

Museum.¹¹ They proved to contain a considerable portion of the Central-Asian version of the *Saddharmapundarikā*, and have since been published by Professor de la Vallée Poussin.¹² He recognizes a close resemblance in palaeographic features between this manuscript and the leaves of the *Vajracchedikā* text which was recovered from a monastic dwelling of Dandān-oilik and which Dr. Hoernle considers as of the seventh or eighth century.¹³

Date and
position
of shrine
F. XII.

This dating, conjectural as it must be in view of the many uncertainties still besetting the history of Brāhmī writing in Central Asia, would have an important bearing on the chronology of the site—if we were justified in *a priori* assuming that the shrine F. XII dated from the same period as the other remains of Farhād-Bēg-yailaki. But grave doubts against this assumption are raised by the position of the shrine, which, in spite of its close vicinity, essentially differs from that of the other ruins. While these are found invariably on wind-eroded terraces or else on flat ground which has the same level as such terraces situated close by, the shrine F. XII is built on a tamarisk-cone the top of which at the time of construction must have risen at least 20 feet, if not more, above the general ground-level of the site. About the peculiar nature of the position thus chosen there can be no possible doubt,¹⁴ and it alone suffices to set this ruin F. XII quite apart from the rest. I know no parallel for it except that of modern Mazārs with adjoining Muhammadan burial-places in the Khotan region, which are frequently found placed on high tamarisk-cones or other conspicuous eminences on the edge of the desert.

Analogy of
position in
Mazārs.

It cannot be mere chance that quite a number of these places of modern local worship, often marked only by a collection of high poles bedecked with votive rags, Yak tails, etc., are to be found close to old sites. Thus, in the very vicinity of the site with which we are concerned here, we have the Ulūgh-mazār and the Mazār of Lachin-atā connected with the remains of ancient P'i-mo.¹⁵ In the midst of the 'Tatis' of Farhād-Bēg-yailaki itself there rises such a modest Mazār (see Plate 56 between IV and V) said to have been visited from 'Old Domoko', while further away it will suffice to mention the much-frequented Mazārs of Imām Ja'far Sādiq and Imām 'Āsim in positions exactly corresponding with reference to the Niya Site and the Ak-sipil remains respectively.¹⁶ The analogy thus presented and what we know in the Khotan region about all the essential features of local worship reaching back far into Buddhist times are bound to raise the surmise that we may have in F. XII, not a ruin contemporary with the other remains of Farhād-Bēg-yailaki, but a shrine raised in this 'Mazār' fashion near the old site after it had been abandoned to the desert, and thus, perhaps, centuries later.

Chrono-
logical
evidence of
coin finds.

In view of this possibility it will be safest, when examining the question as to the approximate date of the site, to begin by considering only those chronological indications which the finds made at the site in general and apart from F. XII furnish. A brief review will show, I believe, that these indications are in close accord among themselves, and that they all point to a date of abandonment distinctly earlier than the period of T'ang dominion in the Tārīm Basin. In the first place importance may be claimed for the evidence of the coins. Apart from the *Wu-chu* coin unearthed on the floor of the temple cella F. III, eight other Chinese coins were found at the site, all on the surface of wind-eroded ground, four of them near the ruined house I, three near the monastic dwelling II, and

¹¹ For specimens, see Pl. CXLIV, F. XII. 7.

¹² Cf. L. de la Vallée Poussin, *J.R.A.S.*, 1911, pp. 1067 sqq.; see also Hoernle, Appendix F.

¹³ Cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i, p. 295, Dr. Hoernle's note vi, on Nos. 14, 15, 17, 18. Prof. de la Vallée Poussin, *J.R.A.S.*, 1911, pp. 1068, nevertheless calls attention to certain characters which seem more archaic.

¹⁴ The unusual thickness of the walls in F. XII, wholly out

of proportion to the size of the structure, is directly due to this position, the loose sand (*recte* loess dust) accumulated round the tamarisk growth in such cones affording no secure foundation.

¹⁵ Cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i, pp. 461 sqq.; Maps Nos. 27. D. 4; 31. A. 4.

¹⁶ For Imām 'Āsim Mazār, see Map No. 27. A. 4; for Imām Ja'far Sādiq, cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i, p. 313.