings of the vast procession.

"At length the statues arrived at the door of the convent. They were deposited there amidst a cloud of perfume, to the sound of harmonious music, after which the whole multitude retired in silence."

During the months that followed the friendship of the Emperor Tai-tsung for Hsüan-tsang continued to increase. Although they had set out from such opposite points, one living the life of the camp, the other coming from the world of prayer, one having subdued half Asia, the other having accomplished the fabulous journey of the "countries of the west", both having realized on the whole the dream of their youth, they had now reached the last stage of their career. T'ai-tsung enjoyed hearing the monk speak to him of Buddhist doctrine, of the world beyond, and above all of the land of India, its scenery and its monuments.

However, after twenty years of a reign entirely occupied in quelling the barbarians and restoring the

empire, T'ai-tsung died in his palace of Ch'ang-an on 10th July, 649. He was buried at Li-ch'üan Hsien, in Shen-si. The following detail is characteristic of the conqueror. He had "his tomb guarded" by the statues of fourteen vassal kings, ranking from the khans of Turkestan to the king of Champa, in Indo-China. Such was the devotion of his veterans that one of them, the old Turkish chief A-shih-na Shê-êrh, tried to kill himself on his corpse, according to the old Scytho-Tartar custom, "to guard the funeral couch of the Emperor!"

After the death of his protector and in spite of the affection shown him by the new Emperor, Kao-tsung, Hsüan-tsang shut himself up definitely in the Convent of the Great Beneficence, in order to devote himself entirely to the translation of the sacred books. "Each morning he set himself a fresh task, and if during the day some business had prevented him from completing it, he never failed to go on with it at night. If he met with some difficulty, he would put the book down, and then, after worshipping Buddha and fulfilling his religious duties until the third watch, he would rise, read aloud the Indian text and mark in red ink, one after another, the passages he was to read at sunrise. Every day at dawn he would first partake of a meagre repast, and then expound a new sacred book for four hours. His disciples who came to ask for his instructions filled the galleries and adjacent rooms. In spite of his multitudinous occupations, his soul constantly maintained the same energy, and nothing could disturb nor hinder him. He would also discourse frequently with the monks on the subject of the sages and saints of India, the systems of the various schools, and the distant voyages of his youth."

The life of the Master of the Law flowed on thus, incredibly industrious in the midst of his translations

and his commentaries, interrupted only by a few short visits to the palace, to the Emperor Kao-tsung. But he felt himself ageing and the malady he had contracted when crossing Pamir returned. He wished to revisit his native town and old family home. "He made inquiries about his relatives and his old friends who had almost all passed away, for only one sister remained to him. He went in search of her, and saw her again with feelings of mingled sorrow and joy. He asked his sister where the tombs of his parents were, went there with her, and tore out with his own hands the weeds that had been growing there for many long years. Finally he chose a spot more happily situated and prepared a double coffin for their last resting place."

In 664, just as he was finishing the translation of the Sanskrit book of the *Prajñā Pāramitā* ("the Perfection of Sapience"), he felt his forces waning, and realized that his end was near: "I feel that my life is approaching its conclusion. When I am dead, take me to my last home. It must be done in a simple and modest fashion. You must wrap my body in a mat, and deposit it in the depths of a valley, in a calm and solitary spot." He wanted to make one last pilgrimage into the valley of Lan-chi, to offer his homage to the statues of Buddha and the Bodhisattvas. When he returned to the monastery, he ceased to translate, and occupied himself only with his religious duties.

Some hours before his death he exclaimed, as though awakening from a dream: "I see before my eyes an immense lotus flower of charming freshness and purity." He saw further, in a dream, men of tall stature clothed in brocade, carrying silken hangings embroidered with flowers of marvellous beauty and jewels of great price, who were coming out of the Master of the Law's room and going to adorn both the

inside and the outside of the room set aside for the translation of the books. He next invited his disciples "to bid a joyful farewell to this vile and contemptible body of Hsüan-tsang, who has finished his work, and does not deserve to exist any longer. I desire," he added, "to see the merit I have acquired by my good deeds poured out on other men; to be born with them in the Heaven of the Blessed Gods (Tushita), to be admitted into the household of Maitreya and there to serve that Buddha who is so full of tenderness and love. When I return to earth to live out other existences, I desire, at each new birth, to fulfil with unbounded zeal my duties towards Buddha and to attain to transcendent understanding." After taking farewell of them, he became silent and entered into meditation. He uttered this last prayer, which he made those present repeat. "All devotion be paid to thee, O Maitreya Tathāgata, who art gifted with sublime understanding; I desire, in common with all men, to see thy loving countenance. All worship be given to thee, O Maitreya Tathāgata! I desire, after leaving life, to return to the hosts that surround thee." "Soon after this his soul passed away. His face kept a rosy hue, and all his features expressed joy and happiness to the highest degree . . ."

The Emperor Kao-tsung mourned him, and had him buried with exceptional honours in the Convent of the Great Beneficence.

Chapter XIV

PILGRIMS OF THE SOUTHERN SEAS

The pilgrimage of Hsüan-tsang was far from being an isolated event. One of his contemporaries, a monk like himself, I-ching (634–713), has left us an account of the journeys accomplished during his time by the other "eminent monks who went to seek the Law in the countries of the West", that is to say in India.

It is a melancholy succession of tales. "There were some who crossed the Purple-coloured Barrier (the Great Wall) in the west and marched alone; others crossed the wide sea and travelled without companions. There was not one of them who did not give his whole thought to the Sacred Remains, and who did not prostrate his whole body in offering the ritual honours; all looked forward to returning and to acknowledging the Four Benefactions by spreading hope.

"However, the triumphal path was strewn with difficulties; the Holy Places were far away and vast. Of dozens who brought forth leaves and flowers, and of several who made an attempt, there was scarcely one who bore any fruit or produced any real results, and few who completed their task.

"The reason for this was the immensity of the stony deserts of the Land of the Elephant (India), the great rivers and the brilliance of the sun which pours forth its burning heat, or else the towering waves heaved up by the giant fish, the abysses, and the waters that rise and swell as high as the heavens. When marching solitary, beyond the Iron Gates

(between Samarqand and Bactria) one wandered amongst the ten thousand mountains, and fell into the bottom of precipices ; when sailing alone beyond the Columns of Copper (south of Tongking), one crossed the thousand deltas and lost one's life . . . That is how it is that those who set out were over fifty in number, while those who survived were only a handful of men." [1]

One of the earliest of these pilgrims, Hsüan-tsang's imitators and successors, was the monk Hsüan-chao. A native of the present province of Shen-si, the latter belonged like Hsüan-tsang to an old family of mandarins. Like him, he entered a monastery in his early youth. "At the age when we put up our children's hair, he took out his hairpin and left the world." As soon as he reached manhood, he desired to worship the Sacred Remains of Buddha. After going to Ch'ang-an to perfect himself in the study of the Sanskrit texts, "he took the staff ornamented with pewter and set out for the West." This was about the year 651. Like Hsüan-tsang twenty years earlier, he plunged into the "Moving Sands"—the Gobi—went on past the defile of the Iron Gates to Turkestan, between Samarqand and Balkh, and climbed the Snowy Mountains—the Hindu Kush. He seems next to have lost his way or to have retraced his steps, for I-ching makes him go by Tokharistan, and then reach the frontiers of Tibet. Very fortunately this latter country was governed at the time by a Chinese regent, widow of king Srong-bcan-sgampo, the princess of Wen-ch'eng. She was a very pious Buddhist who set the pilgrim on the right path again, and had him conducted towards the borders of the Punjāb.

[1] For this chapter and the following, I have made use in the quotations of the translation of I-ching by Chavannes, *Mémoires sur les religieux éminents qui allèrent chercher la loi dans les pays d'Occident.*

As he was approaching Jālandhara (Shê-lan-t'o-lo), and coming down from the mountains, his caravan was stopped by robbers. They were in the midst of a deep valley, where there was no hope of succour. "He, however, invoked the divine assistance; he wrote a prayer, and prostrating himself before the saints, he opened his heart. In a dream he had a presentiment; he awoke and found that all the robbers were sleeping. He was secretly led out of their circle and was able to escape."

Hsüan-chao spent four years at Jālandhara perfecting himself in the knowledge of Sanskrit. He journeyed after that to the Holy Places of Magadha, and spent four years there, at Gayā, near the Temple of the Bodhi, then three years at Nālandā. Whereas Hsüan-tsang had devoted himself more particularly to the study of the idealism of the *Yogācāra*, Hsüan-chao at Nālandā studied first of all the radical critical philosophy of the *Mādhyamika* under the direction of the master Jinaprabha, and then the mystical and ecstatic union of the *yoga* and the *dhyāna* with the master Ratnasiṃha.

Politically the situation in northern India had greatly changed during the preceding twenty years. Harsha had died about 647. In his place a usurper had pushed himself forward, and had committed the folly of attacking the Chinese embassy sent to the deceased by the Emperor T'ai-tsung. The ambassador Wang Hsüan-ts'ê, not wishing to let this offence go unpunished, had gone to the kings of Nepal and Tibet, both dependents of the T'ang dynasty, to ask for assistance. With the reinforcements he received from them, he went back to the basin of the Ganges, defeated the usurper, took him prisoner, and brought him back loaded with chains to the court of Ch'ang-an. It was this same Wang Hsüan-ts'ê who provided Hsüan-chao, when his pilgrimage was accomplished, with the means of returning to China. The return

journey was made via Nepal where the king lent the pilgrim an escort that accompanied him as far as Tibet. In Tibet the good princess of Wen-ch'eng, still regent, loaded Hsüan-chao with gifts and assigned him an escort to return to China.

Hsüan-chao intended to devote himself, as Hsüan-tsang had done formerly, to the translation of Sanskrit texts. At Lo-yang, where he had just settled (about 664), a large flock of pupils was already thronging around him when an imperial decree ordered him to return to India for the purpose of finding a famous healer and some medicinal drugs for the court. He had to put his Sanskrit books on one side, and set out again. "Once more he crossed the Moving Sands, and traversed anew the Stony Desert. In the rugged mountains he marched along the edge of wooden gangways; casting a shadow only in profile he walked across sideways. He was swung beneath rope bridges; by walking crabwise he managed to cross over along the side. He encountered Tibetan thieves who stripped him of everything, even his head-dress, but left him his life . . ." When he reached the Indian frontiers he met the healer whose reputation had created a stir at the Chinese court. This person was proceeding to China, but he told Hsüan-chao to go to India and gather more medicinal plants for his august clients. The pilgrim took advantage of this commission to visit once again the relics at Balkh and Kapiśa. Then he accomplished his task, scouring the Deccan for the drugs required by the court. Before setting out again on the road to China, he went for a time to the monastery of Nālandā to rest. But the way back was now closed both by the Tibetans, who had recently revolted against the empire and were blocking the Nepal route, and by the Arabs whose advance-guard had reached since 664 as far as Kapiśa. The traveller

had to wait at Magadha for a more favourable season. "He made his will quiescent near the Vulture's Peak, and buried his feelings in the Garden of Bamboo. Nevertheless he cherished the constant hope of going on to spread the light of religion." It was a vain hope. He fell ill, and died on the banks of the Ganges, over 60 years old.

But the Chinese were no longer the only ones who made the pilgrimage to the Holy Places. A little earlier, under the rule of T'ai-tsung, several Korean monks had gone to India, the majority across Central Asia, some by the maritime route, past the Indo-Malay state of Śrīvijaya, the present Palembang, to Sumatra. The paragraphs devoted to them by I-ching nearly always conclude with the same remark: "They died in India, and never saw their country again."

Indeed, as the example of Hsüan-chao proves, the journey "from China into India" was now becoming more difficult. The Chinese power, so formidable under T'ai-tsung, underwent a strange phase of decline under his successor. It was no longer able to make the roads of Central Asia respected. Without speaking of the Arabs, who had been installed in Persia since 642, and were pushing their raids as far as Kābul, a new factor had intervened—the revolt of the Tibetans against Chinese dominion. From 660 the Tibetans (the "T'u-fan" as the Chinese call them) who still had all the fire of the barbarian temperament, and to whom their too recent conversion to Buddhism had brought but little increase of wisdom, were violently astir and were disputing with China the hegemony of Central Asia. About 670 they even took from the empire the oases of Khotan, Yārkand, Kāshgar, and Kuchā, which were not to be won back until about 692.

At the very doors of China the frontier marches

of Shen-si and Ssŭ-ch'uan were transformed into a field of battle. "Prince," exclaims the poet Tu Fu soon after this, addressing himself to the Emperor Ming-huang, "have you seen the banks of the Köko-nor on which the bones of the soldiers whiten unburied, on which the spirits of newly-slain men trouble with their lament those whose bodies have long since perished? The sky is overcast, the rain is cold on these mournful shores, and voices rise up on all sides in lament." This was the beginning of the terrible Tibetan wars which were destined to exhaust the power of the T'angs.

The tracks of Central Asia, infested by the Tibetans on the Kashgaria side and by the Arabs on the Bactria side, were becoming almost impracticable. The Buddhist pilgrims, abandoning the traditional road followed of yore by Hsüan-tsang, henceforth preferred to go by way of the sea. But the sea-route also was not without danger, as is shown by the dramatic story of Ch'ang-min. This monk, who belonged to the school of the *Dhyāna*, had embarked for India. He touched at Java (Ho-ling), and at Sumatra (Malāyu). From the latter country he set sail for the coast of the Deccan. "Now the merchantman in which he embarked had a very heavy cargo. It was not far from its starting point when suddenly enormous waves rose, and in less than six hours the vessel had foundered. Even as it was sinking the traders made a rush to get into the life-boat, fighting with one another. Now the owner of the vessel was a believer. "Master!" he shouted, "Get into the boat." But Ch'ang-min replied: "Let others get in." "Thereupon, joining the palms of his hands and turning them towards the west, he invoked Amida Buddha; while he was intoning psalms the ship sank and disappeared. When the sound died away he was dead." The reason of his behaviour, adds his biographer, I-ching, was

that "in despising one's life for the sake of others, one reveals a heart obedient to the Bodhi, and that, in forgetting oneself in order to save men, one acts like the Buddha".

Others were more fortunate. Voyages into the South Seas, in spite of the risks they entailed, were comparatively frequent at this period. The coasts of Indo-China and the Indian Archipelago had long been civilized. The Annamite country—Tongking and northern Annam of the present day—formed a regularly administered Chinese province. In our central and southern Annam, the ancient kingdom of Campa, Malayo-Polynesian by race, Indian by culture and religion, remained, in spite of the inveterate piracy of the inhabitants, more or less a dependency of India. The capital of the country, Indrapura, the modern Tra-Kiü, near Tourane, and the neighbouring Śaiva shrines of Mi-so'n, saw the rise, through the combination of Indian influence and Cam originality, of an architecture and a sculpture of a strange character, the development of which dates from this same seventh century. It is from this period, in fact, that the powerful and striking statues of the Museum of Tourane date, those immortal witnesses to the genius of the old Cams.

Further away, Cambodia was the seat of another profoundly Indianized kingdom, "Chên-la," as the Chinese called it, which shortly before had replaced the ancient Fu-nan, and is the prototype of the great Khmer empire of the ninth century. The maritime part of Chên-la, "Chên-la on the water," whose capital was Vyādhapura or Angkor-Borei, on the frontier of the present Cochin-China, lay like Campa on the sea-route from China to India. It was, moreover, the period when there developed in Cambodia the robust "pre-Angkorean" sculpture which, in a

form already original, was in process of enriching by a new art the æsthetic treasures of India.

Finally, further south, a third Indianized state had been founded in Sumatra, that of Śrīvijaya, the present Palembang, which had replaced in 670 the twin kingdom of Malāyu. This Indo-Malay state, governed by the great dynasty of the Śailendra, was to establish its hegemony, momentarily, over all the South Seas, from Java to the Gulf of Siam. While establishing themselves as a veritable thalassocracy in these regions, the Śailendras were also to make Indian culture flourish there, and with an incomparable splendour, since it was they who towards the end of the eighth century caused the Buddhist reliefs of Bōrōbudur to be sculptured in Java. It is a curious fact that it is in this furthest province of outer India that Indian art has produced the purest of its masterpieces, and realized to the full the law of its being. By taking the maritime route the Chinese pilgrims saw India coming to meet them. For one who wished to study the Sanskrit writings there was no need to push on as far as Nālandā; it was sufficient to stop in the Sumatran monasteries at Śrīvijaya. Whoever desired a revelation of Indian Buddhism could dispense if necessary with a visit to the Buddhas of Mathurā and Sarnath, or the frescoes of Ajaṇṭā; he need only contemplate at Java the reliefs and statues of Bōrōbudur. All the tranquillized harmony and the spirituality of Buddhism were already contained in them.

We must not, therefore, be astonished to see these old maritime routes frequented by our pilgrims. In spite of their dangers, they were now becoming safer than the tracks of Central Asia that were cut off by Tibetan marauders. Moreover, the authority exercised on the seas of the Sound by the Sumatran emperors of Śrīvijaya gave to these shores at this time a safety which they were never again to enjoy.

One of the first pilgrims to take this route was the Master of the Law Ming-yüan. He had travelled by land from South China to Tongking, where he took ship. His vessel came safely through a typhoon, and after a call at Java he landed at Ceylon, where he received a friendly welcome from the king and the court. He responded somewhat badly to it, however, for he slipped by stealth into the stūpa where the relic of relics, the tooth of Buddha, was guarded in order to steal it. "The people of Ceylon," writes I-ching, "guard this tooth of Buddha with extraordinary precautions. They have placed it on a high tower, and they shut the many doors with complicated bolts. On each bolt is placed a seal and five officials put their stamp upon it. If a door is opened, a resounding noise warns the town. Every day offerings are brought to this relic. Sweet-smelling flowers cover it on every side. If one prays to it with great faith the tooth appears above the flowers, or else a supernatural radiance is produced. According to a tradition, if Ceylon were to lose the tooth the island would be swallowed up and devoured by demons. It is in order to avert such a misfortune that it is guarded in such an exceptional fashion." But according to another tradition the tooth was to end by going to China. "That will be an indirect result of the holy power," writes I-ching mysteriously; "if one has faith, this will happen."

The monk Ming-yüan doubtless believed himself to be the instrument designed for this event, for he stole the relic in the hope of taking it away to China. But he was discovered, there was a riot, the tooth was taken from him, and he narrowly escaped coming to grief. "The affair," says I-ching discreetly, "did not go according to his desire, and he found himself covered with opprobrium and shame."

Soon after this unlucky adventure the Ssŭch'uanese monk I-lang embarked with his brother near Canton, went round Cambodia or, as it was called at the time, "Fu-nan", reached Ceylon, and then the Deccan, where he disappeared. Another Ssŭ-ch'uanese, Hui-ning, went at the same time to Java, where he studied the Sanskrit Scriptures for three years under the direction of the Indian monk Jñāna-bhadra ; then he set sail for India, where succeeding pilgrims never discovered any trace of him. He must have perished at sea during this crossing. Like him, Yün-ch'i, of Tongking, went to Java, to study under the direction of Jñānabhadra. It is interesting to note, as his biographer tells us, that he knew equally well Sanskrit and Malay (or, as the Chinese used to say, *fan* and *k'un-lun*), so that he ended by settling at Śrīvijaya (Palembang, in Sumatra).

Occasionally some dramatic discovery took place, like that made by the pilgrim Ta-shêng-têng. This *Dhyānist* monk had travelled a great deal. When still a child he had followed his parents by sea to Dvāravati, that is to say, to the country, at that time inhabited by Indianized Mons, which to-day is southern Siam. After returning to China, where he entered holy orders, he wished to know something of India, and going by sea to Ceylon, crossed the Deccan from south to north. At the port of Tāmralipti (Tamluk) in Bengal, pirates pillaged his boat and took from him everything but his life. After staying twelve years in this country he went to visit the Holy Places of Gayā, Nālandā, Vaiśālī, and Kuśinagara. It was in the course of these journeys that he passed the hermitage where had lived another Chinese pilgrim, formerly one of his fellow pupils, Tao-hsi. But Tao-hsi had recently died. "His Chinese volumes were in the same state as during his life-time. His Sanskrit tablets were still

in order. At sight of them Ta-shêng-têng could not restrain his tears : 'In former days, at Ch'ang-an, we used to go together and sit on mats in the hall where the Law was taught ; to-day, in a foreign country, I find only his empty dwelling left.' "

Such, too, was the fate that awaited another famous religious, Tao-lin. Setting out by the sea-route, he passed by Java, skirted " the land of naked men ", that is to say, the Nicobar islands, and landed at the port of Tamluk, in Bengal. After that he traversed India in every direction, from Nālandā, where he spent several years, to the Deccan, and thence to Kāshmir and Kapiśa. Then we lose sight of him. His biographer thinks he sought to go into Iran and was surprised by robbers—perhaps Arab scouts.

What a number of other names and vague figures are glimpsed in I-ching's memoir ! The melancholy tale of their journeys, and their mysterious deaths somewhere in the jungles of Bihar or the forests of the south, is nearly always the same. We can get but a vague idea of the personality of these seekers after truth who abandoned their fatherland in crowds to wander along the uncertain routes of India. And yet how the mere mention of these itineraries still sets us dreaming ! Travelling in that far-off time was so surprisingly easy. And such circumnavigations as these enable us to understand far better the connections suggested by the specimens in our museums. From India and Ceylon to Java, Cambodia, Campa, and the ports of the Canton region, there was a perpetual exchange of ideas, texts, and works of art. The islands of Malaysia played the same part, in this context, as the oasis chain of the Gobi had done formerly, and a place like Śrīvijaya in Sumatra could only be compared, as a centre of Indian influence, with what Kuchā in Central Asia had been in the past.

A place apart among these pilgrims must be given to Chih-hung and Wu-hsing, who stand out more clearly, and whose journey appears to have been more fruitful in results.

Chih-hung happened to be the nephew of the ambassador Wang Hsüan-ts'ê, whose diplomatic and military missions to India we have already mentioned. No doubt the Confucian culture of Chih-hung and his influence with the Government might have obtained speedy promotion for him. But the young man, whose nature was meditative and serious, showed tendencies of quite a different order. Besides which, the spectacle of the court of the Empress Wu Tsê-t'ien, with its disorder and its crime, was well fitted to shock delicate souls. "He realized that the court and town were nothing but clamour and tumult." "Regarding with reverence the purity and calm of Buddhist wisdom" he retired into the mountains of Kuang-si, and spent several years there in meditation. "He would contemplate the picturesque beauties of mountains and streams, and would walk in the quiet solitude of the forests and woodland glades. He would take his pencil and write down his feelings, his desire to depart on the far journey." It was then that he made the acquaintance of a religious who was animated by the same sentiments—Wu-hsing.

Like himself, Wu-hsing had retired into the mountains of southern China, and there, wandering amongst the summits, beside the streams, amidst the landscapes of distances, of mists, and of peaks which were to be popularized later on by the Sung artists, he became absorbed in the synthetic ecstasy preached by the *Dhyāna* school, and communed long with the essence of things. He also dreamed of a journey to the holy land. In the mountains where he had retired he had just finished reading the *Lotus of the Good Law*. "He then remarked with a sigh: 'If someone

seeks a net, it is with the intention of catching fish ; if someone inquires about words, it is because he desires to turn his attention to the Doctrine. It would be well for me to be able to interrogate a master, to see in him as in a mirror my heart and my soul, to open for myself the gate of serenity and cut short all trouble and doubt.'" The meeting with Chih-hung decided him; the two friends set out on the pilgrimage to India.

They embarked at the present Lei-chou in the peninsula of Kuang-tung. After a month's navigation they reached Śrīvijaya, in the island of Sumatra. The reigning Śailendra showered favours upon them, both as Buddhists and as T'ang subjects. It was on a royal vessel of Śrīvijaya that they set sail for India. One interesting detail is the fact that at first they touched India proper only at Negapatam, and from there went on to the island of Ceylon. This itinerary proves the importance that Singhalese Buddhism had acquired in the minds of Chinese religious, and to what a small extent the quarrel between the two Buddhist churches, *Hīnayāna* and *Mahāyāna*, hindered personal relationships. The abyss that to-day separates the Singhalese-Siamese Little Vehicle from the Sino-Japanese *Mahāyāna* did not yet exist. All the Chinese pilgrims went in the first place to Ceylon to visit the tooth of Buddha,and it was only in consequence of passing local revolutions that Hsüan-tsang himself had been unable to enter the island.

From Ceylon Chih-hung and Wu-hsing embarked for the coasts of Orissa and Bengal. After staying a year in that part they established themselves in the monastery of Nālandā, where the king of Magadha gave them the title of Convent Superiors (*Vihāras-vāmin*). It was there that they saw the arrival of the monk I-ching, the most illustrious pilgrim after Hsüan-tsang, and historiographer to all of them.

Chapter XV

THE VOYAGES OF I-CHING

I-ching, who was to become the historian of the other Buddhist pilgrims, has himself given us information about the incidents of his own journey. He was born at Chih-li in 634. At the age of seven he was admitted to the cloister. He was only twelve when his master, the monk Shan-yü, died. "This event," says Chavannes, "made a profound impression on him. When, twenty-five years later, he resolved to go to India, it was to the tomb of his master that he went to seek a supreme message of encouragement. One grey autumn day he came to visit the burial mound; the shrubs planted at the time of the burial had become young trees, and their growth bore witness to the long period of mourning still going on in the heart of the disciple. The fog was rising above the ground, which was covered with a yellowish grass; in the calm melancholy of the scene there was something mysterious, as though the soul of the deceased had woken in order to give a blessing to the pilgrim. I-ching told him of his coming journey, and asked his protection."

In the autumn of 671 I-ching embarked for Yang-chou, in the province of Kiang-su, on a Persian boat. The season was favourable, being the beginning of the north-eastern monsoon. "At this time the wind began to blow in the vast expanse. We turned in a southerly direction, and the ropes, a thousand feet in length, were hung two by two. It was the beginning of the period marked by the constellations. We went further from the north, and the weathercock of feathers

floated isolated. Long were we held over the immense abyss; great waves, high as mountains, lay across the sea, over the whole of the vasty deep ; the waters rose, like clouds, to the heavens."

Twenty days later I-ching's vessel sighted Sumatra. I-ching remained there eight months, six at Śrīvijaya (Palembang), and two at Malāyu. After that a Sumatran vessel bore him across the gulf of Bengal. He saw as he went along " the land of naked men ", no doubt the Nicobar islands. "If one looks at the shore one sees nothing but luxuriant vegetation, coco-nut trees, and forests of areca palm. As soon as the inhabitants see a boat coming they vie with one another in getting into little vessels, over a hundred in number. They all bring coco-nuts, bananas, and articles in rattan or bamboo to exchange for iron. For a piece of iron as large as two fingers one gets from five to ten coco-nuts. The men are all entirely naked ; the women conceal their sex organs with leaves. If traders offer them garments in fun they make signs with their hands that they do not use them. These natives eat nothing but coco-nuts and yam roots. If one refuses to barter with them, they immediately let fly poisoned arrows."

I-ching took another fortnight going from the Nicobar islands to the coasts of Bengal. In the second moon of the year 673 he landed at the port of Tāmralipti, the modern Tamluk, where he remained for a year in order to perfect his knowledge of Sanskrit before penetrating into the interior. He next made the pilgrimage of the holy land *par excellence*, namely Magadha. " At a distance of ten days from the temple of Bodh-Gayā one enters a region of mountains and lakes. The road is a dangerous and difficult one. One needs to be in a party so that one can help another, and one should take care not to go forward by oneself. At that time I was attacked by a

passing illness. My body was worn and weary to exhaustion. I sought to profit by the opportunity afforded me by a caravan of merchants, but after a short time my fatigue rendered me incapable of following them. Although I made every possible effort and desired to go on, I was obliged to halt a hundred times in a distance of five *li*. There were at the time more than twenty monks from the temple of Nālandā who had all gone on ahead. I remained behind alone in the stony defiles. Towards evening, between three and five, some mountain brigands came up, with bows bent and uttering loud shouts. First of all they stripped me of my clothes. They came to look at me, laughing at me amongst themselves. They snatched away every strap and belt that I had on me. At that moment I thought I was about to bid a long farewell to the human race, that I should not satisfy my desire for pilgrimage, and that my limbs would be scattered by the points of their lances." Recalling, no doubt, the tragic adventure that had almost happened to Hsüan-tsang, I-ching thought that these savages were about to strangle him on account of his pale skin, and offer him to some Śaiva idol. "I then entered a bog and plastered myself all over with mud ; next I covered my body with leaves, and then, leaning on a stick, went slowly forward. At the hour of sunset the halting-place was still very far off. At the second watch of the night (between nine and eleven o'clock in the evening) I was fortunate enough to rejoin my comrades. I heard the venerable Ta-shêng-têng calling to me with long-drawn cries from outside the village ; as soon as we had found one another again, he set about giving me clothing, and bathing my body in a pool."

Having finally reached Nālandā and Gayā, I-ching worshipped at the Holy Places for himself and also for his friends left behind in China, who had asked

him to say a prayer before the Bodhi Tree. "I prostrated myself at full length upon the ground. I had but one thought left—that of respectful sincerity. For China I asked the Four Benefits; then, for all the Buddhist world, the knowledge of the sacred tradition, a general reunion under the dragon-flower tree, a meeting with the venerable person of the Merciful One (Maitreya, the future Buddha), the acquisition of perfect knowledge. Then I fulfilled the whole series of adorations before the holy relics."

I-ching likewise visited the sacred land of Kuśi-nagara, where Buddha had entered *nirvāṇa*, the Antelope Park at Benares, witness of his first preaching, and all the spots celebrated by the Scriptures. He remained for ten years at Nālandā, hearing the teaching of the doctors of the Law and collecting the holy books.

However, the time had come for his return. He wished to take the sea-route once more in order to prepare his Sanskrit texts in the learned atmosphere of Śrīvijaya. His compatriot, Wu-hsing, whom he had found again at Nālandā, also wished to return to China, but by way of the Gandhāra district. The farewells of the two friends were melancholy. "We accompanied one another beyond Nālandā for a distance of six *yojana*. Each of us thought how sad it was to part from one another while still alive. Both of us nourished the hope of meeting again. When we reflected on the immensity of the task that still remained to be accomplished we dried our tears with our sleeves." They went for a last walk, north-east of the ancient Rājagṛiha, on the Vulture's Peak. "When we had finished our adorations and made our offerings, we looked out over the landscape and the mountain defiles, and we could not restrain our sorrow." And then the pilgrim composed this wistful poem: "I

have been to contemplate the transformation of things on the summit of the Gṛidhrakūṭa. I have let my eyes wander over the ancient royal city. The lake which has seen ten thousand years is still well-preserved. The park, though a thousand years old, is still fresh. But the road made by king Bimbisāra, indistinct and uncertain, has perished on the mountain side. The ancient traces of the holy terrace of Seven Jewels have been lost. The celestial flowers of four colours have ceased to shed their blossoms with harmonious sounds ; sounds and flowers have long since passed away."

And then these lines, so touching in their piety : " How I regret that I was born so late ! In the world to-day I cannot distinguish the Gate. To reach nirvāṇa I do not see the Way. I went on foot up to the heights overlooking the town, and I looked into the distance. My heart went out over the Seven Seas. The three worlds were in trouble as though sunk in quicksands, and the ten thousand classes of beings contained not a single sincere heart. Only the Merciful One had complete understanding, and he dispelled the dust, calmed the waters, and opened the deep Way. When he met a famished tigress he yielded to her the rampart of his body ; he let his pity fall on creatures in distress. In the river whose waters are stilled he dissolved his old ties. With the sword of Knowledge, frozen as with frost, he clove the newly-gathered mists asunder. Of the great endless *kalpas* there is not one wherein he did not practise virtue. Throughout the six divisions of the day he takes pity on living creatures. He has crossed the stream of existence, and the glory of the nirvāṇa is assured to him . . ."

I-ching then recalls the labours still awaiting the two pilgrims on the hazardous paths of the return journey : " In the river of sand and the snow-clad mountains at morning one cannot distinguish the

route. On the vast sea and by the steep banks one is lost during nocturnal crossings. One is exposed to ten thousand deaths to save a single life . . . But we have renounced personal pleasure, and we ask from heaven no glory from posterity. We have taken an oath to sacrifice this body, exposed to danger, in order to seek the victorious Doctrine. We all hope to satisfy our passion for spreading the Light."

And again, this last farewell to the land of India, to the hills and forests and villages of Bihar, to the country that had served as a setting to the life of the Blessed One : " This song of sorrow I shall never sing again. I gaze into the distance at the places I visited in the morning. In the east I have contemplated the two Imprints that remain on the hillside ; in the west I have galloped as far as the Antelope Park, whence arose the three revolutions of the Law. In the north I have seen the pools of Kuśāgārapura, that are still intact ; in the south I have seen the cave in the sacred mountain which is still there. The five peaks are still beautiful, the hundred pools are clearly distinguishable. Very pure are the fresh blossoms that brighten the four sides ; very brilliant is the Tree of Wisdom that illuminates the three months of spring. Climbing with the pilgrim's staff, I have been to the steep edge of the mountain. Toilsomely I have scaled the mountain of Gṛidhrakūṭa, and I have seen the stone where the Blessed One formerly folded his garments . . . By this sight and by meditation I am as though I were united to Divinity."

Finally comes a more human and personal note: " I am sad and China is far away . . . While I was taking pleasure in listening, in my youth, day after day was passing, and without being conscious of it I reached my decline, autumn succeeding autumn. I have already realized my original plan of visiting this mountain (in the Holy Land). May I take with

me the sacred books and set out again on the journey back to China!"

Having parted from his companion whom he was never to see again, I-ching came back and embarked at Tāmralipti. He took away with him more than ten thousand rolls of Sanskrit texts (685). He stopped at Srīvijaya in the island of Sumatra, as he had desired, and remained there four years in order to translate in a Sanskrit atmosphere a portion of that vast store-house. But the work was beyond the powers of a single man. In 689, therefore, he went to China to seek helpers. He only landed at Canton, and at the end of four months, after recruiting his disciples, he returned with them to the Sumatran shores.

I-ching remained more than another five years at Srīvijaya, editing his personal notes and translating his Sanskrit texts. At length, in 695, he returned definitely to his native land, and in the middle of the summer made his entry into Lo-yang, the second imperial capital. Like Hsüan-tsang before him, he found the court interested in his voyages, and was given an official reception. But this time the master of the empire was a woman—one of the most curious figures in Chinese history—the Empress Wu Tsê-t'ien. The reign of this Chinese Agrippina has too much interest for the historian of Buddhism for us not to attempt here to resuscitate this intriguing personality. Indeed, by a strange paradox, this wild woman turned out to be one of the most zealous protectors of the faith of Śākyamuni.

Wu Tsê-t'ien was formerly a favourite of the Emperor T'ai-tsung. She entered the harem in 637, at the age of 14, and shone there as much by reason of her wit as of her beauty. When the Emperor Kao-tsung was still only heir to the throne, he had noticed her amongst the number of his father's wives. From that

day he had loved her in secret. After the death of T'ai-tsung, all the ladies of the harem had to cut off their hair and enter the convent of Kan-yeh-ssŭ. As soon as the official mourning was over Kao-tsung, now become Son of Heaven, took the young woman out of her retreat and gave her back her place at court.

But a subordinate position did not suit the ambitious concubine. According to the image of the poet, Lo Pin-wang, her enemy, " her brows, as arched as the antennæ of a butterfly, would not consent to yield to other women. Hiding behind her sleeve, she set herself to calumniate others. Her fox-like charm had a particular power of bewitching the master." To achieve her ends she did not hesitate to commit the most monstrous crime ; she strangled with her own hands the child she had just borne to the Emperor, and had the legitimate Empress accused of the deed.

Chinese historians have related this drama, which recalls Tacitus, with the addition of a setting of hypocrisy and politeness that are peculiarly Chinese. On the birth of the child—a girl—the Empress had come to pay a visit to Wu Tsê-t'ien. She fondled the child, taking it in her arms and congratulating the young mother. As soon as she had gone Wu Tsê-t'ien stifled the new-born infant, and then put it back in its cradle. The Emperor's arrival was announced. Wu Tsê-t'ien received him with a face radiant with joy, and uncovered the cradle to show him their daughter. Horrors ! It was nothing but a tiny corpse ! Bursting into sobs, she took care not to accuse directly the woman whom she sought to ruin. In the end, pressed by questions, she contented herself with incriminating her attendants. Naturally the latter, in order to clear themselves, recalled the visit paid by the Empress a few moments earlier. The scene had been so skilfully manipulated that Kao-tsung was convinced of the latter's guilt. He

deposed her, and raised Wu Tsê-t'ien (655). In spite of the opposition of his father's old comrades-in-arms, he soon fell under the yoke of his new wife. Like the Agrippina of classical times, the latter was present behind a curtain at the deliberations of the Council. As Kao-tsung continued to pay secret visits to the rejected Empress, Wu Tsê-t'ien had the hands and feet of the unfortunate woman cut off.

From 660 it was Wu Tsê-t'ien who directed in Kao-tsung's name all the affairs of the state. Thanks to the system of secret accusations she had established she was able to obey the dictates of her jealousies and desire for vengeance by terrorizing the court freely, and even to decimate the imperial family of the T'angs. Having caused the death of the mandarins who resisted her, she forced their daughters and their widows to serve her as slaves. The timid Emperor knew that her victims were innocent, but dared not take action. But remorse was undermining his health. He died of grief in 683, after seeing his favourite son poisoned by Wu Tsê-t'ien. Under the name of her own son, the latter remained for more than twenty years longer the absolute mistress of the empire.

Nevertheless, she was a superior woman, and very much more skilled than her former husband in the management of affairs. Under her energetic influence, the administrative machine of T'ai-tsung continued to function, and in spite of the tragedies of the seraglio, the veterans of the great Emperor held back the Barbarians everywhere. It was even under the personal government of Wu Tsê-t'ien that China recovered from the Tibetans what were called the Four Garrisons, that is to say, Kashgaria with Kuchā, Qarashahr, Kāshgar, and Khotan (692).

Everyone bowed before this indomitable woman. She went so far in her audacity as to depose her own

son, the young Chung-tsung (684) and to have herself finally styled "Emperor" (690). In vain did the princes of the blood, ashamed of being governed by a former concubine, rise in revolt at the summons of the old legitimist general Hsü Ching-yeh and the poet Lo Pin-wang. They were crushed, and their heads brought to the Empress. With the power in her hands she satisfied her every whim. She even took for her favourite a young bonze, appointing him superior of one of the monasteries of Lo-yang, "and giving him official license to enter and leave the palace at any hour of the day or night."

For with this extraordinary woman religiosity went hand in hand with all the sudden impulses of cruelty and lust. Quite incapable, no doubt, of comprehending the extreme clemency of Buddhism, she nevertheless displayed the most sincere devotion to it. Thus we find her, from 672 to 675, causing to be sculptured in the grottos of Lung-mên the celebrated Great Buddha of the Rocks, with its surrounding company of Bodhisattvas, monks, and *lokapāla*. And doubtless such works as these, just because they replace the mysticism and idealism of a former age by a realism somewhat shocking in its violence, may serve to enlighten us as to the kind of Buddhism that Wu Tsê-t'ien was able to appreciate. They bear witness none the less to the signal protection given by the queen to the faith.[1]

[1] There is a similar case of another celebrated Chinese Empress, the Dowager Hu of the Wei dynasty, a former concubine who became mistress of northern China (516–28). "Certain episodes were quoted about her which made her both feared and admired. One day she invited the courtiers to an archery contest. Most of them proving incapable, she dismissed them on the spot. She took the bow herself and hit the eye of a needle with her arrow. But this energetic woman put the same ardour into her passions as into her work. Her lovers succeeded one another rapidly, becoming all-powerful in a moment. The people and the officials grew weary of

When I-ching arrived she displayed the same sentiments. She came in person to receive him at the eastern gate of Lo-yang, at the head of an immense procession.

I-ching, however, could scarcely entertain with her the same friendly relationship as that which had finally united Hsüan-tsang and the Emperor T'ai-tsung. Having, no doubt, little desire to frequent a corrupt court, the holy monk devoted himself entirely to his translations. He was assigned, for this task, several Chinese mandarins and men of letters, as well as some Indians established in China. For some time he had as his principal collaborator a monk of Khotan named Śikshānanda. With these various helpers he translated no less than fifty-six works, not counting his original productions.

While he was absorbed in his work a palace revolution at last struck down his redoubtable patroness. In the face of adverse public opinion the latter had decided to restore, at least nominally, the young Emperor Chung-tsung. In reality she continued to govern alone with her new favourites, the brothers Chang. But a conspiracy was brewing against her. One night in the year 705 the conspirators invaded

these debauches which upset the court. As her son grew up, the Empress feared he would become hostile to her. At length, when he was 18, and showed some traces of independence, he suddenly died. Public opinion accused his mother of poisoning him. To calm the storm she felt was gathering about her, she pretended to set on the throne a little prince of three years, cousin to the deceased. But the limit had been reached. Supported by all the malcontents, a general revolted at the head of the army. In vain the terrified Empress tried to save her life by having her hair cut off and taking shelter as a nun in a temple; the victorious insurgents drowned her in the Huang-ho." However, this same Empress was herself a very pious Buddhist who sent the pilgrims Sung Yün and Hui-shêng to collect Mahāyānist texts in the Gandhāran region (518–22). The piety of these Chinese Empresses recalls that of the Brunhildas, the Fredegunds, and the Irenes . . .

the palace, armed. They met the timid Chung-tsung, the Emperor without authority, acclaimed him, and dragging him along by force, burst into the apartments of Wu Tsê-t'ien. The old Empress, wakened from sleep, alone and defenceless, her favourites strangled at her feet, still stood firm against the revolt. She made one last attempt to intimidate Chung-tsung, and perhaps she would have succeeded had the conspirators given her time. But they held a dagger to her throat, and forced her to abdicate. Some months later she died of chagrin, at the age of 81.

Chung-tsung, his power restored, showed himself no less zealous a protector of I-ching, and one who was certainly more in conformity with the tastes of the pilgrim than the deceased sovereign. He took special interest in I-ching's work, and was one day seen going in person to the western gate of Lo-yang, in order to inform all the officials that the sacred books had just been newly translated.

Chung-tsung, moreover, remembered that formerly when he had been persecuted and banished from the court by Wu Tsê-t'ien, he had invoked at length the Bodhisattva Bhaishajyaguru, the good physician of bodies and souls, and that his prayer had been granted. Replaced on the throne by the events of 705, he did not wish to show ingratitude towards his celestial protectors. So he frequently summoned to the palace the most holy monks of the capital, notably I-ching, who spent the summer of 707 with him. The Emperor even went frequently to visit the pilgrim, sitting on his mat, and taking part himself in the translation of the Scriptures.

But the affectionate collaboration of the holy monk and the gentle Emperor was soon to be interrupted by another palace drama. Chung-tsung's wife, the young Empress Wei, was regrettably wanton. She had taken as lover one of the nephews of the deceased

Empress Wu Tsê-t'ien, the handsome Wu San-ssŭ. The deceived husband noticed nothing. In vain did one of the princes of the blood, exasperated by such base behaviour, stab Wu San-ssŭ (707). The Emperor disowned his avenger. Finally the Chinese Messalina, who was still hampered by her phantom of a husband, poisoned him, in order to reign alone. But she did not possess the terrible authority of Wu Tsê-t'ien. Her crime as soon as it was known provoked a rebellion among the members of the imperial family, led by the young prince Li Lung-chi. In 710 the conspirators, renewing the drama of 705, invaded the palace by night, and struck down the usurper with arrows. Her head was stuck on a pike, and shown to the crowd. Li Lung-chi then made his own father, Jui-tsung (711), Emperor, until the time when he himself, under the names of Hsüan-tsung and Ming-huang, became the greatest sovereign of the T'ang dynasty after T'ai-tsung (712–55).

As for I-ching, he ended his great work of translation, and also his busy life, in studious retreat, far from these dramatic events. A son of the king of Kāshmīr, come from India to bring his country's homage to the imperial court, gave him at one moment the benefit of his knowledge. He died piously in 713, at the age of 79.

Although he had not the powerful personality of Hsüan-tsang, his silhouette, paler and greyer than that of the former, nevertheless deserves our attention. A certain melancholy turn of thought and the nostalgia that he carries even into his descriptions of Indian scenes, lend a special charm to his physiognomy. Everything, down to the specifically Chinese poems, with which he intersperses his account, creates an atmosphere of gentleness and tenderness in his book. The Confucian rhetoric which appears here and there does not displease us, for it helps to familiarize us

completely with the personality of this pious monk and diligent scholar who accomplished the most marvellous journeys without appearing to be aware himself of his historic importance.

Thus the Chinese pilgrims of the great T'ang dynasty, by their journeys as well as by their translations, were linking the Far East to India more closely every day. It was a unique moment in the history of Asia. Thanks to the peace of the T'angs the continent was opening its doors to missionaries as well as to commercial caravans and to embassies. And much more than this, Japan, newly introduced to Sino-Buddhistic culture, was entering in her turn, through this channel, into the great world-current. One of the principal disciples of Hsüan-tsang was a Japanese, the monk Dôshô, who had come with an embassy to China in 653, and who, on his return, propagated in his own country the doctrine of the Master, the *Yogācāra* idealism, there called the *Hossô* doctrine. Almost at the same time a second Japanese, Chitsû, had gone to the empire of the T'angs, also for the purpose of making a thorough study of Buddhist philosophy (658).

A charming poem of the T'ang period by Ch'iu Ch'i on *The Japanese Bonze Returning to his Country*, evokes for us these Nippon pilgrimages of the early Middle Ages, the sequel and complement of the Chinese pilgrimages:—

By vocation he came to the superior empire.
His journey resembles a dream.
Arriving from the distant ocean, did he sail in the skies?
Light is the boat in which he returns, but heavy with doctrine.
The immensity of the sea and the limpidity of the moon evoke the virtue of Buddha.
The fishes and the dragons will come out of the water to hearken to the Indian prayers.
Is not the light of this lamp sweet that lightens the eyes of the world?

(Translation by Mien Chêng.)

This was indeed the most memorable of all periods, in which, under the influence of the Chinese missionaries, Japan resolutely entered the path of Buddhism, and through Buddhism, the society of the older civilizations. This was especially the work of two politicians of genius who also proved themselves to be two great minds, the regent Shôtoku Taishi and Prince Nakanôe, who governed Japan respectively from 592 to 621 and from 645 to 671. The basis of historic Japan was the constitution of 604, the second article of which said : " The Three Jewels (Buddha, the Law, the Community), are the supreme refuge of all creatures, and the final end of all existences . . . There are few men fundamentally vicious. Everyone is capable of realizing truth if it is taught him." Applying the first of these maxims, Shôtoku Taishi raised on the shores of the Inner Sea monastic colleges where the Sino-Sanskrit Scriptures were taught, and hospitals for old men and invalids.

The temple of Hôryûji, founded by Shôtoku Taishi at Nara in 607, remains the time-honoured witness of this transformation. While everything has changed in Asia, while India has forgotten the very name of Buddha, and while China herself scarcely remembers the immense intellectual effort of the T'ang period, it is there that the doctrine of mystic idealism is still preserved in all its purity, in the form in which Hsüan-tsang and I-ching went to study it in India, thirteen hundred years ago.

Chapter XVI

IN THE PEACE OF THE PAGODAS

It would be interesting to know the inner thoughts of these great travellers, once they had returned to their country. Some of them certainly—Hsüan-tsang and I-ching—have left us a practical account of their travels, their translations, their religious or metaphysical treatises inspired by the teachings of Indian masters. But what we should like to know about these sages of furthest Asia, these subtle literati and delicate poets, is their inner dreams. Returning to the silence of their monastery, after all the visions they had seen and the miles they had covered, they must at times have recalled the great dumb lands that had lain stretched at their feet from the heights of the Pamirs. Benares nights must have lived again for them. Or they must have heard in the depths of their memory the song of the Southern Seas that had led them from the bay of Along to the Sumatran ports, towards the paradisiac isle of Ceylon. Once the gate of their monastery had closed behind them, these pilgrims of wisdom shut in, with themselves, the dream of a world.

And it was in this same wistful reverie that the charm of the Buddhistic convents of the T'angs lay, sheltered homes of learning and meditation, of memories and of silence. The impression they made was so deep that the whole of the Chinese poetry of the period is as though penetrated by it. A whole series of T'ang poems has for its subject *The Visit to the Monastery*:—

I turned my steps towards the holy dwelling where I had the happiness to be given a kindly welcome by a venerable bonze.

I entered deeply into the principles of the sublime reason
And I cast off terrestrial preoccupations.
The religious and I were united in one and the same thought.
We had exhausted the possibilities of speech and were silent.
I gazed at the flowers, motionless like ourselves.
I listened to the birds hovering in space and I understood the Great Truth.

Thus sang Sung Chih-wên, the favourite poet of the pious Emperor Chung-tsung, and we find the same sentiments in Li Shang-yin, in this picture of a hermitage, which is also a spiritual fatherland, the very land of the Buddhist soul:—

The setting sun descends behind the hills of the West,
I come to visit the hermit bonze in his hermitage.
The dead leaves flutter about his dwelling, but where is the owner?
The paths are wrapped in a chill mist.
Alone he will ring his bell at the first hour of the night.
Dreaming he will lean, as he is wont, every evening, against his single wisteria bough.
In this world, small as a grain of dust, what avails it to love and hate?

(Translated by Mien Chêng.)

All the detachment and all the vast peace of Buddhism breathe in these lines. And it is the whole mystic dream of the *Mahāyāna* that betrays itself in this eighth century poem from the pen of T'ao Han:—

The pines and the cypress hide the mountain gorge,
But in the West I discover a narrow path.
The sky opens out, a peak is revealed,
And as though it were born in space, a convent rises up before my eyes.
The building seems to be standing on a terrace of cloud.
Its pavilions soar into the air amidst the rugged rocks.
Night comes; monkeys and birds are silent.
The sound of the bells and the song of the bonzes penetrate beyond the clouds.
I contemplate the blue peaks and the moon which is mirrored in the waters of the lake.

I listen to the sound of the streams and the wind that tosses the leaves
on the banks of the rushing torrent.
My soul has flown up beyond things visible
Wandering and captive at once . . .

The flight of the poem here attains to the serene realms of metaphysics. The pilgrims and poets have led us to the threshold of Buddhist thought into which it now remains for us to penetrate.

Chapter XVII

THE METAPHYSICAL FLIGHT OF THE *MAHĀYĀNA*

We have followed the Buddhist pilgrims in their long journeys from the march of Tun-huang and the sands of the Gobi to the sacred land of the Ganges, from the seas of the Sound to the coasts of Ceylon. We are surely justified in asking ourselves now what force made them rise up on all sides, and brave all perils, in order to undertake the immense pilgrimage? To venerate the holy places of Buddhism, no doubt! Hsüan-tsang as well as I-ching is constantly mentioning—and with what emotion!—the sacred spot in the Nepalese jungle where the Blessed One was born, the glade at Bihar where, beneath the sacred Tree, he attained supreme wisdom, the monastery grounds where he preached, the grove of śāla trees beneath which he awaited his death.

It would, however, be erroneous to picture to ourselves the majority of these travellers as naïve pilgrims, led merely by a sentimental piety. The majority were, on the contrary, philosophers of immense learning, powerful metaphysicians, pious no doubt, but of far superior talent to that of ordinary devotees. What they had come in search of was not merely the sight of places and relics, but the Doctrine. But at that period the Doctrine no longer consisted only of the ancient *sūtras*, of the poetry of the *Previous Lives*, and the honey of the Parables, of that golden legend which in former times, by itself alone, converted the masses.

Beneath this traditional religiosity a constructive metaphysic had at last been built up, and the pilgrims

from China came to India to seek nothing less than truth in its entirety. Indeed, Hsüan-tsang and I-ching are continually speaking of the aim of their labours, and it is always the translation of philosophic texts. It will not be a matter for astonishment, therefore, if we complete this picture of Indian and Chinese Buddhism under the T'ang dynasty by some pages on the religious philosophy of this great period. To study the activities of men without attempting to understand the spiritual reasons for their acts would be to condemn us to the knowledge of their external appearance alone.

The first Mahāyānist doctrine that Hsüan-tsang and the other Chinese pilgrims met with in India was that of the *Mādhyamika* or "Middle Way", founded in the northern Deccan, towards the first century of our era, by the philosopher Nāgārjuna. This is a theory of undeniable power, a system of dialectics peculiarly subtle and remarkably bold, yet it has been little understood in Europe, except in a distorted form; so difficult is it to render Indian conceptions by western equivalents. Thus the Nāgārjunan theory has been described as a nihilist doctrine, a theory of the "Void" and of "Not-Being". And in truth, the notion of *Śūnyatā* to which the Indian sage relates everything does correspond to the idea of vacuity. Does this imply that such a conception is purely negative? If that were so we should have to admit that the most fervent mysticism, the most thorough-going individual heroism, had managed to graft themselves upon a theory of Not-Being. To our mind Nāgārjuna's doctrine, as it has been revived by his Japanese commentators of the present day, is something quite different; but in order to understand it we must travel over the intellectual paths by which it was reached.

First of all we must adopt the mental standpoint of the Buddhist, and more generally of the Indian for whom philosophic thought has as its goal the obtaining of salvation by the total purification of mind and heart. Since its foundation in the sixth century B.C. Buddhism had taught the purification of the heart by freeing it from all attachment to things; in this consists the whole of Buddhist morality, as we find it developed in thousands of texts. But in order that this deliverance might be complete it was necessary to extend it to intellectual things, for what is detachment of heart without detachment of mind? After severing the ties of sense binding one to the world and to the ego, it was necessary to detach thought from belief in the ego and in things. And thus was created by the *Mādhyamika* school what has been called the Buddhist metaphysic, which was at first—seventeen centuries before Kant—nothing but a sort of critique of pure reason.

Taking to pieces the mechanism of the categories of the understanding, Nāgārjuna, in a discussion whose subtlety is not without vigour, although occasionally perhaps slightly disconcerting, shows that the mind never attains, either in itself or in objects, real substance, the divine "self" dear to Brahminists, or, as the Indians call it, the *ātman*. After that he has no difficulty in pointing out, with perfect ease, the unreal and even somewhat contradictory character of a phenomenal world reduced to itself, a masque of appearances without floor or ceiling. Moreover, the Indian philosopher seems to have taken special care to prevent the pure phenomenalism thus established from turning into a kind of positivism wherein the world would have recovered, in the domain of facts, a certain solidity. With no less care the masters of the doctrine seek to prevent it from ending in an absolute idealism which (as was to be the case with

Hsüan-tsang) would reconstruct the world within the mind, restoring by this sleight of hand the whole metaphysic. After combating the idea of substance, Nāgārjuna applied himself therefore to combating equally the contrary thesis, for fear, apparently, that by the complete disappearance of the notion of substance, phenomena themselves might acquire a positive character, which would confer on them an unconscious substantiality.

The heart once free of all attachment to things and to itself, the mind purified and liberated from belief in things and in itself, what is there left? There remains the negative conception of *Śūnyatā*, literally "vacuity", a notion which it is perhaps wrong to try and represent as a metaphysical concept, and which perhaps after all may be only a disposition of mind, a state of soul. *Śūnyatā* is—in the theory of a world as will and representation which is that of all Buddhism—the state of a mind free of both representation and will.

And it is here that the whole difference appears between the Indian and the western mind. This absolute simplification, extending even to vacuity, would in western logic run the risk of issuing in practice in nihilism. The Indian, on the contrary, finding himself free intellectually as well as morally from all attachment, purified in his mind as in his senses, finds in this freedom from the data of what we call the real, in this All-Deliverance, the source of an immense mystic joy, the cause of an unsuspected *élan vital*. The sage has gone down into the depths of his heart. He has seen there—and here he forestalls our critiques of pure reason—the external world, in the phenomenon of representation, taking shape and vanishing there. He has seen the dissolution of all that we call the ego, of the substantial soul because Buddhism denies it, and of the phenomenal ego, because

its fall is involved in that of the external world. In place of this world of moral suffering and material obstacles, of internal egotism and objective adversity, an apparently bottomless gulf opens in the heart—a luminous and as it were submarine gulf, unfathomable, full of ineffable beauties, of fleeting depths and infinite transparencies. On the surface of this vacuity into which the eye plunges dazzled, the mirage of things plays in changing colours, but these things, as we know, "exist only as such"—*tathatā*—and therefore are as if they were not.

And once this mirage is dispelled, behold—in the intimate contemplation of that bottomless and limitless depth, in that unrivalled purity of absolute vacuity—behold all virtualities arising, all powers emerging. What can now check the heart? It has broken its bonds and dissipated the world. What can check the mind? It is freed not only from the world, but from itself. In destroying its own lie it has overcome itself. From the unfathomable gulf it now rises up victorious . . .

Such is this doctrine, undeniably original, in many respects obscure, but one which we should be careful not to neglect, for whatever may be the applications that succeeding schools will draw from the *Mādhyamika*, it is from its interior vision that all their teaching will flow.

Thus, for example, the teaching called the *Garland of Flowers* (*Avataṃsaka sūtra*)—a text composed in India towards the second or third century of our era—develops the mysticism contained potentially in the Nāgārjunan philosophy. Placing itself under the invocation of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, it plunges into the activity of things in the bosom of vacuity—a series of waves eternally succeeding one another on the bottomless ocean—and there discloses

the deepest reasons both of absolute idealism and of radical positivism. In default of substance—that old Brahminist notion which Buddhism thought itself obliged by definition to combat—the adherents of the *Garland of Flowers* could at least seize the "Essential Nature" of things, the *tathatā* in Sanskrit. This Essential Nature will constitute a kind of Divinity appearing in the very bosom of the Nāgārjunan vacuity. It will present itself to feeling, if not from the metaphysical point of view, as an equivalent of the Absolute, or, if you like, as an Absolute no longer superior to phenomena but entirely inherent in them, the Absolute as the actual processus of things. On the surface and in the bosom of the unfathomable vacuity, the bottomless ocean supposed by Nāgārjuna, the phenomena are the ocean considered as waves; the Essential Nature is the waves considered as the ocean.

The whole of mysticism will thus be found, not restored (it had never been absent from the *Mahāyāna*), but definitely confirmed. For this intuition of the Essential Nature of things will henceforth become, under the name of *Prajñā Pāramitā* or Perfection of Sapience, a kind of revelation of truth or, if you like, of Buddhist Holy Wisdom, a veritable hypostasis which will be prayed to and invoked, and which will communicate itself to the mind in an ineffable communion.

Other Chinese Buddhist schools, the establishment of which is exactly contemporaneous with Hsüan-tsang and I-ching, developed the same principles and established two powerful sects. One of them, the school of the *Dhyāna* or of meditation (*Ch'en-na* in Chinese, *Zen* in Japanese) will aim at the mystic communion of the spirit with the Supreme Wisdom conceived as adequate to the Essential Nature. This

communion, by which the mind adheres to the unique essence of things, will make it in and through this sublime essence, master of things as well as of itself. Master of things: for the Chinese Dhyānist will declare himself a superman who has at his command the forces of nature. Absolute Master of himself: the Japanese Zenist, applying this radical doctrine to the education of the *Samurai*, will draw from it unsuspected lessons of heroism. Having by the intuitive method attained in his heart to absolute purity of thought—the Japanese rendering of the Indian *Śūnyatā*—the Zenist will henceforth face with complete serenity and impassiveness, lightly as it were, the innumerable vicissitudes of the *saṃsāra*.

Further—such are the secret paths of Buddhist thought—these doctrines of intense life and of unbounded activity were found potentially in the Nāgārjunan vacuity. Once delivered by the latter from the chains of the ego and of the world, there was no degree of ecstasy nor heroism to which the Zenist could not attain.

It is the same paths, this time ending in a sort of mystical monism, which disclose themselves in the Sino-Buddhist doctrine of the T'ien-t'ai.

The T'ien-t'ai was established, a little before the call of Hsüan-tsang, by the Chinese monk Chih-i (531–97). After following the teaching of the *Dhyāna*, Chih-i, under the influence of the *Lotus of the Good Law*, that "Fourth Gospel of Buddhism", founded about 575, at Chehkiang, in the picturesque surroundings of Mount T'ien-t'ai, a famous monastery and a new sect. This sect, carrying to extremes the tendencies of the *Garland of Flowers*, more or less openly conceived of the Essential Nature of things, the *tathatā* of the earliest teachers, as a sort of Buddhist equivalent of the Hindu *Brahman*, or at least of a *Brahman* inherent in phenomena, which led

moreover to the opinion that *nirvāṇa* is infused into the *Saṃsāra*, that salvation is immediately realizable.

The T'ien-t'ai, transported to Japan in 805 by the holy Dengyô Daishi (died 822) there acquired a new development. The Japanese *Tendai* and the neighbouring sect of the *Shingon*, founded by another Japanese saint, Kôbô Daishi (died 835), carried a step further the pantheistic tendencies of the preceding sects.

But at the time of the Chinese pilgrims, by far the most important school of Indian Buddhism, and, moreover, the one whose doctrine Hsüan-tsang did more than anyone else to spread, was the idealist or mystic school (*Vijñānavāda* or *Yogācāra*)—the two terms are employed synonymously. We think it useful to give a more detailed account of this.

The idealist school, whose origins have been thought to date from the first century A.D., with the philosophic works attributed to Aśvaghoṣha, was given its final form in the fifth century by the hand of two authors whose praises are often sung by Hsüan-tsang in his narrative, two brothers belonging to the Peshawar district who spent part of their life in Oudh, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. From these two thinkers, who finally gave Buddhism a metaphysic proper, are descended all the masters who for two centuries made the monasteries of North India illustrious. Vasubandhu in particular had for his disciples Dignaga, a metaphysician and logician of the fifth century, and Sthiramati,[1] head of another branch which several Japanese Sanskrit scholars consider the real descendant of the preceding masters. Dignaga formed Dharmapāla, who must have flourished between about 528 and 560, and who

[1] This author, whose chronology is not definitely established, is generally placed at the end of the fifth or in the sixth century. It seems that he was still living about 560.

in his turn was the master of Śīlabhadra, himself master to Hsüan-tsang.

It is the idealist doctrine, as it is expounded in the works of Asaṅga, of Vasubandhu and of Hsüan-tsang, that we shall summarize here. Whoever understands it has grasped the essentials of Buddhist thought.[1]

One of the fundamental axioms laid down by Asaṅga is the old Buddhist thesis of the impermanence of things, the passing of phenomena, which he even thinks of as completely instantaneous. "All that happens is instantaneous," so Asaṅga and Hsüan-tsang teach; and they go on to explain that every moment there is produced "another thing" which has the preceding one as cause, and that, since the cause ceases the moment it has produced its effect, this effect ceases the moment after, on becoming a cause in its turn. "But because this change is too subtle to be measured, we allow ourselves to be led into seeing only the resemblance that subsists between successive states"; for example, to take Asaṅga's comparison, we do not discern, from minute to minute, the passage from milk to butter. Asaṅga thus establishes the fact that the *saṃskāra*, the constituent elements of matter (*rūpa*) are instantaneous, for matter implies movement, that is, something perpetually evolving. As we shall see, he will try presently to demonstrate by the same reasoning that the constituent elements of the ego are equally

[1] Without giving a detailed biography of Buddhistic idealism, we mention here the following works from which the greater part of our quotations are taken: Sylvain Lévi, Translation of the *Sūtrālaṃkāra* of Asaṅga; de La Valleé-Poussin, various articles appearing in the *Museon* of Louvain, and the translation of the *Siddhi* of Hsüan-tsang (pub. Geuthner); L. Finot, translation of the *Journey to the Light* of Śântideva, in the *Classiques de l'Orient* (pub. Bossart).

ephemeral, since thought is perpetual change, and an endless series of moments.

The final basis of things, what the school calls the *ālaya-vijñāna* (sensation of the groundwork) is not itself exempt from this eternal instability. "The *ālaya-vijñāna*," says Vasubandhu, "evolves in a continuous stream like the water of a river." This kind of Universal Subconscious, whose importance in the system is obvious, and which supports all that is known, is likewise assumed by Hsüan-tsang only as a perpetual series: "From all time the *ālaya-vijñāna* arises and perishes at each moment and changes from before to after; it is cause and result, birth and destruction." It has been considered as the transposition of the *ātman*, the psycho-ontological substance of Brahmanism, but it would then be (in far too contradictory terms) a substance without permanence or unity. Nevertheless, if it is neither one nor permanent, this universal subconscious—and this is its very definition—is continuous. "As the water in the stream flows continuously, for all time, with all that it carries with it," writes Hsüan-tsang, "similarly for all time the *ālaya-vijñāna*, arising and perishing, bearing the *kleśa* and the acts, carries the creature along, above and below, and prevents the creature from passing out of existence." "And as the river," he writes again, "struck by the wind, gives birth to waves without its flow being interrupted, so the *ālaya-vijñāna*, without a break in its perpetual flux, produces temporary thoughts . . . From all time the *ālaya-vijñāna* flows thus like a river without interruption." Dignaga writes in similar terms: "By reason of the continuity with which the cause and the effect follow one another without cessation, we may say that time is without a beginning."

The world, in the system of Asaṅga, Vasubandhu,

and Hsüan-tsang, can therefore be reduced to a universal subconscious, eternal, continuous, impermanent to the point of instantaneousness, or, in short, a perpetual series. Let us recognize the fact, moreover, that this is only the philosophic formulation of the phenomenalist tendency of the primitive Buddhists.

Another point in the doctrine of Asaṅga, Vasubandhu and Hsüan-tsang is the unreality of the sensible world (*dharma nairātmya*), a theory which is carried by them to the point of absolute acosmism. This theory met with the opposition of one of the principal Indo-Brahmanic systems of the time, the *Vaiśeshika*, which rested entirely on atomism. Our three metaphysicians opened violent hostilities against it, and began by destroying the notion of the atom (*paramāṇu*). "The atom," writes Vasubandhu, "is not proved as such," nor, a fortiori, the agglomeration of atoms that constitutes the object. "The object," he tells us, "is either one, or else formed of several atoms or agglomerations of atoms. But the one is not the object, for nowhere does one find a whole which is other than its parts ; and the manifold is not the object either, since this is not perceived in the component atoms, taken one by one." As we see, Indian philosophy is here seeking to push back the idea of the atom to a series of antinomies : "If the atom," writes Vasubandhu in another place, "is united at the same time to six other atoms, each atom will have six sides, six parts, for at the place where each atom is, another atom cannot be," which comes to the same thing as saying that the atoms are no longer atomic. If on the contrary the six atoms, to avoid their division in space, are assumed to be in the same place, they become fused, are reduced to a single one, and the agglomeration that creates all matter is

impossible. "Moreover," continues Vasubandhu,[1] "it is the idea of an atom that is contradictory. That in which there is division into spatial parts (= that which is extended) cannot possibly be one. The eastern part of the atom would be distinct from its western part. The various parts of the atom being different, how could the atom that is constituted by them be one? If we do not admit this spatial division of the atom, if no atom has parts, where and at what point does an atom come into contact with another atom? And if there is no contact, all the atoms occupy the same place, all the particles unite in a single atom. This is established," concludes Vasubandhu, and he at once draws this conclusion: "Since the atoms are not proved, the objects of the senses (*artha*) are only ideas (*vijñaptimātra*)."

Following the example of his masters, Hsüan-tsang, in his treatise on *Absolute Idealism*, refutes the atomic theory in the form in which the Brahmanist school of the *Vaiśeshika* had put it forth as a doctrine. The demonstration is the same in the Chinese philosopher's case as with his Indian predecessors: "If atoms are extended, they are divisible, like an army or a forest. If they are not extended, like thought and mental acts, they have not the nature of real entities as differing from thought and mental entities. And moreover, being unextended, they cannot form agglomerations and matter does not exist." In other words, if atoms are extended they are divisible and are no longer atoms. And if they are unextended, they are not atoms either, but "mental entities", and they cannot engender matter.

Hsüan-tsang concludes: "The *Yogācāras*, not with a knife but with thought, divide and redivide matter that has mass up to the moment when it is no longer perceivable. To this extreme fraction, whose

[1] Translation by M. de la Vallée-Poussin.

existence is entirely fictitious, they give the name of atom. They think, moreover, that the atom is extended, that it allows of spatial division, and that nevertheless one cannot divide it, for if one went on with dividing it the atom would appear similar to space, to the void (*ākāśa*) and could no longer be called material. That is why it is said that the atom is the limit of matter. We may conclude that matter is the development of thought, and does not consist of atoms." [1]

The School then develops the processus of the sensible world, as the phenomenon of representation creates it. Sometimes the deduction is rather weak : "The *saṃskāra*, the psycho-physical compounds of reality," writes Asaṅga, "being presided over by thought, are subordinate to it ; thus they are the fruits of thought." Often the argument is closer. But as the whole system of the School rests on this theory, the best course is to give a number of quotations.

First we give the very formula of the system from the pen of Vasubandhu in his *Viṃśakakārikā prakaraṇa* : "The triple world (*dhātu*) is only idea (*vijñaptimātra*) or thought (*cittamātra*). It is knowledge (*vijñāna*) itself that appears as object . . . All this is only idea which appears as objects, which (in reality) do not exist." And further on : "It is the idea that appears as visible, as tangible" ; or again, "the pure idea is produced as a visible thing." "Knowledge," resumes his disciple Dignaga, "is produced in the form of objects." (Translated by Yamaguchi.)

Hsüan Tsang, always a faithful commentator of his Indian masters, tells us similarly that thought (*vijñāna*) appears under two forms : the thought-image (*nimittabhāga*) which appears as external, and the thought-vision (*darśanabhāga*), which is concerned

[1] Translated by La Vallée-Poussin.

with this quasi-external. In other words: "Because thought attaches itself to itself, it develops in the form of external things. This visible does not exist. There is only thought."

But if the object does not exist, we may ask, what will "determine" ideas? "Ideas," ingeniously replies Vasubandhu, "are determined by their reciprocal action." The objection, nevertheless, is a serious one; if the idea has no object, there will be determination neither of place, nor of time, nor of differentiation. For example, if the idea of colour is produced without any object, why should this idea be produced at such and such a place, at such and such a moment, and not everywhere and always? "In dream also," replies Vasubandhu, "thought has a local and temporal determination, yet a dream is only a dream. This argument from states of dream and other sense-errors is always employed by the School to deny the objective value of knowledge. Similarly for "the comparison of the picture" by Asaṅga and Vasubandhu: "In a picture painted according to the rules, there is neither hollow nor raised part, and yet one sees them; thus in the imagination there is never duality, and yet one sees it." It is by analogies of this order that Asaṅga demonstrates that "thought is sensation and form"; in other words, that Mind becomes the Cosmos.

"However," Vasubandhu continues uneasily, "if things (*dharma*) have no manner of existence, how can we establish (the existence of) pure idea, since it too does not exist?" An argument of some weight, especially if we reflect that it was the great objection that was later formulated against the *Yogācāra* idealism by the devotees of the absolute vacuity of Nāgārjuna. Vasubandhu, who was well aware of the danger, replies with a peculiarly subtle statement: "No doubt things are unreal (*nirātmānas*) with regard

to that reality (*ātman*) that consists in nature proper, but they are not without existence in the indescribable manner of being which is of the domain of the Buddhas . . ."

Asaṅga too is too wary to allow his acosmism to be exposed to the criticisms of common sense. The subtle metaphysician has taken his precautions. He writes with a curious hesitation : "The existence of things in the mirage of representation cannot properly be reduced to non-existence. In fact, in so far as there is existence of such and such a figure, we cannot say it absolutely does not exist. However, it is not a real existence, any more than one can say that the (metaphysical) non-existence of objects is not in any way existence. But the existence of such and such a figure in the mirage of representation is really the non-existence of the object, as the non-existence of the object involves a (relative) existence of the corresponding figures. Thus the duality is present in appearance but not in reality."

Like the external world, the ego will vanish. Is it not the great obstacle to salvation, combated as such by all Buddhists ? The School first destroys the social and corporal ego. There is nothing here which gives us a different attitude from that of previous writers, but the tone of the Mahāyānists is particularly moving : "Consider this corpse," exclaims Śāntideva, "dragged hither and thither by greedy vultures. Why does it offer no resistance ? Why, O my heart, dost thou watch over this mass, taking it for thy ego ? And if it is distinct from thyself, what matters its disappearance ? Foolish one, thou dost not mistake for thyself a wooden doll, which is at least clean. Then why watch over a machine doomed to decay ? Remove first by thought this envelope of skin, and then with the knife of intuition, separate the flesh from

its skeleton of bone ; break the bones themselves, look at the marrow which lies within and tell me what is there that is essential. . . . No doubt this vile body is for men an instrument of action. But thou guardest it in vain, pitiless death will seize it from thee to throw it to the vultures. Then what wilt thou do ? " After thus rejecting this vile body, a false appearance of the self, the poet in an outburst of ecstasy cries : " When shall I go to the charnel-house, the fit dwelling of the body, to come into the presence of the corpses of others and of my own body destined for corruption ? . . . Behold my body, behold the decay it will become ; its odour will drive away even the jackals." (Translated by Finot.)

The dissociation of the psychological ego, in the doctrine of Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, and Hsüan-tsang, is bound up with the dissociation of the external world. Let us recognize the fact that the negation of the ego, as a permanent metaphysical entity, went back to primitive Buddhism. Philosophic Brahmanism being founded on the divinization of the human soul (*brāhman-ātman*), Buddhism, by a reaction which went to the opposite extreme in its attitude, started with the negation of the soul (*nairātmya*). The first properly philosophic text of the Church, that which, under the name of Milinda, represents the Indo-Greek king Menander disputing with the monk Nāgasena, has no other aim than to show the substantial non-existence of the ego, conceived here as a simple stream of phenomena. It was upon this conception that the Mahāyānist patriarch Nāgārjuna, in the first century of our era, in his doctrine of the Middle Way (*Mādhyamika*), had founded his whole system. His critique of the mind has no other aim than to establish the unreality of all psychological substratum and constants. " Creatures," says one of his later disciples, Candrakīrti, "are mobile and devoid of a

nature of their own, similar to the moon reflected in troubled water. Just as in a sheet of very pure water moved by a violent gust of wind, the moon's reflection is at first seen and then at once disappears at the same time as the ripple that serves as its focus, both ripple and reflection having as their nature instantaneousness and absence of substance; similarly creatures are like a reflection cast on the ocean of the heresy of the ego."

But after Nāgārjuna, between the first and fifth centuries of our era, the philosophic systems of Brahmanism had developed, and all of them rested on the notion of the *ātman*, that is of the soul or the ego endowed with a maximum of ontological fullness, substantial, eternal, universal, divine, identical with the absolute. And Hsüan-tsang also employs the first chapters of his treatise on *Radical Idealism* in destroying the Brahmanist systems in this respect, by trying to oppose them one against another; if, as the Brahmanist philosophers of the Vedantist school claim, the *ātman* is eternal, universal, omnipresent, identical with the Absolute, it is incapable of movement, and hence, how does it act? And if, as the Brahmanists of the *Vaiśeshika* and the *Sāṃkhya* schools think, it is a sort of spiritual atom, how can it move the immensity of space? If it is intelligence it cannot be eternal, for the mobility of intellectual phenomena appears to Hsüan-tsang to be in contradiction to the perdurability of substance. As to the direct perception of the *ātman* in the psychological consciousness, Hsüan-tsang holds that in this case, since the *ātman* becomes the object of perception, it must on that score, and in the same way as all other objects, be no longer considered as a substance, but as a totality of phenomena.

With Asaṅga and Vasubandhu the old Buddhist theory of the unreality of the ego has moreover

received fresh confirmation. More than ever the soul, the ego, the moral person, and all the notions that derive from it are battered down ." The individual," write Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, formulating the doctrine of the School, "exists as a notation (*praiñapti*), not as substance (*pudgala*)." The idea of the ego, they teach further on, has its origin in the sight of the human body ; but this sight, like all material perception, is an illusion. The School is here confronted with the argument of common sense—elder brother, and a more modest one, to the *Cogito ergo sum* : "The individual is, since it is he who feels, acts, experiences pleasure, knows, etc." The School replies : "No, for in that case it would be the agent of the sensations or thoughts, as conjunction (= relation) and as master (= substance). But if sensation is only possible through a conjunction of two terms, this simple relation cannot be the individual. And if the individual were 'the master' (= substance), it could not, as such, as permanent, cause to function the impermanent (which the phenomenon of knowledge is)." The individual is thus not he who sees, feels, etc., since he is neither permanent agent nor ephemeral function.

This doctrine of the unreality of the individual (*pudgala nairātmya*) was so dear to the hearts of Buddhists that it caused them to pass over what a Western mind would take to be an antinomy. Indeed, at the same time that they denied the soul, they accepted, like all Indians, moral responsibility pushed back into the past as far as infinity, and projected to infinity into the future, in virtue of the undisputed dogma of transmigration. The soul and the ego do not exist, and yet the human being transmigrates from reincarnation to reincarnation, carrying with him into each fresh existence the balance—merits or demerits—of his

preceding existences, with all their virtualities of recompense or expiation. One must, moreover, always keep this belief present in one's thought when one studies the Buddhistic "dogma" of the non-existence of the ego. To our mind it more than corrected and more than compensated in practice for the theoretical negations just enumerated.

However it may stand with these revenges of the vital instinct, Hsüan-tsang shows himself on this point, as on all the others, the docile pupil of his Indian masters. In the light of absolute idealism he reconstitutes the genesis of the ego and of the external world. "Through the (anterior) impressions which have left the ideas of soul and of world (*ātman-dharma*) in the mind, the mind, at the same time that it is born, develops into souls and into world. These images, although in the mind itself, appear, however, by the force of false notions, as if they were external. That is why beings, from all time, perceive, as if they were really soul and world, these images which are similar to the soul and to the world. In reality soul and world do not exist with an absolute existence, but only with a relative truth." Alone, he adds, the mind exists in so far as it manifests itself under the appearance of ego and under the appearance of world.

Pushing his analysis a step further, Hsüan-tsang finds the origin of the *ātman*, that is to say, of the notion of soul or ego, in the universal subconscious, in Sanskrit *ālaya vijñāna*, a term translated by M. Sylvain Lévi as "sense of the groundwork" and by M. de la Vallée-Poussin as "thought that receives". It is this sense of the universal psychological groundwork that, when elaborated in the phenomenal consciousness, gives birth to the image of a real *ātman*. The soul, as we shall see, will be the aspect that the cosmic subconscious assumes in its own eyes.

The spectacle of these idealist philosophers, these

mystic poets, these pietist monks, combating with all their might—at any rate in words—all conception of soul as a heresy is undoubtedly a somewhat curious one in our Western association of ideas. Certainly one might point out that their unconscious tendencies were perhaps by way of reversing their own positions ; it has been insinuated that, while preserving the negative postulates of the ancient Church, and while remaining faithful to the letter of Buddhist positivism, they found in notions like that of the thought that receives, sense of the groundwork or universal subconsciousness—whatever may be our translation of the term *ālaya vijñāna*—equivalents of the notion of *ātman*, which are adequate for feeling. "The *manas*," says Hsüan-tsang, "the individual ego, is attached to the *ālaya vijñāna* as to its *ātman*." But in spite of this unconscious and indirect restoration, it is evident that the condemnation of the soul and of the ego by the earliest sacred texts of ancient Buddhism was too explicit for the theorists of the *Mahāyāna* ever to be able to get beyond it. It is therefore necessary that our Western mentality should accustom itself to this spectacle of deeply religious minds, idealists, mystics, and pietists, combating to the end all notion of soul and of absolute.

These postulates once admitted, Hsüan-tsang will have an easy task in shattering the theses of philosophic Brahmanism—of the *Sāṃkhya* system in particular—in what concerns the modalities or hypostases with which the latter endows the absolute ego and Nature, the "essential qualities" (*guṇa*) of Nature, on the one hand, and on the other hand the components of the psychological and social ego, of the individual mind (*manas*) appearing on the surface of the universal subconscious. "These principles," replies Hsüan-tsang to the Brahmanist philosophers, "being constituted by a multiplicity, could not be real ; they

are fictitious, like an army or a forest." Elsewhere, Hsüan-tsang asks how the uniting of these modalities —the *guṇas* for nature, the faculties for the soul—can create single substances that are such as the *atman* or the cosmic substance, and his ingenious and witty argumentation does the greatest credit to the quality of his dialectics.

What finally, therefore, is the ego by definition in the system of the idealist School ? As we described it just now, the play of an illusion on the surface of the mental ocean. Vasubandhu and Hsüan-tsang reply in effect and in almost identical terms : " The thinking mind (*manas*) takes as object the universal subconscious (*ālaya vijñāna*) which is its support. It conceives of this latter as ' I ', as its soul (*ātman*) ; it conceives of the phenomena associated with the subconscious as ' mine ' (*ātmiya*)." In other words, the ego is the appearance beneath which thought perceives its ground, given that the latter is in no way an ontological reality, but only a storehouse and also an incessant flowing of phenomena.

Hsüan-tsang, however, was well aware of the difficulties to which he was exposed by the anti-substantialist postulate of his doctrine. And first of all, if no permanent ego exists, how explain memory, the perception of objects, feelings, etc. ? The Chinese metaphysician finds a way out by saying that all actual thought involves an anterior thought or " root-thought " (*mūlavijñāna*) which constitutes the basis of a homogeneous series and carries the germs of all mental phenomena which, in their turn, will produce other germs, and so on. And no doubt this is an admission in other terms of a psychological constant. As to the question of knowing what becomes of the act if we suppress the agent, of the phenomenon of representation if we suppress the thinking subject, Hsüan-tsang answers that the *ātman* of his adversaries,

being supposed immovable, could not be the seat of the act of representation which is by definition purely phenomenal. And he concludes as follows, with the whole School : " The truth is that beings are corporeal and mental series (*samtāna*) which by the force of their passions and the weight of their former sins, turn into destinies. At length, tortured by suffering and disgusted by this endless cycle, they seek and obtain *nirvāṇa*."

Are not the nihilist opponents of Asaṅga and Hsüan-tsang to some extent right in insinuating that the idealism of these two masters only seeks to destroy Brahmanist spiritualism in order to substitute for it, under another name, substantial equivalents?

But this is of no importance. From the point of view of the logic of the system, the result is achieved. The non-ego and the ego have disappeared together. The philosopher has forced thought to admit that it was it and it alone that took on the appearance of duality or, as Asaṅga says, the aspect of the apprehender and the aspect of the apprehensible. The ego and material phenomena have had to admit that they were not in themselves real things, but as Hsüan-tsang says, " entities of the reason." We have been taught that " internal thought develops like external things ", but with the addition at once of the statement that thought, moreover, is not internal to anything. Observe that thought, sole survivor after the shipwreck of everything else, may find itself, for this reason, in a fairly precarious position. Asaṅga is the first to recognize it (he must do so, indeed, in order to escape the attacks of the *Mādhyamika* " vacuitarians "). " As soon," he writes, " as the sage has realized that there is no other phenomenon to be laid hold of but thought, he also perceives that this Nothing-but-thought itself does not exist, since where there is no apprehensible there is no apprehender." Are

we then with Nāgārjuna and the *Mādhyamika* school to fall back into universal vacuity? Vasubandhu answers by a famous formula: "The *cittamātra*, the existence of pure idea, is established by the very knowledge that we have of the (substantial and objective) unreality of the idea." This again is the Buddhist *cogito ergo sum*; the pure idea corresponds to nothing real, pure idea is an illusion, therefore pure idea exists.

We perceive at once the importance of this argument, a veritable keystone of the system by which we pass from universal vacuity or, if you like, from *Mādhyamika* nihilism [1] to the absolute idealism of Hsüan-tsang.

At this point in the elaboration of the system the horizon begins to grow clearer.

On one side the ruins, all that the *Yogācāra*, in this respect the faithful inheritor of the *Mādhyamika*, has destroyed. Gone is all duality in the phenomenon of representation. According to the expression of Asaṅga there no longer exists either apprehender or apprehensible, or, in the language of Hsüan-tsang, either ego (*ātman*) or phenomena (*dharma*). Gone are the ego and the non-ego, the soul and the world.

On the other side, there is what the School has restored in its place; the ideality of all that it has substantially broken down.

The world and the ego being once dissociated, evaporated, there remain, indeed, their memory and their phantom, what M. Sylvain Lévi, translating Asaṅga, calls the Nothing-but-thought (*cittamātra*,

[1] It should be clearly understood that we only call the *Mādhyamika* "nihilist" here as a convenient term to borrow the expression of Fujishima. In reality, as we shall show in another work, we think wtih Professor Yamaguchi that the Nāgārjunan "vacuity" or "non-substantiality" in no way implies nihilism.

vijñaptimātra). There remains the plane of the ideals (*dharmadhātu*).

Before proceeding further, a preliminary observation, to which Hsüan-tsang invites us, is necessary, in view of the extreme finesse and shades of meaning into which all this Mahāyānist dialectic develops. If the *Yogācāra* philosopher presents us with things as being thought and nothing more (or better, as being *their* thought and nothing more), it is, as he warns us, in order to oppose to the total unreality of things the relatively greater reality of their thought. But he adds immediately that this very thought does not exist in itself, substantially; for to admit the absolute existence of thought would be, by a roundabout way, to condemn idealism itself. And whatever opinion one may have on the question, one cannot but delight in the play of this winged and subtle dialectic, this fluid metaphysic which almost evaporates in the hands of him who tries to grasp it.

The Ideals,[1] as they are given us by Asaṅga, are nothing—as he himself tells us—but the order of phenomena. Phenomena, we have seen, combine to create on the one hand the illusion of the ego, on the other the illusion of the external world. When the sage has exorcised this fallacious duality, when he has dispelled the magic of subject and object, of the ego and the world, there remains only the act of knowledge, functioning henceforth in the void—what Asaṅga calls the mental word—or better still, thought undifferentiated, undeterminate, and virtual, anterior to the subject, the object, and the act of knowledge. This is just what Asaṅga calls the *Plane of the Ideals*.

This impersonal and virtual knowledge, this Plane of the Ideals, can in its turn be sublimated. For if all

[1] Note, however, that this same term *dharmas* which, with M. Sylvain Lévi, we translate by "Ideals" is rendered by M. de la Vallée-Poussin as "phenomena".

is appearance—bodies, mind, differentiation—the ideals themselves are also appearances, imaginary, "similar to an optical illusion, a dream, a mirage, a shadow, an echo, the moon reflected in water." When all notion not only of substantial duality, but even of mental plurality, has been banished, we shall discover in the end, beneath the ideals, or rather in them, the "thusness" or Absolute Nature of things (*tathatā*) which is also their absolute vacuity.

We arrive here at one of the most delicate notions in the Mahāyānist philosophy. What precisely is this Absolute Nature of things, this *tathatā*, which plays so large a part in the system? It is a notion that is strangely complex in its apparent simplicity and, in a radical positivism, it has to fulfil the function of Absolute, and in an idealism which is in ceaseless flux, to fulfil the function of a permanent datum. Such a notion is almost impossible to define. In vain does Hsüan-tsang, in his treatise *On Idealism*, attempt by an accumulation and a balancing of contraries—being and non-being, ideality and reality, etc.—to arrive at an approximation to the Absolute Nature; the only plausible definition is that it is ineffable and inexpressible. And indeed "Absolute Nature" could not possibly be perceived in full light by the active intelligence. It can only be apprehended by the way of mystic communion in the penumbra of the subconscious.

But here arises the whole problem of Mahāyānist transcendence. Hsüan-tsang, wishing to make us realize the transcendence of the *tathatā*, tells us that the latter is superior to being as it is also to non-being. In the first chapters of his *Sūtrālaṃkāra*, Asaṅga likewise posits transcendence as an ineffable "non-duality", superior to being as well as to non-being. Let us note in parentheses that this definition of transcendence will involve an entirely new conception

of *nirvāṇa* : " In the transcendent sense," writes Asaṅga, " there is no distinction between transmigration and *nirvāṇa*." Such a doctrine, it will be seen, puts salvation at the immediate disposal of all pure hearts.

Having reached this point, the saint arrives at knowledge without differentiation, a supernatural state in which the human being apprehends directly and passes beyond the ego and the non-ego, transmigration and *nirvāṇa*, being and non-being—a state which Asaṅga properly terms ecstasy.

In truth, as soon as the philosopher has reached this state of absolute mental purity, his idealism gives place to his mysticism. The *Vijñānavādin* becomes a *Yogācāra*. Speaking of the Unique and the Ineffable, Asaṅga exclaims on a note of lyricism : " In truth, there is nothing else but He and the whole world does not know Him. How then has this strange folly of the world arisen, which causes men to cling to what does not exist (the ego and the non-ego) and to leave completely on one side what is ? " And he opposes to this Absolute Nature, to this sublime Plane of the Ideals, the second nature, made up of a fallacious plurality, with its essential error, the imaginary duality of subject and object. Absolute Nature finally offers the mind of the sage its awaited haven. The saint, liberated at one blow from the twofold falsehood of the ego and the world, will there find salvation, the mysterious Buddha-state.

Chapter XVIII

IN THE MYSTIC HEAVEN OF BUDDHISM

By universal and synthetic knowledge, by knowledge without differentiation, by direct communion with Absolute Nature, the sage has obtained supernatural power (*prabhāva*). Henceforth, in Asaṅga's own words, "he is perpetually in the Brahmic state, holy, divine, incomparable, sublime . . . The worlds with their creatures, with their creations, and their periodic destructions, he sees, all of them, as illusion, and he shows them as he will, by various procedures, for he has the Mastery. By emitting rays he causes the unfortunates who were suffering in hell to pass to heaven. By purifying those who have gone to be reborn in hell, he makes them to be reborn in heaven. By a supreme mastery he has conquered comprehension and has brought under his sway again the world that was no longer in possession of itself. His only delight is to bring salvation to creatures. He walks among the existences like a lion." [1]

In magnificent language Asaṅga insists on the infinite joys of Illumination, of the Buddha-state thus obtained: "By countless trials, by countless accumulations of Good, total knowledge is achieved. All obstacles disappear and the Buddha-state is revealed like a shrine of precious stones, great in power." Of the Buddha-state, however, as of the Absolute Nature just mentioned, no definition is possible. It is ineffable and cannot be glimpsed save in a stream of images. "Because it is the *raison d'être* of the Jewels of

[1] These quotations from Asaṅga are taken from the fine translation of M. Sylvain Lévi.

the Ideal, it has been compared to a mine of jewels ; because it is the sign of the harvests of the Good, it has been compared to a cloud. All ideals are the Buddha-state, since the Buddha-state is inseparable from the Nature of Things . . . The Buddha-state is the totality of all the Ideals. And at the same time it is beyond all ideals."

The being who has attained this perfection of wisdom dominates the world and takes pity on it. " Established there (in the Buddha-state) he casts his glance over the world as if he were on the summit of the high mountain. And he takes pity on all beings." For all beings, declares Asaṅga, are susceptible of being raised to the same summits : " The universality of the Buddha-state in the multitudes of beings is attested by the fact that it admits all of them into itself. As space is universal in the multitude of forms, so is it universal in the multitude of beings." Invisible in the majority of the creatures, it manifests itself suddenly in the Buddhas. " Like music," says Asaṅga again, " coming from instruments without anyone striking them, so does the preaching arise spontaneously in the Conqueror. As a jewel shows forth its own brilliance with no toil, so do the Buddhas spontaneously unfold their activities."

We are now reaching the last notion of the doctrine, that of the essence of the Buddhas, *raison d'être* and final cause of everything. One question, in fact, arose : In what does the personality of the Buddhas consist in relation to the Buddha-state, to the Supreme Wisdom which we have just posited ? " Their personality," replies Asaṅga magnificently, " consists in capital impersonality," adding, besides, that this transcendent Impersonality is no other than the Absolute Nature of things (*tathatā*). Also " although the Buddhas are innumerable, they mingle their unique activity." Certain late Japanese Buddhists, like the

adherents of the Tendai, restore in words as well as in tendency the Brahmanist ontology, and conclude that the soul of the Buddhas is the universal soul.

Asaṅga here encounters one of the most delicate problems of the doctrine, a problem often put by the non-Buddhist as well as by the faithful: Is the Buddha-state plenitude of Being or its total elimination? In other words, is *nirvāṇa*, the goal and the recompense of the Buddha-state, the Absolute or Not-Being? Asaṅga refuses to declare himself. He replies as a subtle metaphysician would: "The Buddha-state is neither existence nor non-existence. It is not existence since its characteristic is the non-existence of the individual and the phenomenal, and therein lies its very essence. And it is not to be said either that it is non-existence since it exists in so far as it has as nature the nature of things. Thus the question having been put as to whether the Buddha exists or no, there has been no dogma pronounced." Let us merely point out here this capital indecision, and note at the same time that, by the side of the ancient Hīnayānist conception of *nirvāṇa* as total cessation (*pratishṭhita*), Asaṅga and Hsüan-tsang posit a "*nirvāṇa*-which-is-not-cessation (*apratishṭhita*)," a fact which seems to be a good indication of their secret preferences . . .

It seems at times as though the thought of the Gandāhran philosopher is about to define itself. At certain places in his demonstration the Buddha-state appears to us almost as a Spinozist *natura naturans*, animating and lighting up at the same time the *natura naturata*: "The Being of the Buddha-state displays now the Wheel of the Law by hundreds and hundreds of openings, now integral Illumination, and now *nirvāṇa*. And yet it does not move from this spot, and it is He who does everything." Such a miracle is rendered possible by a sort of pre-established

harmony, for the Buddha-state of Asaṅga is, in certain respects, like the motionless and inactive god of Aristotle : " The Buddhas do not say to themselves : Here is one who is ripe for me, here is one whom I have to push into maturity. But it is the multitude of beings which, without any operator, advances towards full maturity by the Ideals of the Good, perpetually, in all places, on all sides . . ."

Another of Asaṅga's images explains how the Buddha-state reconciles in itself absolute unity and infinite plurality : " The Buddhas," he says, " are like the sun's rays which mingle their activity and are at once multiple and identical." And again : " As the world is lighted by the rays thrown out at one time by the sun's brightness, so the whole of the knowable is lighted up at one time by the knowledge of the Buddhas . . . Without effort the sun, by the rays it emits, far-reaching and bright, is active on all sides, in all places, for the ripening of the harvests ; thus the sun of the Ideal, by emitting the rays of the Ideals which prescribe Peace, is active on all sides, in all places, for the maturing of the creatures."

To render comprehensible the relations between the Buddha-state and the world, Asaṅga once again makes use of the theory—canonical in Mahāyānism—of the Three Bodies of the Buddha : the Essential Body or Plane of the Ideals (*dharmakāya*) undivided and common to all the Buddhas, who, in it, are undifferentiated ; the Personal Body which varies according to the " planes " of the different Buddhas (*Saṃbhogakāya*), and the metamorphic or magic body which alone appears in the incarnation of the various human Buddhas (*nirmāṇakāya*).

We see here the dawn of the theological reasons for Asaṅga's transcendental idealism. The essential body of the Buddhas, undifferentiated and universal, that body which is also the Plane of the Ideals, has as its

characteristic what the philosopher calls 'the knowledge of the mirror", pure knowledge in which the knower appears to himself as identical with the known, since it is "without me or mine", without limit and without end. It is in this pure and objectless knowledge that the Buddha-state is produced. And as the metaphysics of Buddhism are inseparable from its moral philosophy, Asaṅga adds that this absolute knowledge at once translates itself into All-loving-kindness and All-compassion.

With the same idea, Asaṅga combats the theory of the unique Buddha and that of the primordial Buddha. "It is impossible," he writes, "that there should have been only one Buddha, for then one alone among all the Bodhisattvas would reach Illumination, to the exclusion of all the rest. Why should that be? How could the merits of the Buddhas in no way serve to promote the other Bodhisattvas to the same rank? On the other hand one cannot suppose an original Buddha, for it is impossible to become Buddha without the merits of another Buddha." Nevertheless, Asaṅga adds that if the idea of a unique Buddha is absurd, the hypothesis of the plurality of Buddhas is no less so, since the Ideal Body (or Essential Nature) is common and undivided amongst all of them.

The Gandhāran philosopher thus reduces the crowd of popular Buddhas to the metaphysical principle of the single Buddha-state. "The waters of the rivers," he writes poetically, "appear separate because of the diversity of their beds, but once they have re-entered the Ocean they have only one bed, and are only one mass of water. So it is with the sages as soon as they have penetrated into the common Buddha-state." Such a system—to the extent to which its shifting outlines can be determined—seems very close to a kind of monism, at once mystic and without substance.

This nature of the *tathatā*, for us so fluctuating and baffling, is well characterized by Asaṅga when he says with infinite subtlety : " In the Quiddity are the non-existence of all the Ideals, which are imaginary, and also their existence, for the latter exists by the very fact of their non-existence. Existence and non-existence are, moreover, one. The *tathatā* is at once stained by reason of the incidental under-stains, and naturally quite pure. Differentiated and without differentiation, since it is beyond the range of all differentiation," etc.

This identity of contraries has at least one happy result : At this stage the Bodhisattva no longer makes any difference between himself and the creatures : " When, by the impersonality of the Ideals, he has penetrated their equality (their identity), he has always with regard to all beings the same thought as for himself. He makes no more difference between the ego and others. He desires equally the cessation of pain for himself and for others. And he no longer congratulates himself on being repaid, either by himself or by others."

We come here to the mystical relationship between the Bodhisattva and the soul of the devotee. Asaṅga celebrates in strophes of a high spiritual quality the flight of the creatures towards the ideal of the Buddha-state on the wings of Illumination. " The multitude, drawn by the Ideals, is led by the Compassionate Ones (the Buddhas) who act upon it through fascination, as do serpents." Or, in a similar strain of almost biblical vehemence, he shows us the sage " thrust forward by the Buddhas. It is they who establish him at the mouth of the Ideal, and taking him, so to speak, by the hair, snatch him from the cave of errors and forcibly place him within Illumination." Thereupon the devotee in his turn, " having entirely subjugated the world, sheds light upon

it like a great sun from the summit of his heights."

Then the poet-philosopher, in a different key, and singing in stanzas marked by an infinite tenderness, tells us the love of the Bodhisattvas for creatures, of their sublime and entire charity: "The Bodhisattva has in his innermost bowels love for creatures as one has love for an only son. As a dove cherishes her young and stays to take them under her wing, even so is the Compassionate One with creatures which are his children." Further on he says: "The world is not able to bear its own pain. How much less then is it able to bear the pain of all the others together! But it is the opposite with the Bodhisattva; for he is able to bear the pain of all other creatures all together, of as many as there are in the world. His love for creatures is the supreme marvel of the worlds, or rather it is not, since other and self are for him identical, since creatures are to him as himself."

With what a stream of images does Asaṅga celebrate the mystic states thus reached! For the metaphysician in him is joined with a marvellous poet. The supreme initiation to which he has shown the way, is for him "the anointing of consecration". The mystical union finally obtained is "the Union like to the Diamond"; since, like unto the diamond, no duality can break through it.

We now see the capital importance of the part played by the notion of the Bodhisattva in the doctrine of the School. The Bodhisattvas, the "Beings of Wisdom" who are candidates for the complete Buddha-state, and who in the meanwhile act as intermediaries between it and the world, are, so to speak, the keystone of the system. Here the purely abstract metaphysics of the *Mahāyāna* suddenly betrays a frankly pietistic feeling. If the Compassionate Ones have come, the reason doubtless is that they answer a need of the human heart. The preparation for the salvation

of the individual which had satisfied the primitive Community, and which still satisfied the Hīnayānists —the "Listeners" as Hsüan-tsang contemptuously calls them—could no longer suffice for the aspirations of souls. To make the Buddha himself intervene might appear illogical to some, since he was in the final nirvāṇa state. But the Bodhisattvas remained always present, and quite near. Heroes of saintliness, they were waiting, and by watching over the world won for themselves the right to attain in their turn to the final Illumination. Avalokiteśvara, "He who looks down from on high"; Maitreya, "sprung from the luminous Mitra," who is destined to be the Buddha of the times to come; Bhaishajyaguru, the saviour of the ailing; Kshitigarbha, the ever-merciful judge of souls; Mañjuśrī, who with his flaming sword cleaves the demons in twain and saves the prisoners of hell, all of them bent lovingly over the suffering of humanity to obtain for it that *raison d'être* of Buddhism, a Refuge.

"The Bodhisattva," writes Asaṅga, "every moment and for every creature, would fain make worlds as numerous as the grains of sand of the Ganges, and all filled with the seven jewels, in order to give them as gifts. For the Bodhisattva's love of giving is insatiable. The Bodhisattva takes more joy in giving than creatures in receiving." The poet-philosopher insists on this point. "This love of the Bodhisattva is his joyous love in giving. The Bodhisattva looks upon creatures, whom he thus serves by giving, as more beneficent than himself, telling himself that they are the framework of the all-perfect and insurpassable Illumination."

About the time when Hsüan-tsang was completing his treatise on absolute idealism, another Buddhist

saint, Śāntideva, was about to give expression in a magnificent poem to the mystic doctrine of Mahāyānism. The Chinese pilgrim might have met this young man when he crossed into western India. Śāntideva was the son of a king of Surāshṭra, the present Gujarāt, and he flourished under the reign of Śila, the son of the Emperor Harsha. The day on which he was going to receive the royal consecration he saw in a dream the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, the same who had in the past appeared to Hsüan-tsang. At the bidding of the apparition he renounced glory and fled into the jungle, where he embraced the monastic life. No one so well as he has evoked the mystic heavens of Buddhism. For an example, we may look at the following hymn, which is a kind of vocational call to future Buddhas, in the fine translation of M. Finot :—

"O that I might become for all beings the soother of pain !

"O that I might be for all them that ail, the remedy, the physician, the nurse, until the disappearance of illness !

"O that by raining down food and drink I might soothe the pangs of hunger and thirst, and that in times of famine I might myself become drink and food !

"O that I might be for the poor an inexhaustible treasure !

"All my incarnations to come, all my goods, all my merits past, present, and future, I renounce with indifference, that so the end of all beings may be attained.

"I give up my body to all beings to do what they will. Let them always strike it, treat it with despite, cover it with dust. Let them make of my body a plaything, a thing of mockery and jesting. I have given them my body. What matters it to me ! Let them make

it do whatever may please them. If their hearts are wroth against me and bear me ill-will, let this help me to bring about the ends of all. May those who calumniate me, harm me, and jeer at me, may these and all the others win the Bodhi !

" O that I might be the defender of the forsaken, the guide of voyagers, and for those who long for the Other Bank, the boat, the causeway, the bridge ! O that I might be the lamp of those who need a lamp, the bed of those who need a bed, the slave of those who need a slave, the Stone of Miracle, the Plant which Heals, the Tree of Wishes, the Cow of Desire ! "

In Asaṅga, too, we find the impulses of a similar emotion—for example, in his definition of the pity of the Bodhisattvas : " The Compassionate One suffers in considering that the world is pain. He suffers and takes pity. He knows exactly what it means ; he knows exactly what pain is and by what means to make it stop. The water which floods his compassion is goodness . . . Through compassion the Bodhisattva suffers in the pains of others. How then could he be happy, if he did not put his happiness in creatures ? That is why the Bodhisattva brings about his own happiness by bringing happiness in others . . . One who enjoys himself feels less satisfaction in his enjoyment than does the Compassionate One in lavishly giving, his spirit filled with the three felicities."

We here come upon the essence of Buddhism, which is pity going even beyond justice : " Pity for the wretched," exclaims Asaṅga in a splendid litany, " pity for the wrathful, pity for the hot-tempered, pity for the heedless, pity for the servants of matter, pity for stubbornness in error ! "

Śāntideva, in his *Journey towards the Light*, treats magnificently of a similar thought : " The author of the most terrible crimes escapes forthwith from

their consequences by leaning upon the Bodhi, as one escapes from a great danger through the protection of a hero. Like the conflagration of the end of the world, it immediately consumes the greatest sins . . . Men plunge into suffering to escape from suffering ; through desire for happiness they foolishly destroy their happiness, just as if they were their own enemies. They hunger for happiness and are tortured in a thousand ways. Where shall one find him who will fill them with every kind of happiness, will cut short all their tortures and stop their folly ? Where shall one find so good a man, such a friend, and such merit ? We praise him who recognizes a service done by another. What shall we say of the Bodhisattva who is generous without our begging him ? I pay homage to the bodies of the Bodhisattvas. I take refuge in these mines of happiness whom we cannot even offend without receiving from them some reward."

I cannot refrain from quoting also, in the inspired translation of M. Sylvain Lévi, the marvellous hymn to the Bodhisattva, with which Asaṅga ends his work :—

" Thou art free from every obstacle, thou hast mastery over the whole world, O Muni, thou occupiest all the knowable with thy Knowledge ! Thy thought is liberated. Homage to Thee !

" Thou hast impassivity, thou hast no attachments, thou art in mystical union (*samādhi*). Homage to Thee !

" All beings, when they have seen thee, recognize that thou art truly the man ! Thou makest perspicuity by but being seen. Homage to Thee !

" Night and day thou watchest over the world. Thou art given over to the Great Compassion. Thou seekest only Salvation. Homage to Thee !

" Thou hast achieved the transcendent way. Thou hast gone out from the whole earth, thou hast become the captain of all beings, thou art the Liberator of all beings.

"Given over to inexhaustible and peerless virtues, thou dost manifest thyself in the worlds and heavenly spheres, and yet thou remainest invisible to the gods even as to men!"

What do the metaphysical negations of the doctrine matter to us henceforth? Religious feeling at this pitch of intensity raised the soul above itself and truly transformed the initial idealism of Asaṅga and of Hsüan-tsang into an ardent mysticism. Whether this was intended or not, the Buddha-state here played the part of the Divine. Present in the hearts of all, and common to all, it united all in an ineffable communion.

It should be noticed to what an extent Buddhist charity emerged strengthened by such conceptions. For this mystic teaching ended logically in a thirst for charity whose unappeased longings were to be sung by Śāntideva in burning stanzas:—

"This insignificant particle which causes to arise in us the virtues of a Buddha, is present in all creatures, and it is by reason of this Presence that all creatures are to be revered.

"Moreover, what other means have we of acquitting ourselves towards the Buddhas, those sincere friends and incomparable benefactors, than to please creatures?

"For creatures they lacerate their bodies, they enter into hell. What is done for creatures is also done for them. Therefore we must do good even to our worst enemies.

"Seeing that our masters themselves devote themselves unreservedly to their children's welfare, how could I, even I, show these sons of our masters pride instead of the humility of a slave? . . .

"From to-day, therefore, in order to please the Buddhas, with my whole soul I make myself a servitor of the world. May the mass of mankind set its foot

on my head and kill me, if so be that the Protector of the world is satisfied !

" To serve the creatures is to serve the Buddhas, it is to realize my end, to eliminate pain from the world, it is the vow by which I bind myself ! "

And as a conclusion, this almost Christian thought : " If the suffering of many is to cease by the suffering of a single one, the latter must invite it out of compassion for others and for himself." (Translated by Finot.)

Thus, by the terrestrial paths of the great pilgrimages as well as by the spiritual way of mysticism and of art, the sages of furthest Asia journey towards the land of their dream. Mysterious voices were heard calling to them :—

" For the human caravan which follows the path of life, greedy for happiness, behold the banquet of happiness prepared, at which all comers may satisfy themselves."

These lines of Śāntideva might close our exposition. This is not the place to judge of the doctrine of the *Mahāyāna* from the point of view of its philosophic or religious value. Let us admit, at least, that it inspired sublime devotion, created marvellous images, and that it was in the highest degree—as art and history bear witness—generative of goodness and beauty.

There is, moreover, in these matters, a testimony which is perhaps more precious than that of thinkers and poets. It is that of the humble folk who found in the Buddhist promises a little consolation and hope. Let us listen to their voice that rises from the depths of the past on the funeral style, the commemorative statue and the Chinese ex-voto of the Wei or T'ang period.

On a sculptured stone figuring a Buddha between two Bodhisattvas, we read : " I, a servant of Buddha,

Ts'ui Shan-tê, have long been abandoned and left forlorn by my dead parents. Before a tree shaken by the wind I think long of my parents and I question heaven without obtaining any reply. I wish I might give myself up to the spirits that they might snatch me away from my lonely path, and so I give the wealth of my family to have this *stele* with images made with all reverence. On the front of it I have engraved the image of Maitreya (Mi-lo-Fo), behind that of Kshiti-garbha (Ti-tsang). I hope that happiness will spread among the living and the dead, and that the animals as well as the creatures endowed with feeling will all attain the fruits (of the merits of the Bodhisattva)." This melancholy and touching prayer was written in the first year of the Hsien-hêng period, which is our year 670, "by the grandfather Ts'ui Fa-ying, with all his family."

Or again : " Under the great T'ang dynasty, the second year of the Ch'ui-Kung period (686), in the eighth month and on the eighth day. The Dark Door (Buddhism) is deep and solitary. Its doctrine is unique, expressed in subtle words, and the principles of its Law are profound as the Void . . . The Buddhist Yang Chih-yuan and his sister, for the benefit of their deceased aunt, have had an image of Buddha in stone, made with all reverence, in order that all their family may serve Buddha with their whole heart."

Is there anything more moving than these humble voices speaking to us across the centuries and from out of the tomb, sharing with us in this way their anxieties and their hope ? Voices raised in prayer to the Refuge, they prove to what extent the mysticism of an Asaṅga and of a Hsüan-tsang corresponded to the invincible desire for consolation, latent at the bottom of our hearts. Voices raised in prayer from the deep of the past, voices of our brothers, poor human voices . . .

Chapter XIX

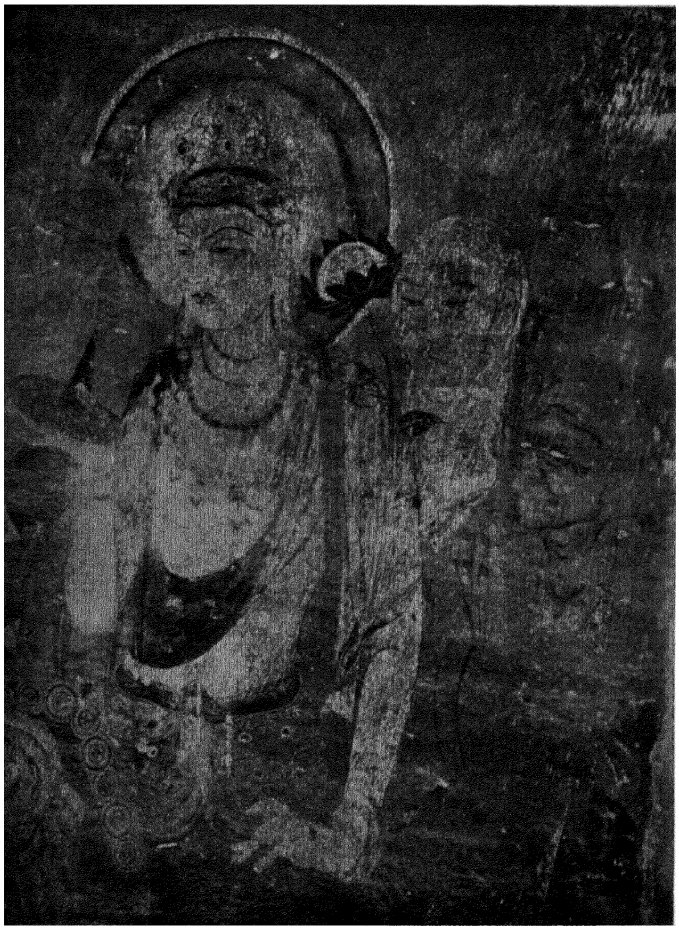
THE REVELATION OF INDIAN ART

The metaphysic of the *Mahāyāna* had created a new vision of things.

The external world had dispersed like a dream—it now hovers but faintly before the eyes of the sage, like the strip of vapour or the sea of cloud which, in the Sung sketches in Indian ink, dull the outlines and blot out the horizons. The essence of the universe, ultimate reality itself, stood out now only as a vision seen in dreams, like those abrupt mountains in the landscapes of Hsia Kuei or Ma Lin, whose grand, ideal lines rise at indeterminate distances against the unreality of the horizons.

On this background of distances and mists, on which the materiality of the world is disintegrated into a filmy ideality, a sage in the foreground pursues his solitary meditation. Over his impassive features flits the half-smile of supreme wisdom before the universal vanity. His gaze, animated with such an intense interior life, is as though lost in the immensity of the aerial depths, and void of all material content. It is because, like the face of the world, the soul of the sage has emptied itself of all concrete reality. Freed from the attachments of the ego, his transitory personality has been dissolved, or rather has become impersonalized, and the pure ideals into which it has melted have gone to join the ideality of the universe.

What then remains of the world and of the human soul? In the case of the soul as in that of the world, we find ourselves in the midst of that ocean of clouds which travellers depict to us as moving from some



[*Photo "Hōryūji"*

A BODHISATTVA

From the Japanese publication "Hōryūji"

Himalayan peak towards infinite distance above the valleys of Kashmir.

But suddenly the mists are lit up. Their unsubstantial and grey fluidity covers under the magic of the suns a radiance and a colour such as the world of concrete forms will never know. A universe more beautiful than those which we know rises fabulously up there beyond the last ridges of the summits. In this way Mahāyānist idealism has been transfigured by the apparition of the Bodhisattvas.

All the rest is only appearance and dream. But the finest dream of all is that all remains. In the disintegration of the world and of the ego, their appearance is suddenly found to cover a supernatural radiance. What matters it that all things have disappeared since they are there to comfort souls ? Or rather, Buddhists will say, it is a gain, since it is the disappearance of things that has been able to give birth and precision to their image. Tender and marvellous shapes whose brightness the world of concrete forms would have prevented us from seeing, they now shine in this sublimated atmosphere—and all art is transformed by their presence.

Let us listen, in M. Finot's fine translation, to the song of Śāntideva : " All the flowers and fruits and simples, all the treasures of the universe, the pure and delicious waters, the mountains made of precious gems, the solitudes of the woods, the woodbine gleaming with its finery of flower, the trees whose branches bend under the weight of their fruits, the perfumes of the divine and human worlds, the trees of wishes and the trees of precious stones, the lakes adorned with lotus and decked with swans, the wild and cultivated plants and the countless beauties scattered throughout the immensity of space, all these things which belong to no one, I take them in spirit, and offer them to the Great Saints and to their Sons. May

they, who are worthy of the finest offerings, accept them. May they have pity on me, They, the Great Compassionate Ones! . . . In the perfumed bathrooms which bewitch the eyes with their pillars gleaming with jewels and their dazzling pearl-embroidered curtains, with their floor of pure bright crystal, with numerous urns encrusted with countless gems, and filled with flowers and odorous water, I prepare the bath of the Buddhas and of their Sons to the sound of songs and of music.

"With peerless stuffs impregnated with incense and washed from all stain I wipe their bodies, and I clothe them in bright and balmy robes.

"With soft, fine, and bright celestial garments, and with varied ornaments I deck Samantabhadra, Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, Kshitigarbha, and the other Bodhisattvas.

"With exquisite perfumes, whose aroma penetrates the immensity of the universe, I anoint the bodies of all the Buddhas, gleaming like purified, polished, and burnished gold.

"I offer them torches, precious stones set on golden lotuses, and along the perfume-covered floor I scatter a heap of lovely flowers.

"I offer to these Merciful Ones a multitude of aerial chapels adorned with garlands of pearls and resounding with melodious hymns . . . I make gift to the Great Saints of lofty parasols with precious stones and gold handles, of costly shape and radiant brightness.

"Formed in the hearts of the large, perfumed, and fresh lotuses, and developing their bright bodies, the Bodhisattvas issue from the flower-cups as they open to the rays of the Saint and are born under his eyes in their perfect beauty . . .

"Behold! raising their eyes at the sight of the blazing Vajrapāṇi upright in the sky, the damned

feel themselves delivered from their sins, and fly t
join him with joyous haste.

"Behold ! a shower of lotuses rains down, mingle
with scented water. What bliss ! Under its delug
the fire of the hells is seen to die down. 'What i
this ?' ask the damned with a sudden wave of delight
'It is the apparition of Padmapāṇi ! May it shov
itself to us !'

"'Brothers,' they exclaim, 'we are called unt
life. Here comes, bringing peace into Gehenna,
young prince fillet-crowned. [It is Mañjuśrī.] Lool
upon him ! Under the lotuses of his feet gleam th
diadems of hundreds of prostrate gods ; his eyes ar
bedewed with pity ; upon his head a shower o
flowers rains down from the lovely palaces in whicl
resound the songs of thousands of *apsaras* who celebrat
his praise . . .'"

These strophes of the Buddhist poet might serv
as a commentary on the frescoes of Ajaṇṭā. Thi
comparison is justified by the fact that Śāntideva wa
born in Valabhī, which is very near the Mahratt
district in which the celebrated grottos were sculpture
and that he was probably a contemporary of th
unknown masters who painted in this region th
marvellous figures of the Bodhisattva of Grotto I.

Is not the Mañjuśrī evoked by Śāntideva th
"beautiful Bodhisattva" whom we see on the lef
of the back wall ? Behind him, rising one abov
the other, are the "aerial chapels" glimpsed b
the author of the *Journey to the Light*, pavilion
with little delicate columns, emerging from th
midst of graceful palm trees, and further awa
other fairy buildings, great rocks, fashioned an
almost geometrical, "forming, as it were, corbel
and shady niches where spirits of all kinds spor
in amorous couples." From this dream setting

the Bodhisattva rises up. His head is crowned with a *kirīṭa-mukuṭa*, a tall head-dress in the shape of a tiara in gold filigree. Round his neck a pearl necklace, on his fore-arm a bracelet of ribbon, round the hips striped cotton drawers. The shoulders of Olympian breadth, the faultless torso, supple and long, the Apollonian nobility and serenity of the face spell the "Conqueror" in the plenitude of his strength. And he is likewise a Prince Charming, a hero of Hindu tale, with gestures of supreme elegance; the right hand delicately raises the symbolic blue lotus, the left arm is stretched out, the hand resting lightly on the hip. The physiognomy, attentive and grave, is marked by an infinite sweetness. The pupils are half closed, and the glance strangely lingering gazes down over the sorrow of the world. The face also looks down, the head slightly inclined over the left shoulder, in an attitude of pity and tenderness. Finally the mouth, firm and pure in line, wears a very complex expression, ranging from divine serenity to human sadness at the sight of suffering, the total impression remaining one of immense sympathy. It is truly "the hero adorned with modesty and virility" of whom Asaṅga spoke to us above, a manly and suave figure which would suffice—even had all the writings of the *Mahāyāna* disappeared—to give us, together with the soul of the past centuries, the feeling of the vast pity of Buddhism.

The graceful creatures surrounding the Bodhisattva of Grotto I participate in his atmosphere. The young princess—no doubt his wife—who is seen on the right, naked to the waist and like him wearing on her head the royal tiara, displays the same pensive attitude with the same suavity of line. Even the pairs of spirits in the background, seated two by two in the attitude of the Śivas and Pārvatīs of Ellora, breathe the same religious atmosphere in the gentleness of

[*Photo "Hōryūji"*

A BODHISATTVA

From the Japanese publication "Hōryūji"

their bowed forms. The tenderness of their light caresses fades still further into mystic gestures, so deeply are they imbued with the spirit of devotion and silence.

And it is only a question here of one among twenty of the apparitions in the first grotto. After the "beautiful Bodhisattva" there looms before us the great figure that adorns the back wall of the principal hall, on the right of the vestibule. Whether it is a Bodhisattva, as we believe, or a mere *dānapati*, wearing on his head the royal *mukuṭa* of sumptuously wrought gold, after once seeing him we can no longer escape from that thought which for thirteen centuries has lived in the shadows of Ajaṇṭā, a life of such strange and such intense silence. Beneath the dome of that immense brow on which is traced like a celestial bow a great meditative line running right round the eyebrows, the lids are half closed. The glance, thus shielded, seems to be plunged back into the interior Essence, into the ineffable Buddha-state—a glance which sees into the beyond, a glance that haunts, heavy with all the metaphysical thought of the *Mahāyāna*, weighted, in its ardent fixity, with all the virtualities of the cosmic play, and vanishing within into the vacuity of substance.

The art of Ajaṇṭā thus reveals itself to us as the very illustration of the mystic doctrine of the *Mahāyāna*. And wherever the *Mahāyāna* has penetrated, it has brought with it the same æsthetic. Thus to-day at Bōrōbudur, at Tun-huang, at Lung-mên, at Nara, it is the ideal of the Great Church, the dream of the Asaṅgas and the Hsüan-tsangs that painters and sculptors bring to life again before our eyes.

Only those who forget the intimate relations established by the Buddhist pilgrims across half Asia could be surprised at this immense artistic

irradiation. The journeys and narrations of a Hsüan-tsang and an I-ching have shown us with what facility travelling took place at that time by land or by sea, between China and India. Moreover the evidence of Hsüan-tsang and I-ching attests the importance attached by the pilgrims to works of art. The thought that preoccupied them, as much as that of bringing back Sanskrit texts, was that of finding Indian statues and paintings.

We have seen, notably, the importance in I-ching's account of the Sumatran-Javanese kingdom of Śrīvijaya, the present Palembang. It was a kind of second India where the Chinese pilgrims made a halt on the outward journey as well as on their return, in order to perfect themselves in the study of Sanskrit or to translate the texts brought back from the Ganges. We shall not be surprised, therefore, to find in the reliefs of Bōrōbudur, in the eighth or ninth century, the same inspiration, the same atmosphere, the same faces as a century earlier in the frescoes of Ajaṇṭā. Turn the pages of Krom's albums and look at the hundreds of reliefs of Bōrōbudur with all their Bodhisattvas. Beneath the tall royal tiara, with their slender limbs, their long elegant figures, their graceful gestures of clemency and sweetness, their nonchalant attitudes, " seated Indian fashion " amongst the dais and cushions, the Sons of the Buddhas appear just the same there as at Ajaṇṭā—faces of irreproachable Indo-European nobility, at times a little disenchanted, as though weary of their own perfection and only aspiring to bend down to the suffering of creatures. Around them, in a similar attitude of contemplation, here maintained even in the tenderness of passion, the same processions of women as at Ajaṇṭā, recumbent and inclined nude figures, with a dreamy grace and the same gestures of fervour and of beauty. And for

background the same somewhat unreal constructions in which the Gothic stone lace-work manages to produce the same airy effects as did once, in fresco, the fabulous palaces of Ajaṇṭā.

We shall find the same associations again at Tun-huang, on the frontier of Turkestan and China.

There has been too marked a tendency to see in the paintings brought back from the celebrated grottoes only the work of artisans. In reality, we know of very noble works among the banners and the frescoes of the Pelliot and Aurel Stein missions. It is not possible to remain unmoved before these Bodhisattvas of the end of the T'ang period, which, although obviously inferior to the paintings of Ajaṇṭā and Nara, nevertheless constitute invaluable testimony as to the past. We are thinking here of some Samantabhadra, still purely Indian, with bare torso, in his long draperies of faded green or pale yellow, of those Kshitigarbhas bearing the Pearl, already more Chinese, but so elegant in their classic drapery, with its red tones still so fresh. Works of faith before which no doubt the pilgrims of yore meditated, possibly pronouncing before them the ardent invocations of Śāntideva . . .

Furthermore, we see the unfolding, still more reminiscent, of the very paradises glimpsed by Sāntideva and Hsüan-tsang. In one of these paradises of Avalokiteśvara of the Pelliot mission in the Musée Guimet, we have the whole dream of the great monks of old living again before our eyes. Here is the Bodhisattva in all his glory, an irradiation of old gold in which the faithful could see the perpetual miracle of his providence, in the forty arms holding the forty attributes of the Compassionate One. At the foot of the mystic lotus from which emerges the Bodhisattva, a *preta*, a damned soul, is receiving, as in the poem of Śāntideva, the drop of the dew of salvation.

And all round the immense aureole surrounding the Being of wisdom, we see the thronging assembly of saints, gods, and spirits. Above, with the Buddhas of the Five Regions, the faery Apsaras come from Vedic India to the very threshold of mediaeval Kan-su to don there the red dress of fair young Chinese girls. Lower down, to left and right, the Indian gods Brahmā, Indra, and Śiva, combining in type and costume Indian memories and a beginning of Chinese influence. Then the Buddha of future ages, Maitreya, a gentle and beautiful young Chinese bonze represented with clasped hands, in a red and white scarf, against a garnet-coloured halo. Then the holy religious Vasubandhu, the father of Mahāyānist idealism, depicted here in the form of a kind old man in Indian costume, kneeling with clasped hands on the left, and quite close to the Bodhisattva. At the two lower corners two Vajrapāṇis, protectors of the Law, are fighting, in a tall red flame, with two little demons (likewise charming) with the heads of elephants or wild boars. In the lower plane, on the right, is the monk Tao-ming in adoration before an amiable Kshitigarbha, in a green and red dress, at whose feet stands the Golden Lion. On the left the donor of the picture, an excellent Chinese mandarin of the year 981, with his votive casket of perfume, held up in this frontier-station, who still wears the costume of the T'angs.

We have the same mystic visions in the paradises of Avalokiteśvara brought from Tun-huang to the British Museum by Sir Aurel Stein. One of them, among others, dating from 864, is a pure fairyland. In an immense circle of old rose the Bodhisattva sits enthroned on the lotus, his head encircled by a starry halo ; his countenance, which is still Indo-European, creates an impression of serenity and gravity that are truly supernatural. The naked bust

[*Photo "Hōryūji"*

HEAD OF A BODHISATTVA

From the Japanese publication "Hōryūji"

and torso still possess irreproachable tenderness with the amber-pale flesh tints, verging on brown. The legs in the sitting position called " the lotus posture " (*padmāsana*) are draped in violet-coloured robes. Above the Bodhisattva, to right and left, in the two discs of a rosy sun drawn by horses and of a yellow moon borne by birds, two charming divinities reveal their naked and delicious torsos. Similarly, below, at each side, in lotuses, two other figures, one of whom is an ascetic with a face marked by a strange spirituality, raise their right arms in token of adoration towards the Compassionate One. Tender and marvellous images which, with their radiation of old gold and faded rose, move us still from the depths of the past. And what must the impression have been that they produced in the centuries of faith on the ardent souls of the readers of Śāntideva, of I-ching, and of Hsüan-tsang . . . ?

Let us cross the seas and follow on their return journey the pious pilgrims who, like Dôshô, brought back from China to the Nippon archipelago, together with Hsüan-tsang's teachings, the Mahāyānist cult. On the frescoes of the Kondô, the golden temple of Hôryûji, at Nara, we shall see the same supernatural figures as at Ajaṇṭā.

Superhuman in beauty beneath the immense aureole that surrounds their faces, with the Hindu tiara of chased gold or the flower-decked *mukuṭa*, these heroes of saintliness preserve the inexpressible grace with which the land of India adorned them. As in the case of their brothers of Ajaṇṭā, the Apollonian nobility of their features, and the reposeful sweetness of their countenance in no way detracts from their character of Olympian strength. Like Śākyamuni, the spiritual father of them all, they remain the " Lions of Mankind ". Perhaps, even, Japan has

accentuated both the Aryan purity of their countenance and the voluptuous gravity of a Prince Charming that characterizes them. There is such triumphant elegance in their Indian hip-line, as also in the richness of the necklaces and bracelets contrasting with the pallor of their flesh, such manly gentleness in the shoulders, the naked busts and torsos, sometimes less slender perhaps, but also better welded than those of Ajaṇṭā.

Above all, in these splendid bodies at once haughty and tender, in these Olympians of an idealist religion, the pride of eternal youth is so impregnated with intellectual gravity, so penetrated by the sentiment of the universal vanity, so mature in religious feeling and fiery mysticism, that now and then there emanates from them a kind of weariness of life. As at Ajaṇṭā, the ample line of the brows in a meditative curve over the forehead seems to spread wings for a flight to all the problems of metaphysics. And again, as at Ajaṇṭā, what inner mystery is hidden behind those lids, slightly lowered, but nevertheless allowing that unfathomable glance to pierce through ; what word is hushed on those lips that know the vanity of all things, and preserve a silence of expectation, full of sweetness and compassion ?

And, finally, the gestures ! What mystic feeling trembles in their gracefulness that is almost haughty in its purity ! The gesture of the slender, outstretched arm, with the hand delicately opened on a level with the hip, and bearing an immense flowering lotus-stalk, springing up all at once ; the gesture "of absence of fear," the "reassuring gesture" which speak so significantly in these grand superhuman figures worthy of Leonardo, of salvation and escape. And lastly, the gestures of supplicating hands, not properly joined as in our Christian art, not simply resting one palm against the other, as in the Indian *añjali mudrā*, but merely allowing the tips of the fingers to intertwine

with infinite delicacy. The gestures of Hôryûji and Ajaṇṭā, gestures of inner meditation, of detachment and of tenderness, gestures of faith in which lies the whole soul of the Mahāyānist ages.

When we leave these visions of the beyond, it will be almost like coming back to earth to evoke the Sino-Japanese Buddhist sculpture of the T'ang epoch. And yet how deep is the harmony that is still to be found between the statuary of Lung-mên and Nara, and the thought of that great epoch !

That the T'ang art of Lung-mên is no longer as fine in its spirituality as that of the Wei, we cannot deny. But yet what beauty there is in the heads of the tiaraed Bodhisattvas of the eighth century in China, in the Stoclet and Doucet collections ! Are these simple, strong, pure lines unworthy of the ideal of Ajaṇṭā ? Is the arch of the conventionalized eyebrows other than that at Hôryûji ? The still mouth, the half-closed eyes, surely bespeak no less plainly the lofty Mahāyānist meditation ? And, finally, the somewhat cold nobility and serenity of the type, combined with the unequalled sweetness of the expression, surely symbolize, here again, the alliance of primitive Buddhist tenderness with the transcendence of the new metaphysic of the *Mahāyāna*.

And does not some " monk with *patra* " high-relief in pottery in the former Goloubev collection, simple, direct, fervent, and rugged as a Gothic statuette, breathe all the ardour of the great pilgrims whose history we have retraced ? One evening when we were following in thought the itinerary of Hsüan-tsang did we not see the Master of the Law passing before our eyes in the guise of this great monk ?

Let us go further : as a symbol of the almost overgrown ideal constructions of the *Mahāyāna*, may we not also quote the colossal Buddha of Lung-mên,

that dates from this very period with which we are dealing (672–76)? Beneath the immense flame halo that surrounds his head, the brow emerging far above human things, the eyes this time no longer lowered over the creatures, but looking out beyond the world, beyond the ego, into the unfathomable inner and cosmic vacuity, it is the whole of the *Mahāyāna*, a *Mahāyāna* which even, at these heights, has almost ceased to be specifically Buddhist, in order to become universal . . .

Even the roughest terra-cottas become at times animated for us by unsuspected spiritual life, when we read on the pedestal of one of them the ex-voto inscription: "Under the dynasty of the great T'angs, with the clay of benefaction has been moulded this image, as though the beauty of Buddha enveloped it."

It is only too true, however, that T'ang realism, the fruit of an epic century and the heritage of a warlike and victorious society, had an unfavourable influence on Buddhist sculpture. There again, as in painting, it is to Japan that we must go to see the real masterpieces of religious art. It would suffice to quote as example the *Bonten*, a dry lacquered terra-cotta from the Sangwetsudo at Nara, with contemplative countenance, joined hands, and drapery which, like the expression of the man himself, is all purity, all simplicity, all sweetness, and the very soul of prayer.

Or again, to turn to something of higher spiritual value, take the *Mirôku Bosatsu*, a sculpture in wood of the seventh century, in the Chûgûji of Hôryûji. The naked bust is so smooth and so pure that it seems non-material. The rounded folds of the robe over the leg are so skilfully manipulated that they give an impression of fluidity. One leg is crossed over the other. The left hand rests on this leg. The right supports the

[*Photo by the Archaeological Survey of Java*

JAVANESE STATUE OF THE PRÂJÑAPARAMITÂ
(Leyden Museum)

[*Photo by the Archaeological Survey of Java*

JAVANESE STATUE OF THE PRÂJÑAPARAMITÂ
(Leyden Museum)

face. The eyes, half closed, dream of far-off things. It is Meditation itself.

On the other hand, this great tradition of Mahāyānist art continued also at Java until the eve of its Islamization. The marvellous statue in the Museum at Leyden, representing the Prajñā Pāramitā, that is, the Perfection of Sapience, as M. Sylvain Lévi translates it, the Holy Wisdom of Buddhism, is from Singhasāri, thirteenth century. In this work the doctrinal power, the elegant simplicity, the spiritual vitality and also the beauty, perhaps a little cold for all its sweetness, conjure up, yet again, a sort of Oriental Gothic. It is as if, on the threshold of new times, we had, as it were, the thought of Asaṅga, of Vasubandhu, and of Hsüan-tsang, rising once again to tell a forgetful world of the grandeur of the Buddhist Middle Ages.

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