

## FOREWORD

IT is by reason of a grievous blow of Fate that the writing of this Foreword has devolved upon me. On 26 October 1943 my life-long friend, Sir Aurel Stein, who would have written it, died a few days after his arrival in Kābul, whither he had gone by consent of His Majesty the Amīr of Afghānistān, full of hope of at last fulfilling his long-cherished wish to carry out archaeological research in and about the ancient city of Balkh.

Sir Aurel Stein had, during several years, repeatedly urged the desirability in the interests of archaeological research, and to satisfy the expectation of those interested in Central Asian archaeology, of publishing this portfolio of reproductions, with explanatory notes, of selected examples from the ancient wall paintings recovered by him. It was his wish that the work should be undertaken by me, and, under the orders of the Government of India, this is now being done. It was understood between Sir Aurel and myself that he would contribute a Foreword dealing with matters relating to the recovery of the paintings, their historical and archaeological importance, and other matters regarding all of which only actual contact with the sites could furnish data leading to fuller elucidation. This he would have done with that scholarly competence and thoroughness characteristic of all his work. From a letter received a few months before he died I understood that he had either drafted or written the Foreword. Whether I rightly interpreted his words and whether it was actually written or only formulated is still in doubt. Unhappy world conditions and lesser circumstances have, so far, hindered the transmission of his papers to this country or the judicious examination of them at their place of deposit in Kashmir.

In the absence of that which would have been so valuable a contribution, it yet seems desirable that some account, although necessarily summary, should be given here of the circumstances which influenced his undertaking the several Central Asian expeditions, of which these paintings form a very small part of the fruit, together with a brief outline of his routes of travel.

It was in June 1900 that Sir Aurel Stein (then Dr. Stein) 'was placed on special duty by the Government of India for the purpose of archaeological explorations . . . in the region of Khotan'. The immediate incentive for this expedition was a communication he had received from Professor Bühler of the finds of birch-bark manuscripts acquired in the vicinity of Khotan, but of which no information was forthcoming as to their exact provenance. Stein felt that personal investigation on