

Ākhūn had brought me. Scanty as were the remains traceable on the spot, they amply suffice to prove that it had been occupied by a Buddhist shrine, evidently of the period (eighth to ninth century) when the ruined fort was last tenanted by Tibetans. But the main interest of the remains rests on the fact that they provide direct archaeological evidence of continuity of local worship having here too, as so often elsewhere in Central Asia, turned a place of Buddhist cult into a Muhammadan 'Mazār'.¹⁰

Geological
character of
Mazār-tāgh
hill range.

Here I may conveniently add that the strike of the reddish strata, mainly marl and alabaster, composing the hill range, which, as Fig. 92 shows, have been laid bare very clearly by wind-erosion on the hill crest close to the ruined fort, was found to be exactly from SE. to NW., with a dip of 20° to the SW.; this agrees very closely with the direction of similar strata observed in the hills north-east of Marāl-bāshi.¹¹ That the general bearing of the Khotan Mazār-tāgh points clearly to its genetic connexion with the former hill range has already been indicated.¹² The appearance of the disintegrated rock flakes covering the Mazār-tāgh slopes closely recalled the fine red detritus observed at the foot of the Kum-tāgh and again on our third desert march south-east of the Chok-tāgh.

Move to
Khotan
town.

I had to abandon my intention of surveying the Mazār-tāgh range farther into the desert north-westwards than had been possible in 1908, owing to the heavy strain that the long series of preceding forced marches had put upon our camels and men. Nor could I allow them a preliminary rest here without a loss of time of which the programme of the winter's explorations far away to the east did not permit. So I let Surveyor Muḥammad Yāqūb with the camels move by easy stages behind me along the route, not previously mapped, that leads from the junction of the Kara-kāsh and Yurung-kāsh along the former river to Kara-kāsh town (Map 14. A. 1). I myself hastened ahead to Khotan by the direct route that I had followed in 1908, and covered the distance of close on 120 miles in four days. Passing through the outlying oases of Islāmābād and Tawakkēl, I had occasion to note a considerable extension of the cultivated area, with a correspondingly large increase of the population, since my visits of 1900 and 1908.¹³

Ruins east
of Yurung-
kāsh R.

From Islāmābād I detached Afrāz-gul Khān to examine ruins reported in the desert east of the Yurung-kāsh river. His survey proved them to be identical with those of the Rawak and Jumbe-kum sites already explored by me in 1901.¹⁴ But near the Rawak Vihāra the dunes had since shifted in position and now disclosed, about 60 yards to the NE. of that great ruin, the remains of a previously unsurveyed structure, about 48 feet square, probably also a temple. Unfortunately its walls were found eroded almost to the ground, and no close determination was possible. On November 21st I regained my old haunts at Khotan, and there, to my pleasant surprise, found Sir George Macartney just arrived on an official tour from Kāshgar.

OBJECTS BROUGHT BY KĀSIM ĀKHŪN AND OTHERS FROM MAZĀR-TĀGH

M. Tāgh. 01. Length of hemp rope, in good condition.
Knot at one end. Length 4' 8", diam. $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

M. Tāgh. 03. End of wooden bow; hard wood.
Towards centre, flattened and spliced to strong band of animal fibre, prob. a large tendon. Splice bound with fine

fibre and covered with black pigment. Posterior aspect of bow flattened; anterior, rounded keel-shaped. End flattened laterally and notched for bow-string. Extremely well made; cf. *Serindia*, iv. Pl. LI, M. Tāgh. a. 0017. Length 1' 9", width at centre $1\frac{1}{2}$ ". Pl. VI.

¹⁰ For references, see *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 611, s.v. local worship; *Serindia*, iii. p. 1546; *J.R.A.S.*, 1910, pp. 839 sqq.

¹¹ Cf. Hedin, *Reisen in Z.-A.*, pp. 221, 223.

¹² See above, p. 81 sq., 88 sq.

¹³ In 1900 Tawakkēl, together with Islāmābād, was reckoned at 1,000 households; cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 132.

Now 1,700 houses were counted at Tawakkēl and 300 more at Islāmābād. This oasis, along with Yangi-arik farther south, also much grown, had been formed into a separate Bēg-ship (*minglik*).

¹⁴ Cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 483 sqq., 502.