

showing the type of the S'aka or early Kuṣana period in India, and as being of older appearance than that I remembered from the single tablet with Brāhmī text, N. xx. 1, excavated on my first visit to the Niya Site.<sup>1</sup>

M. Boyer's  
decipherment  
of  
Brāhmī  
record.

When, early in 1917, I was able to turn my attention to this little relic of Indian writing and presumably Indian language from the Han Wall, the analogy of the silk strip T. xv. a. i. 3, with its Chinese inscription and its almost identical breadth, led me to hazard the conjecture that the Brāhmī legend, too, might prove to contain some record descriptive of the roll of silk fabric from the edge of which this strip had been cut off. But the only support I could see for it was in the Sanskrit word *paṭa* (*paṭṭa*), 'piece [of fabric]', which appeared in Dr. Hoernle's tentative transcript of the otherwise unintelligible legend as supplied in his Appendix F. Remembrance of the most valuable help received from M. Boyer in respect of the Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions at Mīrān made me turn once more to this exceptionally qualified collaborator. His painstaking scrutiny of the legend, aided by repeated examination in the original of the few characters not absolutely clear in the reproduction, has been rewarded by gratifying results. M. Boyer, in letters of March 13 and April 4, 1917, determined the reading as :

[ai]ṣṭasya paṭa giṣṭi ṣaparīsa.

Mention of  
'forty-six  
spans'.

Apart from the first word, in which the initial *akṣara*, owing to a hole in the silk, is incomplete and hence not quite certain, he was able to interpret the short record in a manner which appears to me philologically very convincing, and which accords remarkably well with archaeological considerations. Accepting *paṭa* in the obvious sense of 'piece [of cloth]', already recognized by Dr. Hoernle, he takes *ṣaparīsa* as a Prākṛit equivalent of Skr. *ṣat + catvāriṃśat*, 'forty-six'. The fact that in the Prākṛit of the Kharoṣṭhī tablets from the Niya Site *catvāriṃśat* 'forty' appears as *caparīsa*, and that in Pāli the same decimal numeral is contracted from *cattālīsam* into *tālīsam* when compounded with single numerals (e. g. in *cuttālīsam*, 'forty-four'), makes this interpretation of *ṣaparīsa* phonetically quite acceptable. This reading of the word as a number necessarily suggests that the preceding word *giṣṭi* may designate a measure. No such term is found in Sanskrit, but it is just from such a form that we can most appropriately derive the word *giṭh*, *giṭh*, meaning 'span', which M. Boyer quotes from modern Panjābī,<sup>2</sup> and which, as Sir George Grierson has been good enough to point out to me, is found also in Kāshmirī *giṭh*, with the confusion between cerebral and dental typical in Dardic or 'Piśāca' languages.

Record  
notes length  
of silk roll.

This interpretation of *giṣṭi* appears to me all the more convincing because, if the record on the edge of the silk piece referred to the round roll of silk itself—it is always in this rolled form that silk is carried in Chinese trade nowadays, just as the roll L.A. 1. 002 proves it for antiquity—, there was an obvious reason for its showing the *length* of the piece. The other details which the Chinese inscription on T. xv. a. i. 3, *Doc.*, No. 539, records, about its weight, price, etc., were not always essential, especially for the foreign trader carrying his purchased goods to distant countries with different measures, money, etc. The width of the silk was always visible to him and his purchasers without opening the roll of silk. But the length he had certainly to note for his own convenience, if the troublesome unrolling was to be avoided on every occasion. In short, while the Chinese inscription is such as would naturally recommend itself to the producer or wholesale exporter of the fabric as a guiding record, the Brāhmī note, in a strange script and language, was just a brief memorandum intended by the trader from the West for his own guidance. Chinese inscriptions of similar length and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 369, 376, 412.

<sup>2</sup> Sir G. Grierson believes that the word 'belongs rather to Lahndā or Western Panjābī, which has a large "Piśāca" element in its vocabulary.' But against this M. Boyer ob-

serves that Dr. Hari Chand, himself a native of the Panjāb, declared the word to be in common use throughout the province, even as far east as Delhi. I am unable to follow up this point further at present.