

superior intelligence a very useful practical helper in archaeological field work. His keen topographical sense and zeal allowed me in addition to make use of him with distinct advantage on survey work.⁵ The marked ability and pluck displayed by him were recognized on our return by the award of the Macgregor Silver Medal and secured him admission to the Survey of India as Sub-Assistant Superintendent. This appointment has been fully justified by the distinguished services which Miān, now Khān Sāhib, Afrāz-gul Khān has since rendered.

Extent of
journey.

The close links I have indicated above between the archaeological and geographical purposes of this voyage will help to account for its wide extent. When I returned in March, 1916, to Kashmīr, it had lasted close on two years and eight months, and the aggregate of the distances covered by my marches amounted to nearly 11,000 miles. The objects of my expedition were not confined to the exploration of ruined sites from which to gather fresh materials for antiquarian and philological research in Museum and study. Quite as important in my opinion were the observation and record of whatever could throw light on the past and present of the ground traversed by those ancient Central-Asian routes which for centuries had been the channels of trade and cultural intercourse, and by which the influences of religious belief and political conquest had linked China with India and the Near East. It is for this reason that the record of this journey takes the reader from the passage land of westernmost China across the whole Tārīm basin to the uppermost Oxus and to Irān, from the Hindukush valleys in the south to Dzungaria and Inner Mongolia in the north-east. Exacting claims on my time since my return from this expedition have not allowed me to publish a personal narrative of it, such as might have served as a guide to the scope and bearing of the record presented in the present volumes. Hence a rapid synopsis of their contents may usefully find a place here.

Start for
Kāshgar
through
Darēl and
Tangīr.

The favourable conditions that happened to prevail at the time of my start from Kashmīr allowed me to pass through the valleys of Darēl and Tangīr, a Hindukush territory never visited before by any European and since closed again through lapse into tribal anarchy (Chap. I).⁶ There I traced the route by which Chinese pilgrims in Buddhist times used to make their way down to the Indus. Then travelling through Yāsīn I crossed the glacier pass of the Darkōt, the scene of a memorable Chinese military exploit, and crossing the snowy ranges enclosing the head-waters of the Karambār and Hunza rivers reached Chinese territory on the Tāghdum-bāsh Pāmīr. On my way thence to Kāshgar I examined certain old remains in the great Sarīkol valley, and then surveyed a new route down the difficult gorges of the Kara-tāsh river, which had so far remained unexplored (Chap. II).

Help of Sir
GEORGE
MACARTNEY.

A brief stay at Kāshgar under the hospitable roof of my old friend Sir GEORGE MACARTNEY, H.M. late Consul-General, allowed me to organize my caravan and to benefit greatly by the practical help and advice which this kind friend gave me with regard to my intended explorations. Conditions of Chinese administration in the 'New Dominion' had greatly changed since the revolution, and it was mainly due to the unfailing watchfulness and energetic support exerted from afar by that ever-helpful friend that serious interference with my plans, owing to official obstruction, was avoided. I shall always remember very gratefully the great and manifold advantages which his exceptional influence and forethought secured for me throughout my travels on Chinese soil.

From Kāshgar I traced an ancient route through unsurveyed desert along the outermost

⁵ For the excellent work done by Afrāz-gul Khān on the supplementary survey he carried through the Lop Desert in February-March, 1915, under considerable difficulties and privations, see below, ii. pp. 741 sqq.

⁶ In the *Map to illustrate routes followed by Sir Aurel Stein through Chilās, Darēl and Tangīr* (see Vol. iv), prepared since

Chapter I was printed, there have been embodied the results of the plane table survey, on the scale of 2 miles to the inch, carried out by R. B. Lāl Singh under my direction over some 1,200 square miles of ground which had never been mapped before or even seen by European eyes.