

to be found either of its age or of its purpose. Whatever ground near by had not as yet been brought under cultivation showed far-advanced wind-erosion, with the usual small pottery fragments marking former occupation. About  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles to the north-west, amidst old tamarisk-cones now completely bared of their bushes and roots for the sake of supplying Chīra with fuel, I was shown an area about a quarter of a mile square thickly covered with ancient looking pottery debris. From the soft loess dust of the ground numerous tiny fragments of stucco reliefs were picked up, of which those shown in the List below are specimens. These fragments were all in hard white stucco, and must have belonged to the wall decoration of a Buddhist shrine completely destroyed long ago and probably dating from T'ang times.

Relievo  
frs. from  
*Maira-lati*.

From Chīra I moved on March 24 westwards to regain the extreme edge of the Khotan district at Lop. I had followed this main caravan route between Keriya and Khotan before, and could therefore appreciate the change which the ground immediately to the west of Chīra had undergone through extended cultivation. The few straggling fields of Kankal seen in 1901 had grown since then into a compact stretch of cultivation joined up with the *kōne yer*, or 'old land', of Chīra, and extending it two miles further. Beyond this again the new little oasis of Khalpat had grown up around what was before a solitary Langar by the roadside, and now stretched its fields and young avenues of poplars for a distance of about 2 miles. I need not insist on the lesson which such observations contain for the student of the past of this region. It was interesting, too, to learn, after passing Yailaghan-langar (Map No. 27. c. 4), of the project which the people of the Sampula canton were fondly discussing at the time. It was planned to bring a new canal from the Yurung-kāsh to the great plain of loess and fine gravel which stretches level but utterly barren on both sides of the road west of Yailaghan-langar. A subsequent survey of the proposed canal line, which at the request of the Sampula Bēgs I had carried out by R. B. Lāl Singh, showed that the project as far as levels were concerned was well within local resources, provided a big *tugh*, or dyke, like that on the Domoko-yār were maintained to carry the water diverted from the huge summer floods of the Yurung-kāsh across the dry bed coming from the hills above Achchik. It was but one among many illustrations of the big changes which increasing population and an efficient administration might bring about in the Khotan region, independent of climatic variations.

Extended  
cultivation  
west of  
Chīra.

Projected  
new canal  
from  
Yurung-  
kāsh River.

From Lop-bāzār I proceeded northward in order to examine the remains which Maḥmūd, one of my 'Taklamakānchis', had come upon on a desert crossing from Imām 'Āsīm's Mazār to the shrine of Sultān Waiskaram (Map No. 27. B. 4). The route to the latter place beyond the northern edge of the fertile Hanguya canton followed a marshy stream bed which receives the overflow waters of the easternmost canals from the Yurung-kāsh in addition to *kara-su* from numerous springs. This bed, running to the north-east, was said to find its continuation in a belt of reed-beds and jungle visited by shepherds for a distance of two to three days' journey beyond Sultān Waiskaram. As water in wells can be found further on, too, in the direction of Dandān-oilik, this belt of vegetation provides the most direct and convenient approach to that ruined site from the side of Khotan, and deserves to be surveyed by some future traveller. Two old mounds, known also to the 'Shaikhs' of Sultān Waiskaram-mazār and both situated amidst tamarisk-cones to the west of it, proved to be those of completely ruined Stūpas. One within about a mile's distance had a much-decayed base, about 21 feet square, rising to a height of 7-8 feet. Its sun-dried bricks measured  $18'' \times 10'' \times 3''$ . Of the second mound, about two furlongs further west, only 3 feet or so emerged above the drift-sand. On clearing this to the ground-level there came to light the lowest base of a Stūpa, about 23 feet square and 3 feet high, still retaining in places mouldings in white stucco. What remained of the upper bases, to a height of some 7 feet more, was too badly decayed to permit of any reconstruction.

Ruined  
Stūpas near  
*Waiskaram-  
mazār*.