

ties. Now with these slab-records a more comprehensive picture can be obtained of the political, military, and other conditions in Hsi-yu.

Dr. Sven Hedin and Sir Aurel Stein also discovered at the old site of Lou-Lan slabs of similar kind but bearing the dates of *Hsian-hsi*⁴¹ *Tai-shih*,⁴² etc. which are and indicating that site of Lou-Lan is the city of *Hsi yu-Chang shih*⁴³ of the Wei and Chin dynasties.⁴⁴ Compared with my latest and their earliest dates theirs are late by some 272 years. Thus for the study of the northern part of Lob Nor in the early part of the Han dynasty my material is especially appropriate. Therefore I have done my best to transcribe and interpret them, which serve to fill up gaps that are left by the old chronicles.

The writings are in archaic forms known as *Tsao-Li*⁴⁵ and sometimes also in a loose style hard to decipher. I consulted many calligraphic experts concerning my interpretations, but many are still in doubt. By presenting to reader the original manuscripts in photographic reproduction, I mean to ask for their opinions, so that corrections can be made in a future edition.

A few remarks are necessary in regard to plates and text-figures. They are of three categories. The first kind are the maps which I compiled from works of modern cartographers and historical geographers to illustrate my interpretation of hydrographic changes as noted in Chapter I, Part I, on the drainage of Lob Nor, and the routes of east-west communication noted in Chapter III, which are subject to change as our knowledge of this region is more and more widened. Of the second category are the maps which were drawn by myself as route maps in my diaries and were directly drawn in the field during my travels. The maps published in this volume are only a very small percentage of what I had drawn. The panorama sketches were mostly made from photos taken by me in the field; the original photos were either badly exposed or not well developed and not suitable for direct reproduction. Of the third category are the figures in the plates or in the texts. There are 393 figures in the 36 plates, and 108 text-figures, of which 34 are coloured, and the rest, profiles and restorations.

The arrangement of figures according to kinds and types has been adopted to facilitate comparative morphological studies. In the description of localities in the chapters of Part II their horizon and state of preservation have been noted. It is hoped that with attached tables and the index for the plate figures, cross references can be easily established.

For more details, readers are kindly asked to read the original text. As this work was prepared during the war, life was precarious, and living insecure. But the dangers of those years only served to stimulate me to complete my present volume. It is indeed my good fortune that in spite of world shaking events, the book has at last appeared.

The six years that were consumed in writing up the manuscript and the long years that it has waited for publication have put me under obligation to many individuals and organizations, some of whom have been mentioned in this translation of my preface but many more are mentioned in the original text. Without their help and encouragement this monograph would not have been possible.

Peiping

September 18, 1948.

Huang Wen-pi

41. 咸熙 (魏元帝年號, 264—265 A. D.)

(魏晉時在西域所設之行政首領, 等於漢朝西域都護)

45. 草隸 (不規則隸書)

42. 泰始 (晉武帝年號, 265—270 A. D.)

43. 西域長史

44. 自魏咸熙元年至晉泰始末年 (264—270 A. D.)