

in a number of houses and mosques again recalled distant Kashmir. The Bai's house was an old one, and in the profuse carving covering the pillars and architraves of its hall and its gate-posts, I recognized a number of decorative motives and patterns with which my first excavations of ancient residences at desert sites in Khotan had made me familiar. It seemed like a gratifying assurance that I was now close to the westernmost border of the old Khotan kingdom—and my own field of antiquarian work.

Duwa, in spite of the lowness of the conglomerate hills flanking the valley, proved a cool halting-place. So after a peaceful night spent under the high poplars and elms of the orchard, I started refreshed for the long march which was to carry me on August 3rd to the very confines of Khotan. A straight cut across the glaci-like Sai from Duwa to Kum-rabat Padshahim would have sufficed to make a long day. But when I asked my Darogha to secure guides for this route, the good men of Duwa urged difficulties of all sorts. The high dunes of moving sand, the many steeply cut 'Yars' to be crossed, and the absolute want of water over these twenty-five miles or so, seemed to frighten them thoroughly. Loss of animals and even of men from the heat to which this shelterless desert would expose them, was predicted as a serious danger. So there was nothing for it but to resign myself to the equally hot and still longer route which leads first to Pialma, the terminal oasis of the Duwa stream, and thence by the Khotan high road through the desert. As I had decided to relieve my camels, which the work in the summer heat had severely tried, by the hire of ponies, consideration for local opinion was all the more needed.

The first few miles down the banks of the Duwa Darya were pleasant enough in the early morning. As far as cultivation extended, narrow strips of greensward lined the river course. But soon the route left the stream where it debouches between steep conglomerate cliffs near the last fields of Lamus and took to the most barren of Dashts, with nothing but gravel and dust. Pialma, the last of the oases on the high road to Khotan, was approached by mid-day; but to save a little distance I only skirted its easternmost