

in complete accord with the chronological indications derived from the style and details of the fragmentary painting as above analysed.

Records of  
A. D. 705  
concerning  
postal  
horses.

[The annotated translations since received from M. Maspero of the five documents above mentioned have not only confirmed their dating from A. D. 705 but also shown their contents to be of much interest from an antiquarian point of view. These records have been found to belong to a file of reports and orders concerning losses which had occurred during the early part of the year 705 among the horses maintained in the district of Hsi-chou or Turfān for the postal service and other official purposes. The circumstances, locality, &c., in which the animals died are precisely recorded; the statements of the veterinary or other officers who investigated the individual cases with a view to ascertaining the cause of loss and fixing the responsibility for it are reproduced in full; information is recorded as to the delivery of the dead animals' skins, also whether it was possible or not to dispose of their flesh by sale, &c. The mention of particular localities where losses occurred helps us, in conjunction with the data furnished by the references in the T'ang Annals, to trace regular postal stages on those much-frequented main routes<sup>14a</sup> which led, then as now, from the Turfān basin towards I-chou or Hāmi, Pei-t'ing, and Yen-ch'i or Kara-shahr. These quaint records aptly illustrate the difficulties which necessarily attend transport on lines of communication leading through what was at that time, as it is to-day, mainly desert. They throw light, moreover, on the methods of meticulous organization by which the Chinese administration constantly endeavoured to counter these difficulties of nature and to economize resources.]

Remaining  
tombs of  
Ast. iii.

In the north-eastern corner of the same enclosure a fifth tomb, Ast. iii. 5, was also explored. It proved to be completely empty, though the large amount of drift-sand that filled it showed that it had been opened and plundered long ago. As seen in Pl. 33, its plan, with small niches opening from the tomb chamber, was peculiar. The remaining four tombs all showed signs of having been searched in recent years and were therefore left unexamined. In conclusion I may remark, with regard to this group, that the general similarity of the observations and finds made in the tombs above described supports the conclusion that these burials belonged approximately to the same period. The evidence of the dated documents found in iii. 3 and iii. 4 permits us to attribute the others also tentatively to the first half of the eighth century.

Sepulchral  
inscription  
of A. D. 698,  
at Ast. iv. i.

An inscribed clay slab having been found by one of our men near the surface of the trench leading to a tomb in a group situated to the east of ii, I had this tomb, iv. i, cleared. Its small chamber (Pl. 33), which was almost completely filled with sand, held only one body, and this was too much battered for any observation of interest. The inscription in six lines of Chinese characters painted in red on bluish ground was successfully photographed (Pl. CXXVII). Its date, as read by Li Ssü-yeh and verified by Dr. Lionel Giles, corresponds to A. D. 698.<sup>14b</sup>

Finds in  
tomb Ast.  
v. i.

The similar discovery of a large inscribed slab, Ast. v. i. 07 (Pl. LXXIV), at the top end of an approach trench induced us to turn next to the enclosed group of tombs, v, towards the middle of the area. The tomb at which the inscribed slab was found faced south immediately towards the entrance of the enclosure (Pl. 31, 33). It contained one body badly damaged but still retaining portions of an outer silk shroud of indigo colour. This was painted near the head, as shown by the fragments recovered, Ast. v. i. 02, with the bold representation of two faces, and farther down with curved bands of red and white which probably belonged to two intertwined serpentine bodies, such as may be seen in the hanging Ast. ix. 2. 054 (Pl. CIX) to be described below.<sup>15</sup> Of the silk face-cover,

<sup>14a</sup> Among the localities thus mentioned we find *Liu-ku*, the 'Valley of the Willows', and *Chin-sha* (here written *Chin-so*), stages on the direct route to Pei-t'ing discussed above, ii. p. 563 sq.; *T'ien-shan* (Toksun) and *Yin-shan*

(Kumush) on the way to Kara-shahr (cf. *Serindia*, iii. p. 1177); *Ch'ih-t'ing*, the 'Red Station', on the road to Hāmi.

<sup>14b</sup> [See now Dr. L. Giles' translation, App. I. I. XIII.]

<sup>15</sup> See below, p. 666.