

tive graves as well as their incomplete skeletons. The sepulchral articles in each grave must consequently be of a somewhat varying age. We therefore cannot date these objects more precisely than within the earlier and middle part of the Lou-lan period, say 100 B. C.—300 A. D. Most of the datable objects in the mass-graves seem to point to the later Han dynasty. Our Mass-grave 1, for instance, cannot have been built earlier than the end of the second century A. D., probably later. This is attested by Prof. KONOW's dating of the Kharoshthi script on the silk strip No. 34:65.

I have to object to the method used by STEIN in dating one of the Chinese silks found at Lou-lan. He compares his L.C.x.04 with T.XXII.c.0010 a, the latter from a refuse-heap near one of the watch-towers on the Tun-huang Limes, where a wooden record dated 98 B. C. was also found. If these objects had been excavated from a single grave the date of the record would have been more valid for the silk. Now they originate from a refuse-heap which has been long "in use", and under such conditions we have to reckon with the whole period of occupation of the ruin to which the refuse-heap belongs, and we thus come well down into the second century A. D. Only if we count in this way are we on the safe side. The stylistic analogies are also far from convincing, as can be seen from the reproductions. This date has nevertheless been generally accepted and quoted in all cases where the chronology of the Lou-lan silks has been considered. I do not deny that both of the silks are among the oldest known from Central Asia. They may perfectly well be of the first or even the second century B. C., but such a statement must be based *only* on stylistic criteria.

When STEIN comes to this silk L.C.031b and compares it with the silk piece T.XV.a.002 from another Tun-huang tower with MSS. from B. C. 53 to A. D. 137, he applies these chronological limits to the Lou-lan silk. Here his method is unassailable, and the stylistic analogies are evident. These years do not, however, constitute *absolute* limits for the occurrence of these silks in Central Asia.

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The barrenness and desolation of the Lop desert is only intensified by the occurrence of so many grave-yards. The best preserved mummies give more an impression of human beings asleep than dead, and the few who have experienced the strange sensation of confronting them have stood in amazement at the marvel of Nature which has kept them so life-like for two milleniums. In the delta region the high mesa plateaus, which had the same appearance then as they have now, were chosen as grave-yards in order to secure the dead from moisture and animals. There the people of Lou-lan are resting in their last sleep, all faithfully joined in death. From their relatives they have got provisions and symbolic objects meant to enable them to carry on their accustomed life also beyond the grave. Uncounted storms have roared over their heads, stars have glistened over the tombs on quiet nights, and