

Turfan called it. There, to my surprise, I found the rough stone enclosure of a regular 'Ziarat' crowning the top of a small rocky knoll, and within it the stone image reported. It proved to be a stēlē-shaped slab about three feet high, rudely carved in flat relievo with the representation of a male figure holding a curved sword. The carving, though too rude for any safe dating, was manifestly old. That the image, whatever it was meant to represent, went back to Buddhist times was made clear by the discovery by its side of a small block of granite roughly carved into the miniature representation of a Stupa.

But the most curious feature to me was to see the enclosure around filled with all the usual votive offerings of orthodox Muhammadan shrines—horse-skulls, horns of wild goats, rags fastened on staffs, and the rest. It was manifest that worship was here very much a thing of the present, however sorely the 'idol' image must have scandalized the Uch-Turfan Mullahs of whose protests Mangush Beg told me. Never had I seen so unabashed a survival of an earlier local cult among good Muhammadans, such as all these Kirghiz herdsmen have been for many generations. The carved figure was supposed to represent the wife of some ancient hero called Kaz-ata, whose image pious eyes recognize in an inaccessible rock pinnacle high up on the crest of the range. This connection clearly indicates that the curious shrine here surviving must owe its origin to the worship of some striking natural feature such as is common in the folklore of India, ancient and modern, and for which Buddhist local cult has always been ready to find room.

On our return ride in the evening we had a great treat of milk at a Kirghiz 'Aul' below the Sar-bel Pass, and saw the joyful home-coming of a thousand sheep and lambs. It was difficult to understand where they found adequate grazing; for the peaks above these narrow plateaus carry very little snow, and throughout these mountains the consequent want of water is a serious trouble for the few Kirghiz herdsmen who still cling to them. Here, and in the equally barren outer ranges, I could gather many useful observations about obvious desiccation.