

fourth subsequently unearthed, showed the same neat and clerical handwriting which is found on the leather documents excavated by me at the Niya site; and as these belong to the latter half of the third century A.D., the conclusion seems justified that the deposition of these votive offerings must have taken place here about the same period. The writing on the silk had remained remarkably fresh and black even without a protecting cover, such as folding provided, in the case of the leather documents or wooden envelopes in that of the Kharoshthi tablets. Hence it appeared very unlikely that the gift of the inscribed streamer could have preceded the abandonment of the shrine by any great length of time. And from this, again, the assumption would follow with good reason that Miran, like the sites of Niya, Endere, and north of Lop-nor, must have been deserted about or soon after the close of the third century A.D. For its subsequent re-occupation during Tibetan predominance the case of the Endere ruins furnishes an exact parallel.

[I may add here that since this chapter was written, the Abbé Boyer, my learned collaborator in Paris, has communicated to me the result of his decipherment of these Kharoshthi inscriptions. They contain prayers for the health of a number of persons and their relatives, all the names given being, significantly enough, of either Indian or Iranian origin.]

Twilight was setting in soon after the first of those delightful angel-busts on the north passage wall had emerged from their long interment. It was hard to have to stop work here for the day; but when, digging a little farther on the north-east side, we came upon frescoed plaster surfaces, which had evidently peeled off from higher wall portions of the little rotunda, and now lay closely packed against the painted dado, I realized the need of most careful procedure, and had to refrain from uncovering them. On the west and south-west, where treasure-seekers of old had breached the wall and nothing of the fresco decoration survived, the clearing of the débris was continued until nightfall.

Here, besides numerous pieces of silk in fine carmine,