

forgotten. Nobody seems to have settled in the central Lou-lan area since this time, which is highly important for the archaeologist as we thus get a reliable terminus ad quem. The aridity of the desert climate has, moreover, marvellously well preserved the remains of the forgotten Lou-lan, not only such easily perishable articles as textiles and wooden objects but also the dead in their coffins, and we are thus now able 1600 years after the fall of Lou-lan to behold the features of the people who lived there.

From a Chinese point of view Lou-lan is a remote border district and very provincial. In a wider context, however, Lou-lan has a significant chronological bearing. For this reason the present volume lays particular stress on Lou-lan.

### 3. *ANCIENT REMAINS ALONG "THE SMALL RIVER".*

#### A. INTRODUCTION.

In November 1933 Dr. SVEN HEDIN started from Kuei-hua-ch'eng, Sui-yüan, on a motor car expedition through the Gobi desert to Sinkiang. He travelled on behalf of the Central Government in Nanking, his task being to examine the possibilities for motor traffic along those ancient lonely desert trails that had hitherto been trodden by camel caravans. I had the extraordinarily good fortune to accompany the eminent explorer on this motor journey through the deserts and wastes of Central Asia as I had accompanied him in 1927—28 on camel-back.

His program also included a survey of the new course of the lower Tarim river in Eastern Turkistan and its terminal lake Lop-nor. This part of the expedition started in April 1934, from Könche or Yü-li-hsien, a small village about 45 km. SSE of Korla, whence Dr. HEDIN followed the river Könche-darya and its continuation Qum-darya, travelling in native canoes. In the course of his journey by water Dr. HEDIN met one of his former Turkish servants called ÖRDEK, then aged seventy-two, who had devotedly served him for several years around the turn of the century. In 1900, for instance, ÖRDEK had played some part in Dr. HEDIN's finding the Lou-lan ruins, a discovery which led to the archaeological surveys of the Lop desert. These ruins are still of outstanding importance as the principal archaeological site of the region.

ÖRDEK now told Dr. HEDIN how the Lou-lan discovery had inspired him to start a private tour of exploration, stimulated by the hope of finding fabulous treasures of gold and silver in the desert, a dream common to most natives living in Central Asian oases. Fifteen or twenty years ago (1914—19)<sup>1</sup> he had started eastwards

<sup>1</sup> Indications discovered recently make it highly probable that it was anterior to 1911.