

the Russian demand for 'old books', while Islām Ākhūn attended chiefly to the requirements of British officers and other collectors. Ibrāhīm Mullā, 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) alphabet¹¹. Ibrāhīm Mullā gave proof of his 'slimness', as well as his complicity, by promptly disappearing from Khotan on the first news of Islām Ākhūn's arrest, and could not be confronted with him.

The first 'old book' produced in this fashion was successfully sold by Islām Ākhūn in 1895 to Munshī Aḥmad Dīn, who was in charge of the Assistant Resident's office at Kāshgar during the temporary absence of Mr. Macartney¹². These 'books' were 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 Brāhmī characters found in fragments of genuine manuscripts which Ibrāhīm was said to have secured from Dandān-Uiliq¹³. Though the forgers never succeeded in producing a text showing consecutively the characters of any known script, yet their earliest fabrications were executed with an amount of care and ingenuity which might well deceive for a time even expert scholars in Europe. This may be seen by referring to the facsimiles which are given in part ii of Dr. Hoernle's *Report* of Brāhmī letter-groups from 'codices' belonging to the early output, now deposited, with so many other products of Islām Ākhūn's factory, in the 'forgery' section of the Manuscript Department of the British Museum¹⁴. The specimen pages reproduced from the 'Codices Högberg' in M. D. Klementz's *Report* on the Imperial Russian Academy's expedition to Turfān¹⁵, and the facsimile of an 'ancient Khotan manuscript' which appears in the German edition of Dr. Sven Hedin's *Through Asia*, are conveniently accessible illustrations of the factory's output in a somewhat later and less careful phase of its working.

First sales
of MSS. in
'unknown'
characters.

Seeing that remunerative prices could be obtained for such articles at Kāshgar and, through Badruddīn's somewhat careless mediation, also from Ladāk and Kashmīr, the efforts of the forgers were stimulated. As Islām Ākhūn quickly perceived that his 'books' were readily paid for, though none of the Europeans who bought them could read their characters or distinguish them from ancient scripts, it became unnecessary to trouble about imitating the characters of genuine fragments. Thus, apparently each individual factory 'hand' was given free scope for inventing his 'unknown characters'. This explains the striking diversity of these queer scripts, of which the analysis of the texts contained in the 'British collection' at one time revealed at least a dozen—not exactly to the assurance of the Orientalist scholars who were to help in their decipherment.

Increased
output of
factory.

The rate of production by the laborious process of handwriting was, however, too slow, and accordingly the factory took to the more convenient method of producing books by means of

Production
of 'block-
printed'
books.

¹¹ See, e.g., Hoernle, *Report on C.-A. ant.*, Pls. V-VII, IX; also a 'Note on some block-prints from Khotan,' in *Proc.A.S.B.*, 1898, pp. 130 sq., where facsimiles of these curious block types are given.

¹² See Hoernle, 'Three further collections,' &c., in *J.A.S.B.*, 1897, pp. 237 sq.

¹³ See for such early specimens from the sets of written leaves sold to M. Ahmad Dīn, Hoernle, 'Three further collections,' &c., *J.A.S.B.*, 1897, Pls. XI-XV, XVII; also Pls. XVIII-XIX and *Report*, ii. Pl. I, from sets sold subsequently to Mr. Macartney. For the MS. leaves reproduced

in Pls. XI-XIII, *ibid.*, the characters of the genuine Chinese documents from Dandān-Uiliq may be supposed to have served as models.

¹⁴ See *Report on C.-A. ant.*, ii. pp. 4 sq., where the reproduction of the identical Brāhmī letter-group in the formula of one of the 'block-prints', but with the characters reversed owing to the forger's mistake in preparing the block, has also been lucidly explained.

¹⁵ See *Nachrichten über die von der Kais. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu St. Petersburg im Jahre, 1898, ausgerüstete Expedition nach Turfan*, i. Pl. 8.