

ancient dwellings I had excavated at the Niya Site and elsewhere in the Khotan region.¹¹ In the small passage-like apartment ii that adjoined it, and close to the door, still retaining its wooden frame, which led into a kind of central hall, there were found three rectangular double-tablets with Kharoṣṭhī text, L.A. iv. ii. 1-3 (Plate XXXVIII). Considering that they lay on three feet of sand and almost on the surface, their preservation was surprisingly good. This was partly due to the first two documents being found wrapped up in rags. Among these was the stout cotton fabric, L.A. iv. ii. 001, remarkable both on account of its material, as analysed by Dr. Hanausek, and its interesting texture, which suggests its having originally been intended for wear under armour as a gambeson. It is clear that these Kharoṣṭhī tablets must have fallen to the place where they were found from a receptacle in the wall or above the door.¹² This door was curiously low, like the other two in L.A. iv of which the lintels and cross-piece were still in position.

The central hall in its size, 28 by 21 feet, and general plan distinctly resembled that of the 'Aiwān' still common in modern Turkeṣtān houses. In it the central pillar could still be fitted with the plain massive bracket on which the roof beam had rested. The purpose of the space boarded off, in the eastern corner, with a sort of low railing, could not be made out. The large room, about 22 feet square, adjoining the south-eastern wall, does not communicate directly with the rest of the house, and may, perhaps, from this position be assumed to have corresponded to the *mihmān-khāna* or guest-quarters usually found nowadays in well-to-do people's houses in the oases of the Tārīm Basin. No finds were made either here or in the smaller rooms on the other side of the central hall. Their walls showed a wattle of vertical bundles of tamarisk branches, which were held in position by horizontal twists of the same material tied to a framework of posts. Vertical reed bundles filled a space of about two to three inches wide within the tamarisk wattle, and its outside faces were originally coated with mud plaster to a total thickness of about eight inches. These walls had resisted wind-erosion far better than might have been expected from their rough construction. The reason, no doubt, is that such walls, with their closely set and yet pliable fascines, offered less scope for the corrosive action of wind-driven sand than solid walls of brick or superior wattle, and, in fact, could protect themselves by catching and retaining the drift-sand.

Constructive
features of
L.A. iv.

Tamarisk
and reed
wattle.

Two small deposits of refuse adjoining the house added their quota of finds. From one near the west entrance of the central hall, iv, came the fragment of a rectangular under-tablet in Kharoṣṭhī, L.A. iv. iv. 1, and a complete Chinese document on paper, *Doc.* No. 903, containing the record of a tribute of various pieces of silk offered by a certain barbarian.¹³ In another small refuse-heap to the north-east, near room i, were found the partially bleached Kharoṣṭhī wedge under-tablet, L.A. iv. 001, and fragments of a well-woven woollen material, L.A. iv. 004 (Plate XXXVII). Details as regards the technique of its weaving and the pattern shown by the well-preserved colours will be found in the descriptive list.¹⁴

A striking and more abundant discovery of records was made at a heap of timber débris, L.A. iv. v, which occupied the top of a small and badly eroded terrace some twelve yards to the north of the north-west corner room of the house. The original dimensions or shape of the small structure of which this débris represented the last remnant could no longer be made out. Here, quite close to the surface, when the sand had been scraped away, were found eleven Kharoṣṭhī documents on wood, six of oblong shape together with four pieces of wedge tablets and one

Find of
Kharoṣṭhī
records at
L.A. iv. v.

¹¹ Cf., e.g., Pl. 8, 14, 15, 17; *Ancient Khotan*, Pl. XXVIII, XXXIV, XXXV.

¹² This door of L.A. iv. ii is seen on the extreme left in Hedin, *Central Asia*, Pl. LXXII.

¹³ The wrongly read site-mark, L.A. iv. i. 1, Chavannes, *Documents*, p. 186, should be corrected into L.A. iv. iv. 2.

¹⁴ See below, p. 434.