

Though Abdul Karim had no longer the energy needed to attract fresh settlers, and to extend cultivation as the available water-supply would permit, he had prospered sufficiently to meet an increased assessment and to lay by a good deal of surplus produce. So we could secure adequate supplies not only for our own party and the men I had brought along from the old site, but also for the additional fifteen labourers who now opportunely reinforced us from Niya. Ibrahim Beg's energy managed in addition to raise overnight a small local contingent of labourers from among the thirty odd scattered males of this outlying settlement.

The immediate goal for which I set my column in motion on the morning of November 4th was not the old site across the Endere River whence Sadak had brought away his Kharoshthi tablet, but another 'Kone-shahr' which his father Samsak alleged to have visited years before in the desert between the Yar-tungaz and Endere rivers. Information about it had been kept from me on my previous visit, and the assertion of complete ignorance would have been, no doubt, maintained also on this occasion, had I not been able to quote in support of Samsak's statement the testimony of my friend Mr. Huntington, who during his survey of this area a year earlier visited ruins manifestly corresponding to the Mazar shepherd's description. So after a good deal of shuffling at last one Yar-tungaz man, Kutluk, a withered old herdsman, owned up to a knowledge of the ruins about Bilel-konghan.

In spite of this local guidance the search proved a troublesome business. On November 4th our heavily laden caravan toiled all day eastwards over successive huge ridges of sand rising up to 300 feet and running parallel to salty depressions between, which manifestly had once served for river-beds. After crossing the fourth we camped in a narrow waterless plain known as Yantak-chaval, where dead tamarisk scrub supplied fuel. Next morning our guides led us in a winding course towards the Endere River, and when after six miles across Dawans of less height we reached the edge of a wide area covered