

northern edge of the oasis. Any possible doubt as to the identity of Dandān-Uiliq was set at rest when a few days later I was able to examine, in the presence of Turdi, the two hunters Ahmad Merghen and Kāsim Ākhūn, who had guided Dr. Hedin on his journey and whom at my request Pan Dārin (Ta-jên), the kindly Amban of Khotan, had promptly sent for. I was thus able to arrange definitely the initial programme of my tour, by fixing upon this site as the best place for commencing systematic explorations in the desert.

The specimens brought back by Turdi had the further advantage of convincing the Amban, who previously, notwithstanding his thoroughly friendly attitude, had been somewhat sceptical as to the existence of ancient remains in the desert, that my enterprise was fully justified. Pan Dārin's scholarly type of mind and his keen historical sense made it easy for me to explain to him the direct bearing which the exploration of such ruins would have upon the elucidation of the accounts of old Khotan left to us by the great *T'ang sêng* ('The monk of the T'ang period', i. e. Hsüan-tsang) and other Chinese travellers. His effective assistance for all the needful preparations was thus more readily assured, and to it I owed largely, as results show, the possibility of successful work at the site.

Amban
Pan Dārin.

The week following my return from Yōtkan (Nov. 29) was spent busily at Khotan in writing up accounts of my geographical and antiquarian observations for dispatch to Europe, and in final preparations for the desert journey. In order to keep the camels, on which we should have to depend for the difficult marches through the sands, as lightly laden as possible, it was necessary to restrict the baggage to absolute essentials and to leave behind at Khotan a depôt of all stores and materials not immediately required. The elimination was no easy matter. On the one hand, no estimate could be formed of the length of time during which my explorations would keep me away from Khotan, while, on the other, it was certain that in the inhospitable regions where we were to pass the winter any deficiency in the necessary supplies and equipment might seriously affect our health and hamper my movements. It was largely through the care bestowed on transport and supplies that I was subsequently able to extend my operations so much further from the Khotan base than was originally anticipated.

Preparations
at Khotan.

On the morning of December 7, a misty and bitterly cold day, I set out for the winter campaign in the desert. In order to reach Dandān-Uiliq I had decided on the route via Tawakkēl, which, though longer than the track leading straight into the desert north-east of Yurung-kāsh, which Turdi, my 'treasure-seeking' guide, was accustomed to follow, somewhat reduced the extent of actual desert-marching with its inseparable privations for man and beast. The first day brought me, partly over marshy ground where the Lasku-Üstang and other canals finally lose themselves, to Yangi-arik, a village on the edge of the oasis north of Khotan. Its fields, as the name shows, had only been brought under cultivation in recent times. After two more dreary marches along the barren left bank of the river, where nothing was to be seen but high dunes of drifting sand to the west and reed-covered strips near its winding course, we crossed the Yurung-kāsh and soon arrived at the southern end of the Tawakkēl oasis.

March to
Tawakkēl.

This oasis owes its existence to the construction, some sixty years before my visit, of an irrigation canal which takes off the river waters a few miles further south near Kalama-Langar. Originally settled by forcibly transported colonists from different parts of the Khotan oasis, Tawakkēl has since developed into a prosperous small canton of some thousand households. The names of the various hamlets, called Tosalla, Borazān, Yurung-kāsh, &c., still recall the tracts which supplied the original parties of settlers. The proximity of the forest belt, which accompanies the Yurung-kāsh on its course through the desert, provides a plentiful supply of

Oasis of
Tawakkēl.