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M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

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Ruins of Desert Cathay

In this two-volume work, published in 1912, the Hungarian-born archaeologist Marc Aurel Stein (1862–1943) describes his second expedition to the deserts of Chinese Turkestan in 1906–8. (His account of his first expedition, *Sand-Buried Ruins of Khotan* (1903), is also reissued in this series.) Stein intended this account to be read by non-specialists, and, like his previous book, it is highly illustrated and full of interesting details about his journey and the people he met en route, as well as of the important archaeological discoveries which still link his name with the civilisation of this remote and dangerous area. In Volume 1, Stein describes the problems of setting up the expedition and the excitement and perils of the route, which took him through the tribal areas of the North-West Frontier and the kingdom of Afghanistan, ending with his arrival at the western extremity of the Great Wall of China.

Cambridge University Press

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M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

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M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Ruins of Desert Cathay

*Personal Narrative of Explorations
in Central Asia and Westernmost China*

VOLUME 1

M. AUREL STEIN



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M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07752-1 - Ruins of Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia
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M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

RUINS OF DESERT CATHAY

Cambridge University Press

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M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)



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and Westernmost China: Volume 1

M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07752-1 - Ruins of Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia
and Westernmost China: Volume 1

M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ANCIENT BUDDHIST PAINTING ON SILK, SHOWING
VAISRAVANA, DEMON-KING OF THE NORTHERN REGION, MOVING
WITH DIVINE HOST ACROSS THE OCEAN. DISCOVERED AT
THE 'CAVES OF THE THOUSAND BUDDHAS,' TUN-HUANG.

(CHAP. LXVIII. SCALE, TWO-FIFTHS).

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978-1-108-07752-1 - Ruins of Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China: Volume 1

M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

RUINS OF DESERT CATHAY

PERSONAL NARRATIVE OF EXPLORATIONS IN
CENTRAL ASIA AND WESTERNMOST CHINA

BY

M. AUREL STEIN



WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS, COLOUR PLATES, PANORAMAS,
AND MAPS FROM ORIGINAL SURVEYS

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

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and Westernmost China: Volume 1

M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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978-1-108-07752-1 - Ruins of Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia
and Westernmost China: Volume 1

M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

TO THE MEMORY

OF

MY PARENTS

IN UNCEASING LOVE AND DEVOTION

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07752-1 - Ruins of Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia
and Westernmost China: Volume 1

M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07752-1 - Ruins of Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China: Volume 1

M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

THE purpose of these volumes is to furnish the general reader with a personal record of the archaeological and geographical explorations which, during the years 1906-1908, I carried out under the orders of the Government of India in remote parts of Central Asia and westernmost China. The plan of these explorations was based upon the experiences and results of my earlier journey in Chinese Turkestan, during 1900-1901, of which my *Sand-buried Ruins of Khotan*, first published in 1903, contained a popular account. In the Introduction to that book I explained the manifold historical and other interests which first attracted me to pioneer work in what was then practically a virgin field for antiquarian research. When subsequently publishing the Detailed Report on the scientific results of that journey in my *Ancient Khotan* (Oxford University Press, 1907, two vols. quarto), I had occasion to dwell more fully upon the singular fascination possessed by the ancient remains of a region which once served as the main channel for the interchange of the civilizations of India, China, and the classical West, and also upon the geographical interest of the deserts which have helped to preserve those relics. There seems therefore no need to detail here the general aims which guided me in the plans of my second journey.

A kindly Fate allowed me to carry through my programme in its entirety and with abundant results.

VIII

PREFACE

The extent of these explorations is sufficiently indicated by the length of time spent over constant travel and field-work, more than two years and a half, and by the aggregate marching distance of close on ten thousand miles. As to the importance of the results achieved, it will be enough to mention that it was recognized by the Royal Geographical Society, soon after my return at the commencement of 1909, with the award of the highest distinction in its gift, the Founder's Gold Medal. Owing to the abundance of interesting discoveries made on this expedition, it will take years to complete the full scientific publication of its results in spite of the help afforded by the collaboration of a large number of savants. Even then such a Detailed Report will, by reason of its bulk and cost, necessarily remain beyond the reach of the general public.

I fully realize the necessity of enlisting the interest of this wider public for a field which has yet much to reveal as regards the far-spread influence exercised by the ancient civilization, religion, and arts of India—a field, too, in which British scientific enterprise was rightly the first to assert itself. I feel, therefore, grateful for the permission accorded to me by His Majesty's Secretary of State for India to publish independently the present narrative. I have endeavoured to make it not merely a descriptive record of my personal experiences and observations amidst some of the most forbidding deserts and highest mountain ranges of Asia, but to give in it also the first-fruits of the abundant 'finds' which came to light from ancient sites abandoned for long centuries to the desert sands. I hope the photographs and panoramic views here reproduced from among the many taken by me, the colour plates showing specimens of ancient art objects, and the well-executed maps indicating the surveys effected over wide regions by my Indian assistants and myself, will help the reader to

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07752-1 - Ruins of Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China: Volume 1

M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

IX

visualize some of the results of my explorations and also the conditions under which they were achieved.

My excavations in 1900-1901 at ruined sites in the Taklamakan Desert around Khotan first revealed fully the great historical interest of that ancient culture which, as the joint product of Indian, Chinese, and classical influences, once flourished in the oases of Chinese Turkestan. They also showed the remarkable state of preservation in which even the humblest relics of a civilization extinct for long centuries might survive under the sands of a region vying with Egypt in its extreme dryness of climate. By my second journey I succeeded in extending these systematic explorations farther eastwards for nearly a thousand miles in a straight line. There, along routes which from the last centuries B.C. onwards linked China with the kingdoms of Central and Western Asia and the classical world, are scattered ruins which yielded up plentiful relics throwing light on the early history, arts, and every-day life of regions the past of which, except for rare references in the Chinese Annals, seemed lost in darkness.

But many reasons led me to devote quite as much attention to the things of the present as to those dead and buried. Nowhere, probably, in Asia is the dependence of historical development on physical conditions so strikingly marked, nor the secular changes of these conditions so clearly traceable by archaeological evidence, as in those barren basins of innermost Asia. This observation is of particular importance with regard to the much-discussed problem of progressive desiccation or general drying-up of the climate. Hence the characteristic physical features of the regions traversed, and their influence on the economic and social conditions of the scattered settlements met with, were bound to claim a large share in my observations of travel.

My story starts from the valleys of the Indo-Afghan

border, where Graeco-Buddhist art first endeavoured to use classical forms for the figures and scenes of Indian religious worship. Thence it takes the reader across the snowy range of the Hindukush up to the cradle of the River Oxus on the Pamirs, the 'Roof of the World,' and down into the great basin drained by the Tarim River which finally dies away in the marshes of Lop-nor. Explorations in the Kun-lun Range, framing this basin south and west of Khotan, show the forbidding nature of the glacier-clad mountains which feed the Tarim's greatest tributary. Then a succession of expeditions to ruined sites in the desert far beyond the extant oases east of Khotan helps the reader to realize the archaeological attractions as well as the serious difficulties of that dreaded Taklamakan Desert, where want of water raises constant obstacles and risks, and where work is possible only in the winter.

At the fascinating ruins of the Niya Site, amidst the remains of ancient dwellings abandoned since the third century A.D., and still surrounded by their dead arbours, hundreds of wooden documents were discovered, in Indian script and language, but often bearing classical seal impressions. Then north-eastwards to the wind-eroded dead wastes and the salt-encrusted dry lake-beds round Lop-nor. Plentiful discoveries rewarded my explorations carried on in this desolate region under exceptionally trying conditions; but I may allude here only to two. From ruins now situated at a distance of fully a hundred miles from the nearest supply of drinkable water, I recovered conclusive evidence that the use for administrative purposes of the same early Indian language I had found in the oldest records of the Khotan region, extended in the first centuries of our era as far as this most remote corner of Central Asia. At the same time, the discovery of fine wood-carvings in Graeco-Buddhist style, and of beautiful frescoes quite classical in style that once adorned Buddhist shrines offered

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07752-1 - Ruins of Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China: Volume 1

M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

xi

unexpected testimony to the powerful influence exercised by Hellenistic art even on the very confines of true China.

After crossing the great desert by the track which Marco Polo, like early Chinese pilgrims before him, had followed on his journey to Cathay, I found myself rewarded by a big and fascinating task after my own heart. It was the discovery and exploration of the long-forgotten westernmost portion of that ancient frontier wall, or *Limes*, with which the Chinese Empire guarded the chief line for its political and commercial expansion towards Central Asia and the West against the raids of the Huns during the centuries immediately preceding and following the time of Christ. The line of the ancient wall, with its watch-towers and stations, found often in wonderful preservation, was explored for over 200 miles. Having remained undisturbed by the hand of man in the solitude of the gravel desert, it yielded a rich harvest of early Chinese and other records of historical interest, along with many curious relics of the life once led along this most desolate of borders.

Not far from Tun-huang, the chief oasis still surviving within this western extremity of the ancient 'Great Wall,' lies the sacred site of the 'Thousand Buddhas.' Buddhist piety of early times has here honey-combed the rock walls of a true Thebais with hundreds of cave temples, once richly decorated with frescoes and stucco sculptures, and still objects of worship. Here I had the good fortune in the spring of 1907 to gain access to a great deposit of ancient manuscripts and art relics which had lain hidden and perfectly protected in a walled-up rock chapel for about nine hundred years. The story how I secured here twenty-four cases heavy with manuscript treasures rescued from that strange place of hiding, and five more filled with paintings, embroideries, and similar remains of Buddhist art, has been characterized by a competent observer as a particularly dramatic and fruitful incident in the history of

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978-1-108-07752-1 - Ruins of Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China: Volume 1

M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

XII

PREFACE

archaeological discovery. Faithful reproductions in colour of some of the fine paintings here recovered make it easy to appreciate the artistic value of these 'finds,' and to recognize how the influence of Graeco-Buddhist models victoriously spread itself to the Far East. A new chapter may be said to have been opened in the history of Eastern art; but it will take long years of study before all its problems can be elucidated, and probably longer still before all that is of historical and philological interest can be extracted from those thousands of manuscripts in Chinese, Sanskrit, Uigur, Tibetan, 'unknown' Central-Asian languages, and the rest.

After explorations among the snowy Nan-shan ranges, where some 20,000 square miles were mapped in an interesting and very imperfectly known mountain region towards Tibet, there followed our second archaeological winter campaign (1907-1908) in the Tarim Basin. Apart from a further series of important antiquarian discoveries, this included a successful crossing of the great 'Sea of Sand' of the Taklamakan at its widest, a task accomplished under considerable risks and difficulties. The time still available in the summer and autumn of 1908 before the return to India was utilized for fresh geographical work in the high and almost wholly unexplored Kun-lun mountains south of Khotan and Keriya. Here we succeeded in pushing our surveys across exceptionally rugged ranges and through inaccessible, deep-cut gorges up to the great glaciers which feed the sources of the Khotan River. Subsequently we made our way across the terribly barren plateaus of the extreme north-west of Tibet to the head-waters of the Kara-kash.

Great hardships had to be faced on this journey owing to the inclement nature of the ground, and just when completing my exploratory tasks by an ascent to the ice-clad crest of the main Kun-lun Range, at an elevation of about 20,000 feet, I suffered a severe frost-bite which

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07752-1 - Ruins of Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China: Volume 1

M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

XIII

cost me the toes of the right foot. It was as a helpless invalid that I had to get myself carried somehow over the 300 miles of rough mountain track on the Kara-koram route, with its high passes reaching to over 18,000 feet, before medical aid could be obtained at Leh. The recovery was painfully slow; but there was comfort in the thought that my programme had been carried right through, and that my own accident had not interfered with the safe transport of my collection of antiquities, filling close on a hundred cases, which reached the British Museum uninjured.

Tasks of such extent and variety as this rapid summary indicates could not have been accomplished without manifold aid to overcome the serious difficulties which were bound to beset every one of them. This much-needed help has come to me from many quarters, and it is no small satisfaction to be able to record here the debts of gratitude which I owe. Foremost and greatest is my obligation towards the Government of India. Being then under the aegis of Lord Curzon as Viceroy, and stimulated, no doubt, by his deep interest in geographical research and all that bears on the antiquities and history of India, it sanctioned in 1905 my proposed explorations with the approval of His Majesty's Secretary of State, set me free from administrative duties, and provided the bulk of the means needed for the execution of my plan. The help of kind patrons and friends, such as my lamented chief, Colonel Sir Harold Deane, the late Sir Denzil Ibbetson, Sir James Wilson, K.C.S.I., and Mr. E. D. Maclagan, C.S.I., former and present Secretary to the Government of India in the Revenue Department, did much to smooth the way for a timely consideration of my proposals by Government. Their favourable decision was facilitated by the generous offer of the Trustees of the British Museum to contribute two-fifths of the estimated cost of the expedition, against a corresponding share in

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07752-1 - Ruins of Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China: Volume 1

M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xiv

PREFACE

the prospective archaeological 'finds.' Recognizing the services rendered by this great institution in the past towards Oriental researches, it is gratifying to me to think that it has been possible for me to bring back a collection of antiques which has made this share, even from a financial point of view, a very profitable investment.

When the time came in 1906 for the start on my journey the kind interest shown in my enterprise by Lord Minto, then Viceroy of India, was a great encouragement. It continued through the whole course of my travels, as shown in the letters of my old friend Colonel (now Sir James) Dunlop Smith, then the Viceroy's private secretary. I shall always remember with sincere gratitude the effective support which my subsequent efforts to secure adequate leisure for the elaboration of my results received from Lord Minto.

For the execution of my geographical tasks the help of the Survey of India Department has proved, as before, of the utmost value. Under the direction of Colonel F. B. Longe, R.E., it readily agreed to depute with me one of its trained native surveyors, and to provide by a special grant for all costs arising from his employment. Colonel S. Burrard, R.E., F.R.S., then Superintendent of Trigonometrical Surveys and now Surveyor-General of India, lost no opportunity to encourage and guide our labours in the field and to facilitate the preparation of their cartographical record in his office. It is mainly due to his unflinching help that our geographical results are now worked out and embodied in an Atlas of ninety-four map sheets, on the scale of four miles to one inch, which await publication with my Detailed Report. In Rai Ram Singh, the excellent Surveyor who had accompanied me on my first journey, and in his equally experienced and hard-working colleague Rai Bahadur Lal Singh, who subsequently relieved him when considerations of health necessitated the former's return to India, I found not only most

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07752-1 - Ruins of Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China: Volume 1

M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

xv

efficient topographical assistants, but also willing and always reliable helpers in many other practical tasks. The story of our travels as recorded in these volumes will bear ample testimony to the great value of their services and to the trying physical conditions in which they were cheerfully rendered.

Quite as valuable for my geographical work was the moral support which, in addition to the loan of a number of instruments, the Royal Geographical Society gave me. Those who like myself have to struggle hard for chances of achieving their scientific aims in life, will appreciate the encouragement I derived from the Society's generous recognition of the results of both my Central-Asian explorations. Whether in the course of solitary travel across the desert plains and high mountain ranges of innermost Asia, or struggling with the difficulties of the labours which the results brought back imposed upon me in more commonplace and often less congenial surroundings, I always felt the vivifying touch of the friendly interest and unfailing sympathy of the Society's incomparable secretary, Dr. J. Scott Keltie. I must also record here my special thanks to the Royal Geographical Society for having enabled me to make the results of the surveys effected by my topographical assistants and myself more accessible; in its *Journal* have been published three maps presenting on a reduced scale the main contents of the Atlas prepared at the Indian Trigonometrical Survey Office, Dehra Dun. With the Society's kind permission and the publishers' ready concurrence it has been possible to reproduce these maps here.

Once beyond the Indian political border I knew well that the success of my undertaking would depend very largely upon the view which the local powers would take of my plans and upon their readiness to countenance them. I could not have wished in this respect for a more encouraging sign at the outset than when H.M. Habibullah, King

of Afghanistan, readily gave me permission to cross his territory on the uppermost Oxus on my way to the Pamirs, and most effectively provided for my passage along an ancient route of very great interest, but difficult at the time and quite closed to European travellers. For this gracious consideration and hospitality on the part of the ruler of those regions, towards which my scholarly interests have been turned with special keenness ever since my youth, I wish to record here my deep gratitude.

After crossing the Chinese frontier on the Pamirs the fields of my exploratory work consisted almost entirely of deserts and inhospitable mountain wastes. But just there I could realize more than ever how absolutely essential was the active co-operation of the Chinese administrators for the execution of my plans. Without their efficient help it would have been impossible to secure the transport and labour indispensable for my expeditions into the dreaded deserts where 'old towns' had to be searched for, or to obtain what was needed in animals, men, and supplies for prolonged explorations in forbiddingly barren mountains. My narrative will show how fortunate I was in meeting with invariable attention and willingness to help among the Mandarins of all the oases which served successively as my 'bases of operation.' At most of the Ya-mêns I soon found trustworthy friends and scholars keenly interested in my archaeological aims and 'finds.'

Among many to whom my thanks are due, I must content myself with specially naming Ch'ê Ta-jên, the Amban of Khotan; Liao Ta-lao-ye, who helped me from his dreary place of exile near Lop-nor where he afterwards died; Wang Ta-lao-ye, the learned magistrate, and Lin Ta-jên, the military commandant of Tun-huang, who both did their best to remove difficulties from my explorations along the ancient 'Great Wall.' But most of all I owe heartfelt gratitude to my old friend P'an Ta-jên (the Pan-Darin of my former narrative), then Tao-t'ai of

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978-1-108-07752-1 - Ruins of Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China: Volume 1

M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

xvii

Ak-su, who, cherishing a kindly recollection of my work and person from my former journey, did all he could from a distance to use the influence of his high office for smoothing my paths.

But what secured to me from the outset the benevolent disposition of the provincial administration of Chinese Turkestan was the influence exercised on my behalf by my old friend Mr. G. Macartney, C.I.E., for many years the representative of the Indian Government at Kashgar, and now H.M.'s Consul-General for the 'New Dominions.' Throughout that wide region his name and character are held in high respect by officials and people alike. I owe to him a heavy debt of gratitude for the most effective help which he was ever ready to extend to me from afar; for all the hospitality and kindness I enjoyed during my stay at his residence in Kashgar; and, last but not least, for the watchful care with which he assured the safe transit of my antiquities and my mails when distances up to a thousand miles and more lay between us.

But it was a service of quite as great importance as any just mentioned, and one which I shall always remember most gratefully, when he recommended to me an excellent Chinese secretary in the person of Chiang-ssü-yeh. Since I had not been able to equip myself by a serious study of Chinese, the help of a qualified Chinese scholar was of the utmost importance for my tasks. I found in Chiang-ssü-yeh not merely a zealous teacher and secretary, but the most eager of helpmates, always cheerfully sharing labours and hardships for the sake of my scientific interests. My narrative will show how much of the success attending our work on purely Chinese ground was due to his invaluable services. How often have I longed since we parted for my ever alert and devoted Chinese comrade!

The rapid sketch given above of the aims, extent, and

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978-1-108-07752-1 - Ruins of Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China: Volume 1

M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xviii

PREFACE

character of my explorations will convey some idea of the heavy tasks which the elaboration of their over-abundant results has laid on my shoulders since my return. When so much detailed research had to be started on new materials likely to need scholarly application for years, it seemed doubly important that I should work out my own observations and conclusions in broad outlines and make them available as soon as possible. I realized from the first that the publication of a general narrative like the present offered the most suitable place for their early record. Hence these volumes were to serve not for the mere reproduction of diary leaves or first impressions of travel, but, apart from any personal interest they may possess, also as a prelude, and in some respects a necessary complement, to my Detailed Scientific Report.

This close connection has made the preparation of the present book a more responsible task than may appear on the surface. It also imposes upon me the duty of recording, however briefly, the manifold help without which it would have been impossible to reap the true results of my efforts in the field. Most of all do I owe gratitude to the Government of India, which, with the approval of H.M.'s Secretary of State, sanctioned my being placed on 'special duty' in England for a period of two years and three months, in order that I might be able to devote myself to these tasks within easy reach of my collection of antiquities. I hope that when it will be possible to make this accessible to the public by a temporary exhibition, and still more when the publication of my Detailed Report, as sanctioned by H.M.'s Secretary of State, in four quarto volumes, will be completed, the value of the official help thus extended to me will be fully appreciated.

It would have been quite impossible for me to accomplish within a reasonable time all the manifold labours connected with the arrangement and description of my collection and the study of its *embarras de richesse* in remains

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07752-1 - Ruins of Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China: Volume 1

M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

XIX

of ancient art had I not enjoyed once again the invaluable assistance of my old friend and chief helpmate, Mr. F. H. Andrews, late Principal of the Mayo School of Art, Lahore. Prolonged study on the spot of Indian art in all its aspects, coupled with his own high artistic gifts and his wide experience of Eastern crafts in general, has made him an expert, unsurpassed in this country, for all questions touching the arts and industries of ancient Central Asia. I shall never cease to feel deepest gratitude for the enthusiastic devotion which induced him to sacrifice to our common tasks what hard-earned leisure he could spare from educational duties elsewhere.

Besides his constant co-operation in matters of art and technical interest, the présent book has benefited greatly by the special care which Mr. Andrews has bestowed upon its illustrations. Thus I owe to his artist's hand the black and white drawing reproduced in the vignette on the title-page, which shows a faithfully restored enlargement of the figure of Pallas Promachos, as seen in several of the ancient seal impressions on clay recovered by me from the desert sand. In addition to Mr. F. H. Andrews' guidance, the work of arranging and classifying my finds has derived much advantage also from the trained and zealous help of several young classical archaeologists, Mr. J. P. Droop, Miss F. Lorimer, Mr. H. G. Evelyn-White, and Mr. L. C. Woolley, who conjointly or successively have filled the posts of assistants at my collection during the last two and a half years. To them, too, I wish to record my grateful acknowledgments.

Ever since temporary accommodation was secured for my collection at the British Museum its Director, Dr. F. G. Kenyon, and the Keepers of the Departments directly concerned, especially Dr. L. Barnett, Sir Sidney Colvin, Mr. C. H. Read, have done all in their power to facilitate my labours by valuable advice and support. For the help thus received and for the very useful information placed at my disposal on subjects of special enquiry by the

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07752-1 - Ruins of Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China: Volume 1

M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xx

PREFACE

Assistant-Keepers and Assistants, Messrs. J. Allan, R. L. Binyon, L. Giles, R. L. Hobson, T. A. Joyce, R. A. Smith, I may be allowed to express here my sincere thanks.

A number of distinguished savants have helped me towards producing the present work by collaborating on the materials brought back from my journey. On the artistic and technical side my hearty thanks are due, in the first place, to my old friend Monsieur A. Foucher, Professor at the Paris University, the leading authority on all that relates to Graeco-Buddhist art. To his exceptional knowledge of Buddhist iconography I owe the correct interpretation of some of my most interesting frescoes and paintings. Professor Percy Gardner has generously allowed me to draw upon his wide archaeological knowledge for the elucidation of objects of classical art. Professor J. Strzygowski, of the Imperial University of Vienna, has been good enough to afford similar guidance as regards the links which connect the ancient art of innermost Asia with that of the late classical world. In respect of Tibetan art remains my friend Colonel L. A. Waddell, C.B., C.I.E., gave me welcome assistance from his wide experience of Tibetan Buddhism. Sir Arthur Church, F.R.S., allowed me to profit from his life-long researches for an analysis of the materials used in the ancient paintings, frescoes, and relievos. To Professor J. von Wiesner, of the Imperial Academy of Vienna, a great authority on plant-physiology, I owe illuminating investigations on the substance and technical character of my ancient papers and textiles. My old friend, Professor L. de Lóczy, head of the Hungarian Geological Survey, did his best to help me in the elucidation of interesting geological questions suggested by my desert explorations.

Among my philological collaborators my heaviest debt is due to M. Éd. Chavannes, Membre de l'Institut, the eminent Sinologist and the leading authority on Chinese sources of information concerning early Central-Asian

PREFACE

xxi

history. Immediately after my return he charged himself with the detailed study and publication of all early Chinese records excavated by me, and subsequently very kindly allowed me to utilize the results of his painstaking labours for the present volumes. The perusal of almost any chapter dealing with ancient sites will show to what extent my interpretation of their past must depend on the materials thus made available to me. It is a special satisfaction to me to know that M. Chavannes' volume dealing with these early Chinese 'finds' will soon be ready for publication in advance of my 'Detailed Report.' M. Paul Pelliot, Professor at the Sorbonne and the successful leader of a French archaeological mission to Central Asia, has put me under a great obligation by undertaking the inventory of the thousands of old Chinese texts and documents from the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas.

Dr. A. F. Rudolf Hoernle, C.I.E., the pioneer of Central-Asian studies on the British side, has rendered me very valuable help by his preliminary analysis of all manuscript 'finds' in Indian Brahmi script, which are in one or other of the 'unknown' languages of Chinese Turkestan. It is reassuring for me to know that the analysis of the ancient wooden records in Kharoshthi script discovered on my second journey has been undertaken by the same highly qualified scholars, Professor E. J. Rapson, M. É. Senart, and the Abbé Boyer, who had already bestowed so much critical acumen and labour on the corresponding 'finds' of my first expedition. To the Abbé Boyer I am indebted besides for the decipherment of certain important Kharoshthi inscriptions. In regard to my Sanskrit manuscript materials I have enjoyed equally competent assistance from my friends Dr. L. Barnett and Professor L. de la Vallée Poussin.

For the analysis of the plentiful Tibetan records I had the good fortune to secure the collaboration of an exceptionally qualified expert, Dr. A. H. Francke, of the Moravian

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M. Aurel Stein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

XXII

PREFACE

Mission, Ladak, while the catalogue work on the Tibetan Buddhist texts, started by Miss C. M. Ridding with the help of Dr. F. W. Thomas, the learned Librarian of the India Office, has also benefited my own task. Professor V. Thomsen, of Copenhagen, the veteran Orientalist and decipherer of the famous Orkhon inscriptions, has done me the honour of examining and interpreting my early Turkish manuscripts in Runic Turki writing. To Dr. A. von Lecoq, of the Royal Ethnographic Museum, Berlin, who carried on exceptionally fruitful excavations at Turfan, I am indebted for the full edition of an important Manichaean text in old Turkish; and to Dr. E. Denison Ross, Assistant Secretary to the Government of India, for a preliminary investigation of Uigur Buddhist manuscripts. Professor F. W. K. Müller, Director of the Royal Ethnographic Museum, Berlin, has helped me by an analysis of the manuscript materials in the Sogdian language which he was the first to decipher. Even earlier relics of this interesting Iranian language have come to light in certain documents of an 'unknown' script resembling Aramaic, to which my friend Dr. A. Cowley, Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, and subsequently M. R. Gauthiot, of the *École des Hautes Études*, Paris, have been kind enough to devote much learned labour.

This long record of much-needed scholarly help cannot make me forget that for the purpose of the present book it was, perhaps, even more important to bring the results of my labours graphically before the eyes of the reader than to determine in all cases their exact scientific bearing. So I feel particularly grateful for the liberality with which my publishers have allowed me to provide illustrations so numerous and varied. My special thanks are due also to Messrs. Henry Stone and Son, of Banbury, who, by dint of much skill and care, have succeeded in making the colour plates worthy and true reproductions of the specimens of ancient art work.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

XXIII

I have left it to the last to record my heartfelt gratitude to those kind friends who have bestowed their personal care on these volumes. Mr. J. S. Cotton, late editor of the *Academy*, did me the great favour of revising my manuscript with regard to the needs of the general reader; he also readily charged himself at the publishers' request with the preparation of an appropriate Index which, I trust, will also be found useful as a glossary of Eastern terms. Mr. P. S. Allen, Fellow of Merton College, Oxford, spared time from absorbing scholarly labours of his own, and, assisted by my friend Mr. J. de M. Johnson, of Magdalen College, cheerfully sacrificed it to a very thorough revision of the proofs. His letters, which followed me everywhere on my travels, had been a constant source of encouragement amidst difficulties and trials. That I was able to complete this narrative in Oxford and in surroundings both inspiring and congenial was a special boon assured to me by the kind hospitality of the Warden and Fellows of Merton College. The peaceful retreat for work which they granted me under their historic roof will always be remembered by me with sincere gratitude.

But whether working by the banks of the Isis or in British Museum basements, amidst the condensed humanity of London, I never ceased to long for the deserts and mountains which had seen my happiest years of labour. How gladly should I forget all the toil which the results brought back from this journey have cost me, could I but feel sure of freedom for fresh explorations, in old fields and in those to which my eyes have, as yet vainly, been turned since my youth!

M. AUREL STEIN.

MERTON COLLEGE, OXFORD,
November 3rd, 1911.

VOL. I

b