

benefit my examination of the history and topography of those areas has derived from the new explorations.

Deputation
to England,
1916-17.

The period of 'deputation' to England which the Indian Government kindly granted to me in 1916 after the conclusion of my third journey meant a very valuable help for my remaining tasks. For over a year I was able to resume direct touch with the collection of antiques still deposited as a whole in the British Museum, with corresponding advantage to the great portion of *Serindia* (Chapters X-XX) which was written during this period. Last, but not least, I am grateful for the fact that my return to England allowed me to enlist the generous interest and support of the Right Honourable Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN, then H.M. Secretary of State for India, for the publication of a much-needed complement of *Serindia*. I mean the portfolio of *The Thousand Buddhas*, intended to furnish in its large plates reproductions on an adequate scale of the most representative specimens of the paintings recovered from the walled-up cave-chapel of Tun-huang, artistic treasures to which the scope of the present Report would not allow full justice to be done.¹⁸

Portfolio of
*Thousand
Buddhas*.

Completion
of *Serindia*.

Subsequent to my return to Kashmir in the autumn of 1917, being placed on special duty, I was able to carry on the work still remaining on *Serindia* side by side with such tasks as the arrangement of my third collection and the preparation of the new atlas of Central-Asian surveys demanded. My manuscript of the text was finished by September, 1918, and some ten months later I had the satisfaction to see the printing of it, which my third Central-Asian journey and then the difficulties resulting from war conditions had stopped, resumed by the Oxford University Press. The completion of the heavy task of passing these volumes through the press was facilitated by a period of leave and subsequent 'deputation' to England which Government had been pleased to grant me during 1920.

Collabora-
tion of M.
CHAVANNES.

It still remains for me to record my grateful acknowledgements for the manifold and very valuable help by which fellow-scholars and others have enabled me to bring these protracted labours to a satisfactory end. Among those whom I have the privilege to claim as honoured collaborators, my heaviest debt of thanks is due to the late M. ÉDOUARD CHAVANNES, Membre de l'Institut, the greatest western authority of our times on all that concerns China's past, and the most effective of helpers. In the spring of 1909 he had readily charged himself with the detailed study and publication of all early Chinese records excavated by me. In spite of the quite exceptional difficulties of decipherment and interpretation which many among them offered, and their very large number, his amazing powers of rapid and yet profoundly critical work had enabled him a year later to place at my disposal annotated translations of nearly a thousand of them. These were of great immediate help to me for my *Desert Cathay* and, after having been revised by M. Chavannes and provided with an *Introduction* of masterly lucidity, were published in a separate quarto volume as a forerunner of the present publication.¹⁹ The perusal of almost any chapter in the latter dealing with ancient sites which have yielded written records will prove to what extent my interpretation of their past has been guided by M. Chavannes' labours. But they by no means exhausted the help I was privileged to receive from him.

Last contri-
butions of M.
CHAVANNES.

However busy over big tasks of his own, he was ever ready to grant it where matters needing Sinologue research were concerned, and reference to Appendix *A* will show how varied such contributions from his indefatigable hand were. The last of those reproduced there relating to inscribed paintings from the *Thousand Buddhas* have a pathetic interest of their own.²⁰ They were

¹⁸ The portfolio of *The Thousand Buddhas*, containing forty-eight plates mostly 24 by 20 inches in size and about half of them in faithful colour reproduction, will be published under the order of H.M. Secretary of State by Messrs. B. Quaritch, London, very soon after the issue of *Serindia*. Constant

references to its plates will be found in Chapters XXIII-XXV.

¹⁹ See *Documents chinois découverts par Aurel Stein dans les sables du Turkestan chinois*, Oxford University Press, 1913

²⁰ See below, pp. 1334 sqq., also p. 835.