

ample out-houses. This building attests the enterprise of Niaz Hakim Beg, governor of Khotan in the days of Yaqub Beg—the same whose country mansion gave me shelter at Yarkand. A tank is provided, into which water flows for one day in the week by a small canal brought down from the outer hills. A ruined mound of sun-dried bricks, some 30 feet high, which rises from the desert plain about a mile and a half northwards, may possibly mark the remains of a Stupa. But its decay was too far advanced to permit any certain conclusion.

On the 3rd of October my march lay entirely through desert ground. To the south the line of outer hills was faintly visible through the haze, but no canal or watercourse of any kind descends from them to the plain. After the chilly nights the heat and glare of the midday hours were very perceptible. The dreary route we were now following along the southern edge of the great sandy desert, the Taklamakan, had for me a special historical interest. It was undoubtedly the ancient line that led from the Oxus region to Khotan and China. Walking and riding along the track marked here and there by the parched carcasses and bleached bones of animals that had died on it, I thought of travellers in times gone by who must have marched through this same waterless, uninhabited waste. Hiuen-Tsiang, who travelled here on his way back to China, has well described the route. After him it had seen Marco Polo and many a less-known mediæval traveller to distant Cathay. Practically nothing has changed here in respect of the methods and means of travel, and thus my thoughts could wander back into the past the more readily. It is certain that, with the caravans that once trod this sand, the Buddhist religion and the elements of Indian as well as of classical culture and art travelled to the land of the Sinæ. Shall we ever learn how much they brought back that has influenced the civilization of the ancient world?

Cholak Langar, which I reached in the early afternoon, has