

White Walls"), and situated among high sand dunes, at a distance of nearly fifteen miles from the right bank of the Yurung-kash opposite Khotan, was my next objective. On the march, and close to the edge of the cultivated area, I examined with interest the site known as Tam-öghil, from an adjoining small hamlet, where ancient "culture-strata," yielding some leaf-gold, besides old coins, terracottas, &c., are worked under exactly the same conditions as those described at Yotkan. The extent of the excavations is, however, far more limited, as the available water supply is scanty and the proceeds are less remunerative. Here, too, the excavations, which now employ about a dozen people for one and a half to two months in the year, are said to have been started by the accidental discovery of gold in a small 'Yar' that had formed about twenty years ago through the overflow of an irrigation channel. I noticed that the banks of fertile earth overlying the ancient "culture-stratum" to a height of 10 to 18 feet, silt deposits as I take it, showed here and there distinct traces of stratification. Considering the short distance, less than three miles, which separates this site from the present right bank of Yurung-kash, it appeared to me possible that these slight layers, 1 to 1½ inches thick, may, perhaps, be due to exceptional floods from the river. The fertile soil excavated is used by the villagers to improve gravelly fields in the vicinity.

As soon as we had passed the edge of the cultivated area, fragments of ancient pottery appeared on the bare loess, cropping up also in large patches between the low dunes over which our march led for the next four miles. There was ample evidence that the belt of villages and fields had extended much further to the north in ancient times. Then the dunes grew remarkably steep and high, up to 60 feet and more, the coarse, heavy sand unmistakably showing its origin from the gravel deposits of the river. Here the uniform direction of the dunes was also clearly marked, being N.N.W. to S.S.E. After five miles of these difficult dunes we reached open and in places much eroded ground near Ak-sipil, where I thought I could distinguish traces of little embankments dividing ancient fields, and of distributing 'Ariks' along them.