

left to follow the *ta-lo* ('big road'), dear to Chinese in general, along with the heavy baggage. Anyhow he was brought back safely to Kāshgar some twenty months later, managed meanwhile to indite my Chinese epistles, and justified Chiang's belief in his probity by never playing me false in my dealings with Chinese officials.

For this negative virtue I had special reason to feel grateful. Sir George Macartney's shrewd warnings had prepared me to find many aspects of Chinese officialdom greatly changed, and not for the better, as a result of the influence exerted by the revolution of 1911 even upon this distant province. The peace of the New Dominion had in 1912 been seriously disturbed by a series of assassinations of Mandarins, including the Tao-t'ais of Kāshgar and Ak-su, and by petty outbreaks among the Chinese garrisons and their attendant rabble fomented by unscrupulous office-seekers masquerading as 'revolutionaries' and 'reformers'. Though confined entirely to the numerically weak Chinese element and viewed at first by the mass of the people, peaceful Turkī Muhammadans, with their characteristic unconcern, these disturbances before long spread a feeling of insecurity throughout the province. It was largely due to the wise counsels and moderating influence of Sir George Macartney, who for many years past had enjoyed wide and richly deserved respect both among the people and the Chinese officials, their masters, that complete anarchy did not ensue.

Disturbed conditions in Hsin-chiang.

The situation had become more settled before my return to Kāshgar under the influence of a somewhat stronger régime at head-quarters, and the local administrators were now less subject to the exactions of blackmailing Chinese soldiers and so-called 'revolutionaries', in fact gamblers and adventurers.<sup>3</sup> But it was difficult not to realize that the 'revolutionary' movement in Hsin-chiang had in various respects adversely affected the general type of officials in power. The new elements raised to office had manifestly discarded most of the good qualities of the old local Mandarin class, including regard for scholarly aims and labours; but the beneficial effect hoped for from 'Western learning' and pretended republican institutions was still conspicuously absent. While clinging faithfully to the old corrupt administrative system which has made Hsin-chiang a kind of Eldorado for needy Chinese officials, these new masters, eager to display their sympathy with the 'Rights-recovery-policy' of Young China, were not likely to ignore such chances of obstruction to Western enterprise as were offered by recent orders from Peking about surveying and archaeological operations. Altogether there was only too much justification for Sir George Macartney's warning that I could not reckon upon always finding the same favourable disposition at Chinese Ya-mêns that had greatly facilitated my explorations on previous journeys.

Change in officials' attitude.

As soon as my preparations were completed I set out, on October 9th, from the hospitable shelter of the Consulate General for the winter's work in the desert. Its chief goal was the region around the ancient dried-up Lop Sea, in the extreme east of the Tārīm basin; I was separated from it by the whole length of the Taklamakān, that great sea of drift-sand over 600 miles in length. In order to assure adequate time for the explorations contemplated in that waterless region, it was essential to reach them while the cold of the winter permitted of the easy transport of water in the shape of ice. This consideration had from the first played a decisive part in my plans.

Departure from Kāshgar.

For a variety of reasons I was anxious to revisit Khotan, and once there I was bound to proceed by the only practicable route, which skirts the southern edge of the Taklamakān. Most of the ground to be traversed was already familiar to me from my previous expeditions, and I was therefore all the more eager to avail myself of any new route from Kāshgar to Khotan that could be traversed within the time available. With this object in view I had decided to move first due east

Planned route along foot of T'ien-shan.

<sup>3</sup> Commonly known in Chinese Turkestan as *kamarbāz* and lately also as *kara-sepech* 'black hats' from the (Japan-

made) European head-gear that the leaders of these gentry affected as a visible mark of their advanced Western notions.