

representing specimen pages from the "block-printed" books in "unknown characters" which formed his own manufacture. He had, previous to 1894, been engaged at times in collecting coins, seals, and similar antiques from Khotan villages. About that time he learned from Afghan traders of the value which the 'Sahibs' from India attached to ancient manuscripts. Genuine scraps of such had indeed been unearthed by Turdi and some other "treasure-seekers" at Dandan-Uiliq. But the idea of visiting such dreary desert sites, with the certainty of great hardships and only a limited chance of finds, had no attraction for a person of such wits as Islam Akhun. So in preference he conceived the plan of manufacturing the article he was urged to supply the Sahibs with.

In this enterprise he had several accomplices, among whom a certain Ibrahim Mullah was the leading man. This person appears to have made it his special business to cultivate the Russian demand for "old books," while Islam Akhun attended chiefly to the requirements of British officers and other collectors. Ibrahim Mullah, from whom the Russian Armenian I met on my first arrival at Khotan had purchased his forged birch-bark manuscript, was credited with some knowledge of Russian, a circumstance which explains the curious resemblance previously noticed between the characters used in some of the "block-prints" and the Greek (*recte* Russian) alphabet. Ibrahim Mullah gave proof of his "slimness," as well as his complicity, by promptly disappearing from Khotan on the first news of Islam Akhun's arrest, and could not be confronted with him.

The first "old book" produced in this fashion was successfully sold by Islam Akhun in 1895 to Munshi Ahmad Din, who was in charge of the Assistant Resident's Office at Kashgar during the temporary absence of Mr. Macartney. This "book" was written by hand, and an attempt had been made, as also in some others of the earliest products of the factory, to imitate the cursive Brahmi characters found in fragments of genuine manuscripts which Ibrahim was said to have secured from Dandan-Uiliq. Though