

rectangular covering-tablet. As a consequence of the exposed position in which these tablets had lain, the surface of almost all had suffered badly through bleaching and cracking. But, on most, Kharoṣṭhī writing was still traceable in parts, and on a few, L.A. iv. v. 3, 9, 12 (Plate XXXVIII), columns of lines, clear and black, had survived. The rapid examination I was able to make on the spot suggested that the oblong tablets with their columnar writing contained accounts or office memos. In one I thought that I made out a list of Indian-looking personal names, all in the genitive case.

Evidence of
indigenous
administra-
tion.

This discovery of Kharoṣṭhī records, added to those made in room ii and outside the house, was enough to convince me at the time that the ruin L.A. iv marks the residence of a non-Chinese official belonging to the indigenous administration of the territory. I shall have occasion to refer below to the indications which make it highly probable that here, too, Chinese control, military and political, had allowed the indigenous administration to continue undisturbed in the hands of the local ruling family. The first direct evidence of this was furnished to me on the spot by one of the rectangular double-tablets found in L.A. iv. ii. Its shape was sufficient to prove that it was a full official document and hence dated, and on examining the opening formula I found that the dating was, just as in the Niya Site rectangular double-tablets, by the year of the reigning Mahārāja. But the name, which I then read as Dugaka, entirely differed in formation from the names of rulers recorded in the documents of the far-off Niya tract.

Besides these Kharoṣṭhī tablets, L.A. iv. v yielded a number of fragments of fabrics, including several much-torn pieces of a well-made woollen rug, L.A. iv. v. 002 (Plates XXXVII and XLIX), with an elaborate coloured pattern, details of which will be found in the descriptive list.¹⁵ There was found also an interesting wooden bar, L.A. iv. v. 001 (Plate XXXV), which appears to have formed part of the saddle-gear of a pack-animal, but the exact use of which still remains to be determined.

Finds in
dwelling
L.A. v.

The ruin next cleared was that of the small dwelling, L.A. v (Plate 25), situated about twenty yards to the north of L.A. iii. What remained of the rooms, built of timber and horizontal reed wattle, had suffered badly through erosion, and the covering of sand on the floor was only two feet deep or less. So it was not surprising that the three Kharoṣṭhī tablets found in the southernmost room, i, showed a bleached surface only marked by faint writing. Yet on a small wooden seal, *Doc.* 889 (Plate XXVII), which came to light here, the raised Chinese characters, giving the name and place of origin of its owner, had remained in excellent preservation. The Chinese slip, *Doc.* 891 (Plate XXVII), found here also retained its writing in fair condition. From the thin layer of refuse in the adjoining court, ii, we recovered besides a Chinese record on wood, *Doc.* 890, and two Kharoṣṭhī tablets, L.A. v. ii. 2, 4, an excellently preserved wooden fire-block, L.A. v. ii. 1 (Plate XXXV).

Wooden
fire-block.

Along one side it shows four charred holes or 'hearths' partially sunk through the thickness of the wood and communicating with the edge by means of flat grooves through which the spark could reach the tinder. Threaded on a thong of white leather, and still attached to the block through a hole in the centre, is a small peg of very hard wood, with one end sharpened into a point, the other conical and just fitting the holes. The latter end shows signs of fire and evidently was once revolved in the holes. As pointed out by Mr. Joyce in his note on this and other fire-sticks in my collection,¹⁶ this peg was probably cut down from an old broken 'male' fire-stick and attached to the 'female' fire-block to allow it to be conveniently fixed to the wall. I have already referred elsewhere to the curious evidence which this and similar finds at other sites, from the Tun-huang

¹⁵ See below, p. 435.

¹⁶ Cf. *Man*, xi. 3. No. 24.