

A curious discovery in i was that of a large store-pit, sunk into the ground to a depth of over $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet and about 6 feet square. It was carefully revetted with timber, and like the large planks which had formed its covering, together with a small trap-door, had escaped the final conflagration. The pit was found completely empty, to the great disappointment of the men, who confidently looked out here for 'treasure'. That it had served for the keeping of stores is certain.

The finds made in the narrow room ii included, besides half a dozen Tibetan records, a triangular mould in hard stucco, M. Tagh. ii. 0010, for casting seated Buddha relievos. It scarcely needed this discovery to assure me that the 'Hill of the sacred shrine' must have already possessed its sanctuary in Buddhist times. But it was not until my renewed visit in November, 1913, that I actually traced its remains—under the very enclosure of one of the previously mentioned stacks of ex-voto decked staffs which are now worshipped by wayfarers as the resting-places of anonymous Muhammadan saints. The dozen or so of very flat and roughly made pottery bowls about 5 inches in diameter which were unearthed in a corner of room ii might possibly have served for sacrificial purposes.

The clearing of the large area iv within the main fort walls yielded but scanty finds. The ground proved to be covered with burned brick fragments and charred timber to a height of 3 to 5 feet. All relics of perishable material must have been destroyed here by a great conflagration. Two large pottery jars were found embedded in the floor. One measured 2 feet 6 inches in height, with a greatest width of 2 ft. 4 inches and a mouth 10 inches across. The other was but slightly smaller. The low neck, only about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches high, suggested that these jars may have been used for storing water. Within the larger one there turned up two copper coins bearing the *nien-hao* Ch'ien-yüan (A. D. 758–60), and a third coin of the same date was found near the other jar. And here I may conveniently mention that of the remaining six coins actually found by us on the ground in the immediate vicinity of the ruins, or embedded in the refuse-layers below the fort, not less than four were Ch'ien-yüan pieces, while one bore the *nien-hao* Ta-li (A. D. 766–80) and another the legend *K'ai-yüan* in use throughout the T'ang period.⁴ The valuable chronological evidence thus supplied will be considered further on.

Far richer in relics of all kinds than the ruined fort itself proved the big layers of ancient refuse which were discovered in the course of the first day's work on the steep rock slope below it to the east and north-east. They extended from near the gate of the outer court v to beyond the north corner of the latter for a distance of about 190 feet. Their greatest width over the slope was about 70 feet, and their depth, as seen in the photograph (Fig. 334), up to 4–5 feet in places. These masses of refuse, made up mainly of straw, dung, animal bones, and the like, from the first vividly recalled by their look and still pungent odours the huge rubbish deposits with all their unspeakable dirt which those old Tibetans had left behind in the ruined fort of Mīrān. Here, too, there could be no doubt that the refuse accumulations owed their origin mainly to the presence of a Tibetan garrison; for Tibetan records on wood and paper emerged in plenty as soon as the systematic clearing was begun, and continued to preponderate throughout among the written remains of the thick consolidated layers. The conditions had been exceptionally favourable for the preservation of all their

⁴ See Appendix B. The *Ta-li* piece, together with a *Ch'ien-yüan* coin, was found stuck on a small stick, M. Tagh. c. 005 (Pl. LI).

In view of the very definite chronological evidence furnished by the coins actually found at the ruins, it is curious to note that of the twelve coins brought to me at Islāmābād and said to have been obtained from Mazār-tāgh eleven are much-worn *Wu-chu* or 'goose-eye' pieces, while the twelfth,

with an inscription not otherwise known to me (Pl. CXL, No. 35), is described by Mr. J. Allan as a *Wu-chu* coin of A. D. 581–604; see Appendix B. Is it possible that these pieces come from some 'Tati' above or near Mazār-tāgh the existence of which I heard mentioned in vague talk and also by my old guide Turdi, but which I could not verify? See also *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 579.