

Obliged now to turn back to Kashgar, I chose for good reasons the longer route leading past the Lop tract and what was until quite recently the terminal course of the Tarim river to the northern caravan road along the foot of the T'ien-shan. It thus became possible to collect useful evidence as to the interesting hydrographical change which has caused most of the Tārīm river's waters to join the Konche-daryā and thus to flow into the Lop desert about ancient Lou-lan. Another useful result of this journey extending over more than two months was that a chain of exact longitudes determined by astronomical observations and time signals could be carried all round the Tārīm basin. It was achieved through the unwearied exertion and skill of my surveying companion, Khan Sahib Afrāzgul Khān, in the face of serious difficulties.

Thus by the close of April our circumambulation of the whole Tārīm basin, over an aggregate distance of some 2,000 miles, was completed. It will render possible useful additions and corrections in numerous sheets of the atlas prepared from our previous surveys and published as volume iv of my *Innermost Asia*.

During the later portion of this journey I learned that representations of the British Legation had induced the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs to deny his having cancelled my passport or ever intending to do so. This declaration was coupled with a request for the submission of a detailed programme as to my intended labours. It was to be submitted under my own signature and to serve the purpose of 'allaying criticisms of certain learned bodies'. Neither of these points suggested departure from the obstructive tactics experienced since my start on this journey. Under prevailing postal conditions it would take months for a detailed programme under my own signature to reach Nanking. It was easy to foresee the still greater delay likely to result from its consideration by 'certain learned bodies' of China in the light of the wholly unwarranted allegations, &c., which had been advanced by the 'National Commission for the preservation of Chinese antiquities'. The Chinese savants and others who had signed that protest were obviously influenced far more by nationalist bias than by any knowledge of my past scholarly labours in this field and their aims.

The risk of indefinite loss of time through obstruction disguised under procrastinating tactics was clear enough and the experience of previous tergiversations far from encouraging. It did not seem advisable to face such loss of time at my age when the years for active work in Eastern fields of exploration are bound to be limited. So when a three weeks' wait under the hospitable roof of the Consulate-General had brought no reply to a wireless message promising to submit the desired detailed programme provided I were authorized meanwhile to utilize the approaching summer for work in a specified portion of the T'ien-shan, I felt obliged to decide for a return to Kashmir. Significantly enough the provincial authorities professed still to be ignorant as to the withdrawal of the order cancelling my passport.

Alternative plans of exploration on other ground had been considered by me at the outset and will now claim careful preparation. Before leaving Kashgar in the third week of May, all archaeological objects collected at sites or acquired from local searchers were submitted for the Tao-tai's inspection, on the understanding that they will remain deposited at the Consulate-General until the Chinese Government's orders are obtained as to their disposal. It must be hoped that with the help of the Legation permission will be secured for the ancient manuscript materials, mostly on wood