

ART. X.—*Vaisāli*. By VINCENT A. SMITH, M.R.A.S.,
late of the Indian Civil Service.

WHEN discussing the position of Kuśinagara I was compelled by the necessity of avoiding undue prolixity to assume without proof the correctness of the current belief that the ancient and famous city of Vaisāli (Vesāli) is now represented by the ruins at Basār and the neighbouring villages in the Muzaffarpur District of North Bihār.¹

The evidence in favour of the current belief was presented by Cunningham in such an unconvincing fashion that it was impossible for his readers to feel assured of the identity of Vaisāli and Basār.² At one time I felt doubts on the subject myself. Professor Rhys Davids has recently intimated his opinion that the site of Vaisāli is quite uncertain, while Dr. Hoey has felt at liberty to reject Cunningham's decision, and to propose the identification of Vaisāli with a place named Cheraṇḍ in the Chaprā or Sāran District.³ Inasmuch as Dr. Hoey's ingenious arguments move on a plane different from that of mine, and seem to me wholly opposed to the evidence, I trust that I may be excused from criticizing them in detail. But the fact that doubts concerning the identification of Basār with Vaisāli have been freely expressed is good reason for examining afresh the evidence which satisfied Cunningham, as well as any other available, and for forming a definite and well-considered judgment on the question at issue. In the following pages I propose to

¹ *Ante*, p. 143.

² Cunningham: Arch. S. Reports, i, 55, 56; xvi, 6.

³ "On the Identification of Kusinara, Vaisāli, and other places mentioned by the Chinese pilgrims," by W. Hoey, Litt.D., I.C.S.: *J.A.S.B.*, 1900, vol. lxi, pt. 1, pp. 78, 83. Cheraṇḍ stands on the northern bank of the Ganges, in approximately N. lat. 25° 41' and E. long. 84° 55', about seven miles south-east from Chaprā.

submit to impartial criticism and discussion all the known facts, and I venture to think that any reader who examines the case without prepossession will agree with me that Cunningham was right in his conclusion, although, as often happened, he failed to record the reasons for his opinion with sufficient detail and lucidity to compel the assent of his readers. I have no doubt whatever that Basār and the adjoining villages occupy the site of the city of Vaisāli, and am further convinced that, while the limits of the city can even now be determined with a near approach to accuracy, a very moderate amount of local exploration, conducted under competent guidance, should result in the determination of the exact sites of many renowned monuments.

The village of Basār (बसाढ़) stands in about N. lat. $25^{\circ} 58' 20''$ and E. long. $85^{\circ} 11' 30''$, twenty-six or twenty-seven miles in a direct line a little to the west of north from Patna, the ancient Pāṭaliputra, and about twenty miles from Hājipur on the northern bank of the Ganges opposite Patna. It is due north of the Dīgha Ghāṭ railway station on the Bengal and North-Western Railway.

The great mound or 'fort' at the village is known as the Fort of Rāja Bisāl (Visāl). The close correspondence of the name of this eponymous local chieftain with the city name of Vaisāli or Vesāli is obvious, and, although not by itself conclusive evidence of identity, is of great weight as corroboration of other evidence.¹

Well-known Buddhist legends, which it seems unnecessary to repeat in detail, clearly imply that Vaisāli lay beyond the Ganges at a moderate distance in a northerly direction from Pāṭaliputra, and on the road from that city to Kusinārā (Kusīnagara).

¹ The correct spelling is said to be Basār (बसाढ़), but I believe that the spelling Basārḥ (बसाढ़) is also permissible. The first syllable is certainly not *Be-*, बे, as it is written by Cunningham and Hoernle. The Indian Atlas (Sheet 102) spells the name as 'Busadh Puttee.' Basārḥ represents Vaisāli or Vesāli more accurately than does the form Basār. Cunningham (*Reports*, i, 55) erroneously places Basār "a little to the east of north from Patna." The mistake is probably due to a misprint.

The traditional account of Gautama Buddha's last journey relates that he travelled leisurely from Pāṭaliputra to Vaisāli in three stages, halting twice on the way, first at Koṭigrāma and next at Nadiyāgrāma. Travellers in India whose journey begins with the crossing of a great river are always glad to make their first halt as near as possible to the further bank of the river. The ancient town of Hājipur (N. lat. 25° 40', E. long. 85° 18' 30"), which stands on the eastern bank of the Gandak river and the northern bank of the Ganges at a distance in a direct line of six or seven miles from Patna, is still the first halting-place for the traveller proceeding north from Patna. We may be quite certain that Koṭigrāma, the first camping-ground of Buddha, was at or close to Hājipur.¹

Lālgañj, situated twelve miles from Hājipur and eight from Basār, is now the principal village intermediate between those two places, and Nadiyāgrāma should be looked for in the vicinity of Lālgañj. Careful local enquiry would probably find the names Koṭigrāma and Nadiyāgrāma surviving in slightly modified forms, such as Koṭgāoñ and Nadiyāoñ, but no such names are entered in the Indian Atlas, sheet No. 103.

The position of Basār at a distance of three easy marches north of Patna exactly agrees with the position of Vaisāli in relation to Pāṭaliputra as described by Buddhist tradition.

Hiuen Tsiang places the *stūpa* marking the locality of the orthodox Council or Convocation of Vaisāli at a spot two and a half miles (15 or 16 *li*) south-east from the city. At a distance of 15 or 16 miles (80 or 90 *li*) to the south of this *stūpa* stood the splendid monastery of Śvetapura, which marked the place where the *sūtra* called "Bodhisattva-piṭaka" was supposed to have been revealed. A *stūpa*, ascribed to Aśoka, stood beside the monastery, and preserved the memory of the spot where Buddha, when going south to Magadha,

¹ Hājipur possesses an ancient fort dating from Hindū times, and the principal mosque stands on the site of earlier buildings. The ruins of a Hindū temple known as Marhai exist two miles to the north of the town. (Cunningham, *Reports*, xvi, 5.) A hoard of gold Gupta coins, ranging in date from about A.D. 320 to 400, was found in the bazaar in 1893. (*Proc. A.S.B.*, March, 1894, p. 57.)

stopped to look back upon Vaisāli. The Śvetapura monastery, therefore, stood on the road from Vaisāli to Pāṭaliputra, at a distance of about 20 miles from the former city, and close to the river. Five or six miles (30 *li*) to the south-east of Śvetapura a *stūpa* on the northern bank of the Ganges marked the position of the ferry where, according to the legend, Ānanda divided his body, and gave half to the king of Magadha on the southern and half to the king of Vaisāli on the northern side of the river. A corresponding *stūpa* stood on the southern bank. The ferry connected by legend with Ānanda was therefore 23 or 24 miles ($2\frac{1}{2} + 15$ or $16 + 5$ or 6) distant from Vaisāli in a direction slightly east of south, and, inasmuch as the Ganges then flowed a good deal farther to the north than it does now, the *stūpa* marking the northern end of the ferry should be looked for near Dāūdnagar, about six miles south-east from Hājipur. The *stūpa* at the southern end of the ferry must have been carried away by the river. The Śvetapura monastery must have been near Hājipur. Its "massive towers," of which Hiuen Tsiang speaks, were probably wooden, but it is quite possible that careful search would succeed in tracing the substantial brick foundations on which those towers rested.

The position of Vaisāli in relation to Śvetapura on the bank of the Ganges agrees accurately with the position of Basār in relation to the river.¹

Hiuen Tsiang expressly states that Vaisāli lay on the road from Pāṭaliputra to Nepāl.² Basār lies on the ancient royal road from the capital to Nepāl, marked by three of Aśoka's pillars, which passed Kesariyā, Lauṛiyā-Ararāj, Betiyyā,

¹ Beal: Records, ii, 74-77. The statement that the Bodhisattva-piṭaka *sūtra* was revealed at Śvetapura is taken from the "Life of Hiuen Tsiang" (p. 101), which defines the position of Śvetapura by the rather obscure words: "Leaving the southern borders of Vaisāli and following the Ganges river for 100 *li* or so [27 or 28 miles], we came to the town of Śvetapura." The *Life*, as M. Sylvain Lévi has pointed out, was written for edification, and is not to be depended on for geographical or topographical details. Many statements in the book are manifestly erroneous. The *Records*, on the other hand, the more they are tested, the more accurate they are proved to be.

² Beal, ii, 81.

Lauriyā-Nandangarh, Chānkīgarh, and Rāmpurwā, entering the hills by the Bhiknā Thorī Pass. The jealousy of the existing Nepalese government compels the modern traveller to take a more easterly route and pass through Sigauli (Segowlee) in lat. $26^{\circ} 44'$, long. $84^{\circ} 47'$.¹

Two geographical tests of the identity of Basār and Vaisāli having been proved satisfactory, I now proceed to apply a third test of the same kind.

The *stūpa* near Kesariyā, known by the name of Rāja Ben Cakravartī, is, as was explained in my discussion of the site of Kusinagara, the spot erroneously described by Fā-hien as the scene of the Licchavi leave-taking, and correctly described by Hiuen Tsiang as the memorial of a Cakravartin Rāja. Both pilgrims substantially agree in their estimate of the distance of this locality from Vaisāli, Fā-hien giving the round figure "5 *yojanas*," equivalent to 38 miles,² while the more accurate Hiuen Tsiang states the distance as being "a little less than 200 *li*." Five *yojanas* being the exact equivalent of 200 *li*, the term "a little less than 200 *li*" may be fairly interpreted as equivalent to $4\frac{1}{2}$ *yojanas*, or 33 miles, which is the approximate marching distance between Basār and Kesariyā. Measured on the map (Sheets 102 and 103 of the Indian Atlas), the direct distance between Busadh Puttee (Basār) and the "hillock with temple" south-west of Kesariyā village is about 30 miles. Consequently in relation to Kesariyā the correspondence in position between Basār and Vaisāli is again proved to be perfect.

Fā-hien states that "the confluence of the five rivers," that is to say, of the Ganges, Son, Ghāgrā, Gandak, and some smaller stream not identified, was distant four *yojanas*, or about 30 miles, eastward from the *stūpa* to the north of Vaisāli, which, according to his guides, marked the scene

¹ The ancient and modern routes can be traced on Sheets 102 and 103 of the Indian Atlas. No doubt in ancient times several passes into the valley of Nepal were open to the traveller. The royal route led to the Goramasān Pass, as well as to the Bhiknā Thorī Pass, but the latter was probably that generally used.

² "Five *yojanas*" (Beal and Giles). The distance of "ten *yojanas*" stated in Legge's translation is out of the question.

of the Buddhist Council or Convocation of Vaisāli. The river Ganges below the present junction with the Gandak opposite Patna has made a considerable move in a southerly direction, having in ancient times flowed much farther to the north. In those days the Son followed the present course of the Punpun and Murhār rivers, and joined the Ganges to the north of Phatuhā (Fatuhā), about 10 miles east from Patna and about 25 miles east from the present point of junction. As long as the vast mass of water from the Son was thrown into the Ganges below Patna, the latter river was necessarily forced towards the north. When the mouth of the Son moved to the west, and the pressure from its waters was withdrawn, the Ganges naturally took a more southerly course. In Fā-hien's time Pāṭaliputra stood in the tongue of land between the Ganges and the Son, but nearer to the latter river, and might be accurately described as situated on the bank of the Son. The old *ghāṭs*, or river-side stairs of the city, can still be traced along the bank of the ancient bed of the Son. The critic who merely glances at the modern map would suppose Fā-hien to be mistaken in describing Aśoka's city of Pāṭaliputra as being distant a *yojana*, or some seven miles, from the Ganges where he crossed at the confluence. But a knowledge of the changes in the courses of the rivers as explained above fully justifies the pilgrim's description, and explains his meaning without violence to his text. The confluence of the five rivers must have been situated near the villages named Bāzār and Gopālpur (I. A., sheet 103), which stand north of Fatuhā, and about nine miles south-east from Hājīpur. The distance from those villages to the ruins of Aśoka's city on the old course of the Son is about eight miles. Fā-hien when defining direction commonly uses the four cardinal points only. He therefore describes the confluence of the five rivers as being "to the east" from Vaisāli, and Pāṭaliputra as being "south" from the confluence. The true bearings are approximately south-east and south-west respectively.

The direct distance measured on the map from Baniyā (Buneean), situated north-west of Basār, which approximately

marks the position of Fā-hien's "convocation *stūpa*," to Bāzār is $29\frac{1}{2}$ miles, or four *yojanas* as required. The distance from Bāzār to Aśoka's city of Pāṭaliputra being about eight miles, the city would have been in the dry season about a *yojana* from the southern bank of the river, as stated by the pilgrim. Thus, a fourth geographical test rigorously applied establishes the identity of Vaisāli with Basār.¹

If my readers have had the patience to follow me so far, I trust that they will be satisfied that the remains at Basār and the neighbouring villages beyond doubt occupy the site of the famous city Vaisāli. The identity of the site is established by the continuance of the name of Vaisāli in the forms Basār (or Basārḥ) and Bisāl, as well as by the exact agreement in the positions of Basār and Vaisāli on the old royal road from Pāṭaliputra (Patna) to Nepāl with reference to Pāṭaliputra itself, to the course of the Ganges, to the Kesariyā *stūpa*, and to "the confluence of the five rivers."

The discussion of the topography of Vaisāli, on which I now propose to enter, will be found to strongly corroborate the geographical arguments set forth above.

The exact date of Hiuen Tsiang's visit to Vaisāli is not known, but the year 635 A.D. may be assumed as approximately the correct date. His description of the city is unusually detailed and precise, and enables the modern reader not only to form an accurate conception of the state of the ruins in the seventh century A.D., but also to mark on the map with a close approach to exactness the position of each monument described.

¹ Fā-hien, ch. xxvi, xxvii, in Legge's version. For the changes in the courses of the rivers see the discussion by Cunningham and Beglar in *Reports*, vol. viii, pp. v, vi, xi, 23, and plate i. Cunningham (pp. vi and xi, with a misprint at p. vi) cites Patanjali as mentioning "Pāṭaliputra on the Son," *anu Sonam Pāṭaliputram*. Patanjali is supposed to have lived about B.C. 150. I have myself seen the remains of the riverside stairs on the old bank of the Son near Bankipore. They were traced by Bābū P. C. Mukherji for a distance of about 1,000 feet to the north of Nayātola, midway between Patna and Bankipore railway stations, and adjoining Kumrāhār (also called Nema or Nima), the site of the Maurya palace.

At the time of the pilgrim's visit the city was to a great extent in ruins. The buildings were in a state of advanced decay, the forests had been uprooted, and the numerous lakes and ponds had shrunk into offensive swamps. The ruins covered a space about twelve miles (60 or 70 *li*) in circuit, and included the remains of hundreds of Buddhist monasteries, out of which only three or four were occupied by a few monks. The Jains (Nirgranthas) were numerous, as might naturally be expected, Vaisāli having been the birthplace of their religion; and Brahmanical Hindus of various sects worshipped at more than a score ('several tens') of temples. The citadel, or palace precinct, was less than a mile (4 or 5 *li*) in circuit, and was inhabited by a small population. This citadel is obviously represented by the mound now known as Rāja Bisāl's Fort (Bisālgaṛh), which retains the ancient name almost unaltered, and in dimensions exactly agrees with Hiuen Tsiang's description.¹

A monastery tenanted by a few friars of the Sainmatīya school of the Hinayāna stood about a mile (5 or 6 *li*) north-west of the citadel, and apparently within the city walls. Hiuen Tsiang specifies the position of most of the monuments mentioned by him with reference to this monastery, which was evidently his residence during his sojourn.

Close to the monastery three *stūpas* attracted the pilgrim's special attention. One of these commemorated the delivery of the Vimalakīrtī Sūtra and the presentation of precious parasols to Buddha. The second marked the spot where Sāriputra and others attained the rank of saint (*arhat*). The third, which stood at a short distance to the south-east, was the most interesting monument at Vaisāli, being the *stūpa* which enshrined the share of the relics obtained by the

¹ The fort is 1,580 feet in length from north to south, by 750 feet in width from east to west, and the circuit round the crest of the mound measures 4,660 feet (Cunningham, *Reports*, i, 55; xvi, 6), equivalent to about 5 *li* at the rate of 5 $\frac{1}{3}$ *li* to the mile. The extensive forest to the north of the city was still standing in Fā-hien's time, about A.D. 405, in the reign of Candra Gupta II. The final ruin of the city was probably due to the destructive wars with the White Huns half a century later.

unnamed king of Vaisāli at the time of the cremation of the body of Gautama Buddha. This *stūpa*, dating from about B.C. 500, will probably, when identified, prove to be similar to the monument at Piprāvā, which enshrined the share of the relics obtained by the Śākya of Kapilavastu.¹

Reference to the accompanying map² will show that the Sainmatīya monastery, the *stūpa* containing the cremation relics, as well as the *stūpas* of Sāriputra and the Vimalakīrtī Sūtra, must all lie in a compact group (No. 1 on map) between the Kharonā tank and the village of Pharāwal, where a large mound exists. Bābū P. C. Mukherjī, when visiting Vaisāli, discerned that the cremation-relics *stūpa* must be near Pharāwal. It is astonishing that Sir Alexander Cunningham made no attempt to ascertain the position of this most interesting monument of the earliest period of Buddhism, which probably still contains the relics of Gautama. According to a legend told by Hiuen Tsiang, Aśoka removed nine-tenths of the original deposit, leaving one-tenth behind. I have no doubt that careful survey, supplemented by intelligent excavation, will bring to light this *stūpa*, which is almost certain to contain a valuable inscription.

Having visited and described the more conspicuous and interesting monuments close to the monastery where he lodged, which must all have been situated within the walls,

¹ The exact date of the death of Gautama Buddha Śākyamuni is not known, and is probably unascertainable. The Ceylonese date, B.C. 543, which has been treated with undue respect, appears to be a little too early. If the figures 256 in Aśoka's Minor Rock Edicts express a date, they indicate that Aśoka believed Gautama to have died in or about B.C. 608. As an approximate round figure, B.C. 500 may be considered correct. As to the authenticity of the Piprāvā relics, see Professor Rhys Davids' paper "Aśoka and the Buddha-relics" in *J.R.A.S.*, July, 1901, p. 398.

² My map is based on a tracing of plate ii in vol. xvi of Cunningham's *Reports*. The scale of Cunningham's map is really the same as that of mine, but is misprinted. Some details are taken from his earlier, and apparently less correct, plate xxi in vol. i of the same series. The additions made by me are supported by my interpretation of the Chinese pilgrims' texts, and by some notes supplied by Bābū P. C. Mukherjī, who visited the locality in November, 1897, on behalf of the Government of Bengal. His notes, although too crude for publication as a whole, contain valuable matter. The position of Chak Rāmdās is misrepresented in the map in *Reports*, xvi. This hamlet is really contiguous to Baniyā, from which it is divided by a narrow passage. (*Ibid.*, 91.)

Hiuen Tsiang turned towards the north-west, where he found a distinct group of holy places (No. 7 of map). He observed a *stūpa* built by Aśoka, beside which stood a stone pillar 50 or 60 feet high, surmounted by the figure of a lion. To the south of the pillar was a tank, which, according to the legend, was dug by monkeys for the use of Buddha, and two *stūpas* to the south of the tank marked the spots where the monkeys gathered honey and offered it. The pilgrim notes that a figure of a monkey still stood at the north-western corner of the tank.

His description of these monuments is strictly applicable to the remains situated on a low mound one mile south-east of Bakhirā village and about two miles north-north-west of Bisālgaṛh, the fort of Basār. Aśoka's pillar with its lion-capital complete is still standing. Its height from the water-level is known to be 44 feet 2 inches, and several feet are submerged. The total height, therefore, closely agrees with Hiuen Tsiang's estimate. A ruined *stūpa* of solid brick due north of the pillar is evidently that erected by Aśoka. The tank to the south of the pillar, measuring about 200 feet in length from east to west and 150 feet in width from north to south, agrees exactly in position with that connected by Hiuen Tsiang with the legend of the pious monkeys who offered honey to Buddha. Small mounds to the south of the tank seem to represent the *stūpas* which commemorated the monkeys' piety. A life-size statue of Buddha, with an inscription, considered by Cunningham to date from the tenth century, was found in the ruins of a temple about 720 feet north of the *stūpa*, and Lieut.-Colonel Waddell observed on the pedestal of a similar statue, or perhaps the same one, a representation of the monkey legend. No hesitation, I think, need be felt in accepting Cunningham's identification of the remains south-east of Bakhirā with the group of ruins described by Hiuen Tsiang as lying to the north-west of the Saṃmatīya monastery.

I may observe in passing that the legend of the presentation of a pot of honey to Buddha by a monkey,

or company of monkeys, is often represented in sculpture, and was localized at Mathurā as well as at Vaisāli.¹

I am unable to agree with Cunningham (i, 56) that the city of Vaisāli, strictly so called, included the Monkey Tank group of ruins and Bakhirā village. Attentive consideration of the testimony of Fā-hien and Hiuen Tsiang permits no doubt that both Bakhirā and the Monkey Tank group of ruins fall outside the line of the ancient walls. The Kuṭāgāra, or 'upper-storied,' hall, where Buddha dwelt during the fifth year of his ministry, was situated in the precincts of the Mahāvana Vihāra, or monastery of the great forest, and on the bank of, or close to, the Monkey Tank. Fā-hien informs us that the great forest, or Mahāvana, lay to the north of the city, and that the "double-galleried *vihāra*" where Buddha dwelt (i.e. the Kuṭāgāra) was in that forest. But inasmuch as the "double-galleried *vihāra*" adjoined the Monkey Tank, that tank also must have been within the forest and without the city. The "*stūpa* of the last look," which will be mentioned presently, stood outside the western gate, and it is impossible to locate this *stūpa* if Bakhirā be considered part of the city. The village of Kolluā, or Kolhuā, which is unfortunately not marked on the maps accessible to me, is close to the Monkey Tank, and probably represents the ancient suburb Kollāga. The Monkey Tank group of remains may properly be regarded as forming part of that suburb. The site of Bakhirā village lay, I should think, quite clear of the city.² It is, however,

¹ Cunningham: *Reports*, i, 56, 58-63; xvi, 12-16. The distance of the temple from the *stūpa* is given in the text as stated in *Reports*, xvi, 16; in *ibid.*, i, 61, the distance is stated to be 500 feet. The existence of the mediæval statue may be explained by the well-known devotion of the Pāla kings to Buddhism. Lieutenant-Colonel Waddell's observation was communicated to me by letter. For the Mathurā variant of the monkey legend, see Beal, i, 182. Hiuen Tsiang was not disturbed by the duplication of the story.

² Fā-hien, ch. xxv (Legge); Turnour in *J.A.S.B.* for 1838, pp. 790 and 1,200; Burnouf, *Introduction*, p. 74. The last two references are given by Cunningham, and I have not verified them. As to Kolhuā, Cunningham (xvi, 12) writes: "Near the village of Kolhua, 2 miles to the north-west of Besārḥ, and 1 mile to the south-east of the village of Bakhra, stands the massive stone pillar known as the Bakhra *lāt*, or monolith." In my map I have, therefore, inserted Kollua as north of the Monkey Tank. Bābū P. C. Mukherji spells the name of the village as Kolluā, and states that there is a large mound on the eastern side.

quite possible that when Hiuen Tsiang estimated the circuit of the "old foundations" of the ruined city as measuring some twelve miles (60 or 70 *li*), he meant to include the Monkey Tank group of monuments. Excluding that group, the periphery of the walled city, as will presently be explained, seems to have amounted to about ten miles only.

The third group of monuments (No. 2 on map), described in detail by Hiuen Tsiang, consisted of four buildings distant more than half a mile (3 or 4 *li*) in a north-easterly direction from his temporary residence at the Saṃmatīya monastery. A *stūpa* marked the reputed site of the house where the convert Vimalakīrtī had lived, and close by a so-called "spirit-dwelling in shape like a pile of bricks" preserved the memory of the spot where he had preached. A second *stūpa* commemorated the residence of Ratnākara (? Ratnakūta), and a third monument of the same kind occupied the site of the residence of the celebrated courtesan Āmrāpālī, whose hospitality Buddha had not disdained to accept. The aunt of Buddha and other nuns were believed to have attained Nirvāṇa at this spot. The monuments included in this group must have been situated at or close to the site of the hamlet, now called Chak Aborā. It seems to be possible that this name may preserve that of Āmba- or Āmrāpālī. Āmbapura might easily pass into Abaura or Abora.¹ This group of monuments was evidently inside the city walls.

The fourth group of buildings selected by Hiuen Tsiang for special notice is described by him with reference to a *stūpa* (No. 3 on map) situated to the north of the monastery where he lodged at a distance of about three-quarters of a mile (3 or 4 *li*). This *stūpa*, which evidently was inside the walls, marked the spot where Buddha, attended by a crowd of men and angels, was believed to have halted for a moment before he passed out by the western gate on his long journey to Kusinārā and to death. At a short distance to the north-west of this *stūpa*, a similar

¹ The name is given as Abora in *Reports*, xvi, pl. ii, and as Aboha in *ibid.*, i, pl. xxi. The latter form is probably a misprint.

monument, outside the walls (No. 4 on map), recalled the memory of the long, last look which the Master took at the city where he had dwelt so long.

A little way to the south of this *stūpa* of the last look, Hiuen Tsiang was shown a *vihāra* and a *stūpa* said to mark the site of the garden presented to Buddha by Āmrapālī. The two last-named monuments may possibly have been inside the walls, because Fā-hien explicitly records that "inside the city the woman Āmbapālī built a *vihāra* in honour of Buddha, which is now standing as it was at first." As to the position of the garden, Hiuen Tsiang seems to have been misinformed. Fā-hien correctly places it to the south of the city on the west side of the road from Pāṭaliputra.

Another *stūpa*, near the site shown as that of the garden to Hiuen Tsiang, commemorated, according to his guides, the spot where Buddha announced his approaching dissolution to his attendant Ānanda.

Yet another *stūpa*, not far off, marked the spot where, according to a wild legend, "the thousand sons beheld their father and their mother." Fā-hien relates a variant of this fantastic legend, which belongs to the Jātaka cycle, and gives the *stūpa* the quaint name of "bows and weapons laid down." He fixes its position as being three *li*, say a thousand yards, to the north-west of the city. Close by a *stūpa* had been erected on the spot where Buddha had expounded the meaning of the Jātaka legend of the thousand sons.

Further to the east were the ruins of the "turretted preaching hall, where Buddha uttered the *Samantamukha dhāraṇī* and other *sūtras*." This hall is the "double-galleried *vihāra* where Buddha dwelt" in the great forest north of the city as described by Fā-hien, near which stood the *stūpa* built by the Licchavis over their half of the body of Ānanda. This *stūpa*, according to Hiuen Tsiang, was "by the side of the preaching hall, and not far from it." The same hall is described in other books as the Kuṭāgāra on the bank of the Monkey Tank, and we are thus able to check and combine the topographical indications given by the two

pilgrims, and to fix the approximate position of each building described.

Fā-hien supplies another and important datum by the statement that the *stūpa* which commemorated the site of the Council of Vaisāli stood three or four *li*, say 1,000 to 1,200 yards, eastward from the *stūpa* of "bows and weapons laid down." He also tells us that the *stūpa* standing on the spot where Buddha foretold his approaching dissolution was "by the side" of the "bows and weapons laid down" monument. In this detail he differs from Hiuen Tsiang.

Bābū P. C. Mukherjī is very probably right in locating the site of the Kuṭāgāra to the north-east of the Aśoka pillar, "where the field is comparatively high, and where some years ago the local zemindār excavated hundreds of cartloads of bricks, which he carried to Bakhirā to build his house" (No. 6 on map). The scene of the Council of Vaisāli, according to Fā-hien's guides, must have been close to the Kuṭāgāra, and the *stūpa* over the half body of Ānanda should be looked for in the same group of ruins.

The *stūpa* of the "thousand sons," or "bows and weapons laid down," and the adjoining *stūpa* marking the spot where Buddha, according to Fā-hien, foretold his death, which were about 1,000 yards west of the Kuṭāgāra, must be represented by the "two high conical mounds half a mile to the west of the pillar" known locally either as "Bhīm Sen's baskets" (*pallā*), or as "Rāja Bisāl's battery" (*morca*, No. 5 on map). These two *stūpas*, according to the testimony both of Cunningham and Bābū P. C. Mukherjī, are constructed of earth without bricks, and are used as a quarry by the Lūniyas, or saltpetre-makers. They are, no doubt, of very early date.

It is interesting to observe that in two cases the distinct statements of the two Chinese pilgrims differ so irreconcilably that they can be explained only by the assumption that their guides showed them different sites under the same names. Fā-hien places the garden of Āmrāpālī where we should expect to find it, a little to the south of the city, and he adds that it was situated to the west of the road from Pāṭaliputra.

He does not mention any *stūpa* or monument as marking the site. Hiuen Tsiang was shown a *stūpa* on the alleged site of the garden, which he places a short distance to the south of the “*stūpa* of the last look” (No. 4 of map), and consequently to the west of the city.

A more important discrepancy concerns the locality of the famous Council of Vaisāli, which Hiuen Tsiang places about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the south-east of the city. He says that the site was marked by a “great *stūpa*,” of which careful exploration will probably disclose remains, although Cunningham’s hasty researches failed to find them. I have not the slightest doubt that Hiuen Tsiang saw the “great *stūpa*,” and that his guides told him that it marked the locality where the Council was held.

Fā-hien, with much greater probability, locates the Council *stūpa* close to the Kuṭāgāra, or “double-galleried *vihāra* where Buddha dwelt,” and 3 or 4 *li* east from the *stūpa* of “bows and weapons laid down,” or the “*stūpa* of the 1,000 sons,” as it is called by Hiuen Tsiang. The site of the Council hall was therefore, according to the information given to the earlier pilgrim, close to the Aśoka pillar, which was probably erected there for that reason. A council or synod of some sort was doubtless really held at Vaisāli, although the accounts which profess to give its date and the details of the proceedings are hopelessly contradictory and incredible.¹

The fact that the two pilgrims were shown totally irreconcilable sites for the garden of Āmrāpālī and the Council of Vaisāli is of importance, and should be borne in mind during discussions of the authenticity of the sites described by them. Pious visitors to the Holy Land of Buddhism, like Christian pilgrims in Palestine, were, of course, completely at the mercy of their guides, and were obliged to accept what they were told, and they were not always told the same thing. I have proved, or believe myself to have proved, that a similar discrepancy exists

¹ See my paper on “The Identity of Piyadasi (Priyadarśin) with Aśoka Maurya, and some connected problems,” in this Journal for October, 1901.

between the statements of Fā-hien and Hiuen Tsiang concerning the site of Kapilavastu. The Kapilavastu of Fā-hien is represented by the ruins at Piprāvā, 9 miles from the Lumbini Garden, whereas the Kapilavastu shown to Hiuen Tsiang is represented by the walled enclosure of Tilaurā Koṭ and the surrounding ruins, distant about 15 miles from the Lumbini Garden.¹

In all the three observed cases of clear discrepancy I believe that the earlier pilgrim, Fā-hien, is right; that is to say, that the genuine sites were shown to him, whereas when Hiuen Tsiang made his pilgrimage some 230 years later, the legends had been shifted to fictitious sites. I cannot add to the length of this already long essay by discussing the possible or probable causes of the shifting, and content myself with noting that Dr. Stein has recently pointed out that sacred sites can be, and often are, completely forgotten.² Sites, the true position of which has been forgotten, can be easily changed. Dr. Burgess also has shown how freely the Burmese priests, in their anxiety to localize sacred legends, have invented a system of fictitious geography.³

A few words are necessary to explain the principles on which I have endeavoured to determine the approximate limits of the ancient city.

According to Jain tradition, Vaisāli consisted of three distinct portions, Vaisāli proper, Kuṇḍagāma, and Vāṇiyagāma, besides the Kollāga suburb. Vaisāli proper has been sufficiently identified as being represented by Bisālgaṛh and an indeterminate portion of the other extensive ruins. The village of Baniyā (with the adjacent Chak Rāmdās) is almost certainly the representative of Vāṇiyagāma. The lands of the village contain "extensive mounds," and some ten years ago two statues of Jain Tirthankaras, one seated,

¹ "A Report on a Tour of Exploration of the Antiquities in the Tarai, Nepāl, the Region of Kapilavastu, during February and March, 1899," by Bābū P. C. Mukherji, with a Prefatory Note by Vincent A. Smith; being No. xxvi, pt. 1, of the Imperial Series of Reports of the Archæological Survey of India; Calcutta, 1901. I refer especially to pp. 10 and 21 of my Prefatory Note.

² *Indian Antiquary*, vol. xxx (1901), p. 95.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 387.

the other standing, were discovered about eight feet below the surface, and 500 yards west of the village. Vāṇiyagāma was the residence of Mahāvīra, the great prophet of the Jains, and this discovery of Jain images strongly confirms the identification suggested by the name. The hamlet of Bodhā also possesses a mound of ruins. The western boundary must run to the west of Baniyā, nearly as I have drawn it. Bābū P. C. Mukherjī was told by a resident Brahman that the principal angles of the ancient walls were marked by images of the four-faced (*chaumukhī*) Mahādēo, and was shown one of these images buried under the embankment of a large tank, about half a mile south-east of Basār. This image probably marks the eastern extremity of the line of the southern wall. The Bābū says that he found distinct traces of a rampart both to the west and north of it. I have, therefore, drawn the eastern wall as extending in a straight line to another similar image which exists some four feet below the surface, near Bēnīpur. A third Mahādēo of the same kind is enshrined in a modern temple north-east of Baniyā, and is probably near its original position. A fourth Mahādēo is said to have formerly stood at Dharārā at the south-west corner of the fort, but that one, of course, cannot have been on the city wall in that position. The northern portion of the city must have included the mounds of Pharāwal village, Chak Abora, where the house of Āmrapālī is located, and Chak Biṣanpur. The suburb of Kollāga is probably represented by the village of Kolluā and the group of Aśoka ruins, which must have been without the walls. The boundary at the north-western corner of the city is uncertain; it has been contracted in my map in order to agree with the traditional accounts of Buddha's last journey.

The result is a city ten miles in circuit, which agrees with the popular local estimate of five *kos*, but is somewhat smaller than Hiuen Tsiang's estimate of twelve miles, which may have included the Kollāga suburb.

The foregoing discussion will, I hope, have convinced my readers that Professor Rhys Davids carries scepticism rather

far when he suggests that nobody knows the site of Vaisāli. "It must," he writes, "have been a great and flourishing place. But, though different guesses have been made as to its site, no one of them has yet been proved to be true by excavation. It was somewhere in Tirhut; and just three leagues, or say 23 miles, north of the Ganges, at a spot five leagues, say 38 miles, from Rājagaha."¹

The distance of the city from the river, as stated by the Pāli writer, is sufficiently correct; but, if the words "at a spot" refer to the position of Vaisāli, and not to a point on the bank of the Ganges, the alleged distance from Rājagaha is little more than half of the true distance. Rājgīr, the site of Rājagaha, is 40 miles distant in a straight line from Patna (Pāṭaliputra) on the south side of the river, and the marching distance from Rājgīr to Basār (Vaisāli), through Patna and across the river, must slightly exceed 70 miles. The distance from Rājagaha to Vaisāli was therefore approximately ten, not five, *yojanas* or leagues of more than seven miles each. If the words "at a spot" refer to a point on the bank of the Ganges, the statement of the Pāli author is approximately correct. The statements in the Pāli books of distances expressed in *yojanas* are often so discrepant, and so far invalidated by doubts as to the value of the *yojana* used, that they are generally of little practical use.²

¹ Journal of the Pāli Text Society for 1897-1901, p. 79. For the distances stated Professor Rhys Davids refers to "Dhammapāla on S.N. 2. 1."

² The best published discussion of the value of the *yojana* is that given by Professor Rhys Davids in "Ancient Coins and Measures of Ceylon," pp. 15-17. He finds that the *yojana* used by Fā-hien was approximately equal to $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles, and with this finding I agree. Both the Chinese pilgrims reckoned 40 *li* to the *yojana*, and their *li*, therefore, is equivalent to about $\frac{3}{8}$ of a mile, or, in other words, $5\frac{1}{3}$ *li* go to the mile. Cunningham reckoned 6 *li* to the mile. The modern Chinese *li* is about one-third of a mile. Gibbon, with his usual accuracy, did not fail to perceive the lower value of the ancient *li*. "According to the present standard," he observes, "200 *li* (or, more accurately, 193) are equal to one degree of latitude; and one English mile consequently exceeds three miles of China. But there are strong reasons to believe that the ancient *li* scarcely equalled one half of the modern." (*Note to ch. xxvi.*)

Hiuen Tsiang records the fact that the *yojana* had three values, namely:—

- (1) According to the old accounts, 40 *li*;
- (2) According to the common reckoning in India, 30 *li*; and
- (3) In the sacred books, 16 *li* (Beal, i, 70).

Hiuen Tsiang's measurements in *li*, when compared with Fā-hien's in *yojanas*,

The vague and contradictory estimates of distance given in the Buddhist sacred books cannot, so far as I can see, be made by any amount of cross-questioning to disclose the site of Vaisāli, which, however, is now established, as I venture to think, without any room for reasonable doubt, even in the absence of the test by systematic excavation and survey.

No site in India calls more loudly for such excavation and survey. It is far more promising than the site of Pāṭaliputra. Most of the remains of that famous capital lie, as I have seen, buried fifteen or twenty feet below the present surface, and it is practically impossible to explore them. The city of Patna, the civil station of Bankipore, the East Indian Railway, and sundry villages and high roads, all lie over Pāṭaliputra, and cannot be dug up by archæologists

The site of Vaisāli, on the contrary, is in open country,

always give a value of 40 *h* for the *yojana*. I have not noticed in any book a clear example of the *yojana* containing only 30 *h*, equivalent to $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles. But examples of the *yojana* of the value of three miles, containing only 16 *h*, or an equivalent Indian measure, seem to occur in 'the sacred books'. The following quotations are from Spence Hardy's "Manual of Buddhism," 2nd ed. Hardy drew his information from Pāli authorities

The distance from Kapilavastu to Anoma river, according to him, was 480 'miles,' and from the same river to Rājagṛha the distance was equal. Hardy's 'mule' seems to be the sixteenth of a *yojana*, and the two distances stated would be 30 *yojanas* each (pp. 164, 165). This interpretation is fully justified by the statement (p. 204) that when Buddha commenced his journey he proceeded each day sixteen 'miles,' and accomplished the distance of 60 *yojanas* between Rājagṛha and Kapilavastu in two months, that is to say, in sixty days he travelled sixty *yojanas* of 16 'miles,' or *h*, each. He is, therefore, alleged to have moved at the very leisurely rate of 3 English miles a day. But, even if the *yojana* be taken at this minimum value of 3 miles, the total distance as stated of 180 miles (60×3) between Rājagṛha and Kapilavastu is not nearly correct. The position of Rājagṛha is certain, and Kapilavastu stood a few miles westward from Rummīndei, the certain site of the Lumbini Garden. The direct distance from Rājagṛha to Kapilavastu is about 225, and the marching distance about 250 miles. The estimate of 60 *yojanas* cannot be reconciled with any of the known values of the *yojana*.

The distance between Rājagṛha and Śrāvastī is stated to be 45 *yojanas*, or 45 days' journey for Buddha (ibid., pp. 224, 225). But the site of Śrāvastī is nearly 100 miles further from Rājagṛha than is Kapilavastu, the distance from which place to Rājagṛha is stated as 60 *yojanas*.

From Śrāvastī to Vaisāli the distance is said (p. 291) to be 54 *yojanas*, and the distance from Kapilavastu to Vaisāli (p. 354) is given as 49 *yojanas*, whereas the distance from Śrāvastī to Kapilavastu is known to have been $12\frac{1}{2}$ long *yojanas*, equivalent to 500 *h*. From such figures it is difficult to deduce any valuable result.

at a considerable distance from the great rivers or any town, and has not been extensively built upon. The slight exploration which has been effected has been concerned only with a few of the Buddhist holy places. The pre-Buddhist and Jain associations of the place, which give it such a special interest, have been almost ignored.

At the very dawn of Indian history we catch glimpses of Vaisāli as a splendid city, the capital of the proud and lordly Licchavi clan. The religious ferment which so deeply moved the hearts of the dwellers in the Gangetic valley during the sixth century B.C. seems to have centred in Vaisāli.

Vardhamāna, surnamed Mahāvīra, who erected the fabric of the Jain system upon the foundation laid by Pārśvanātha, was a noble of Vaisāli, a member of the Nāta or Nāya clan of Kṣatriyas who dwelt in the suburb Kollāga,¹ which is probably now represented by the village situated close to the Monkey Tank called Kolluā or Kolhuā, on the eastern side of which a large mound exists. In Cunningham's time Jain history and antiquities had not attracted the general attention of scholars, and the great opportunities offered by a study of the remains at Vaisāli for the elucidation of the story of the rise and progress of Jainism were not utilized. The position of Kolluā is not even marked on either of Cunningham's maps, and its identifications with Kollāga cannot yet be treated as an absolute certainty. I understand that the village lies to the north-east of Baniyā, between Vaisāli (Basāṛ) and Bakhirā.

Vāniyagāma, the mercantile quarter of the city, may be confidently, for reasons already stated, identified with Baniyā village. Exploration of the Baniyā and Kolluā sites should yield materials for the study of Jain history little inferior in interest to the discoveries in Buddhist lore which may

¹ A convenient summary of the Jain traditions, with references to the original authorities, will be found in Dr. Hoernle's masterly address delivered to the Asiatic Society of Bengal on the 2nd February, 1898. As an indication of the early pre-eminence of Vaisāli, see the curious story about "the water of the tank in Vesāli City where the families of the kings get water for the ceremonial sprinkling," in Jātaka No. 465, the Bhadda-Sāla (Rouse, transl. iv, 94).

confidently be expected from the same localities or others immediately adjoining. I expect that Jain and Buddhist monuments will be found intermingled, and that considerable difficulty may be experienced in distinguishing them, because the Jains and Buddhists alike built *stūpas*, *stūpa* railings, and *torāṇa* gateways, and to a large extent used the same symbolism.¹

Kuṇḍagāma, the Brahman section of Vaisāli, may be represented by the hamlet called Basukuṇḍ, but the identification must at present remain doubtful.

At one time there was reason to suppose that I might be in a position to attempt a solution of the many problems in the ancient history of India on which light would probably be thrown by the systematic survey and exploration of the Vaisāli site; but, as that cannot be, I have written this paper in order that it may serve as a rough guide to other enquirers; and I trust that the official advisers in archæological matters to the Governments of India and Bengal may be induced by the perusal of these imperfect and tentative notes of mine to undertake the adequate exploration of the rich field which lies ready before them.

I understand that the Government of India, as at present constituted, is disposed to rely largely on private effort for the work of archæological research as distinguished from that of conservation. If that opinion should be acted on, the results are likely to be disastrous. Private enterprise cannot deal with the gigantic task of Indian archæological exploration. Even the resources of the Government can effect but little compared with the vast amount of work remaining to be done, but intelligent official direction by competent persons can secure at least that wanton destruction be not wrought in the name of science, whereas unsystematic

¹ The full proof of this proposition will be found in my work entitled "The Jain Stūpa and other Antiquities of Mathurā," now in the press, which will be published as volume xx of the Imperial Series of Reports of the Archæological Survey of India. Dr. Führer left behind him a series of valuable plates depicting the Jain remains at Mathurā, to which I have added a brief descriptive commentary.

private enterprises will ordinarily in the future, as in the past, destroy more than they discover.¹

Professor Rhys Davids is not far wrong when he writes that "the archæology of India is, at present, almost an unworked field."² I need hardly add that the enunciation of this dictum does not imply either on his part or on mine any failure to appreciate the high value of many of the researches conducted by a long line of learned scholars and enthusiastic explorers. It means, I apprehend, that earnest students of Indian archæology are the persons most sensible of the very small proportion borne by the work properly done to that which remains undone.

¹ The prospectus of the India Exploration Fund fully recognizes the special interest attaching to the Vaisāli site. If that Fund should ever come into being it will, so far as I understand, simply result in a small cash contribution to the Archæological Department of the Government of India for expenditure on works selected by the managers of the Fund.

² Journal of the Pāli Text Society, 1901, p. 79.

1. Sammatiya monastery, cremation relic stūpa, etc.
2. Amrapāli's house, etc.
3. Stūpa of halt.
4. Stūpa of last look.
5. Stūpa of 1000 sons, etc.
6. Kuṭāgāra, etc.
7. Monkey tank, Aśoka pillar, stūpa, and temple

