

D. VII. 4. d, dated in the year 789, mentions quite a number of them (Ying-ch'ing, Hsüan-ying, I-fa, Shan-i, Fa-yu). Another list of monks, with the names P'u-?, Pao-ming, Fa-chin, Tao-ch'ao, still preserved, was contained in D. VII. 4. f, while the third fragment, D. VII. 4. c, of uncertain purport, furnishes the name of the monk *Ta-p'i*, who figures in another fragmentary Chinese record (D. VIII. 1) from a small shrine still to be mentioned, with the title of *Wei-na* or Karmadāna.

We have no means whatever for locating the *Hu-kuo* Vihāra, whose relation to the last dwellers of this modest structure the documents just discussed have so curiously revealed to us. The Chinese designation (*Hu-kuo*, literally 'country-protecting') and the Chinese names of the monastic dignitaries, as well as of the monks specified, leave little doubt as to the nationality of that religious establishment. But that the population among which Ch'ien-ying and his brethren lived was not Chinese seems plainly indicated by the inscriptions in cursive Brāhmī which we have already referred to in describing D. VI, as well as by the finds of cursive Brāhmī documents in the same place.

The very pettiness of the affairs recorded in these Chinese papers increases their value from a chronological point of view. Unimportant in character and insignificant in appearance, it is highly improbable that these records of the private transactions of a few monks and of the casual orders, &c., sent to them by their convent should date back to a period preceding by any great length of time the final abandonment of the building. We have seen that all the papers from this ruin which can be dated with accuracy belong to the years 782-789 A.D. Taking into account that the first Chinese document found in the ruined house D. V under exactly similar conditions, bears the date of 781, and that the fragment discovered in D. IX, the only other dated Chinese paper from the site, was written in 790 A.D., we are almost forced to the conclusion that the settlement to which these dwelling-houses and shrines belonged was deserted between the last-named date and the close of the eighth century of our era. In each case the papers were discovered on the original floor or quite close to it, which proves that drift-sand must have entered the rooms very soon after these petty records had been scattered about there. For light and flimsy as they are, the little paper rolls could not have resisted very long the force of the storms which pass over the country each successive spring and summer.

It is a fortunate circumstance that such unmistakable chronological evidence has been obtained in the very same structure which furnished us with the best preserved specimens of contemporary painting from this site and, perhaps, also the most interesting. I have already described the position in which the three painted panels of wood I refer to were found in the loose sand near the south-east corner of the main room of D. VII. Direct evidence in the case of two panels allows us to infer that these pictures had once been fixed high up on the wall, from which they dropped when the little dwelling was gradually being filled with sand. The panel D. VII. 5 still retains on its plain reverse the remains of dowels in several places showing how it had been affixed, while the 'Takhti'-shaped tablet D. VII. 1 has a hole drilled through its handle by means of which it could be nailed to the wall. Perhaps it was due to this manner of fixing that this particular panel lay considerably higher above the floor than the rest. The third panel, D. VII. 6, which turned up quite close to D. VII. 5, and which being painted on both sides could not have been attached in the same manner, may have been made to stand upright on a small shelf by means of a socket or otherwise. These observations account for the excellent preservation of the wood of all these panels, and for the remarkably good condition of the colours in the case of two of them. The fact of these panels having been found

Locality of  
*Hu-kuo*  
convent.

Chronologi-  
cal value of  
Chinese  
papers from  
D. VII.

Painted  
panels from  
D. VII.