

last but unmistakable traces of that ancient wind-eroded hill range. Elsewhere, near Camp XXVII, fully 30 miles from the nearest point of the present Yärkand river course, the surface of a small belt of wind-eroded clay was covered with plentiful relics of the Stone Age, proving occupation by a Palæolithic settlement of what is now absolutely lifeless desert.

We regained the Yärkand river to the east of the Chok-tāgh in a violent sand-storm which, if encountered amidst the high dunes, would certainly have brought us to a standstill for some days. Then we surveyed rapidly the tracts of riverine jungle on the left bank to the southern extremity of the Ak-su cultivation, near Ghōra-chöl, where the last dried-up offshoots of the Kāshgar-daryā lose themselves.⁹ Thence the head of the Khotan river delta was gained by a route not previously surveyed. It was of distinct interest as showing the great change which the terminal course of the river had undergone since my passage in 1908.¹⁰

The journey further up the Khotan-daryā, accomplished by a series of forced marches, led necessarily along the route already followed in that year. But a renewed visit to the Mazār-tāgh was rewarded by the discovery of Buddhist remains, of special interest as proving the antiquity of the local worship from which this desert hill derives its modern name. Before reaching Khotan the opportunity was used also for surveying a small unmapped portion of the Kara-kāsh river course.

After a brief halt at Khotan necessitated by manifold practical arrangements I set out on November 28 for the long journey eastwards. Some 700 miles still separated me from Lop-nōr, and for the work planned in the desert region beyond, it was essential that I should reach it while the winter cold allowed water to be transported in the convenient form of ice. Rapid progress was therefore important and this could only be assured by following in the main my previous route by the southern edge of the Taklamakān. Nevertheless I was able to use what opportunities for surveying new ground were presented by archæological work to the north-east of the Domoko oasis and at the ancient site beyond the termination of the Niya river.¹¹ Elsewhere occasion could be taken to observe and record on the map the interesting changes which extended cultivation had brought about in the limits of the oases since our previous surveys.

Subsequently a 'short cut' taken from the Yär-tungaz to the Endere river allowed us to survey an unexplored desert area to the north of the caravan route.¹² When following this towards Charchan, in bitterly cold weather with minimum temperatures down to 50° F. below freezing point, exceptionally clear atmospheric conditions allowed us to sight day after day the snowy K'un-lun range far away to the south. At most seasons it remains quite invisible to the traveller between Niya and Charchan. Now intersections from peaks previously triangulated on it permitted the route to be mapped with greater accuracy than before.

We left Charchan on New Year's Eve of 1914 and did the desert journey to the western border of the Lop district by seven long marches, mainly through the jungle belt along the left bank of the Charchan river, a new route to me.¹³ I had detached Muhammad Yakūb to follow the Charchan-daryā down from Lashkar-Satma where we crossed to its right bank, and was approaching Vāsh-shahri, the first little Lop settlement, when I learned of the upheaval which a band of Chinese 'revolutionaries', *recte* bandits, had created at Charkhlik, the headquarters of Lop. Tungan troops had suppressed the murderous outbreak by the time of my arrival there, January 8, 1914; but its consequences greatly impeded the collection of the supplies, transport and labour needed for the explorations I had planned during the next three months in the desert between Lop and Tun-huang.¹⁴ The six days' stay needed for securing at least a portion of our requirements was hence an anxious time for me; but fortunately it could be used also for profitable archæological work at two ancient sites to the south of the little oasis.

⁹ See Sheets Nos. 8. B, C. 1; 7. C, D. 4; 12. A. 3.

¹⁰ See Sheets Nos. 12. A. 4; 13. A. 1.

¹¹ See Sheets Nos. 14. C. 2; 19. B. 1; cf. *Third Journey*, G. J., xlviii. pp. 115 sq.

¹² See Sheet No. 19. B-D. 1.

¹³ See Sheets Nos. 22. D. 3, 4; 26. A-D. 2, 3.

¹⁴ For some details about these disturbances, cf. *Third Journey*, G. J., xlviii. p. 117.