

now I had the additional satisfaction of tracing on a low knoll near the centre of the plain the foundations of a square enclosure, some thirty-five yards on each side, built with rough but massive stone walls. It seemed likely to mark the remains of the ruined hospice which my Chinese pilgrim guide had referred to, and the decayed graves I thought I could trace inside supported the conjecture. For had I not found elsewhere on my Central-Asian travels the continuity of local worship illustrated so often by the preference with which pious Muhammadans buried their dead at sites already sacred to Buddhist tradition? But there was matter-of-fact evidence, too, of the spot being suited for a hospice, in the shape of two huts erected under Chinese orders some two hundred yards away. Though dating only since Sarikol had received an Amban, the huts looked already half-ruined.

After our experiences across the Baroghil and Wakhjir the snow-beds encountered on the Chichiklik Maidan, relatively firm under a grey heavy sky, did not impress me so much as they might otherwise have done. Yet I could not help realizing the trials presented at other times by this bleak plateau close on 15,000 feet above sea, as I recalled here the account left by Benedict Goëz, the worthy lay Jesuit, whom missionary zeal had sent in 1603 from the court of Akbar in search of fabled Cathay. From the hamlets of "the province of Sarcil," *i.e.* Sarikol, he and the large Kafilah of merchants to which he had attached himself for safety, reached in two days "the foot of the mountain called Ciecialith (Chichiklik). It was covered deep with snow, and during the ascent many were frozen to death, and our brother barely escaped, for they were altogether six days in the snow here. At last they reached Tanghetar (Tangitar), a place belonging to the kingdom of Cascar."

By nightfall we struggled down to Tar-bashi, some 3000 feet lower, where a Kirghiz Beg offered us comfortable shelter in his felt tents. Next morning we entered the deep-cut defile eastwards, appropriately known as 'Tangi-tar,' *i.e.* 'the narrow gorge,' through which the winter route passes eastwards. For over two miles it leads in the stream bed itself between high frowning rock