

There was no time for the examination of these humble resting-places, as we still had a long march before us that evening, to the newly established district head-quarters of Kara-kum south-westwards. The route followed took us first across a wide area of tamarisk and scrub-covered steppe, where shallow flood-beds and plentiful salt efflorescence indicated liability to inundation both from the drainage of the westernmost foot-hills of the Kuruk-tāgh and from the overflow of canals from the Konche-daryā. Some seven miles from Yār-karaul we came upon the first detached patches of cultivation belonging to 'old Kara-kum', on ground known as Gherilghan. Then over waterlogged roads, through an alternation of fields and unreclaimed land, we reached the half-abandoned market-place of Kara-kum 'Kōna-shahr'. The official head-quarters had been shifted thence in the preceding autumn to the 'new town' of Kara-kum, situated on the left bank of the Konche-daryā eight miles farther south, and there we arrived long after nightfall, having covered fully thirty-one miles in the day.

March to
Kara-kum.

SECTION IV.—THE TERRITORY OF WEI-LI AND THE MODERN KARA-KUM

I was obliged to halt two days at Kara-kum, partly in order to let men and animals have some rest after the rather trying desert journey and partly in order to save if possible one of our camels which had been severely wounded, near Sanje, by the accidental discharge of Ibrāhīm the hunter's gun. We had been obliged to leave the poor beast behind, with one of the men to take care of it, in the hope of bringing it in later. This hope was destined to disappointment, and the victim of our guide's want of care had to be killed by Hassan Ākhūn, my camel factotum, on his return to the spot with assistance.

Halt at
Kara-kum.

This halt at Kara-kum proved useful, inasmuch as it enabled me to secure reliable information about that out-of-the-way and comparatively little known Chinese district which comprises the northern portion of the Lop area and the tract between the upper Konche-daryā and Korla. I have already had occasion to discuss in *Serindia* the reasons which lead me to identify the territory of *Wei-li* 尉梨 with this modern district.¹ A brief summary of the Chinese historical notices referring to it will therefore here suffice.

The notice in the Former Han Annals makes the 'kingdom of Wei-li' join Shan-shan and Chū-mo on the south.² This corresponds correctly enough to the position of the district now officially known as Kara-kum, which extends along the Konche-daryā from below Korla down to near the river's junction with the Tārīm below Tikenlik. We have seen that, according to the *Ch'ien Han shu*'s notice of Shan 山 or the western Kuruk-tāgh, the chief place of this territory was situated 240 *li* east of Wei-li, which clearly takes us to the vicinity of the present Kara-kum.³ The distance to, and bearing of, the seat of the Governor-General, probably in the present oasis of Yangi-hissār, viz. 360 *li* to the west, are approximately correct. So also is the statement that from *Ch'ü-li* 渠犂, the riverine tracts between the Inchike-daryā and the Yār-kand-daryā from Shahyār downwards, the road led to Wei-li.⁴ The population of 2,000 families recorded for Wei-li as compared with that of 700 families for the adjoining *Wei-hsü* or Korla suggests a fairly large territory.

Wei-li in
Former
Han Annals.

The Later Han Annals do not furnish a special notice of Wei-li, but mention its 'king', in significant conjunction with the chiefs of Yen-ch'i (Kara-shahr), Wei-hsü (Korla) and Shan, all territories closely adjacent to Kara-kum, as having been defeated and punished by Pan Ch'ao in

Wei-li in
later
Annals.

¹ See *Serindia*, iii. p. 1231.

² Cf. Wylie, *J. Anthropol. Inst.* xi. p. 101.

³ Cf. above, ii. p. 763; Wylie, *loc. cit.*, p. 105.

⁴ Cf. Wylie, *ibid.*, p. 100. I may add here to the statement

made in *Serindia*, iii. p. 1231, about *Ch'ü-li*, that the distance of 650 *li* indicated from *Ch'ü-li* to Wei-li might lead us to locate the chief place of the former not far from the present Shahyār.