

complete certainty the easternmost limits of the area once irrigated. But if I had to forgo these inquiries which might have cost precious days without perhaps yielding an adequate return in results, there was ample compensation in the thought that my observations and finds had confirmed in all essentials the conclusions to which my previous explorations had led me.

Historical
conclusions
regarding
site.

These conclusions have been set forth so fully in Chapter XI of *Ancient Khotan*, which deals with the Niya Site,³ that the briefest mention will suffice here of the main points which have received additional support by the results of my fresh explorations. In the light of these it can still be asserted with confidence that the ruins belong to a widely scattered and mainly agricultural settlement which flourished in the third century A.D. and was abandoned about the time when Chinese supremacy in the Tārīm Basin came to an end towards the close of that century. The discovery in the refuse heap of N. XIV of the interesting wooden labels with dedicatory Chinese inscriptions to members of a local royal family, proves on the one hand the correctness of the Chinese records which mention the separate existence of the small kingdom of Ching-chüeh down to the middle of the third century A.D. in a position clearly corresponding to the tract watered by the Niya River.⁴ On the other hand, the same find illustrates again the important influence which Chinese administration and culture exercised here at that period.⁵

Chronology
of site.

It is true that the fresh excavations did not yield another dated document like the Chinese wooden record, N. xv. 326, which had definitely settled the main question as to the chronology of the ruins.⁶ But apart from the collateral evidence supplied by the fact that the same royal names which were found on Kharoṣṭhī documents from N. xv appear again and again on the tablets brought to light in the newly discovered ruins, there are two negative proofs which support the approximate date previously assumed for the abandonment of the site. In view of the extent of the fresh excavations these may claim additional weight.

Total ab-
sence of
paper.

In the first place it is noteworthy that none of the ruins opened, far more numerous though they are than those of 1901, has yielded the smallest scrap of paper. The chronological significance of this fact is much increased by the observation that at the site of 'Lou-lan', north of Lop-nōr, which, as my subsequent explorations showed, must have been occupied down to about the middle of the fourth century A.D., documents on paper, both Chinese and Kharoṣṭhī, were relatively abundant by the side of others written on the older material, wood. Considering that the Niya Site lay close to, if not actually on, the ancient trade route leading from Kan-su to Khotan and westwards, the only probable explanation for this striking absence of paper must be sought in the fact that the Niya Site was abandoned somewhat earlier than that of Lop-nōr and before the use or manufacture of paper had spread from China sufficiently far to the west. Equally telling is the numismatic evidence. The ten Chinese copper coins found near the excavated ruins, or picked up from eroded ground elsewhere at the site, comprise only pieces which were current under the Later Han dynasty (A.D. 25-220) or immediately after its close.⁷ The analysis of the coin finds made on my former visit had yielded exactly the same result.⁸

Numismatic
evidence.

The essential observation still holds good, that the local administration of the tract was carried on

³ Cf. in particular *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 368 sqq., for conclusions concerning historical matters, and i. pp. 382 sqq. for those bearing on questions raised by the physical conditions of the site.

⁴ See above, p. 219 and below.

⁵ Cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 372 sq.

⁶ See *ibid.*, i. p. 370.

⁷ As the list in Appendix B shows, the series is made up of two coins showing the legend *Ho chuan* as issued by

Wang Mang (A. D. 9-22; for specimen see Pl. CXL); two *Wu-shu* pieces of the type ascribed to Kuang Wu ti (A. D. 25-57); and three small coins without legends belonging to clipped *Wu-shu* issues associated with the reign of Hsien ti (A. D. 189-220).

⁸ Cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 369, note 29; also p. 577. The proportion between the various types represented was approximately the same as indicated in the preceding note; but no *Ho chuan* were previously found.