

helped greatly to keep me to the ample antiquarian tasks in hand and before me. Curiously enough, though the dunes were steadily rising, the Surveyor had found at his northernmost camp a group of living Toghraks, evidence, perhaps, of the subsoil water from the Niya River coming nearer to the surface there than over the greater part of the ancient site.

It seemed highly probable that Islam Akhun, like his great namesake, the Khotan forger of happy memory, had indulged in romancing. Yet his statement as to ruins to the east of those previously explored by me could not be left untested merely because he had chosen a wrong bearing. So next morning Ibrahim, with two enterprising companions and a goat-skin full of water, was sent out to reconnoitre independently eastward. I myself had advanced so far with the clearing of the ruined dwellings in the north-western group that I could avail myself of the camels bringing the first fresh convoy of water to shift my camp farther south on the fourth day. Three camels were not enough to move all baggage and food supplies; but, fortunately, there was the large band of labourers to fall back upon. So they dragged what loads the camels could not carry to the ruin which was on the day's programme, and when we had cleared it by the evening, shouldered the heavy loads again without a murmur and marched on with them to the new camp. It was quite dark when we reached it, and I sat long by the blazing fire fed with ancient timber before all the men had come in and my tent could be pitched.