

exceptionally favorable location, I was told that cultivation had been carried on irregularly for twelve years, but in most for only two or three. It would to-day be impossible to establish a permanent agricultural village below Niya, just as below Keriya.

In ancient times conditions were very different. Fifty-seven miles due north of Niya, and seven miles from the shrine, at the point where the largest floods disappear in the sand and the most northern living poplars are found, we came upon the southern houses of an ancient town. Stein believes it to have been abandoned about 300 A. D. The remnants of the town consist of sites strewn with pottery, the remains of orchards full of fruit trees and the white poplar, a "stupa" or Buddhist shrine of sun-dried brick, and the beams and lower walls of ancient houses, of which I counted a hundred and sixteen. The town was large and prosperous. It was inhabited for a long time, as appears from the nature of the ruins and the size of the trees. Its date is known from coins, and from many documents in the Kharosthi tongue. These are written upon wood, and are found in the various forms shown in the illustrations. Accounts, official orders, memoranda, and letters were written upon strips of wood of various carefully defined shapes. Data to be kept for future reference were recorded on strips like A, E, G, I, and L, which were filed away in rows, or were hung upon strings run through the holes at the pointed ends. The most interesting specimens which I found are C and D, parts of two letters. The communication was written upon the concave side of a strip such as C; and upon the convex side of a complementary strip of exactly the same size. The two were then