

protestations of complete innocence, Islām Ākhūn introduced a denial which seemed to offer some chance of catching my wary defendant. He emphatically denied having seen any of the alleged find-places himself, in fact having ever personally visited any ancient site in the desert.

Islām  
Ākhūn's  
early  
'narratives'.

I had purposely refrained at the time from showing any special interest in this far-reaching disclaimer. Consequently I had no difficulty in inducing him to repeat it with still more emphasis and in the presence of numerous witnesses when he was brought up 'on remand' for a third time. Whether encouraged by the success he thought to have scored so far, or by the forbearing treatment I had accorded to him, it was evident that the sly, restless-looking fellow was for the time being off his guard. So I promptly confronted him, from the detailed account printed in Dr. Hoernle's *Report*<sup>8</sup>, with an exact reproduction of the elaborate stories which he had told, in the course of depositions made before Mr. Macartney in connexion with different sales of 'old books', about his alleged journeys and discoveries in the Taklamakān during the years 1895-98.

Confession  
of forger.

The effect was most striking. Islām Ākhūn was wholly unprepared for the fact that his lies told years before, with so much seeming accuracy of topographical and other details, had received the honour of permanent record in a scientific report to Government. Hearing them now read out by me in re-translation, he was thoroughly startled and confused. He appeared also greatly impressed by the fact that, with the help of the exact information recorded by Dr. Hoernle from the reports of Mr. Macartney and Captain Godfrey<sup>9</sup>, I could enlighten him as to what 'old books' he had sold at Kāshgar on particular occasions, what remarkable statements he had made about the manner of their discovery by himself, &c. He was intelligent enough to realize that he stood self-convicted, and that nothing was to be gained by further protestations of innocence. He now admitted that he had seen manuscripts being written by his above-named employers (*recte* accomplices) at a deserted Mazār near Sampula. Little by little his admissions became more detailed; and ultimately, when assured that no further punishment awaited him, he made a clean breast of it.

Origin of  
Islām  
Ākhūn's  
forging  
enterprise.

Islām Ākhūn's subsequent confessions proved perfectly correct on many important particulars when checked from the records reproduced by Dr. Hoernle<sup>10</sup>, as well as from the evidence of a number of independent witnesses. He showed himself to be possessed of an excellent memory, and readily recognized among the fine photogravure plates accompanying Dr. Hoernle's *Report* those representing specimen pages from the 'block-printed' books in 'unknown characters' which formed his own manufacture. He had, previous to 1894, been engaged at times in collecting coins, seals, and similar antiques from Khotan villages. About that time he learned from Badruddīn Khān and other Afghān traders of the value which the 'Sāhibs' from India attached to ancient manuscripts. Genuine scraps of such had indeed been unearthed by Turdi and some other 'treasure-seekers' at Dandān-Uiliq. But the idea of visiting such dreary desert sites, with the certainty of great hardships and only a limited chance of finds, had no attraction for a person of such parts as Islām Ākhūn. So in preference he conceived the plan of manufacturing the article he was urged to supply the Sāhibs with.

Accomplices  
in forging.

In this enterprise he had several accomplices, among whom a certain Ibrāhīm Mullā was the leading man. This person appears to have made it his special business to cultivate

<sup>8</sup> See *Report on C.-A. ant.*, i. pp. xvi-xxi.

<sup>9</sup> The accurate 'List of contributions' given by Dr. Hoernle (*Report*, i. pp. iii. sqq.), together with his painstaking description of all peculiar features in the MSS. and 'block-prints,' the queer objects (e. g. a skull) said to have been found with them, &c., was of great utility to me

in this connexion.

<sup>10</sup> E. g., Islām Ākhūn distinctly remembered the introduction into certain 'block-printed' volumes of the 'artistic' sketches of heads, discussed in *Report*, i. pp. 62, 85, 105, and seemed rather proud of this proof of cleverness.