

The first brought me to Karakir Langar, a deserted roadside Bazar east of the Domoko oasis, where a curious illustration offered itself of the changes affecting cultivation in this tract. About ten years previously, I was told, abundant springs had unexpectedly appeared in the sandy jungle some miles to the south, fed, no doubt, by the Nura and other hill streams which higher up lose themselves on the pebble 'Sai,' that glacis of the mountains. The water supplied by these springs was so ample that land sufficient for 700 to 800 households has since been brought under cultivation in the desert tract to the north of Karakir Langar, with the result that the wayfarers' custom has been completely transferred to the new village of Achma. My second day's ride was to Chira, a large oasis counting some 3,500 households, and receiving its water from the river that comes from Hasa, and is fed by the glaciers north and north-east of the great Muztagh. My night's halt here was rendered enjoyable by the charming camping-place I discovered in a terraced orchard, where the white blossoms of the plum-tree ('ürük') covered the ground like fresh snow, while the air was scented with their perfume.

But already on the following morning we had to face a strong dust-storm blowing from the west, while we covered the forty odd miles across the dreary plain of sand and pebbles to the oasis of Sampula. The thick haze which enveloped us all day made me thankful for the guidance afforded by the rows of poles marking the road. Sampula, or Lop as it is also called from its chief village, is a thickly populated tract still included in the Ambanship of Keriya, though watered chiefly by canals from the Yurung-kash or Khotan River. I was struck by the thriving look of its villages, due largely to the flourishing carpet industry which is centred here. Its products, though unfortunately debased by the use of aniline dyes, are still much prized throughout Turkestan. There is little doubt that the manufacture of these famous silk carpets, and some other local industries connected with Khotan, are an inheritance from ancient days.

The fourth and last day of my journey to Khotan was utilised