

hill-men of Karanghu-tagh was sure to baffle all efforts in that direction. With so much wholly unexplored ground before us and the certainty of exceptional physical difficulties to be encountered, it was very reassuring that Ch'ê Ta-jên quickly grasped my aims and the way in which I wished to attempt their realization. Though he had come to Khotan only a few months before, his acquaintance with the general topography of the district and those adjoining it eastward seemed surprisingly good. He followed my explanations on the map of our previous surveys without any difficulty and readily promised all help in his power.

When in the afternoon, accompanied by Chiang-ssü-yeh, I returned the Amban's visit at the familiar Ya-mên, I was received not only with a tasteful collation and all possible marks of honour, but with the information that all the various official orders needed to assure effective assistance were already drafted and ready for my secretary's perusal. There could be no possible doubt as to the Amban's eagerness to offer help, and I appreciated this assurance all the more since I still vividly remembered the caution and reservations with which six years before P'an Ta-jên had met my corresponding requests. I wondered whether in the meantime the dread of the unknown Tibetan uplands, where the Yurung-kash was vaguely supposed to take its rise, had diminished in the eyes of Chinese officials, and why. Or was it only Ch'ê Ta-jên's geographical instinct which roused his personal interest in the plan for which I had asked his assistance?

My hope of successful explorations in the Khotan mountains received additional encouragement when two days later Rai Ram Singh safely joined me from the difficult expedition for which I had detached him from Kôk-yar. His success in the tasks I had entrusted to him was complete, and I could congratulate him on a really remarkable exploit. He had surveyed the hitherto very imperfectly known part of the Kun-lun between Kôk-yar and the Kilian route, including the head-waters of the Yül-arik River about the Karlik Dawan. He had then made his way over the Pass of Kilian still deeply covered by snow to the upper Kara-kash course, and had thence