

ground between the villages of Tasmache and Khān-arik, which had long been deserted but was beginning to be again brought under cultivation. Also at the point where we struck the right bank of the broad bed of the Kara-kāsh river near the village of Kumuchakar, I had occasion to note a change in the area of cultivation. Here a narrow strip of ground that had evidently been left without irrigation for a prolonged period showed all the characteristics of an incipient Tati. Plentiful pottery, but not of an old look, appeared over loess soil that evidently was undergoing erosion in the immediate vicinity of a fertile village tract.

From Kara-kāsh, a lively and comparatively well-built town, I used April 30, my last day within the territory of Khotan, for a long excursion to the Tati known as *Kara-döbe* 'the Black Mound', of which Islām Bēg had obtained information, away to the west on the edge of the desert. In order to reach it we had to traverse the remarkably fertile tracts of Bahrām-su<sup>1</sup>, Kayāsh, Mākuya, and Kuya, all stretching in long strips of highly cultivated ground, with many fine orchards and avenues, along their own separate canals fed by the Kara-kāsh. No more pleasing picture could I retain as a souvenir of rural Khotan; but the usual haze had already effaced the vision of its mountain background. Near the Kara-sai stream, which is fed by springs and marshes below Zawa, we left the cultivated area behind and then crossed for about four miles a sandy scrub-covered plain to the Yawa-Üstang. The latter is a permanent stream which receives most of its water from extensive spring-fed marshes north of Zawa-Kurghān, but during flood-times is also reached by water direct from the Kara-kāsh river. Its relatively large volume—where we crossed the stream it was 30 ft. broad, with a depth of about 4 ft., and flowing rapidly—showed that there would probably be no want of water for new colonies in the desert northward.

At a distance of about two miles to the west I reached, among low dunes, the Tati of *Kara-döbe*, called thus after a neighbouring large tamarisk-covered cone. A stretch of eroded ground, thickly covered with ancient pottery wherever clear of drift-sand, extends here for about a mile from north to south. Owing to high dunes along its east and west edges the full breadth of the débris area could not be ascertained in the short time available. In its midst rises a much-decayed small mound of sun-dried bricks, known as the 'Tim', 9 ft. high, and about 8 ft. square at the base. It has been burrowed into in several places. The intact bricks measured about 19 by 13 in., with an average thickness of 3½ in. Close by fragments of small Chinese copper coins, probably without legend, were picked up by my companions. At a distance of about a hundred yards to the south I could faintly trace the foundations of clay walls, forming apparently a rectangle measuring about 25 ft. from north to south, and 32 ft. from east to west. Within the area thus enclosed there were found several broken pieces of a white and hard stucco, among them some showing traces of relief decoration. Prof. Church's analysis of the latter specimens, in Appendix *F*, has proved that their material was plaster of Paris, just as in the stucco reliefs from Kighillik; their appearance suggests that, like the latter, they had been exposed to accidental fire after having become broken. Two fragments (K. D. 001. d) are of a moulded enrichment, showing a pattern that had evidently formed a border; another (K. D. 001. f) with a surface resembling locks of hair, displays on the back the impression of a fine canvas over which the plaster must have been fixed originally. These pieces might well have belonged to the stucco decoration of a small shrine, of which, as at Kighillik, no structural remains have survived. Fragments of ancient pottery, among them pieces of terracotta with a polished outer surface, were plentiful near the find-place of these stucco fragments.

<sup>1</sup> This canton derives its name from that of its canal, the *Bahrām-su-Üstang*, which tradition ascribes to Bahrām,

a son of Afrāsiyāb. The name may be of early date, and in this case a lingering trace of old Irānian legend.