

which Ptolemy, and before him the great geographer, Marinus of Tyre, knew as the emporium on the extreme western frontier of Serike, *i.e.*, the Central Chinese Dominions. Nature itself has marked the site not only as the administrative centre for the valleys forming the Sarikol region, but also as the most convenient place for trade exchange on an ancient and once important route connecting great portions of Central Asia with the far West and East. From Tashkurghan the road lies open equally to Kashgar and Khotan, and thus to both the great routes which lead from Turkestan into the interior of China. Here also the two best lines of communication across the Pamir converge. The Taghdumbash Valley, giving direct access to the Upper Oxus, is met by the route which crosses by the Naiza-Tash Pass into the Aksu Valley and thence by the Great Pamir leads down to Shighnan and Badakhshan.

At Tashkurghan I had the satisfaction of finding myself once more on the track of Hiuen-Tsiang, the great Chinese pilgrim, whose footsteps I had traced to so many a sacred Buddhist site of ancient India. Travelling about A.D. 649 from Badakhshan to Khotan, he passed through the district of Kie-pan-to, long ago identified by Sir Henry Yule as the modern Sarikol. Examining on the spot the description he and the earlier Chinese pilgrim, Sung-yun (circ. 500 A.D.), give of the old capital of that territory, I found it to agree most closely with the position and remains of Tashkurghan. The ruined town, within which the modern Chinese fort is built, "rests on a great rocky crag and is backed by the river Sita" (*i.e.*, the Taghdumbash branch of the Yarkand River), on the East, exactly as the pilgrims describe it.

A line of massive but crumbling stone walls crowns the edges of a quadrangular plateau of conglomerate cliffs, roughly one-third of a mile in length on each of its faces. A small portion of the area thus enclosed, on the east side facing the river, is occupied by the Chinese fort. Its high and carefully plastered