

KARAVAN

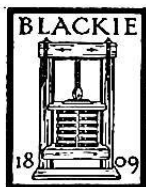
Travels in Eastern Turkestan

BY

NILS AMBOLT

Translated from the Swedish by

JOAN BULMAN, M.A.



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FOREWORD

I HAD spent some months in the summer of 1928 in Stockholm, arranging business matters connected with my big expedition and selecting its members, and was to return on 8th August to my headquarters in Urumtsi.

Thanks to the extreme generosity of the Swedish Government and the kindness of our Chinese friends, we had been able to increase the scientific staff of the expedition considerably. One of our three new members was the promising young astronomer and geodesist, Dr. Nils Ambolt, of Lund, Sweden. His work had been highly praised by Professor C. Charlier, of Lund, and Professor W. Carlheim-Gyllenskiöld, of the Academy of Science, Stockholm, and he had spent a further eight months studying at the Geodätisches Institut, Potsdam, under Professor Kohlschütter, one of the most prominent geodesists of our time, who also spoke most highly of him.

I returned to the field accompanied by Dr. Ambolt. Our ways soon parted, however, for I was called elsewhere to other duties. Ambolt was seriously ill for some time. On his recovery, he set off on his five-year expedition through Central Asia. He worked particularly happily with our chief geologist, Dr. Norin, in a collaboration that proved profitable to them both. The field of their activity was indeed wide. It included not only those parts of Sinkiang which have been known from earliest times under the names of Dzungaria and East Turkestan, but also completely unknown parts of northern Tibet. Towards the end they worked also in western Tibet and Ladakh.

Dr. Ambolt in the course of his zigzag journeys collected the most comprehensive and valuable astronomic, geodetic, and meteorological observations. He also carried out triangulations, altitude measurements, and cartographical observations in the districts he visited. His first work, *Latitude*

and Longitude Determinations, was published a short time ago. These astronomical determinations of position have enabled the map of Central Asia to be drawn with a certainty hitherto impossible. To me, whose first journeys were made as a pioneer and pathfinder, it is a very great pleasure to be able to afford young Swedish explorers opportunities of filling in, by means of thorough and strictly scientific research, the gaps which I myself was forced to leave.

Dr. Nils Ambolt possesses the happy faculty of relating his personal adventures and experiences in an interesting and highly readable form. His book *Karavan* enjoyed an unusual success in Sweden, and was taken up with enthusiasm both by the public and the press.

It is a great pleasure to me to know that Ambolt's book is now to appear in English. No country in the world has shown a greater interest in Sinkiang, particularly East Turkestan, than Great Britain, both in the past and at the present day. Some of the roads to India run through this great province, and Englishmen from Shaw, Forsyth, Bellew, Biddulf, Gordon, Carey, Dalgleish, and Sir Francis Young-husband to Sir Aurel Stein and Peter Fleming have done great service to geographical exploration, science, and politics in these inaccessible parts.

At the present time, and possibly for many years to come, travel in Sinkiang will not be easy. The war now in progress in China places almost insuperable difficulties in the way of fresh enterprises, and at this moment it is impossible to foresee who will gain the mastery of these huge territories. Russia is very powerful there, and every friend of China hopes that, when the war is over, the province of Sinkiang will be more firmly linked than ever before with the greatest republic in the world. Any new contribution to our knowledge of Chinese Turkestan should therefore be warmly welcomed. As Ambolt held a place of honour on my staff on the big expedition of 1927-35, it would be a matter of great satisfaction to me if the same friendly interest that has always been accorded me could be extended also to my young astronomer and his book.

SVEN HEDIN.

STOCKHOLM, December, 1938.

PREFACE

"Youth is not an age, it is a quality"

At the time I write these lines, Sven Hedin is seventy-three years old; or perhaps it would be more correct to say that he is seventy-three years young. He still possesses unimpaired his wonderful power of inspiring others and filling them with enthusiasm, and this applies most of all to that youth which he loves and on which he has always lavished his rich optimism.

I was privileged to take part in his big scientific expedition of 1928-33 to the heart of Asia. *Karavan* is founded on these years of camping life. The first chapter of the book, "Chinese Turkestan—the Land of Contrasts", is an account of an imaginary journey, included by way of introduction to the land and its people. The rest of the book deals with the expedition itself.

During these years my joys were doubled and my troubles shared by many good friends of various nationalities. To all these I would express my sincerest thanks. May this book prove that those five years in the East were years of great happiness—not merely as seen in the delusive light of memory, but as they were lived in tent and yurt, with theodolite and pendulum, in distant lands where one's work was the finest sport.

NILS AMBOLT.

LUND, July, 1938.

CONTENTS

CHAP.		Page
I.	Chinese Turkestan—the Land of Contrasts -	I
II.	Kuruk-tagh—the “Dry Hills” - - -	10
III.	A Standing Long-jump - - - -	16
IV.	Divine Service - - - -	22
V.	Diplomacy and Lop Nor - - - -	28
VI.	An Evening at Kara-koshun - - -	34
VII.	The Hurricane at Bejan-tura - - -	38
VIII.	A Severe Temptation - - - -	44
IX.	Spring Idyll. Back in Urumtsi - - -	49
X.	A Chinese Dinner - - - -	52
XI.	Bogdo Ula—the Hill of God - - -	58
XII.	Difficulties - - - -	65
XIII.	In the Field Again - - - -	69
XIV.	The Casket of the Dalai Lama - - -	73
XV.	The Burgomaster’s Visit - - - -	80
XVI.	Through the Desert to Khotan - - -	87
XVII.	Karanghu-tagh—the Dark Hills - - -	98
XVIII.	Khotan—the Town of Rugs - - - -	109
XIX.	To Yarkand and the Swedish Missionaries -	117
XX.	Vorotnikoff—Meteorologist and Psycholo- gist - - - -	121
XXI.	Over the Kara-koram Pass— <i>Via Dolorosa</i> -	127

CHAP.		Page
XXII.	The Advantages of Jiu-Jitsu - - -	131
XXIII.	Goal of our Ambitions - - -	138
XXIV.	A Change of Course—Difficult Days -	143
XXV.	Dalai-kurghan—Charchan - - -	151
XXVI.	Private Lessons in Chinese - - -	155
XXVII.	Revolution - - - - -	158
XXVIII.	Along the Southern Edge of Taklamakan	165
XXIX.	Your Excellency!! — A Tragically Short Chapter - - - - -	174
XXX.	Feminine Intuition and Turki Religion -	177
XXXI.	Homeward Bound - - - - -	181

LIST OF PLATES IN COLOUR

	Facing Page
Women's dress in Mongolia is noteworthy for its soft harmonious colouring. The heavy ornaments are of silver - - - - - <i>Frontispiece</i>	
Children at Shindi, the home of Abdu Rehim - -	24
Kirghiz in the hills south of Urumtsi - - -	48
The Mongol prince Sin Chin Gegin Khan - -	64
Looking from Kirghiz across Lake Tsai Woa Poo to the Mountain of Heaven, Thian Shan - - -	68
Mongolian lamas outside a temple yurt at Chogusän kurai - - - - -	72
The burgomaster of Ak-su and his two-wheeled mapa	84
The mother and daughter of Kerim achon, the Kirghiz hunter - - - - -	182

LIST OF PLATES IN BLACK-AND-WHITE

	Facing Page
The Taklamakan Desert - - - - -	XIV
Niaz Beg - - - - -	I
“The road followed a canal, edged with tall poplars”	4
Grey-bearded Junnos achon, carpenter and doctor -	5
Shah Chodja, a typical Taghlik - - - - -	8
Kasim plucks at his dotar - - - - -	8
“An unbroken chain of mountain tops covered with snow” - - - - -	9

	Facing Page
Norin examining coral at Arpishme-bulak - - -	12
Our Christmas camp at Mo-Chia-Hutuk - - -	12
On the way to Kurban-chik we crossed several frozen rivers - - - - -	13
Map - - - - -	14
Abdu Rehim and two of his kinsmen outside his home at Shindi - - - - -	22
Many of the hills in Kuruk-tagh are rich in gold - -	23
Governor-General Chin outside his yamen at Urumtsi -	30
Tomes in his working clothes - - - - -	31
The magnificent camp of the Grand Lama Sin Chin Gegin Khan - - - - -	38
We approach Bejan-tura - - - - -	39
Sky-blue iris - - - - -	50
The burgomaster Ma-hsien-kuan - - - - -	51
We were working in idyllic surroundings - - - -	60
Photograph of a Kirghiz yurt - - - - -	61
One of the Taoist monasteries of Bogdo - - - -	61
The camp on the southern shore of Lake Tsai-Woa-Poo	70
Through deep-cut valleys almost devoid of vegetation -	71
Chogusän kurai - - - - -	78
Töven Changset, one of the most powerful Mongol leaders, and two soldiers of his guard - - - -	79
The author with his "Thousand Eyes"—his theo- dolite - - - - -	86
Abdul achon, the white-bearded, much-travelled caravan bashi - - - - -	87
"Hedin's Pool" - - - - -	94
Vorotnikoff beside the meteorological station at Mazar- tagh - - - - -	95
A Langhru family - - - - -	100
The higher we climbed, the more difficult it became -	101
One man walks in front holding the halter, another walks behind and holds the animal's tail - - -	108
The interior of a courtyard in the "Town of Rugs" -	109
The main street of Khotan - - - - -	110
Chuda-berdi-bey, with his eldest son and daughter -	111

LIST OF PLATES

	xlii Facing Page
Badrudin Khan and his grand-children - - -	111
The serai, where Indian merchants bargained for the finest products of Khotan - - - - -	112
The spinning-wheels whir in Khotan - - -	113
The 83-year-old Karekin Moldovack, faithful guardian of a precious treasure - - - - -	114
Liou-Dao-Tai and his family - - - - -	115
Erik Norin at his plane-table - - - - -	115
"Via Dolorosa" - - - - -	130
The boundary mark between China and India in the Kara-koram Pass, 18,200 feet above sea-level - -	131
Among the Kirghiz at Keng-shewar—a yak with her calf - - - - -	131
A "white patch" on the map investigated by Erik Norin	134
A robber band? - - - - -	135
"The goal of our ambitions" - - - - -	142
"Quo Vadis?" - - - - -	143
Huang Ssueh with his box of indian ink - - -	158
Ma Fu Guan and his fifteen-year-old son - - -	159
A little girl follows in the furrow sowing the grains of wheat one by one - - - - -	172
Muhammet Emin Emir, pasha of Khotan - - -	173
"A military parade in honour of Your Excellency!" -	176
The Mongol Tomes in his Chinese ceremonial costume -	177



Women's dress in Mongolia is noteworthy for its soft harmonious colouring. The heavy ornaments are of silver.

KARAVAN

Travels in Eastern Turkestan

NILS AMBOLT

An intimate, modest, but splendidly interesting account of a young explorer's adventures in the heart of Central Asia. Dr. Nils Ambolt, one of the group of scientists who made up the "Travelling University" of Sven Hedin, describes those sides of his five years in Eastern Turkestan (1928-33) which will appeal particularly to the general reader. The picturesque, the strange and the terrible make a vivid background to Dr. Ambolt's journeys, but the exceptional charm of his pen is best revealed in his graphic descriptions of people—China-man, Mongol and Turki spring to life in these pages, and make a fascinating picture of a country where, in the words of the author, "colour exists to be used".

A WINTER WITH FINNISH LAPPS

BY

NORAH GOURLIE

The author's enthusiasm for travel in strange places is apparent on every page of this book. In a long winter journey she toured large areas in the north of Finland, between Russia on the east, the Arctic Sea on the north, and Sweden on the west. Travelling alone except for her Lapland guides, she made herself proficient in the difficult art of travel by reindeer sledge.

Fascinating pictures of arctic scenery, forests, mountains, frozen lakes and rivers, are combined with an intimate account of those most likeable people, the Lapps. Interesting chapters are devoted to the Finnish and Lapp culture, and to the history and origin of the Lapps, and the book is full of the author's sense of fun and adventure. It is admirably illustrated with the author's own photographs.

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