

which leads through the scrubby desert to the south of a barren outer hill chain, and being now waterless for several marches is now practically abandoned. In order to visit a couple of minor Buddhist sites I myself had to follow the highroad through the subsidiary basin of Bai. This lies to the north of that hill chain, and is watered by the river which flows to Kucha from near the glacier pass of the Muz-art on the T'ien-shan.

The torrid heat of the Turkistan summer had begun to set in by the time we reached the long-stretched oasis of Aksu. So I was not altogether sorry that this narrow belt of cultivation along both banks of the Taushkan river descending from the north-west offered no ancient remains to explore. The tract does not appear to have been of importance in ancient times, and has received its present population of rather uncouth Dolans from a late immigration of an originally semi-nomadic Turkish tribe.

Our six long marches beyond, towards Maral-bashi, led mostly through desert ground within sight of bare mountains belonging to an outlier of the T'ien-shan which encircles the small oasis of Kelpin. On my second expedition I had carried in May 1908 a survey across those barren ranges, and after emerging from them traced a line of ruined watch-stations marking the line of the ancient highroad where it ran through what is now absolutely waterless, sandy desert well to the north of the present route. The change of a terminal bed of the Kashgar river beyond Maral-bashi accounts for this diversion of the old caravan route.

In the neighbourhood of Maral-bashi, another settlement of Dolans, where the courses of the Tarim and Kashgar river closely approach each other, detached rocky ridges,