

## SECTION IV.—VISITS TO RUINED SITES OF TURFAN

Six rapid marches from Toghucha by the high road brought me on November 10 to the oasis of Pichān, the easternmost of the fertile tracts comprised in the Turfān depression. The great importance attaching to this region from the point of view both of history and of geography has been known for a long time. Since the visits of Russian explorers first revealed the abundance of its ruins, the old sites of Turfān have acquired exceptional interest for all students of the ancient civilization of Central Asia, owing mainly to the prolonged and very fruitful archaeological labours which a succession of German expeditions under Professors Grünwedel and von Lecoq carried out there between 1902-7.

Importance  
of Turfān  
sites.

Since my tasks further west would not allow me to spare for Turfān more than a few weeks at the utmost, while I knew its ruined sites to be both numerous and extensive, I had to arrange the programme of my visit on lines very different from those I was accustomed to follow elsewhere. It could not be my object to attempt to supplement the protracted labours which the German savants had carried on, with all the advantages of ample time and thorough local experience, by excavations at sites that might not yet have been fully exhausted. It appeared far more useful that I should endeavour, within the limits of the available time, to familiarize myself in the first place with those peculiar physical conditions and geographical aspects which make this region the reflex, as it were, on a small scale of the whole Tārīm Basin and have determined the essential features of its historical past. For this study our topographical survey work obviously offered the best opportunity. In addition, visits to the different sites were to furnish me with some direct knowledge of the constructive peculiarities of the ruins, the art remains left *in situ*, and anything else that might help me to understand better the significance of the Turfān finds and to profit by them for the interpretation of my own.

Limitation  
of work at  
Turfān.

In accordance with this programme I succeeded in visiting in the course of less than three weeks all the ruined sites which Maps Nos. 54, 59 show from the extreme south-east end of the Turfān basin to Yār-khoto, its ancient capital, in the west. The surveys carried out side by side with these tours, and pushed by R. B. Lāl Singh far beyond the inhabited area both to the north and the south, allowed this interesting area to be mapped on a scale far more accurate and detailed than had been done previously. Of the many useful observations which I was thus enabled to gather of the characteristic physical and economic conditions prevailing in the Turfān basin some indications will be found in my Personal Narrative.<sup>1</sup> The experience gained on these tours proved of the greatest help later in planning the archaeological labours which my prolonged stay in the Turfān region during the autumn and winter of 1914-15 made it possible to carry through. But the very fact that this second visit covered a period of close on four months, and was also supplemented both before and after by visits to ground which, though outside the Turfān depression, is yet closely connected with it in geography and history, will explain the restriction which must be imposed upon my present record.

Surveys in  
Turfān  
basin.

It is obvious that it would be of little scientific utility if I were to discuss here the geographical and antiquarian observations of a general kind which my rapid tours of November, 1907, allowed me to gather, without taking into account the far more abundant and exact data bearing on the past and present of Turfān which my surveys and explorations of 1914-15 have yielded.<sup>2</sup> The proper

Surveys and  
explorations  
of 1914-15.

<sup>1</sup> See *Desert Cathay*, ii. pp. 354-63, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> The great addition made to my previous materials is best illustrated as regards topography by the fact that our stay in 1914-15 permitted the execution of a detailed map comprising the whole of the inhabited portions of the Turfān

basin, on the large scale of one inch to the mile, based upon a continuous series of accurately observed levels. The separate publication of these surveys is contemplated by the Royal Geographical Society.