

On the morning of the 4th of January I paid off and dismissed to Tawakkel a portion of my little force of labourers who had worked so valiantly. With the rest I set out to the north, and after a march of about seven miles across gradually rising sand-ridges reached again ground where broken pottery between the dunes indicated the former existence of habitations. We halted at a spot between deeply eroded banks of loess, where Kasim's party eighteen days before had camped and found water. But the well would yield no water now, as the ground was frozen quite hard, and when at last water was reached by fresh digging it proved even more brackish than that we had to drink at Dandan-Uiliq.

Though Turdi had not visited the place for nine years he guided me on the next day without hesitation to where behind a long-stretching ridge of sand, some 60 ft. high, the ruins were situated. They proved to consist mainly of two much-decayed mounds, lying quite close together, composed of fairly hard sun-dried bricks, probably the remains of small Stupas. They had evidently been dug into repeatedly and had suffered badly; but in the case of the larger one it was still possible to make out what looked like a circular base about 32 ft. in diameter. From among the small *débris* of ancient pottery, broken glass, &c., strewn over the ground near the mounds I picked up a fragment of remarkably hard stucco on which the practised eye of Turdi at once discovered traces of a thin gold-layer. Judging from its shape this stucco piece is likely to have belonged to a statue that had once been fully gilded.

Old Chinese coins without legend, as issued under the Han dynasty, also turned up at various places among the pottery *débris* which covered the low ground between the dunes. As the latter rise here to heights over 25 ft. and are proportionately large, it was scarcely surprising that we could trace the ruins of only one house built with timber. Its walls had decayed by erosion to within a few feet of the ground, and the high dune rising immediately above it made it impossible to clear more than a single room. Within