

miles farther to come upon what at once suggested the appearance of a small Tati of the historical period.

For nearly half a mile the hard soil was strewn everywhere with pieces of slag and potsherds, red and black, showing relatively finer grain and distinctly recalling the pottery débris met with about the Niya and other early sites. There were pieces among them, such as part of the neck of a large vase, which bore evidence of having been made with a wheel. My impression was soon confirmed when Tokhta Akhun, who with a few men then kept by me, picked up a large and well-preserved bronze signet ring, which in shape and design unmistakably tallied with similar finds of the first centuries A.D. obtained from those early sites of the Khotan region. A fragmentary square-holed Chinese coin, uninscribed, but of a type associated with the Han dynasty, furnished definite proof of the débris marking the site of some settlement of the historical period. High sand-cones held together by dead tamarisk growth gave a familiar look to the little Tati, and had restricted the carving out of Yardangs. Mullah's sharp eyes discovered that on the top of three cones the tamarisk was still living, and on approaching we found near them droppings of wild camels which at times must come to feed upon it.

By that time we all felt half-frozen by the cutting wind under a grey, sunless sky. When the wind dropped slightly about 2 P.M. light snow fell for half an hour, and almost gave comfort by limiting the dreary outlook. It lay only to the depth of half an inch or so, and, after the next morning's sunshine, disappeared altogether except on Yardang slopes where protected by corniced clay edges. Even thus it helped us to economize ice for a couple of days, and afforded a chance for the camels to moisten their tongues. To let them have a good drink off this snow was impossible; for it was dark before they could be unloaded, and it would have been unsafe to let them stray about on ground to which their legs were so ill-adapted. A mile or so before dusk obliged us to halt, we had crossed a long row of big dead poplars still rising to ten feet or more and clearly marking an ancient water channel.