

Tao-t'ai at Ak-su, he never failed to use the influence of his high office for smoothing my paths, however far away the explorations of this second journey might take me.

From Kāshgar I made my way past Yārkaṅd and the foot of the westernmost K'un-lun to Khotan (Chap. III, sec. iv, v). After having carried out from there surveys of unexplored parts of the high glacier-crowned range in the south towards the close of the summer, and having gathered a rich harvest of small antiques from the old capital of the oasis, I was able to search with profit a series of wind-eroded sites previously unvisited to the north-east (Chapter IV). Next, excavations made at sand-buried sites near Domokō to the east yielded a rich harvest of antiques and manuscript remains in Sanskrit, Khotanese, and Chinese dating from the close of the T'ang period (Chapter V). Close study of the physical conditions on this ground and of the successive shifts in the cultivated area it has witnessed proved of considerable geographical interest with regard to questions of 'desiccation'. The excavations I resumed during the second half of October at the Niya Site, abandoned to the desert sands since the third century A. D., were rewarded by unexpectedly rich finds of wooden documents in Kharoṣṭhī script and Prākṛit language, besides other ancient records in Chinese and a mass of miscellaneous antiques helping further to illustrate the life and civilization prevailing in the oases of the Tārīm Basin at that early period (Chapter VI).

Explorations about Khotan, 1906.

Excavations at Niya Site.

Continuing my journey to the east I reached, near the terminal bed of the Endere River, the easternmost limit of the area visited in 1900-1. Fresh excavations around the T'ang fort revealed remains of a far earlier settlement, throwing interesting light on the history of this desert site (Chapter VII). The long desert journey which thence brought us via Charchan and Vāsh-shahri to Charkhlik (Chapter VIII) helped to clear up the historical topography of an important ancient route, directly connecting Khotan with China, and showed its conditions practically unchanged from those in which Hsüan-tsang and Marco Polo saw it.

From Endere R. to Charkhlik.

At Charkhlik we had reached the only inhabited place now of any importance in the desolate region of drift-sand, wind-eroded or salt-encrusted clay, and bare gravel which surrounds the Lop-nōr, or the terminal marshes of the Tārīm, and the vastly greater dried-up ancient sea-bed beyond them. This region of Lop, the ancient *Lou-lan* or *Shan-shan* of the Chinese, had by its position on the earliest routes of Chinese expansion into Central Asia played an important historical part from the time of the Former Han dynasty. The exploration of its ancient remains formed the chief object of my first winter's work, and it has appeared appropriate to preface its record by a critical analysis of the numerous early notices concerning Lop, Shan-shan, and Lou-lan (Chapter IX).

History of Lop region.

My immediate goal was the ancient settlement in the waterless desert north of Lop-nōr first discovered by Dr. Hedin. The trying marches there across wind-eroded wastes proved of distinct geographical and antiquarian interest by revealing plentiful relics of the Stone Age and unmistakable traces of an ancient delta (Chapter X). The systematic excavations carried out at the ruins of what can now be definitely identified as the walled Chinese station of Lou-lan and of an outlying smaller settlement yielded an abundance of written records in Chinese and Kharoṣṭhī, dating mainly from the third century A. D., and many interesting remains of the architectural and industrial art of that period (Chap. XI, sec. i-ix). Supplementary explorations carried out on my third journey have enabled me to elucidate the position occupied by the 'Lou-lan Site' with regard to the earliest Chinese route into the Tārīm Basin (Chap. XI, sec. x, xi).

Exploration of Lou-lan Site.

After crossing the unexplored desert belt of high dunes to the Tārīm and examining small sites near its terminal course, I excavated the ruins of Mīrān, marking the site of an early settlement of Shan-shan due south of Lop-nōr. Hundreds of Tibetan records on wood and paper were recovered, together with fragments of Turkish 'Runic' documents and plentiful other relics, from the refuse-heaps of a ruined fort (Chapter XII). They proved that this portion of the site was occupied during

Excavations at Mīrān ruins.