

course of the next two days brought to light only scanty fragments of a Buddhist image in stucco and badly perished wood-carving. Destruction by fire, digging for timber, and the effects of moisture, which had evidently been more abundant until a period not very distant, had worked sad havoc all around. Apart from remains of fresco decoration showing diapers of small Buddha figures, on the topmost wall portion, nothing survived in the five cellas which had been cut into the lower conglomerate ridge, and which now lay fully exposed owing to the collapse of the front walls. But the close agreement in drawing and colouring with the mural decoration of the 'Thousand Buddhas' caves was striking. The same observation applied to the architectural arrangements both here and in some smaller much-ruined shrines still traceable on the north side of the same ridge.

That we found not a scrap of writing was scarcely a surprise. Evidence of occasional rain was to be seen on all sides, and local information asserted that it was still plentiful in the valleys north, and had in 'old times' been so too at the foot of these mountains. On the other side of the range, in the Bar-kul district, cultivation was said to be possible in many places without irrigation, and grazing even in the plains abundant. All this agreed with what I knew of the totally different climatic conditions prevailing north of the T'ien-shan. Those were the regions which had served for the migration westwards of one nomad race after the other. But interesting as they are for the student of Central-Asian history, there was little to tempt the archaeologist as long as there were sites to explore within and around the parched-up Tarim Basin.

My eagerness was great to reach the latter in time for a fresh winter campaign in the desert. So when the digging at Ara-tam and my anthropometrical work among the people of the neighbouring village were completed, I left 'my' delightful country seat and returned to Hami. There the great loads of manuscripts brought away from the Tao-shih's cave just before my start from An-hsi could at last be safely packed in twelve solid wooden cases. This task was scarcely completed when Rai Lal Singh