

four sides by a passage after the fashion of the Dandan-oilik shrines. The rapid clearing effected by the small party brought with me, soon showed that the walls rose nowhere more than two feet above the original floor. Their timber framework had completely perished under the influence of damp from subsoil water, but had left distinct matrices. But even these modest remnants sufficed, by their fresco decoration in red and black outlines and the mode of construction, to furnish some clue to their date.

Like the Rawak Stupa, this structure manifestly belonged to the period from the fourth to the seventh century A.D. Chinese coins of the ancient uninscribed type picked up under my eyes on the neighbouring 'Tati' ground confirmed this conclusion. With it agreed, too, the considerable depth (from ten to twelve feet) to which wind erosion had lowered the adjoining ground unprotected by ruins. It thus became evident that this whole tract, within a few miles of the right bank of the Yurung-kash, must have been abandoned centuries before the sands were allowed to overrun the settlement of Dandan-oilik some sixty miles farther out in the desert north-eastward. Here we have another proof that the progress of general desiccation cannot by itself supply an adequate explanation of all such changes in the extent of cultivated areas.

I devoted the following morning, September 17th, to a careful survey of the dunes in relation to the ruined walls still exposed, and then once more said farewell to Rawak, earnestly hoping that the dunes will keep watch and ward over the sculptures on those sides of the great Stupa quadrangle which are still completely buried. I wondered whose task it might be years hence to spend here the months and—the money needed for a final exploration.

My next object was the ruined site of Kine-tokmak, from which Roze's men had brought to Khotan small pieces of stucco relievos once serving for wall decoration, of exceptional hardness and yet withered and cracked by long exposure to the summer heat and the fierce winds of the desert. The condition of the ruin, reached after a march of only three miles over gradually lessening dunes