

lection of huts by the side of a swampy depression fed by a little canal. But of Baikhan nothing was to be seen, and evidence as to its distance was conflicting. The prospect of being benighted over our search, or of having to traverse the sand-dunes towards Ordam-Padshah with no daylight to guide us, was distinctly uninviting. I therefore felt bound to abandon the projected visit and to make for the shrine where I supposed my caravan to have preceded me.

So after securing a shepherd guide, we set off to the south, and gradually approaching the line of white sandhills, after an hour and a half's ride entered the true desert area. All scrub disappeared, and only hardy tufts of grass known as 'Kumush' covered in patches the glittering sand. With the hope of a more extended view we made for a higher sandhill. Far away to the south stretched a sea of sand, curiously resembling the ocean with its long wavelike dunes. Through the dust-haze that lay over the long succession of ridges there appeared to the south-west a darker range of low hills for which the extant maps had in no way prepared me, and nearer to us a series of high posts marking the sacred sites to be visited by the pilgrims. With the help of these far-visible marks it was easy to ascertain the position of Ordam-Padshah, as well as of the subsidiary 'Mazars' of Dost-bulak, Sultanim, and Kizil-jaim.

Following our guide, we struck to the south until we reached the main route of the pilgrims near a lonely rest-house known as Uftu Langar. There we looked in vain for the track of the camels which we expected to have passed long before. After a long and somewhat anxious wait—for it was getting late, we saw at last far away to the north the caravan emerging from behind the sandhills. Assured that I should not have to wait in vain for the baggage, however belated it might be, I rode on in the twilight towards our destination.

The sand-dunes to be crossed steadily increased in height, and the going became more difficult. Even in the failing light