

covered by drift-sand, but emerging again amongst low dunes and patches of dead forest. Over all this strange ground desiccation was written most plainly.

Particularly impressive evidence offered of the great change which had come over this ground when, beyond a curious deep depression probably wind-eroded and flanked by high tamarisk-cones and not far from that foot-bridge, we found the remains of a large and remarkably well-preserved orchard (Fig. 49). The carefully arranged rows of various fruit-trees and the trellis-carried vines, though dead for more than sixteen centuries, could be examined here in almost uncanny clearness.

The 400 odd miles of desert through which my marches took me in November 1906 from the Niya site north-eastwards past Charchan to Charkhlik, offered opportunities for interesting observations both geographical and archaeological at more than one point. Here it must suffice to mention the solution which some fortunate finds at an ancient site to the east of the Endere river afforded for a problem of distinct antiquarian interest. Starting from Imam Ja'far Sadik, we reached this site after a succession of trying marches across the forbiddingly high ridges of dunes which separate the dying courses of the Niya and Yartungaz rivers from the bed of the Endere river before this too loses itself in the sands of the Taklamakan.

I had first visited that ruined site of Endere in 1901, when excavations carried out within a small fort protected by a circular rampart had allowed me to clear a small Buddhist shrine (Fig. 50) closely corresponding in type to those found at Dandan-oilik. Among the interesting finds made there were remains of Tibetan Buddhist manuscripts, the oldest