

secured overnight from the small oasis. Among scattered groups of large tamarisk-cones there extended for about one mile both north and south of the route, and with a total width of about half a mile, open patches of eroded ground exhibiting all the features of a typical 'Tati'. Wherever it was clear of drift-sand, the loess soil was profusely covered with fragments of pottery. Among these I was struck at once by the relative frequency of broken pieces of finely-glazed ware in a variety of rich colours, from chocolate brown to bluish green of celadon. The examination which Mr. R. L. Hobson was kind enough to make at the British Museum of the specimens brought away (V. S. 0011-23) has proved the presence among them of grey porcellaneous stoneware unmistakably of Chinese origin, and exhibiting characteristics which permit their safe attribution to the period of the Sung dynasty. In the case of some pieces (V. S. 0012, 0013, 0015), the finely crackled appearance of the thick glaze, as known from the Chün-chou ware of the Sung dynasty, is particularly noteworthy.⁷ In others (V. S. 0016, 0019) the mottled glaze of deep olive brown is of interest.

Fragments of small objects in bronze, such as buckles, arrow-heads, and hair-pins, bits of coarse opaque glass, and beads of all sorts in stone, glass, and paste, were also numerous among the small finds brought to me. But they cannot afford such clear chronological indications as the stoneware. For the evidence of the latter full confirmation was furnished by the coins which were either picked up during our visit or else brought to me by Vāsh-shahri villagers accustomed to search these small 'Tatis'. Among the eight copper pieces thus obtained, and shown in Appendix B, three belong to *K'ai-yüan* issues starting from A. D. 618-627, and continued during the first century of T'ang rule; another probably dates also from that dynasty, while the remaining four show *nien-haos* of the Sung dynasty extending from A. D. 1023 to 1101. Thus the occupation of the site, probably from T'ang times, down to the twelfth century is conclusively proved.

Chrono-
logical
evidence
of coins.

Any structural remains that had survived at this site were invariably found by the side of tamarisk-cones which had helped to protect them. These ruins, about half a dozen in number, were those of quite small dwellings containing only one or two rooms. With a single exception, they showed walls built of sun-dried bricks having an average size of fifteen to sixteen inches by eight to nine inches, with a thickness of four inches. These were placed in single courses, separated by layers of clay, three to four inches thick. In the ruins north of the route the walls were found destroyed to within a few feet of the ground or else almost completely eroded. But at two points of the southern part of the area wall portions protected by sand-cones still rose to a height of about seven feet above the ground.

Structural
remains
of site.

In the northern part of the area the ruined structure of which the plan is shown in Pl. 21 was of special interest. It consisted of two small rooms built of hard burnt bricks, with a third of the usual sun-dried brickwork adjoining. The masonry of the former, preserved to a height of about four and a half feet, was remarkably careful and regular. It showed a thickness of twenty-two inches, and consisted of bricks measuring thirteen by eight inches and two inches thick. They were laid with the long and short sides facing in alternate courses, a practice that I had not previously observed in the ruins surveyed south of the Taklamakān, but subsequently rendered familiar by the masonry of many buildings, old and new, I had occasion to examine in Kan-su. About six inches from the floor a kind of plinth was formed by a course of bricks projecting two inches. Here, as in the other small ruins, excavation failed to yield any finds whatever, a result probably of the repeated searches to which these remains must have been subjected by Vāsh-shahri villagers and others. I have not noticed the use of burnt bricks in any other ancient structure in the southern part of the Tārīm Basin, and it is certainly a peculiar feature. It may have been resorted to in order to give greater security to whatever was kept in these small rooms; but it

Ruin built of
hard bricks.

⁷ Cf. Bushell, *Chinese Art*, ii. pp. 22, 25 sq.