

CHAPTER XXVI

TO THE ENDERE RIVER

ON the morning of November 1st our camp separated. Ram Singh, the Surveyor, was sent south to Niya and Sorghak with instructions to resume his triangulation along the foot of the great Kun-lun range, and to carry it as far east towards Lop-nor as time and conditions would permit. The Charchan oasis, where the two available routes eastward meet, the one skirting the mountains and the other through the desert, was the nearest point where touch could be resumed between us. I myself with the rest of my party set out for the high sands due east in order to revisit the Endere tract before moving on to Charchan. In 1901 I had explored there the ruins of an ancient fort and Stupa. Time had been wanting then for a thorough survey of the whole site, and as various indications suggested the existence of other remains, my archaeological conscience would not have allowed me to forgo a fresh visit, even if the shortest route to Charchan had not led quite near. But a curious acquisition made during my stay at the Niya site supplied also a special reason.

Sadak, a young cultivator from the Mazar working with my party, had on hearing of my intended move to Endere told me of a 'Takhta' he had come upon a year or two before while prospecting for 'treasure' close to the old fort of Endere. When he brought it for my inspection I was surprised to find that it was a fairly well preserved under tablet of a rectangular Kharoshthi document. The writing clearly proved that it belonged to the same early period as the wooden documents of the Niya site, *i.e.* the