

and some of the stucco pieces were blackened by smoke, a clear proof that the ruin had suffered from fire. Wooden tablets inscribed in Brahmi; boards used for holding Pothis, with remains of leaves still adhering; fragments of a text illuminated with miniatures, also emerged from this small shrine in gratifying variety.

But the discovery which pleased me most was a numismatic one. Deep down on the floor of the passage through which the entrance to the cella had led, there came to light first a scattered batch of Chinese copper coins of the T'ang period, and then, as if to satisfy my craving for exact chronological evidence, from a corner two completely preserved rolls of coins, counting some twenty and fifty pieces respectively, still held together by the original string which the last owner had passed through their square holes. Rapid examination showed that the rolls were made up, apart from some older uninscribed pieces, of T'ang coins only, the latest being issues of the Ta-li period (A.D. 780-783). As votive deposits of this sort must belong to the period immediately preceding the abandonment of the shrine, the date of this event in the case of the whole group of ruins could thus be definitely fixed at the close of the eighth century.

Of the excavations which followed, and which kept me incessantly at work until October 1st, I can only give the briefest account here. They laid bare a series of small dwellings close to the west and north of the large temple which had probably served as abodes of monks (Fig. 78). Here the walls, partly of sun-dried bricks and partly of timber and plaster, still stood over six feet high, the sand accumulated within having evidently been high enough from the first to hide and protect them. Once more I could sit down on a bench by an ancient fireplace and collect in numbers humble domestic implements, such as wooden locks and keys working with a curious arrangement of movable pins which has its exact parallel in a system of locking still traceable from Khotan to Egypt; brooms, bags with raw cotton wool, etc.

By running trial trenches through the surrounding sand I traced other small shrines and monastic quarters