

Kochkar-öghil. My joy at again greeting these experienced searchers of 'old things' (Fig. 292) was much increased by the exact local information they brought, in addition to my mail bag from Khotan. The men from Shahyar were now discharged, well pleased with their liberal wages and an ample *viaticum* in silver with which to make their way to Khotan, and thence by the trade route homewards. Alas! by the time I revisited Keriya a month later I heard how most of these shifty fellows had used the first opportunity to gamble away with the dice what they had earned by their trying tramp through the sands.

After a hearty welcome from my old friends, the aged Sheikhs of Burhanuddin's desert shrine, and a quaint mendicant pilgrim they sheltered (Fig. 293), I marched with my band of 'treasure-seekers' by a new route to the desert belt north of the oasis of Domoko. There, in the deceptive zone of tamarisk-covered sand-cones, they had succeeded in tracking an extensive but scattered series of ruined dwellings with several Buddhist shrines, which had escaped our search when in 1906 we worked at Khadalik, some eight miles farther south. The ruins of this site, which from an adjoining jungle grazing-ground we called Farhad-Beg-yailaki, had suffered much through the vicinity of 'Old Domoko,' a village which, as described in my former narrative, was occupied until sixty or seventy years ago. Yet the excavations which I was able to effect rapidly during the first half of March, with a relatively large number of labourers easily recruited from Domoko, were rewarded by valuable finds of well-preserved manuscripts in Sanskrit, painted panels, and tablets inscribed in the language of old Khotan. The time of abandonment here, as at Khadalik, proved to have been the second half of the eighth century A.D.

Some of our best finds at this site were made within a small Buddhist shrine which occupied a quite unusual position, emerging from the side of a tamarisk-covered sand-cone about forty feet high (Fig. 294). The relatively well preserved cella with its massive walls of clay must have been built when this cone was much lower; for the sand of the latter now rose fully eighteen feet above the floor.