

Muhammadans or Tungans about ; and in these parts none of these quondam rebels had been allowed to survive or to effect a fresh footing.

Yet T'a-shih had not escaped their fury during the times of the last great rebellion, as was shown by the quaint, only half-restored temple in which I found airy quarters outside the walled central village. Scarcely twelve years had passed since, as Lin, my warrior friend of Tun-huang, related, a large body of Tungan rebels, retreating from Hsi-ning, threatened T'a-shih with fresh destruction. The outer enclosure of the temple still displayed the loopholes and other defences then hastily improvised by the local troops sent up from Tun-huang to intercept them. We had struck now, in fact, the main route which connects An-hsi and the great road from northern Turkestan and Mongolia with Tibet and the Koko-nor region across the high plateaus of Tsaidam.

I knew that the Dalai-Lama in 1904, on his flight from Lhasa to Urga, had passed by this route, and that I might any day while along it meet pious Mongols or Buriats returning from their Tibetan pilgrimage. Yet with all these geographical facts before me, I never suspected that T'a-shih on the very night of my stay had given shelter also to the late Lieutenant Brooke, the plucky young English traveller, who some eighteen months later was to fall a victim of exploring zeal among the treacherous Lolos. Starting from the Hsi-ning side he had vainly attempted to make his way through to Lhasa, and, foiled by Tibetan obstruction, was forced to retreat by the very route which I was now about to survey up to the watershed of the Tun-huang river sources. I heard first towards the end of July of his passage at Su-chou, but did not learn until nearly four years later, when Mr. Fergusson published an account from his papers, that without knowing of each other's presence we had passed in such close proximity.

The fresh transport promised completely failed us at T'a-shih. However, on hearing that the route was just practicable for carts over a march which would take us to the cave-temples of Wang-fo-hsia, I managed, with much difficulty, to induce the men from Ch'iao-tzŭ to take us up