

as you can see. At a distance of about 3 1/2 miles the monotony of the desert is broken by a narrow strip of forest that struggles stubbornly from the north in a SSW direction, battling with the drifting sand. Close to Karghalik you notice some faint attempts at irrigation and some patches of field, where the peasant, protected by his small earthen walls, seems to have made an effort to strive against churlish nature. But very soon even these attempts appear to have been abandoned. As long as the road led us through these fields, it was ditched and planted with trees that looked as though they were suffering from consumption. The soil consists of fine sand with a strong admixture of gravel in places. After plodding laboriously through the sand for an hour and a half we came to the edge of a wood, the oasis of Beshariq, that we had seen in the distance. A few poor houses and tidy sandy fields protected from the drifting sand by the surrounding trees, and again nothing but sand, this time without a break. The land is flat with a slight occasional hillock of sand formed under the influence of the wind. Another weary progress of an hour and a half and we came once more to a very small oasis lying in the sand like an island. Five minutes' journey led us out of these trees into the ocean of sand again. At 2 p.m. we reached Kosh Langar, a large barracks-sarai in the desert, built of baked bricks and constructed, like the next one, by Niaz Hakim Beg, the Governor of Khotan in Yaqub Beg's time. Close to it is a small pond filled with water from an oasis, Bura (Bulaq su) about 8 paotai to the S or SSW. It contains about 150 houses.

*November 23rd.* Our journey to-day was, if anything, more monotonous than yesterday. The road goes all the time in a SE direction and is indicated by more or less clear tracks in the sand, the paotai towers, sometimes half in ruins, and in a couple of places by a row of stakes driven into the ground. Numbers of carcasses of horses and asses strewn along the road bear witness to the hard struggle these honest animals have to endure in such difficult country. For about an hour's drive at a walking pace the plain is even, the land apparently only rising in front of us in the direction from NNE to SSW. About 9 o'clock, on reaching this rise you enter ground that undulates in long, low hillocks. The road either leads over them or cuts a deep furrow through their sand. The soil consists of sand and gravel, more mixed with gravel than yesterday. A strong SW wind carried the dust and sand, obliterating the horizon, and made us feel cold. The road was hard on the arbah horses. By 1 p.m. we had covered the 7 paotai or more for the day and stopped in front of a spacious caravanserai, built on the same plan as the last one, but with an outer courtyard and having the inner one paved with flat flagstones. A valley from NNE to SSW was visible for some time before we reached our destination. The slope on its opposite side seemed to grow a few low bushes. To the south of the sarai the ground seemed to rise considerably and become hilly. In the valley below the sarai a large pond had been dug, surrounded by high mud walls. Next to it some patches of field had been ploughed and a few trees grew round them. A couple of miserable huts were occupied by the hardworking labourers and their few children. I went to have a look at these people, whose stubborn struggle with the niggardly desert deserved a better reward. Everything indicated extreme poverty. — The water in the pond comes from Kilian (?), a distance of