

Khotan, by a high range of sand dunes. This was crossed near the Mazar of Shitala Padshahim, a simple collection of posts with yak tails and fluttering rags, and at last, after a ride over much boggy ground, I again entered the little oasis. In the twilight it seemed like a return to civilisation. Since starting from Niya on the 23rd of January I had covered over 300 miles in a great oval loop. Yet when the positions indicated on the plane-table for the starting and closing points of our route came to be compared, the difference proved to be only three-fourths of a mile in longitude and a little over a mile in latitude.

Leaving my "goods train" of camels to follow behind, I covered the distance from Niya to Keriya, some eighty miles, in two stages. There I was busy at work with reports and letters, and with re-arranging my baggage. The weather was rapidly getting warmer; hence all heavy winter clothing was to be left behind before the start for the ancient site I next intended to visit far down the Keriya River. As arrangements also had to be made for labourers to accompany us for excavation work, and for the supplies that men and animals needed, the two days, which were all I could allow myself, were indeed no time of rest for me or Ibrahim, my energetic Darogha.

Huang-Daloi, the kindly Amban, opportunely returned the day after my arrival from a little tour of criminal investigation. So I had the wished-for opportunity of thanking him personally for all the help which I had experienced at a distance. From the stores that had arrived from Khotan I had sent him the best selection of tinned goods I could offer. Everything seemed to be duly appreciated, and the return presents in the shape of fodder supplies, sheep, &c., were quite overwhelming. When the Amban, a few minutes after my departure, paid his return visit, I was able to satisfy his curiosity about my finds with specimens of ancient tablets, &c. With the historical sense which all educated Chinese seem to possess, he at once rightly surmised that the use of wood as a writing material indicated a period corresponding to that when split bamboos were employed in China previous to the invention of paper. Extravagant rumours