

tern consists of different kinds of filled figures, nearly covering the whole surface, and recalling certain parts of the Noyan-ola embroideries, inter alia Trever Pl. 16 and 18:2.

STEIN also found two small silk bags in the mass-graves L. C.

There are also several ribbons, partly with knots, as for instance Pl. 21:6, and various silk pieces of uncertain use, Pl. 20:9.

Before leaving the silks we must turn our attention to a small strip of plain, undyed silk which would be of no special interest in this connection but for the ink inscriptions on it, Pl. 21:5. On one side there is a line of Kharoshthi characters which Prof. STEN KONOW, Oslo, has been kind enough to examine. He translates it as "The Sindhu teacher's roll, 40" for which I refer to Prof. KONOW's own paper that he has generously placed at my disposal and allowed me to print as an appendix at the end of this volume. His dating of the writing to the end of the second century A. D. is of special importance for the chronology of the whole grave.

On the other side of the same silk strip there are two Chinese characters, not very clear, which Prof. KARLGREN has kindly interpreted to me as *chin shih*, "fabric ten" either standing for 'Silk roll 10', 'Ten silk rolls' or 'Quality 10'.

These inscriptions in two languages, brief as they are, give us a hint of the general progress of the all important silk trade of this time. We know that the Chinese themselves did not take their silk as far as the Roman Orient, the Sogdians, Parthians etc. serving as intermediaries. These peoples were well aware of their favourable position in this respect, and anxiously guarded their trade monopoly, hardly letting any Chinese silk merchants pass through their own countries. That the Sogdians, on the other hand, had agents travelling far into the Chinese dominions is verified by such documents in Early Sogdian script as those found by STEIN in Lou-lan and as far to the east as the Tun-huang Limes near the ancient Yü-men-kuan. So far the Sogdians. They were perhaps never settled in any communities in the Tarim Basin. Indians, on the other hand, were so settled, and to such an extent that the Kharoshthi script was very widely spread there during the first two centuries of our era, this script being then superseded by the Brahmi.

It is not absolutely impossible that the roll of silk of which our inscribed piece formed an edge was handed over from a Chinese to an Indian just in Lou-lan. A Chinese, here or maybe further east in his home country, had marked it as his "Roll or Quality 10", the Indian then marking it with his own name, and the length of the roll. Probably this Indian sold it retail in Lou-lan, as a part of it came to rest in a Chinese tomb. Otherwise he may have forwarded the silk merchandise further westwards. It seems justified to conjecture that the unsettled conditions prevailing in China during the latest decades of the Han dynasty prevented the Chinese silk merchants from venturing upon too big enterprises, and that they did not proceed with their caravans beyond Lou-lan.