

up on the road to Imam Ja'far Sadik; but I soon ascertained the original finder in the person of Ibrahim, an enterprising young miller of the village who had dug them out a year before when searching a 'house of the old town', beyond that pilgrimage place, in the hope of 'treasure'. He had found no 'treasure', only a number of these, to him, useless tablets. He had brought away six, only to throw away some on the road and to give the rest to his children to play with. These, of course, were soon destroyed, and Ibrahim now greatly regretted their loss when he saw how well I rewarded the more sensible man who had picked up the others.

I lost no time in securing Ibrahim as a guide for my party. It was a happy evening when I examined these most promising finds. The very cursive form of writing and the faded ink prevented any attempt at immediate decipherment, but there could be no doubt that I held in my hands documents written in an early Indian script and older than any which have come to light in India apart from inscriptions. The writing alone was enough to assure me of the antiquity of the site for which I was bent; yet I little anticipated at the time what a rich harvest awaited me there.

The three days' march along the dying Niya river was brightened by this cheering prospect quite as much as by a delightfully clear sky. But the cold was still severe, the temperature at night falling to somewhere about eight degrees below zero Fahrenheit. The Mazar of Imam Ja'far Sadik is a famous pilgrimage place marking the spot where popular legend assumes the holy Muslim leader of that name to have fallen with many hundreds of the Faithful in fighting the infidels of 'Chin and Ma-chin', *i.e.* Khotan.