

approach to that forgotten route across the main Kun-lun Range which I had tried hard to trace from the Karanghugh side. No doubt it was the same by which the tyrant, Aba Bakr, early in the sixteenth century, had made good his escape to Ladak. For long centuries it was probably known to the wily hillmen as a track to be used in emergencies, a difficult loophole to safety for desperate men. But before Haji Habibullah, no Khotan ruler had attempted to turn it into a trade route of his own to India. The effort had been as short-lived as Khotan's last independence. Yet for me there was a sort of pathetic interest in finding myself linked even beyond the ice-covered Kun-lun with the historical past of Khotan.

On the morning of September 19th we started early down the valley in order to reach, if possible, Abdul-Ghafur-tam, the highest point in the main Kara-kash Valley, where there was adequate grazing, and where I expected Satip-aldi Beg's men to be awaiting us with yaks and fresh supplies. For over a mile the old route, carefully lined with cairns, led along the edge of a barren alluvial plateau, and I noticed marks of improvement at places where it crossed broad torrent beds draining small side valleys. Then the line of cairns was seen running straight across a huge alluvial fan to the north-west towards the mouth of a valley coming down from the main range. It thus became certain that Johnson's 'Yangi Dawan,' which led across the high range above Karanghugh, and for which I had looked out so long, would have to be searched for somewhere at the head of that valley.

We continued to march down by the side of our steadily widening river bed in which all water had now disappeared amidst rubble. At last, after nine miles, we came opposite to the point of junction with the main branch of the Kara-kash River where it breaks through the flanking range from the south, and I was relieved to find that its vast bed of rubble, fully a mile broad, held at least a few small and shallow channels of running water. Of vegetation there had been no trace since we left Haji Langar, and the animals were now again showing plain signs of exhaustion. At last some five miles lower down