

By the side of it a broad wooden bench filled a kind of recess. Judging from a similar arrangement still observed in Turkestan houses, and from the broken pottery discovered below it, this bench probably served for the handy storing of cooking utensils. In front of it, and not far from the fireplace, there stood a rough wooden tripod, such as is still used throughout the country to support large water-jars required for kitchen purposes, while a short post with branching head, which I found fixed in the ground close to where the first manuscript leaf was discovered, certainly served to hang a kettle from. Remains of animal bones, oilcakes, and small layers of charcoal found scattered over the floor in various places fully bore out the conclusion indicated.

My attention was still fixed on the manuscript remains that were successively emerging from the depth of this sand-buried dwelling, when at noon of the 23rd of December the sound of a distant gun-shot was heard over the silent dunes eastwards. Old Turdi, who with me was keenly watching the excavation work, at once interpreted the faint sound as a signal that Ram Singh was approaching from the direction of the Keriya Darya. An hour later the Sub-Surveyor was by my side, together with faithful Jasvant Singh, his Rajput cook and companion, both manifestly as pleased as I was at our successfully effected junction. Considering the distances covered and the various incidents for which it was impossible to make proper allowance in our respective programmes, the rendezvous I had arranged for had been kept most punctually.

I was greatly relieved to find from Ram Singh's report that he had fully carried out the topographical task I had assigned to him, and had experienced no difficulties from either the Chinese or the native local authorities. Marching back by our former route to above the Pisha Valley, he had effected a supplementary triangulation of the great peaks above the headwaters of the Yurung-kash. He had then made his way north of the massive of Peak K. 5, or 'Muztagh,' to the slopes of the great glacier-crowned range which sends its numerous streams down to the small oases fringing the desert west of Keriya. By plane-table work and triangulation