

of a little lake of saline water, half-covered by reeds, there rises a semicircle of sandhills. On the top of one, the customary erection of poles hung with votive rags, yak's tails, and skins, indicates the supposed resting-place of a saint. Of his life and deeds I could gather nothing except that the holy man came to live here when his beard was black, and died here as an 'Ak-sakal' ("a white-beard"). Of the vast cemetery round this shrine where Islam Akhun alleged that he had made finds of ancient block-prints, I could discover no sign.

The lake is fed by a small rivulet, which flows in a broad, tortuous bed about a quarter of a mile eastwards. It rises from a series of springs and pools about Hasa, and accordingly is known by the name of Kara-su ("black water"); but during the spring and early summer it is swelled by flood water ('ak-su' or "white water") when the snow melts on the mountains southward. In its bed, which we followed for about three miles to the oasis of Karatagh-aghzi, or Karataghiz, I came for the first time upon the jungle that thrives along the watercourses that penetrate into the desert. Reeds of various kinds, the hardy 'Yulghun' plant with its heather-like small red flowers, and other shrubs filled the dry bed of the Kara-su in picturesque confusion. The autumn had already turned the leaves of many to various tints of yellow. So there was a feast for the eyes, doubly welcome after the dreary monochrome view of the Dasht. At Karatagh-aghzi I found luxuriant groves of poplar-, mulberry-, and other trees scattered among ripe fields of Indian corn. The other produce had already been harvested. The part of the cultivated land which I saw was said to have been reclaimed only some fifteen years ago. The size and luxuriance of the trees that had grown up in this short time was a striking illustration of the capability of the desert soil if once reached by water.

From Karatagh-aghzi Islam Akhun alleged that he had visited various ruined sites which yielded him "old books"