

French travellers seem to have prevented them from a personal inspection of the cave by alleging religious objections.

No difficulty whatever was raised in my case. I found the Mullahs, jovial, well-fed fellows, curiously resembling in their ways my old Purohita friends at Indian 'Tirthas,' ready enough for a consideration to show me the cave, including its mysterious recesses. The close examination I was thus able to effect gave me strong reason to doubt the possibility of the manuscript having been really found there. Though the visit of the French explorers was well remembered by the Sheikhs, nothing was known to them or the villagers of the alleged discovery in the cave. Taking into account that other fragments of the same manuscript had been sold separately into Russian hands at Kashgar, it appears probable that the native "treasure-seekers" concerned made the statement connecting their find with the cave simply in order to disguise the true place of discovery.

In the course of my inspection of this sacred cave I had occasion to appreciate the easy-going ways of Khotan local worship. Nobody, however good a Musulman he may be, thinks of taking off his boots on approaching a sacred spot. Those who wear a kind of over-shoes with their top-boots leave them outside, it is true. But the common people not possessed of such refined footgear freely retain their high leather 'Charuks' (mocassins) or the sandals fastened with long cloth bandages. The winter is cold in this region, and I wonder how frequent the occasions are when the Khotanese really do remove their footgear during the winter months. I have always managed to make friends with the priestly attendants of Indian shrines, be they Hindu or Muhammadan, and have almost invariably escaped the necessity of taking off my boots—a kind of *déshabillé* which for a European is incongruous and inconvenient, without in reality marking in any way religious conciliation. But in Khotan there seemed no