

Chichiklik plateau has then to be sought over the high pass of K  k-moinak.

This year deep snow was said still to cover the latter, and so I felt glad to be able to avoid it by continuing on June 4th from Kara-kapa, our night's camp, the ascent along the stream which drains the Chichiklik. But progress in the gorge soon became terribly difficult, owing to the confused masses of boulders which choke it and the steepness of the rock slopes on its sides. At several points the baggage had to be unloaded and carried by the pony-men. So it was not until 2 P.M. that we gained at about 14,000 feet the easy detritus slopes leading up to the Chichiklik Maidan or plateau.

It was curious to find at that height an almost level plain, about two and a half miles long from north to south and over a mile across, bordered all round by snowy ridges, and to see with my own eyes how closely its appearance agreed with Hs  an-tsang's description of the level space comprising "some thousands of acres" which he saw on his route to Kashgar and at two days' marching distance from the Sarikol capital, "in the midst of the four mountains belonging to the eastern chain of the Ts'ung-ling mountains." The pilgrim has recorded the severe troubles encountered by merchant caravans on this desolate high plateau, where "both during summer and winter there fall down piles of snow, and the cold winds and icy storms rage." He has also related an 'old story' how once a great troop of merchants, with thousands of followers and camels, perished here by wind and snow. A saintly man of Sarikol was supposed to have collected the precious objects left behind by the caravan, and to have built with the proceeds a hospice for the shelter of travellers.

The topographical indications given by Hs  an-tsang had before induced me to identify this locality with the Chichiklik Maidan, and the accounts I heard from Muhammadju, my experienced Yarkandi caravan-man, and my Sarikoli followers were convincing as to the losses which this desolate high plateau, exposed to the winds and snows, claims annually in animals and at times in men, too. But