

attacks from across the T'ien-shan. But the first Chinese effort failed, and it was not until thirteen years later that Hami was reoccupied by the Chinese.

But meanwhile the Tarim basin had become the scene of events which in the end placed the Empire once again in undisputed possession of that great passage land. By a series of remarkable exploits the famous Pan Ch'ao, the greatest of the soldier statesmen who ever served China's Central-Asian policy, succeeded in re-establishing effective imperial authority throughout the Tarim basin. Starting by the old desert route from the side of Lop, he gradually gained mastery over the chiefs of Khotan, Yarkand and Kashgar, not so much by the force of arms as by bold bluff and skilful diplomacy. Pan Ch'ao's maxim, as stated by him in a very interesting memorial to the Emperor, "was to use the barbarians for attacking the barbarians".

Chinese political influence was, in consequence of Pan Ch'ao's triumphs, extended westwards even beyond the Pamirs. Diplomatic relations were established with the Parthians and direct contact sought with distant Ta-ts'in or Syria by means of a mission which A.D. 97 appears to have reached the sea in the Persian Gulf. By A.D. 102, when Pan Ch'ao, grown old and laden with imperial honours, returned to the distant capital soon to end his days there, Chinese prestige and power in Central Asia may be said to have reached its culminating point. It is just about this time that we may assume *Scythia extra Imaon*, or the Tarim basin, to have been traversed by the trade agents of that Macedonian merchant, Maës Titianus, whose reports enabled Marinus of Tyre and through him Ptolemy, the Alexandrian geographer, to furnish us with information on the