

asked or offered in advance. At last, after much careful sounding, I fathomed the folklore belief which furnished the clue to the mystery. All the Korla people had grown up under the influence of the old tradition, which elsewhere also haunts the outskirts of the great desert, about 'old towns' buried by the sands, and full of hidden treasure. This tradition was firmly coupled with a belief that such ruins were guarded by demons, which prevented them ever being seen a second time by those who were lucky enough to discover them.

It was but a survival of the popular legend of which Hsüan-tsang, the great pilgrim, had already heard a localized form between Khotan and Keriya, and which I had occasion to relate in the narrative of my former journey. Musa Haji and his fellow-hunters had tried their luck in searching for the ruins of their local 'Kötek-shahri,' on different occasions and in different desert areas. They had *bona fide* offered their guidance in the fond hope that my supposed magic would be powerful enough to overcome the evil genii hiding the walled town of which their own imagination had before let them only catch a glimpse—apparently in a dust-storm! They now felt sorry for the failure of my 'Wilayet arts' to secure them a chance of discovering all those hidden treasures.

After marching up the Inchike Darya, Lal Singh and myself separated on January 12th, 1908. While he was to follow the hitherto unmapped river course right through to Shahyar, I myself struck by forced marches through the broad belt of unsurveyed desert north-westwards, and after reaching the great northern caravan route at Bugur, made my way to Kuchar. At this great and ancient oasis I utilized a week's halt for visits to the interesting ruins close by, which had during the preceding five years been searched successively by Japanese, German, and Russian archaeological parties, and had finally been cleared with a thoroughness and method deserving of all praise by the French mission under Professor Pelliot. Kuchar, situated at the foot of the T'ien-shan, and watered by two large rivers which debouch here, may by reason of its