

travelled from Chieh-p'an-t'ō via Wu-sha (Yangi-hissār, Yārkan) to Kāshgar in the autumn of A. D. 642.³ At that season the more direct route up the Dershat valley and across the Kōk-moinak pass is certainly also the easier. In fact I was able to assure myself, as I moved up it on September 13-14, that the track leading up to it over the Kō-bulak-dasht and through the Dershat Jilga (Fig. 66) is practicable throughout for camels and even elephants. This point is of some interest, because we know from the *Life* that Hsüan-tsang was accompanied by elephants as far as the Tangitar gorge beyond the Chichiklik,⁴ and the upper portion of the Shindī valley choked with masses of big boulders must have been in the pilgrim's time as impossible for elephants as it would now be.

I have already had occasion fully to discuss in *Serindia* the physical features of the forbiddingly barren and exposed plateau that forms the head of the Shindī valley, known as the Chichiklik-maidān, and to prove that there was situated, at an elevation of close on 15,000 feet, an ancient hospice the legend attaching to which is related by Hsüan-tsang in detail.⁵ The cutting wind and driving snow which met us when we approached the Kōk-moinak pass and crossed to the high open plain beyond it was an appropriate illustration of the truth of Hsüan-tsang's description: 'In this region, both during summer and winter, there fall masses of snow; the cold winds and icy storms rage. The ground, impregnated with salt, produces no crops; there are no trees and nothing but wretched herbs. Even at the time of the great heat the wind and snow continue. Scarcely have travellers entered this region when they find themselves surrounded by vapours and clouds.'⁶ But there was more satisfaction when, on examining more closely the spot where on my previous passage I had located the ancient hospice of Hsüan-tsang's legend, I found distinct archaeological evidence confirming this identification.

The Chichiklik-maidān (Map 2. c. 4), as our survey showed, measures about three miles from north to south and over two miles across. Near the centre of it rises a low knoll bearing on its top the remains of a much-decayed 'Gumbaz' built with rough stones and respected as a sacred spot by Muhammadan wayfarers (Fig. 67). Around it there can be traced quite clearly foundations of walls built with the same rough material but far more solidly, forming an enclosure 102 feet square and correctly orientated (see the plan, Pl. 1). All over the enclosed area are scattered low grave mounds, most of them badly decayed, the ground being still used, according to the information I received on the spot, as a burial-ground for unfortunate wayfarers. For this desolate high plateau, exposed to the winds and snows, continues to claim its victims, as testified by Benedict Goës where his notes tell us: 'And then in two days more [from *Sarciž*, i. e. Sarikol] they reached the foot of the mountain called Ciecialith [i. e. Chichiklik]. It was covered deep with snow, and during the ascent many were frozen to death, and our brother himself barely escaped, for they were altogether six days in the snow here.'⁷ In Chinese Turkestān the sites of supposed 'Ziārats' of saints are invariably chosen for graveyards; hence the graves found within the ruined enclosure furnish direct proof that the spot has long been held sacred.

This fact, viewed in the light of what I have been able to show elsewhere about the survival of Buddhist local worship in Muhammadan Central Asia,⁸ as well as the central position occupied

Plateau of
Chichiklik-
maidān.

Graves
around
ruined
'Gumbaz'.

Remains of
ruined
hospice.

³ For the time of Hsüan-tsang's passage, cf. *Serindia*, i. p. 79.

⁴ Cf. Julien, *Vie*, p. 275; regarding these elephants carrying the pilgrim's heavy baggage, including his large collection of sacred objects and manuscripts, see also *ibid.*, p. 262. This *cortège* of elephants is indirectly a proof that the economic conditions of Wakhān and Sarikol in Hsüan-tsang's times must have been very different from what they are now; for I much doubt whether the present resources of

these valleys would allow of elephants being adequately provisioned there, to say nothing of the passage of the Pāmirs. Yet we know that Hsüan-tsang—and his elephants—honoured the Sarikol capital by a stay of twenty days!

⁵ Cf. *Serindia*, i. pp. 77 sqq.; *Desert Cathay*, i. pp. 98 sq.

⁶ Cf. Julien, *Mémoires*, ii. p. 215; Beal, *Si-yu-ki*, ii. p. 303.

⁷ See Yule-Cordier, *Cathay*, iv. pp. 214 sq.

⁸ Cf. my 'Note on Buddhist local worship in Muhammadan Central Asia', *J.R.A.S.*, 1910, pp. 839 sqq.