

India Office, had, in 1910, been kind enough to place at my disposal concerning a few of such documents, and which I was very glad to be allowed to utilize for some comments on the Mīrān records in my personal narrative.<sup>2</sup> It is impossible at present to ascertain to what extent the contents of these, avowedly provisional, notes have been confirmed by Dr. Francke's subsequent closer examination of the materials. It appears, therefore, to me a critically safer course to reproduce, for convenient reference, only Dr. Francke's above-quoted later notes.<sup>2a</sup> In them no distinction is made between data from the Mīrān documents and from those found at Mazār-tāgh.<sup>2b</sup> But this circumstance is of less consequence than might appear at first sight; for in both cases the ruined forts which have furnished the written remains can, by independent archaeological evidence, be proved to belong to the same period and to have served a similar purpose as Tibetan frontier posts. The system of common treatment which Dr. Francke has adopted is the best proof that neither in language nor in contents do the records obtained from the two sites show any appreciable difference of type.

Name *Nob*  
for Lop  
territory.

Dr. Francke's notes show the wide range of the philological and antiquarian interest attaching to the documents recovered from the Mīrān fort, and also the great number of the questions needing thorough investigation by scholars to whom these records are accessible in their Tibetan original. Want of this qualification precludes me from making any general attempt to elucidate here even such points as have an immediate bearing on the antiquities and historical geography of the region which formed the scene of my explorations. But an exception must be made in the case of the Tibetan designations which these documents have revealed for the site of Mīrān itself and the territory comprising it. In a preceding chapter, I have already given the reasons which have led me to recognize in the local name *Nob*, so often occurring in these documents, an earlier form of our familiar *Lop* and a phonetic link between it and Hsüan-tsang's *Na-fu-po*.<sup>3</sup> It remains, however, to furnish documentary evidence, with the help of Dr. Francke's inventory, as to the use of the term and the particular application of the forms 'Little Nob' and 'Great Nob' in which it is most frequently found.

*Little Nob*  
mentioned  
in records.

It is a significant fact that whereas the simple *Nob* is found only in three wooden slips, all fragmentary (M. I. ii. 28; xiv. 0043; xxi. 10), 'Little Nob' (*Nob-chung*) is mentioned in no less than thirty documents, and 'Great Nob' (*Nob-chen*) in fourteen.<sup>4</sup> In addition, both Great and Little Nob combined are referred to in five records (M. I. vii. 27; xix. 002; xxviii. 002; xlv. 2, 0013). Among the documents mentioning Little Nob, a fair number seem to justify the conclusion that the locality meant is identical with the one where the documents were actually found, i. e. the Mīrān Site. Thus M. I. vii. 76, 99 are wooden slips briefly referring to a communication which is to be delivered, probably orally through the bearer, to the *rTse-rje* (an official) of Little Nob,<sup>5</sup> and of similar purport is the address on the slip M. I. xxvi. 13. Particularly convincing seems the evidence furnished by the letter on paper M. I. xxvii. 18 (Plate CLXX), which is also addressed to the 'rTse-rje of Little Nob' and conveys the requests of a man dangerously sick concerning himself and the disposal of his property. Importance may be attached also to M. I. xxxii. 13, in which two high officers communicate news of a conquest to the 'rTse-rje and the others at Little Nob'. M. I. iv. 138,

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Desert Cathay*, i. pp. 447 sq.

<sup>2a</sup> See below, Appendix G. In this all passages dealing with points of purely philological interest have been omitted.

<sup>2b</sup> For the Mazār-tāgh site, cf. below, chap. xxxii. sec. i.

<sup>3</sup> See above, pp. 321 sq.

<sup>4</sup> We read of 'Little Nob' in M. I. i. 13, 14, 27; ii. 005; iii. 7; iv. 3, 93. b, 132, 138; vii. 76, 99; viii. 49, 63. b;

x. 7; xiv. 77, 108. d, 0027; xix. 9, 001; xxi. 9; xxvi. 13; xxvii. 18; xxviii. 0036; xxxii. 13; xl. 001; xlii. 1; xlv. 6, 7, 109, 005. 'Great Nob' is mentioned in i. 0028; iv. 101, 106; vii. 30, 32; viii. 18; ix. 10; x. 2, 3, 6; xiii. 12; xiv. 62. b; xvi. 22; xlv. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Cf., regarding this official designation, Dr. Francke's remark in Appendix G.