

necessarily reduced the chances of finding relics even of nomadic existence or passing traffic. Yet that this riverine area was visited during the historical period of Lou-lan occupation, probably as jungle grazing, was proved by some of the finds made there. Thus, close to our Camp 126 a well-preserved *Wu-chu* coin was picked up, and some nine miles beyond it the fragment of a Chinese bronze mirror, decorated in relievo, C. 126. 002. This was the last object in metal found, excepting the fragment of a bronze spear-point, C. 128. 001, which turned up unexpectedly some eight miles beyond Camp 128, long after the last remains of ancient tree-growth had been left behind, about four miles from Camp 127. It may have been brought there by some hunter who had strayed into the desert after game; for that ground must have been wholly devoid of vegetation even in the earliest historical period which at present is accessible to us.

In prehistoric times, however, human occupation had evidently extended beyond the limits of the area containing the dried-up river-beds which were still traceable; for stone implements of the same primitive type as those found on our march to the Lou-lan Site, and fragments of coarse pottery, probably neolithic, cropped up at rare intervals, not merely in the deltaic area but also on the desolate ground passed between Camps 127 and 130. Yet, judging from the exceeding scantiness and complete decay of such wood débris as we could find there, this ground must already have been an absolute waste in the early historical period. Specimens of these Stone Age remains found between Camps 125 and 129 have been described in the list above.<sup>1a</sup> A well-preserved celt, C. 126. 001, and the 'blades' in chalcedony and jasper, C. 127-128. 002, 003, are reproduced in Plate XXX.

As soon as the last riverine belt of dead Toghrahs was passed, about four miles from Camp 127, big ridges of piled-up dunes, or *Dawāns*, were encountered in more and more frequent succession, and bare patches of eroded ground grew rare, even in the broad sandy valleys between them. But if these huge accumulations of drift-sand left little chance of discovering relics of prehistoric occupation, yet they, too, had their quasi-antiquarian interest. They stretched invariably from north to south, and previous experience, gained from the rivers which lose themselves in the Taklamakān, had taught me to recognize the significance of this regular bearing. Such 'Dawāns' are always found running parallel to river-courses where these penetrate into areas of drift-sand. Under the action of physical causes, which need not be set forth in detail here, these sand ridges conform in their bearing to the direction of the barrier which the river presents to the movement of dunes, and to which they indirectly owe their origin.<sup>2</sup> It was easy to see that, far away as we still were from the Tārīm, it was its course, running roughly from north to south in this section between Tikkenlik and the Charchan River junction, which determined the bearing of the Dawāns we encountered in steadily growing heights.

The observation is worthy of record here because it is relevant to the question which certain views set forth by Dr. Hedin have raised, whether the present course of the Tārīm south of Tikkenlik is an old one or dates only from the time when the Kuruk-daryā ceased to carry water. This is not the place to discuss the question at length. But I may point out that the north-south bearing of the Dawāns, which remained constant over the forty-six miles, in a straight line, of our

Prehistoric remains.

North-south direction of *Dawāns*.

*Dawāns* parallel to Tārīm River.

<sup>1a</sup> Cf. above, pp. 367 sq.

<sup>2</sup> For such riverine 'Dawāns', always crossed at right angles where my route led from one river-course towards another in the Taklamakān, cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 309, 418 sqq., 444, 453, 483; also above, p. 241, and below, p. 455. My map of the Khotan region accompanying *Ancient Khotan* graphically illustrates these observations.

Though the force which has built up these 'Dawāns' of

sand is the wind, their line is not determined by the direction of the prevailing wind. This is clearly seen in the high sand ridges fringing the lower Charchan River course, where it runs right against the predominant north-east wind blowing from the Lop desert. It is only in the formation of the individual dunes that the direction of the wind invariably asserts itself.