

kurghān, the Sarikol 'capital' since ancient times. The route along the west side of the wide open valley was new to me and afforded interesting observations, recorded in my personal narrative,<sup>10</sup> as to the extent of arable land here available and its steady resumption now proceeding under the conditions of security and growing population which prevail since incursions from Hunza ceased. Of remains of some modern antiquarian interest I have only to mention the presence of an old fort by the left river bank about one and a half miles below Pisling and a walled enclosure at Ak-tam, some five miles above Tāsh-kurghān.

Remains  
below  
Pisling and  
at Ak-tam.

The fort consists of an enclosure, about fifty-eight feet square inside, with walls built of rough boulders below and sun-dried bricks above. The size of the latter is about one by two feet, with a thickness of six inches. A fosse about thirty-eight feet wide on top and now five feet deep protected the north-west and south-west faces, the others being rendered difficult of access by steep slopes of conglomerate falling off towards the river. Though called 'old' by the Pisling people, the little fort did not look to me of great antiquity, and the absence of layers of brushwood between the courses of bricks confirmed this impression. Nor was it different with the ruins of a walled enclosure, about sixty yards square and built in stamped clay, which I passed, after crossing a dreary waste of sand and gravel, at Ak-tam some five miles above Tāsh-kurghān. Some precarious cultivation resumed here by means of a new canal suggested that the Ak-tam ruin might be that of a Sarai marking the edge of the Tāsh-kurghān oasis as it existed in mediaeval or even more recent times. On the opposite bank of the wide river bed lie the fields of Bāzār-dasht where in 1900 I had heard of scanty remains of houses manifestly occupied in the Muhammadan period. I may here also mention that when passing, some twenty-six miles above Tāsh-kurghān, the fertile meadow land of Ghan on the opposite side of the valley,<sup>11</sup> I was told of the ruins of an ancient fort known as *Taghash* existing on a high ridge rising east of Ghan. A local legend seems to cling to the place, but it was impossible to spare time for a visit.

From Tāsh-  
kurghān to  
Kāshgar.

On leaving Tāsh-kurghān on June 3, after a busy halt of two days, I chose for my onward move to Kāshgar the caravan track which crosses the great spurs radiating from the Muztāgh-ata massif to the south and south-east. My choice was due partly to the hope of saving time on this the most direct route—and as my personal narrative shows, I actually succeeded in covering on it the distance of about 180 miles usually reckoned at ten marches, in six days—;<sup>12</sup> but even more it was influenced by the wish to see with my own eyes the route which Hsüan-tsang must have followed when proceeding about A. D. 642 from Chieh-p'an-t'o (or Sarikol) to Ch'ia-sha (or Kāshgar).<sup>13</sup> The pilgrim begins the account of this journey by remarking on an ancient hospice or *punyaśālā* which he reached after journeying from the capital of Chieh-p'an-t'o, i. e. the present Tāsh-kurghān, towards the north-east and marching for two hundred li (or two daily marches) across mountains and along precipices.<sup>14</sup> The position of this religious foundation is described as 'a space comprising some hundred *ch'ing* (thousand Chinese acres), in the midst of the four mountains belonging to the eastern chain of the Ts'ung-ling Mountains'.

Hsüan-  
tsang's  
legend

'In this region, both during summer and winter, there fall down piles of snow; the cold winds

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Desert Cathay*, i. p. 94.

<sup>11</sup> See *Ruins of Khotan*, p. 68.

<sup>12</sup> For a description of this journey see *Desert Cathay*, i. pp. 97 sqq.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 42 sqq.

<sup>14</sup> See Julien, *Mémoires*, ii. p. 215; Beal, *Si-yu-ki*, ii. p. 303; Watters, *Yuan Chwang*, ii. p. 286, gives a mere abstract.

The general context of the narrative, especially what it

states about the subsequent continuation of the journey from the ancient hospice to *Wu-sha*, by a descent of 800 li from the Ts'ung-ling Mountains eastwards, makes it certain that the initial stages of 200 li are reckoned from the Chieh-p'an-t'o capital. The expression 'from a great rock', used in regard to the starting-point of the journey, refers to the 'rocky ridge' which Hsüan-tsang mentions earlier as the site of the Sarikol capital; cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 35; Julien, *Mémoires*, ii. p. 209.