

century did the Chinese begin to settle Charchan once more, as a penal station. Its growing importance as an agricultural settlement has been stated by STEIN, and on my visit in 1928 I found that the oasis had improved still further.

On his fourth expedition, 1883—85, PRJEVALSKY visited Charchan. As the information he obtained regarding the Kohna-shahr is very important and has been overlooked by STEIN I herewith render it in English from HEDIN's Swedish translation of PRJEVALSKY's narrative (pp. 396 f).

"At Charchan there are, in the middle of the desert and partly covered by mounds of loess and sand, traces of an old culture — ruins of towers, houses and old canals. According to local tradition two cities existed here at different epochs. Among the remains of these the natives now and again undertake diggings, especially after the storms when the sand is removed to a considerable depth. Here they find coins of copper and gold, silver bars, gold ornaments, jewellery, iron objects and copper vessels, and, oddly enough, sherds of glass — all in the older city. From the younger city they obtain burnt bricks. They also excavate tombs containing wooden coffins. In these the corpses are very well preserved, thanks to the extreme dryness of the ground and the air. The men are of very high stature and have long hair; the women have one or two queues. Once a tomb was discovered with twelve male corpses in a sitting position. Another time a young girl was discovered in her coffin. Her eyes were covered with leaves of gold, and her head was wound round with a gold ribbon from chin to crown. She had been dressed in a long garment, now totally decayed, but on the breast were some thin stars of gold; her feet were bare. The natives of Charchan told us that even the wooden coffins in some instances were so well preserved that the wood could be used for making various small articles. Together with human corpses one also found bones of horses and sheep in the tombs."

PRJEVALSKY apparently made no excavations or collections of antiquities, he only gathered information. In the statements of the natives the riches found in the tombs have probably been exaggerated — this is usually the case when ignorant people describe archaeological finds. Another typical detail is the mention of the very high stature of the corpses: the size of a corpse or skeleton is always magnified when described. Several points are very suggestive and ring true: the good preservation of the corpses, the occurrence of glass and so on. It is also interesting to note that the existing ruins have been extensively used by the natives as "brick mines".

GRENARD's description is also interesting and worth quoting (Grenard Vol. 3, p. 146). He visited Charchan 1893.

"A Tchertchen à l'ouest de l'oasis et légèrement au sud de la route de Kéria, des maisons en ruines sont ensevelies sous le sable; les toits ont disparu, mais les murs sont encore assez bien conservés. Ils sont faits de briques cuites, grosses et solides. Les anciens du village disent qu'on y a trouvé aux premiers temps de la colonisation du nouveau Tchertchen, c'est-à-dire début de ce siècle, des corps d'hommes vêtus de