

Date of
original
burials.

Whatever uncertainty, however, may attach to the date of individual burials, a definite *terminus a quo* is fixed for them all by the fact that the Lou-lan route was first opened for Chinese traffic during the last two decades of the second century B.C.¹² It is equally certain that the first century B.C., roughly conterminous with the latter half of the period of the Former Han dynasty, was the time when the Lou-lan route was most frequented by Chinese trade and military and general traffic westwards.¹³ We know that its importance was reduced when about A.D. 2 'the new route of the north' leading straight from the 'Gate' of Yü-mên to 'Posterior Chü-shih', i. e. the present territory of Guchen, north of Turfân, was opened.¹⁴ Nor can there be any doubt that the complete break-down of Chinese authority in the 'Western regions', and the prolonged troubles with the Hsiung-nu or Huns which followed the accession of the usurper Wang Mang in A.D. 9, must have very seriously interfered with relations between China and Lou-lan.¹⁵ When in A.D. 73 under the Later Han dynasty a fresh expansion of Chinese power into Central Asia took place and imperial control effectively asserted itself again in the 'Western countries' for about three-quarters of a century, it was by the route leading through the newly secured base of Hâmi that the advance took place. Ever since, this route, far less beset with natural difficulties though longer than the other, has remained the main line of communication between westernmost China and the Tārīm basin.¹⁶

Chrono-
logical
limits of
remains
at L.C.

But the documentary evidence recovered at the station L.A. and discussed in *Serindia* proves that, notwithstanding the much-reduced importance of its route, Lou-lan still retained a small Chinese garrison in the third century, and that traffic between it and Tun-huang, no doubt in much-diminished volume, was maintained down to the second quarter of the fourth century.¹⁷ Hence the only chronological limits that are certain for all the burial remains of L.C. are comparatively wide ones, extending roughly from the very end of the second century B.C. to the latter part of the third century A.D. In order to draw these limits somewhat closer we must look for archaeological evidence in the relics themselves. Fortunately such evidence is not confined solely to the few Chinese records on paper, of which the very material proves an origin later than A.D. 105, the well-established date of the invention of paper.¹⁸ We shall see that archaeological indications, in some cases pointing to earlier origin, are not altogether wanting either for those remains of ancient textile art which form the largest and in many respects also the most interesting portion of the antiquarian discovery made at the grave-pits. There appears accordingly to be the fullest reason why our analysis of the finds should be directed first to these.

MISCELLANEOUS OBJECTS FOUND BETWEEN SITES L.A. AND L.C.

L.A.-L.C. 01. Lump of lead. $\frac{15}{16}'' \times \frac{13}{16}'' \times \frac{5}{8}''$.

L.A.-L.C. 02. Flat bronze ring, split at one side. $\frac{3}{4}'' \times \frac{3}{8}'' \times \frac{1}{8}''$.

L.A.-L.C. 03. Flat bronze ring, similar to L.A.-L.C. 02, but smaller. $\frac{9}{16}'' \times \frac{3}{8}'' \times \frac{1}{8}''$.

L.A.-L.C. 04. Fr. of bronze disc, showing relief pattern; prob. not coin. $\frac{7}{8}'' \times \frac{3}{8}'' \times \frac{1}{24}''$.

L.A.-L.C. 05. Bronze disc, with hole in centre. Diam. $\frac{7}{16}''$, thickness c. $\frac{1}{64}''$.

L.A.-L.C. 06-7. Two stone blades, long, narrow; black and green stone, resp. Length $1\frac{1}{2}''$, gr. width $\frac{3}{8}''$.

L.A.-L.C. 08-9. Two frs. of bronze, thick, of lamellar structure; somewhat corroded. Gr. fr. (or) $1\frac{11}{16}'' \times \frac{15}{16}'' \times \frac{1}{32}''$ to $\frac{3}{16}''$.

¹² Cf. *Serindia*, i. pp. 336 sq.; ii. pp. 724 sq.

¹³ See *ibid.*, ii. pp. 730 sq.

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, ii. p. 705.

¹⁵ See *ibid.*, ii. p. 731.

¹⁶ See *ibid.*, ii. p. 732; below, Chap. xv. sec. iv.

¹⁷ See *ibid.*, i. p. 426; for dated documents from L.A., cf. also Conrady, *Funde Sven Hedins*, pp. 98, 102, 117, 126 sq., 137, 139.

¹⁸ Cf. Chavannes, *J. Asiat.*, 1905, jan.-fév., pp. 5 sq.; also *Serindia*, ii. pp. 650, 672.