

CHAPTER I

BETWEEN HYDASPES AND INDUS

EVER since, in 1901, I returned from my first journey into Chinese Turkestan, happy recollections of successful labour among its mountains and deserts kept my mind fixed upon the hope of fresh explorations. By the excavations I then effected it was my good fortune to bring to light for the first time authentic remains of that ancient civilization which, as the joint product of Indian, Chinese, and classical influences, had once flourished in the oases fringing the Tarim Basin. There was every reason to hope that explorations renewed over a wider area, and with a more liberal allowance of time and means, would be equally fruitful. But the very abundance of the results which had rewarded my first effort retarded the attainment of that eagerly sought chance. Their scientific elaboration had to precede a fresh journey, and to assure that elaboration in a manner befitting pioneer work in a new field involved a task of exceptional difficulty. It was not enough to record and illustrate in full detail discoveries so ample and varied; the very novelty and the remoteness of their region laid it upon me to become their interpreter also from whatever historical and geographical light could be gathered.

The task was doubly heavy for one who had to struggle for leisure from exacting official duties. So it was not until the summer of 1904, while employed as Inspector-General of Education on the North-West Frontier, that I was able to submit to the Government of India detailed proposals about another journey which was to carry me back