

appearance of the paper suggests that these relics of the devotion of those who lived in, or passed through, the Mīrān fort had also found their way there across the Tibetan plateaus from distant monasteries in the south. In conclusion, it should be noted that quite a number of the paper documents were found as originally folded up, though not always so cleverly as M. I. ii. 40 (Plate CLXXI), and that in some I thought I could recognize narrow vertical ruling as if intended for Chinese writing in the customary columnar arrangement.

#### SECTION IV.—MISCELLANEOUS FINDS IN THE MĪRĀN FORT

Great as was the wealth of written remains recovered by our clearing of the ruined fort of Mīrān, I knew that their detailed decipherment and interpretation would prove a task needing much time and labour, and that even when it was accomplished it could scarcely be expected to throw as much light on the daily life led at the site during the period of Tibetan occupation as careful observation of what has survived of its setting. In the preceding pages I have endeavoured accurately to describe the humble quarters once tenanted by the garrison and the condition in which they had been left. No information to be gathered from records could compare in convincing directness with the impression, obtained on the spot, of the squalor and discomfort in which those Tibetan officials and soldiers must have passed their time at this forlorn frontier post. But the accumulations of refuse which they had allowed steadily to rise around them, with an indifference to dirt such as my excavations have revealed nowhere else, have at any rate proved a thoughtful provision for the antiquarian interests of posterity. The remains of implements, apparel, arms, and other articles of daily use which were embedded and preserved in them permit us to supplement the picture of their life in a variety of curious aspects. All the objects are modest in make and much worn in condition. But considering that the deposits must have taken a long time to grow to their present height, this uniformity may be taken as additional proof that they faithfully reflect the local conditions of the period.

Among the relics thus recovered, the pieces of leather scale armour may be mentioned in the first place, on account of the interest attaching to their technique and material as well as of their great number. The fact that batches of them came to light in a series of different quarters is significant evidence of the prevailing military character of those who lived in the fort, and 'shed' there their worn-out equipment. The first finds, M. I. 0068-71 (Plate L), were quite detached scales of oblong lacquered leather, varying in size and ornamentation, as the details noted in the Descriptive List below show, and without any definite indication of their original purpose and relation. That I could nevertheless recognize them at once in their true character was my reward, as it were, for having six years before correctly identified a small piece of hard 'green' leather, N. xv. 005, from a rubbish-heap of the Niya Site as having once belonged to scale armour.<sup>1</sup> This conjecture of mine had subsequently received striking confirmation when Mr. Andrews discovered, in a suit of mail brought to the British Museum from the Lhasa expedition of 1904, scales laced exactly after the fashion which that single little piece of leather had suggested.<sup>2</sup>

The succeeding finds within the Mīrān fort have furnished us with a considerable quantity of scales belonging to lacquered leather armour, as the following list shows: M. I. i. 002 (three pieces),

<sup>1</sup> See *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 411. For other specimens recovered there in 1906, see above, p. 246, N. v. xv. 004-006.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the note in *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. xvi (Addenda). I must mention here that owing to an erroneous interpretation of Mr. Andrews's remarks I assumed there that the scales

of the Lhasa mail suit were round-headed. In reality their shape is oblong; see below, p. 465.

For earlier Chinese references and representations of leather scale armour, cf. now Laufer, *Chinese Clay Figures*, i. pp. 195 sqq., 292.

Relics of daily life.

Pieces of leather scale armour.

Method of lacing leather scales.