

the proper comprehension of the past of a people and its civilization. Eastern Turkeṣtān is not a part of the earth as easily accessible as Greece or Egypt or India. If in recent years much has been achieved, particularly through Dr. Hedin's labours, towards the elucidation of its topography, yet there are great tracts where the detailed knowledge of local conditions, routes, &c., must still be gained primarily on the spot. The same observation applies still more forcibly to the ethnography of the country. These considerations will explain why I often felt obliged to record modern physical and anthropological facts when discussing questions connected with earlier economic and ethnic conditions. They also justify me in looking upon the publication of my Personal Narrative, in which observations of geographical interest together with others illustrating the life and character of the population could be suitably detailed for a wider public, as a useful and even necessary preliminary to the present work.

Just as it was important for the proper investigation of antiquarian questions to keep in view the geographical and ethnographical background, so too my task presupposed constant references to whatever written records have come down to us of the early history of these regions. The great majority of these records have to be gleaned from scattered passages in the Chinese dynastic Annals and the itineraries of Chinese Buddhist pilgrims to India. The limitations of my philological knowledge, which, as I have often bitterly regretted, does not extend to Chinese, would not allow me to consult these sources in the original. Nevertheless I have thought it right to attempt the succinct sketches of the history of Eastern Turkeṣtān, Kāshgar and Khotan which are embodied in chapters III and VII⁷. Fortunately M. Chavannes' recent publication *Documents sur les Tou-k'iue (Turcs) occidentaux* has opened to us a rich storehouse of precise and valuable information on the history of Central Asia during the period of Chinese ascendancy under the T'angs, including a great portion of those notices in critically revised and annotated translations. For the Chinese notices on Khotan I could avail myself of the full extracts which Abel Rémusat, in a small but very meritorious publication, had rendered accessible from the Encyclopaedia of the *Pien i tien*⁸. I hope those historical sketches will prove useful by the endeavour made in them to apply to the recorded historical data the light of geographical and antiquarian knowledge acquired on the spot.

The preparation of my detailed report on the lines indicated was bound to prove an exacting task; but the difficulty of securing adequate leisure made it more difficult still and has greatly delayed its completion. The period of three months' special duty which the Secretary of State had been pleased to sanction after I had, early in July, 1901, deposited my archaeological finds in the British Museum as a temporary measure, barely sufficed for the provisional arrangement of the collection and the preparation of the *Preliminary Report* published the same autumn⁹. At its expiration I was obliged to return to India, where during the following half-year my heavy official duties as Inspector of Schools in the Panjāb precluded the possibility of any scholarly occupation. Fortunately, however, the Government of India, on the proposal of the Panjāb Government, and influenced, no doubt, by the interest which H. E. Lord CURZON was kind enough to show in the results of my expedition, sanctioned, with the concurrence of H. M.'s Secretary of State, my deputation to England in May, 1902, in order that I might be enabled to elaborate those results and to make arrangements for their publication with the help of expert scholars in Europe.

⁷ See below, pp. 52-72, 166-84.

⁸ See *Histoire de la Ville de Khotan*, Paris, 1820.

⁹ *Preliminary Report on a journey of archaeological and*

topographical exploration in Chinese Turkeṣtān. By M. A. Stein. India Office, London, 1901.