

were acquired, had in statements recorded at Kashgar by Mr. Macartney and subsequently reproduced in Dr. Hoernle's learned report on the Calcutta collection, specified a series of localities from which his finds were alleged to have been obtained. Most of these were described as old sites in the desert north of the caravan route between Guma and Khotan. Information that had reached me at Kashgar helped to emphasise the doubts which had previously arisen as to the genuineness of his "finds." But it was at Guma that I first touched the ground where it was possible to test the "treasure-seeker's" statements by direct local inquiries.

When the local Begs together with the several Yüz-bashis of the main villages joined me in the morning, I ascertained that there was an extensive débris-covered area known to all as a 'Kone-shahr,' close to the road between Guma and Moji, the next oasis eastwards. But nobody had ever heard of the discovery of "old books" either at this or any other site. Of the string of localities named as find-places in the detailed itinerary which Islam Akhun had given of one of his desert journeys, only two were known to them. As both lay close to the oasis it was easy to arrange for their inspection. Riding to the north-east with a lively following of Begs and their attendants, I soon reached the area of moving sand-dunes 20 to 30 feet high which encircles Guma from the north. Near to the little hamlet of Hasa, passed en route on the edge of this area, the dunes had within the memory of the villagers encroached considerably on the original holdings. A portion of the scattered homesteads was believed also to lie buried under the advancing sands. But as they had been abandoned only within a comparatively recent period, they could never, as my guides sensibly pointed out, have furnished antiquities.

A ride of a little over three miles sufficed to bring me to Kara-kul Mazar ("the Mazar of the Black Lake") which figured prominently in Islam Akhun's itinerary. By the side