

examination of all the more important sites and to secure, besides other antiques, a considerable collection of interesting mural paintings from ruined Buddhist shrines (Chap. XVIII). Particularly ample results rewarded the exploration of a large burial-ground near Astāna, the deposits of its tombs yielding abundant relics of the early T'ang period, such as figured silks, stucco figurines, and other objects of artistic or technical interest (Chap. XIX).

From Turfān I paid a rapid visit to the provincial head-quarters at Urumchi, north of the T'ien-shan. It enabled me to see again my old Mandarin friend P'AN TA-JĒN (Mr. P'an Ch'ên 潘震),<sup>7a</sup> whose kind support, which I had experienced on all my former explorations, was now helping to ward off threatened official obstruction. To the memory of this lamented friend, who died in 1926, still in office and honoured throughout Hsin-chiang for his high character, true scholarship, and rare integrity, I wish to offer here my tribute of sincere respect and gratitude.

During these months R. B. Lāl Singh had carried out extensive survey operations in the waterless Kuruk-tāgh range to the south. Starting in the middle of February, 1915, I was able to supplement these by work in the western portion of the same desert region and by the exploration of ancient burial-grounds along the 'Dry River' that once flowed to Lou-lan. At the same time our topographical knowledge of the Lop Desert was enlarged by a survey which Afrāz-gul successfully carried out under very trying conditions (Chap. XX). Moving between the western foot of the Kuruk-tāgh and the Konche-daryā which had once fed the 'Dry River', I examined the remains marking the line by which the ancient highway from China gained the string of oases along the northern rim of the Tārīm basin (Chap. XXI). Our move westwards by the latter allowed me to trace the line followed by the ancient *Pei-lu*, the 'Northern Route' of the Chinese Annals, to Kuchā, and subsequently to explore a series of old sites now abandoned to the desert which mark the former extent of this large oasis, important both geographically and historically (Chap. XXII, XXIII). While R. B. Lāl Singh was carrying his survey along the T'ien-shan as high up as the early season would permit, I myself rapidly travelled to Kāshgar by the present caravan route, acquainting myself with ground that I had not previously visited (Chap. XXIV).

After arranging during a busy stay at Kāshgar for the safe transport to Kashmīr of my collection of antiques (which filled 182 cases), I started in the middle of July, 1915, for my journey across the Russian Pāmīrs and the valleys of the Upper Oxus. It was greatly facilitated by the friendly offices of Prince MESTCHERSKY, the Russian Consul-General at Kāshgar, and Colonel I. D. JAGELLO, then commanding the Pāmīr Division. Passing down the great Alai valley I followed the route of the ancient silk trade from China, as described by Marinus. Then crossing the succession of high ranges which divide the main feeders of the Oxus, I reached ground on the Alichur and Great Pāmīrs which had seen the passage of the armed forces as well as the Buddhist pilgrims of China (Chap. XXV). As I made my way through Wakhān and up and down the secluded alpine valleys of Ghārān, Rōshān, Shughnān, and Darwāz, I was able to examine ruined strongholds of early date and throughout to observe much that is ancient in the racial type of the people, their language, and ways of living (Chap. XXVI). The anthropometrical materials here collected are discussed by Mr. T. A. Joyce in Appendix C. After regaining in Kara-tegīn the route of the old silk traders towards Baktra I travelled through the hills of Bokhāra to Samarkand. Thence the Transcaspian railway allowed me to gain Persian ground. Subsequently, a rapid but instructive journey of three weeks along the Perso-Afghān border, brought me safely to Sīstān by the close of November, 1915 (Chap. XXVII).

Visit to  
Urumchi.

Explora-  
tions in  
Kuruk-tāgh.

Move to  
Kuchā and  
Kāshgar.

Journey  
across  
Pāmīrs and  
Upper Oxus  
Valleys.

Past Samar-  
kand and  
Perso-  
Afghān  
border.

<sup>7a</sup> See below, ii. pp. 634 sq.; Fig. 298. For the constant help which P'an Ta-jên had rendered me ever since my first visit to Khotan in 1900, cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 237 sq.,

507, &c.; *Ruins of Khotan*, pp. xxi, 200, 214 sqq.; *Desert Cathay*, i. p. xvi; ii. pp. 421 sqq.; *Serindia*, i. pp. x, 311; iii. pp. 1185, 1273.