

with copper nails which are prevented from tearing the paper by copper plates. The leaves are next slightly damped and sprinkled with sand, the copper nails and plates are treated with acid to produce verdegriis, and the completed article is buried in the desert where it will be found when wanted. The name and habitation of this book-manufacturer were not disclosed, but it was understood that the man was Islam Akun, and the place Khotan.

Curiously, not a single ancient manuscript (true or false) was offered for sale to me during my first visit to Khotan, though I inquired about them and announced the fact that I was eager to purchase. Probably it had leaked out that the system of manufacture had been disclosed, and the owners of genuine manuscripts had considered it prudent to avoid the appearance of complicity in the fraud, by refraining from offering even genuine books for sale.

Having arranged to travel into the desert under Islam Akun's guidance, I set about preparation. The chief difficulties being that of water supply, I had iron tanks constructed with padlocks to keep the contents secure. I questioned Islam now and then about his plans for the journey, and he always adhered to one general outline of his scheme. Sometimes, however, the distances of the buried cities would vary, and the book-making system attributed to him put me on my guard. My suspicions were not fairly awakened till the tanks were completed, and then, thinking it a pity not to use them, I decided to spend a portion of the spring in the desert, where, if I could light on no buried cities or books, I might at least unveil a fraud. It was on April 12th that I left Yarkand bound for the east. The loads had been arranged two days before, but Asiatics are slow to begin a journey, and it was not till a late hour that we were fairly on the way.