

grains, etc., a reference to the descriptive list below must suffice here. Of the small structures which must have once stood amidst the accumulations of refuse, only the plastered floors could be traced, with here and there a mud-built sitting platform, of the type common in modern houses under the Turkī designation of *sika*. Near one of these a wooden trough, one foot eight inches wide, and the lower portion of a big pottery jar, one foot ten inches across, were found fixed in the ground.

Find of
Chinese
records on
wood.

It was not far from this point, and by the west edge of the mound, that the day's reward came to light in the evening. One of the diggers then hit upon a confused heap of narrow wooden tablets, or rather sticks, bearing on their flattened faces Chinese writing in single line. They lay within a space of about two feet square, covered only by a foot or so of sand, and owing to prolonged exposure to atmospheric influences many had become more or less rotten. All were thickly encrusted with decayed matter and salts drawn from the layers of refuse in which they had been buried. Their wood had become so friable that many got broken during removal in spite of all the care used. However, with the help of Chiang Szū-yeh, who, of course, was greatly interested in these finds, I managed to piece together again most of these fragments.

Character
of Chinese
records.

In the end some fifty wooden documents of this kind were recovered. Their size and shape varied greatly, but in all the rough treatment of the material and the obviously rather careless cursive style of writing pointed to records of a transitory nature. Some were over sixteen inches in length with a width of about an inch and a half. Most of those complete show a string-hole at one end. Some are flat, with two smooth surfaces covered with writing; a few are stick-like, having four inscribed sides. Others are written on what is nothing more than the split half of a branch, usually of tamarisk, with one surface roughly smoothed to receive the writing, and the other left in the original round and sometimes retaining the bark. Specimens of different kinds of these wooden records are reproduced in Plate XXXVII of M. Chavannes' volume. The varying notches found on many of them suggested from the first tallies and the like, and such rapid examination as Chiang was able to make on the spot pointed to miscellaneous petty 'papers' connected with village administration, irrigation, and supply matters. M. Chavannes' close study of the pieces still decipherable seems to have confirmed this conclusion, but the impression of his volume has not yet proceeded sufficiently far for me to quote details. A few of the pieces are bilingual, bearing, besides Chinese, inscriptions in cursive Brāhmī writing, and what obviously is the Īrānian language of old Khotan. In this respect, too, the resemblance of these records to those brought from Balawaste is of the closest.

Original
discovery of
ancient
rubbish.

It is certain that the records here recovered are 'waste paper' remains of some little local office. Their poor state of preservation was accounted for by what Haidul Khwāja told us of how the rubbish deposit had been dug into by villagers who searched here for saltpetre some forty years earlier. Disappointed in their quest they abandoned the site after a day, leaving the parcel of wooden documents incidentally brought to light to rot on the surface. Curiously enough, local tradition seems to have preserved an inkling of, or made a shrewd guess at, the official character of the ruined structure; for Mullah Khwāja and other greybeards of Domoko knew the spot by the designation of *Kōne-ötang*, the 'old postal station'. However this may be, the different levels on which the plastered floors and platforms above referred to were found suggest the prolonged occupation of the spot. In this connexion it is curious to note that a copper coin, found on the eroded slope near the place where the heap of wooden documents had been thrown down, is taken by Mr. J. Allan to be 'probably a late Pan Liang cash, of the latter half of the second century B.C.'

Approximate
dating
of remains.

The dates found on several of the Chinese records are in months and days only. But even in the absence of any fully dated document it seems safe to assume that the relics of Mazār-toghrak belong to the closing period of the T'ang dynasty's rule in the Tārīm Basin. This is indicated on