

gradually broadens higher up to the north-west. It is furrowed by a succession of deep ravines, in which the rare rain floods from the little valleys of the hill range have cut their way into the Murtuk 'Yār'.

Cultivation
at Tonguluk-
bulak and
Bēsh-kan.

Where one of these tiny valleys debouches on the plateau just opposite to Ākhūn-mahalla, we find the small spring known as Tonguluk-bulak irrigating about an acre of land immediately below the outfall. It was, no doubt, the presence of this modest supply of water that accounted for the small monastic establishment (M.A. in plan) once existing here. It is marked by two or three little caves, quite bare, on the right side of the valley mouth, and a group of small ruined structures, found completely cleared, on higher ground on the left. Proceeding about five hundred yards to the west along the foot of the range one reaches the second group of ruins, M.B. I, II, variously designated as *Bēsh-kan* or *Bēsh-khān*, also near the mouth of a little valley. Within this valley a spring, which I found dry, used to provide irrigation for a small terrace under cultivation in years gone by but abandoned at the time of my visit. Below this are found six caves of small dimensions, some of which have their walls decorated with remains of interesting paintings.⁶

Clearing
of ruin
M.B. I.

On the opposite (left) bank of the dry bed rises the ruin of a high tower-like structure, M.B. I (Fig. 305; see sketch-plan, Pl. 28), which in spite of much destruction still showed remains of originally vaulted rooms in three stories. A smaller building adjoined on the east, which also contained rooms, with an open court. The upper portion of the main structure had suffered a great deal through burrowing, and no structural details could be definitely established. But the fragments of stucco ornaments in relief, M.B. I. 02-17 (Pl. IV), found among the debris suggested that a shrine had been comprised in this upper portion of the building. The fragment of a gracefully shaped wooden jar, M.B. I. 019 (Pl. VI), and a small bowl of glazed ware also came to light in this debris. The clearing of the small rooms of the lowest story yielded a number of manuscript and block-print remains in Uigur, including two large and complete documents, besides some in Chinese. The numerous miscellaneous objects found here left no doubt that these lower apartments had served as living quarters, probably for attendants of the shrines. Among them special mention may be made of implements, like the iron razor M.B. I. v. 01 (Pl. VI); the sticks from a loom, iii. 011; the iron awl ix. 01 (Pl. LXVI); of the embroidered silk bag ix. 02, and the figured woollen fabric i. 022. The few fragments of ornamental stucco reliefs and carved wood found in clearing the debris-filled rooms vii and xii had probably dropped there from the shrine destroyed higher up.

A little over half a mile to the north-west of M.B. I there lies at the mouth of a somewhat wider Nullah a third group of ruined shrines, M.C. (Fig. 303). No surface flow of water ordinarily reaches this point now, but the presence of subsoil moisture issuing from the little valley is attested by the presence of a few old stunted trees and by a *Kārēz* which takes off from here and helps to irrigate some fields farther down in the Yār. It is very probable that when the several shrines now in ruin were still 'in being' water was obtainable near them from a spring or brook. The religious importance attaching to this group of ruins is brought out by the fact that from about two hundred yards eastwards the ground right to the cliffs overlooking the 'Yār' of Murtuk is covered with the graves and domed tombs of the large Muhammadan cemetery formed around the *Ziārat* of Maulāna Ḥamīd Khōjam (see the plan, Pl. 29). The site thus consecrated by the resting-place of this holy man was said to form a place of regular pilgrimage for the people of Kara-khōja towards the end of the summer.

The ruins which Professor Grünwedel has explored and fully described⁷ comprise a large tower-like structure, M.C. I, resembling M.B. I, on the right bank of the dry bed; a series of small

⁶ For the curious composition adorning the cella wall of the central cave M.B. II. i. above the entrance, cf. Grün-

wedel, *Kultstätten*, pp. 303 sq. For a plan of these caves, see Pl. 28. ⁷ See Grünwedel, *Kultstätten*, pp. 309 sqq.