

of Afghanistan, readily gave me permission to cross his territory on the uppermost Oxus on my way to the Pamirs, and most effectively provided for my passage along an ancient route of very great interest, but difficult at the time and quite closed to European travellers. For this gracious consideration and hospitality on the part of the ruler of those regions, towards which my scholarly interests have been turned with special keenness ever since my youth, I wish to record here my deep gratitude.

After crossing the Chinese frontier on the Pamirs the fields of my exploratory work consisted almost entirely of deserts and inhospitable mountain wastes. But just there I could realize more than ever how absolutely essential was the active co-operation of the Chinese administrators for the execution of my plans. Without their efficient help it would have been impossible to secure the transport and labour indispensable for my expeditions into the dreaded deserts where 'old towns' had to be searched for, or to obtain what was needed in animals, men, and supplies for prolonged explorations in forbiddingly barren mountains. My narrative will show how fortunate I was in meeting with invariable attention and willingness to help among the Mandarins of all the oases which served successively as my 'bases of operation.' At most of the Ya-mêns I soon found trustworthy friends and scholars keenly interested in my archaeological aims and 'finds.'

Among many to whom my thanks are due, I must content myself with specially naming Ch'ê Ta-jên, the Amban of Khotan; Liao Ta-lao-ye, who helped me from his dreary place of exile near Lop-nor where he afterwards died; Wang Ta-lao-ye, the learned magistrate, and Lin Ta-jên, the military commandant of Tun-huang, who both did their best to remove difficulties from my explorations along the ancient 'Great Wall.' But most of all I owe heartfelt gratitude to my old friend P'an Ta-jên (the Pan-Darin of my former narrative), then Tao-t'ai of