

the care of Ibrahim Beg, the most reliable of my Turki followers, for its two months' journey to Kashgar. When by the middle of February the detailed survey of the Turfan depression was also nearing completion, I was free to bring our work in the Turfan basin to an end by a close examination of the curious site of Yar-khoto, situated island-like between two deep-cut ravines to the west of the modern town of Turfan (Fig. 122).

There an isolated and naturally strong plateau bears the remains of a maze of ruined dwellings and shrines carved out for the most part from the loess soil. They mark the position occupied by the earlier capital of Turfan territory during Han times and offer quite an imposing appearance. But owing to the ease with which the fertile loess soil within the ruins could be extracted by the villagers around for manuring earth, there were few layers of debris left here to invite systematic excavation. So when Chinese obstruction was beginning anew to assert itself directly against my archaeological activity, I was glad to set out south into the Kuruk-tagh for fresh exploratory tasks in the desert.