

the locality and that of one of its convents called *Hu-kuo*, 'the country-protecting'. Curiously enough, several monks there seem to have combined business as money-lenders with their religious occupations. The names given in one of the documents of the superintending priests of this monastic establishment are Chinese; but that the population which supported it was not Chinese is plainly indicated by the transcribed names of the borrowers and sureties.

But the essential value of these documents lies in their chronological evidence. From their very character and the condition in which they were found, scattered amidst rubbish in ground-floor rooms used as quarters or kitchens, it is quite safe to conclude that they were penned during the closing years of the occupation of the site and left behind when it was finally abandoned. This inference is completely borne out by the Chinese copper coins found on the site which bear dates reaching down only to A.D. 760.

The time of abandonment thus established is in remarkable agreement with what the Chinese historical Annals tell us of Chinese control over the Tarim basin under the T'ang dynasty having finally come to its end about 791. The collapse of Chinese authority and the successful Tibetan invasion must have meant for Khotan a period of exceptional trouble. The effects of a great political upheaval in that part of the world are always felt most seriously in small outlying oases; for these are wholly dependent on a system of irrigation which only a firm and watchful administration can maintain. Considered in this light, the evidence furnished by the finds at Dandan-oilik may well help us in tracing the true relation between the abandonment of other ancient sites in this region and the cause or causes which,