

CHAPTER X

FROM DANDĀN-UILIQ TO THE NIYA RIVER

SECTION I.—THE RAWAK SITE

Visit to
Rawak
ruins.

On the 3rd of January, 1901, the explorations at Dandān-Uiliq were completed. The camels had, in accordance with previous instructions, duly arrived from the Keriya river; and my men, who had suffered from the long exposure to the cold of the wintry desert and the brackish water, were all eager for the start to less desolate surroundings. Before, however, finally leaving for the Keriya river, I decided to visit some ruins of which Turdi had spoken as situated to the north and known to treasure-seekers by the name of *Rawak* ('High Mansion').

Mounds of
Rawak.

On the morning of the 4th of January I paid off and dismissed to Tawakkēl a portion of my little force of labourers. With the rest I set out to the north, and after marching across gradually rising broad ridges of sand for a distance representing about seven miles in a straight line, reached once more easier ground, where the appearance of potsherds on the loess between the dunes indicated the former existence of habitations. Camp was pitched at a spot between loess terraces deeply eroded by the wind, where exceedingly brackish water was reached after sinking a well to a depth of about 7 feet. On the next day Turdi guided me to where, behind a long-stretching ridge of sand, some 60 ft. high, the ruins were situated at a distance of about one mile due north of my camp. They proved to consist of two low and much-decayed mounds, which looked like the last remains of small Stūpas. But repeated diggings, together with the effects of erosion, had rendered the shape of the superstructure quite unrecognizable, and even the foundations very difficult to distinguish. So much, however, was clear on examination of the débris that the structures must have been composed of sun-dried bricks, probably about 3 inches in thickness. The smaller mound to the east showed what might have been a Stūpa base about 10 feet square, with layers of red burned loess embedded among the débris. The second mound, situated about 50 feet to the west, seemed to show the foundations of some circular structure, measuring about 32 feet in diameter.

From among the débris of ancient pottery, broken glass, &c., which strew the ground near the mounds, I picked up a small fragment of remarkably hard greyish stucco (D. R. 003), on which the practised eye of Turdi at once discovered traces of a thin gold-layer. Judging from its shape, this piece is likely to have belonged to a statue that had once been gilded. The material has been proved by Professor Church's analysis (see App. F) to be unusually crystalline plaster of Paris. At the back there appear what look like markings left by a canvas backing. Specimens of the glass and terra-cotta fragments found here are shown in the descriptive list under D. R. 001, 4, while D. R. 002 comprises beads of glass and stone picked up on different parts of the site.

Condition of
ruins.

The remains of a small structure built in timber and plaster, about 40 yards to the south of the mounds, were found completely destroyed by recent burrowings; and this has undoubtedly