

Kuruk-darya, the 'Dry River', which had once carried water to the Lou-lan site.

By following up this river branch we came upon a second and smaller fort, and to the north of it upon scattered remains of an extensive settlement. Its timber-and-wattle dwellings had suffered greatly through wind erosion. Yet where consolidated refuse-heaps had helped to protect the original floors we found ancient records on wood and paper in two early Indian scripts, Kharoshthi and Brahmi, as well as in Chinese and Early Sogdian. There were other interesting remains also, such as a fine lacquered casket, fragments of figured fabrics in silk and wool, of wooden agricultural implements, etc. This settlement, too, must have been abandoned like the Lou-lan site not later than the beginning of the fourth century A.D.

The exact antiquarian evidence here obtained had its special value in helping to date a variety of physical features observed in the immediate vicinity of the ruined settlement. These throw light on the hydrography and early occupation of this part of the Lop region during historical times and those immediately preceding them. To the latter period belonged the abundant finds of stone implements, such as neolithic arrowheads and jade celts, picked up on eroded ground near by.

On the two long marches which brought us to the Lou-lan site we passed once more a succession of old river-beds. All were lined by rows of fallen dead Toghrak (wild poplar) trees and clearly marked by their direction as belonging to the delta once formed by the Kuruk-darya, the 'Dry River'. Finds of Chinese Han coins and of small metal and pottery fragments mingled freely in places with relics of the Stone