

or in detached items usually ending with numerals<sup>24</sup>. That tablets of this class would often, after having been written upon, be utilized again for fresh notes or drafts, readily suggests itself; and in N. xv. 199, where part of the text on the reverse has been deleted by scraping, we have evidently an instance where this process had been begun.

#### SECTION V.—CHINESE DOCUMENTS FROM N. xv. AND THE WRITING ON WOOD

Interest of  
Chinese  
records.

The Chinese records on wood, which were among the first striking finds revealed by N. xv., form the only class of epigraphical relics from this site still awaiting description. In numbers, size, and variety of outward appearance, they cannot compare with the rich harvest of Kharoṣṭhī documents which the same ancient rubbish-heap yielded. Yet with the light which has been thrown upon them, mainly through M. Chavannes' investigations, it is easy, even for one who is no Sinologist, to realize their special antiquarian interest and their historical value.

Form of  
Chinese  
records on  
wood.

In regard to their material and form these Chinese records display a remarkable uniformity. With the single exception of the rectangular covering-tablet (N. xv. 345) referred to below, Chinese characters are found only on narrow and thin pieces of wood, for which the expression of 'slip' seems more appropriate than that of 'tablet'. These bear their writing invariably in a single column and on one side only. The wood used appears to be that of the Terek or *Populus alba*, as also in the great majority of the Kharoṣṭhī tablets. As seen in Plates CXII–CXIV, where the whole of the Chinese records have been reproduced in approximately full size, the width of the slips is only from  $\frac{7}{16}$  to  $\frac{5}{8}$  of an inch. The length of the five complete slips, found either intact (as N. xv. 314, 353, 362) or broken in two closely-fitting pieces (as N. xv. 75+328, 93. a. b), varies only from 9 to  $9\frac{1}{4}$  in.; and an examination of the forty-two fragmentary documents<sup>1</sup>, as well as of the two broken pieces found blank (N. xv. 59, 111), proves that none of the slips used for these Chinese records of N. xv. is likely to have exceeded this length. I have already referred to the probable cause which has made broken Chinese documents, varying from almost complete pieces like N. xv. 203, measuring  $8\frac{5}{8}$  in., to N. xv. 72, only  $1\frac{3}{8}$  in. long, so very numerous in proportion to complete ones. Owing to their narrowness and the slight thickness of the wood, such slips were far more liable to be broken by chance or 'torn up' on purpose than the substantial Kharoṣṭhī tablets.

Writing on  
bamboo  
slips in  
China.

The close resemblance in shape between these Chinese documents on wood and the pieces of bamboo which, according to a widely-known tradition, were used in China as writing material before the invention of paper, had become evident to me already at Khotan. The Amban Pan Dārin, my kind and learned friend, on being shown there some of the Kharoṣṭhī tablets, quite correctly indicated his own conclusion as to their approximate date by a reference to the bamboo slips which in China served for writing purposes up to the Han period. There being no bamboo in Hsin-chiang, that scholarly Mandarin thought wood had naturally been substituted. The explanations which Mr. Macartney and Sun Ssü-yeh, the Chinese Munshī of the Agency, kindly furnished to me at Kāshgar as to the Chinese records on wood discovered by me, left no doubt on the point. But it was only after the publication of M. Chavannes' exhaustive

<sup>24</sup> Columnar arrangement is observed in N. xv. 33, 68, 92. a, 130, 184; for items with numerals see, e.g., N. xv. 76+181, 122, 129, 185.

<sup>1</sup> See N. xv. 34, 37, 53, 59. b, 61+62, 69, 72, 73, 78,

82, 82. a, 85, 100, 101. a, 109, 116, 117, 123, 125+127, 139, 145, 152, 169, 175, 176, 188, 189, 191, 192, 203, 207, 324, 326, 337, 339, 348, 349, 351, 02, 08, 09, 010.