

in the extent of the cultivated area. Hence there are no sites there which once abandoned to the desert like that beyond the Niya river, or those of Lou-lan, have remained uninhabitable and practically inaccessible ever since, to preserve for us undisturbed remains of everyday life datable within narrow chronological limits. These circumstances, coupled with the immunity from complete devastation and consequent abandonment which the important localities of the territory have enjoyed, explain why the plentiful ruins of the pre-Muhammadan period in the Turfan basin are practically all found within the area of actual cultivation or in the immediate vicinity of still occupied towns and villages.

Easily accessible and conspicuous as they are, the abundant ruins of Buddhist times had not failed to attract the attention of Russian travellers towards the close of the last century. Subsequently they became the scene of extensive archaeological operations by successive expeditions, Russian, German and Japanese. Among them those conducted by two very distinguished German scholars, Professors Grünwedel and Von LeCoq, between 1902 and 1907 had been exceptionally fruitful. Yet my own short visit of 1907 had shown me that those ruined sites of Turfan were not yet completely exhausted.

So I was glad to make Turfan the base and chief ground for our combined archaeological and geographical labours of the ensuing winter. R. B. Lal Singh, ever pining for fresh work, was sent off for surveys in the great and as yet partly still unexplored desert area of the Kuruk-tagh, while with the second surveyor the detailed survey of the Turfan basin was taken in hand. With my remaining two Indian assist-