

tinguished from inscriptions) that have as yet come to light in India proper. But from the first there was ample evidence pointing to this chronological conclusion. The Kharoshthi writing of the tablets and leather documents, as already stated, showed close agreement in its palæographic features with the Kharoshthi inscriptions of the Kushana kings, whose rule in North-Western India undoubtedly falls mainly within the first two centuries of our era. This testimony was fully supported by the fortunate discovery in another ruin, N. VIII., of a unique tablet showing by the side of Kharoshthi some lines of Brahmi characters which clearly display the peculiarities of Brahmi writing of the Kushana period. The evidence of the coins was equally eloquent, since the numerous finds made during my stay included only Chinese copper pieces of the Later Han Dynasty, whose reign came to a close in A.D. 220. Finally there was in the use of wood as the only writing material, apart from leather, another proof of considerable antiquity. Though the use of paper is attested in Chinese Turkestan from at least the fourth century A.D. onwards, yet I failed to discover even the smallest scrap of paper among all the ruined houses and ancient rubbish heaps.

But with all these indications at hand, I felt particularly gratified when a recent discovery revealed the incontrovertible chronological evidence for which I had always longed. It came from one of the small pieces of wood inscribed with single lines of Chinese characters, of which the excavation of N. xv. ultimately yielded up over twoscore (for an illustration, see p. 316). Their preliminary examination at Kashgar and in the British Museum seemed to show that they contained brief orders, chiefly concerning the movements of specified individuals who were to be arrested or allowed to pass certain posts, etc. References to ancient localities such as Kucha, Shen-shen, Su-le or Kashgar, and the description of two persons as 'Ta-Yue-chi,' *i.e.*, Indo-Scythians, were points possessed of considerable historical interest. But it was only when Dr. S. W. Bushell, the distinguished Sinologist, had occasion to examine these Chinese tablets that one of them was