

though somewhat abstracted look and his gentle manners of gesture and speech impressed me from the first as entirely in agreement with the reputation for learning and piety which has followed this Mandarin wherever he was employed in the province. Dressed in his state clothes and surrounded by numerous attendants, Pan-Darin received me with every mark of attention. He had long before been informed from Kashgar of the objects of my visit, and I was curious to see what his attitude would be, both as to explorations in the desert and my proposed survey of the mountains about the sources of the Khotan river.

To my delight there was no trace of obstruction to be discovered in what Pan-Darin had to tell me as to either project. He had no doubt that ancient places amidst the dreaded sands of the 'Gobi,' if they existed at all, were difficult to reach, and that the statements made about them by natives were not to be trusted too readily. In the mountains again the routes were bad, implying hardships and risks, and beyond the valleys of Karanghu-tagh there lay the unknown uplands of Tibet where Chinese authority ceased, and where, under the strict orders of the Tsung-li-Yamen, no assistance was to be rendered to travellers. But apart from these natural difficulties and political limitations Pan-Darin offered to give me all help that lay in his power. The Amban's simple, earnest ways, his evident comprehension of the scientific objects in view, and the scholarly interest with which he followed my explanations about Hiuen-Tsiang's travels and the old Buddhist culture of Khotan, induced me to put reliance in this promise of help. And subsequent experience showed me how well it was justified. Without his ever ready assistance neither the explorations in the desert nor the survey work in the mountains which preceded it could have been accomplished.

As soon as I had arrived in Khotan I had commenced the local inquiries which were to guide me as to ancient sites