

of its 'rights-recovery' policy with convenient grounds for renewing the attempt. This time obstruction would be made easy enough, so far as the antiquities were concerned, by the production of republican edicts (existing, it is true, solely on paper) prohibiting their export; or reference might be made to far more ancient ordinances, which were at one time really enforced, against the desecration of graves. Chinese officials, no doubt, both from Turfān and Urumchi, had during recent years done their best to promote it, by encouraging indiscriminate local spoliation for the sake of securing curios for themselves; but this fact would be conveniently ignored.

Dispatch
of collec-
tion to
Kāshgar,

It was of course possible that an attempt might equally be made to interfere with my convoy of antiques on its long transit to Kāshgar, a journey for laden camels of at least six weeks. But I assumed, rightly, as it turned out, that regard for appearances and the fear of possible diplomatic consequences in case of any loss would make such interference less probable if I was myself far away. The responsibility for the safety of the suspected cases would then fall on local officials, who would be by no means eager to accept it, since no personal profit was to be gained from the detention of the cases. So I did my best to hasten the dispatch of the caravan. By February 5th the last big batch of cases containing frescoes had been duly brought in from Bezeklik by Naik Shamsuddīn, who, working at his troublesome task with untiring energy, had valiantly contributed to their successful removal. A day later I saw with no small relief the long string of forty-five laden camels starting for their distant destination under the care of Ibrāhīm Bēg, the veteran factotum who had accompanied me on three journeys. Setting about his task with his usual steady self-reliance, he was once more to carry it through successfully. On the same day Afrāz-gul set out across the Kuruk-tāgh for his difficult work in the Lop desert. I had given him the seven strongest of our camels, plucky Hassan Ākhūn to manage them, and as guide as far as Āltmish-bulak, Abdulmalik, a worthy brother of Abdurrahīm, the hunter of wild camels. His instructions were, if all went well and if he could keep closely to the programme that I had laid down for him on the basis of our preceding surveys in that desolate region, to rejoin me about March 11th at the ruins of Ying-p'an at the head of the Kuruk-daryā.

Start of
Afrāz-gul
for Lop
Desert.

Move to
Yār-khoto,

Eager as I was myself to exchange the quasi-suburban conditions of the Turfān oases for the greater freedom of new ground in the desert, I nevertheless put off my own start to the south for the sake of a renewed examination of the ruined site of Yār-khoto, the early capital of the Turfān basin and the *Chiao-ho* 交河 of the Chinese Annals. The rapid visits I had paid to it during my short stay at the Yangi-shahr of Turfān in November, 1907, had shown me that a closer survey of its remains was desirable, even though the physical conditions of the site, already recorded in the account of those visits,² and the prolonged exploitation to which the ruins had been exposed, left no doubt that useful archaeological work there must be limited. On February 9th I arrived at Yār-khoto with the above object and in order to test what chances of fruitful excavation a few of the ruined shrines might still offer. But my stay at the site was made even shorter than I had intended by that interference from Urumchi of which I had already seen symptoms while still at Kara-khōja.

Protest
raised
against
excavations.

On February 11th I received a verbal message from the Hsien-kuan of Turfān requesting me to stop the excavation work started on the day after my arrival. An official letter from him which reached me next day revealed the fact that his request had been rendered necessary by stringent orders from Urumchi. In these the Tu-t'u or Provincial Governor raised his protest against the excavations, on the ground, as I expected, that they involved a spoliation of China's ancient inheritance; the Governor desired to be duly informed of the nature and extent of the collection formed by me. The kindly Tungan Amban, who, as a good Muhammadan, did not

² Cf. *Serindia*, iii. pp. 1167 sq.