

## CHAPTER V

### ON THE WAY TO LOP-NŌR

#### SECTION I.—CHARCHAN AND VĀSH-SHAHRI

March to  
Yār-tungaz  
river.

My aim, when on the 19th December I left the extremity of the Niya river, was to gain as quickly as possible the Lop Desert region, my main goal for the winter's operations and still far away to the north-east. For the first two marches I had to follow my old track of 1901 and 1906 to the Yār-tungaz river; to my surprise I noticed that where it crossed high ridges formed by dunes of coarse sand it still showed in places distinct traces of the footprints left behind by my camels. This observation was subsequently confirmed when I revisited the Limes west of Tun-huang.

Crossing to  
Endere  
river.

From our old camp at Helya-bēg (Map No. 19. c. 1) I crossed the Yār-tungaz river, already hard frozen, and in order to shorten the journey to the Endere river struck eastwards across unexplored desert ground. The belts of dunes that I met on the first march beyond the Yār-tungaz river proved unexpectedly low, none rising to more than about 50 feet in height. Yet they, too, all stretched in the north-south direction of the river, thus conforming to what I had observed elsewhere in the Taklamakān and Lop deserts, viz. that the big sand ridges or 'Dawāns' always have their axis parallel to the main bearing of the nearest river-bed, whether still carrying water or dry.<sup>1</sup> Here I noticed that the same rule holds good also as regards the thin lines of tamarisk-cones on our route.

Old branch  
from Endere  
river.

On the march beyond Camp LXVIII the sandy soil with anty scrub soon gave way to wide stretches of bare clay covered with a hard salt crust, which forced us to steer a more southerly course for the sake of the camels' feet. Patches with tamarisk bushes, lying on flat ground showed that the area had been subject at one time to occasional inundation. It is to be noted that this must have come from the Endere river became clear when towards the end of the second march we encountered a wide *shōr*-covered depression flanked by lines of high tamarisk-cones, lying from SE. to NW. Beyond it we came upon rows of Toghraks, and there we camped. But still twelve miles had next morning to be covered from Camp LXIX before we reached the Endere river; as we did after striking the caravan track towards Charchan. The wide divergence of a dry western bed from the deep-cut Endere river is of interest as illustrating the great lateral flexion to which the drainage descending over the piedmont gravel glacis of the K'un-lun, here particularly broad, may be subject at one period or another.

Course of  
Endere  
river.

The observation is of interest as it helps to account for the distances that separate the main ruins of the Endere Site and the remains of Bilēl-konghan, explored on our first and second journeys,<sup>2</sup> from the present course of the Endere river. This, where the caravan track crosses it at Endere-langar, runs in a broad 'Yār' cut into the loess to a depth of over a hundred feet. Its course here, still almost clear of ice, had a width of about 30 yards; and carried a volume of water which could not be less than 100 cubic feet per second. A still greater abundance of water during the summer

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Serindia*, i. p. 241 note 2, 451 sq.; iii. p. 1239.

<sup>2</sup> See *Anc. Khotan*, i. 1 421 sqq.; *Serindia*, i. pp. 271 sqq., 275 sqq.