

he was the first European in modern times to make his way across from Tun-huang to Abdal and Khotan, but did not live to record his story.

Beyond the river to the north-north-east, and a considerable distance away, my guide showed me a large group of ruined buildings, temples according to his statement. But the flooded condition of the river made them inaccessible for us now, and indications subsequently gathered make me inclined to believe that they were of relatively recent date, belonging to an abandoned road-side station on the route to Hami.

Gladly would I have kept my hardy Tungan for a guide in these regions, however obnoxious his presence might be to my Chinese entourage. But no fair words or offers would induce him to stay with me even for a day. He would not leave his flock in sole charge of others, and in all probability he preferred his sturdy independence to any service, however easy, which would bring him into constant touch with the despised 'heathen Chinees.' He left us soon, but promised to turn up in the morning with a sheep for which he was to be paid a good price. I hoped to get then at least a photograph of him; but he never came, and the men I sent to fetch the sheep failed to find him. So the only man who could or would tell me of the old wall vanished from my horizon for good. I often wondered where the next Tungan rebellion, when it is due, will find him!

For me the day had closed with cheering promise, and the men found warm shelter in shallow cave-dwellings which some earlier occupants had excavated at the foot of the clay ridge. It was the more welcome as a cutting wind continued to blow from the east and the thermometer still showed twenty-five degrees of frost in the morning. Besides myself, only Naik Ram Singh, ever scrupulously clean and tidy about his person, preferred to stick to his little tent. The Chinese labourers were overjoyed at finding a nice den to huddle into; but Hassan Akhun and the rest of my Turki followers, not liking the vicinity of the Tungans, tethered ponies and camels close by and kept a watch all night.