

of a woman with a flower or mirror in her hand, N. xxiv. viii. 79 (Plate XX), is a motif which we have met already in a seal found earlier at this site (N. xv. 155; *Ancient Khotan*, ii. Plate LXXII). The head of a man with elaborate head-dress, holding some ill-defined object, is of coarse workmanship, but is nevertheless of interest as the type and pose curiously recall the representation of the king on certain Kuṣāna coins.¹²

Among several seals of debased work showing human figures, N. xxiv. viii. 71, 72, 76, 94, 96 (see Plate XX; also *Desert Cathay*, Fig. 95), the last named deserves special mention; for the male divinity there represented with nimbus and sword can be safely recognized, by the double sack-purse carried in the left hand, as Kubera or Vaiśravaṇa, the god of riches and Guardian (Lokapāla) of the Northern region. We know that he was specially worshipped at Khotan as a kind of *genius loci*.¹³ It is significant that this seal, though manifestly of local origin, reveals unmistakably Roman influence. The remaining impressions show mostly animal figures, the charging elephant seen in N. xxiv. viii. 86, 95 (Plate XX) being, perhaps, the most spirited among them, and conventionalized representations of birds, N. xxiv. viii. 75, 79, 82, 83, 92, 96, the most frequent. The comparison of these impressions with the seals in stone or metal found at the site or obtained at Yōtkan¹⁴ leaves little doubt about the originals having been produced in the Khotan region.

The value of the rich haul of ancient records yielded by this ruin N. xxiv lies even more, perhaps, in their remarkable state of preservation than in their number. Since Professor E. J. Rapson kindly charged himself with the decipherment and eventual publication of the Kharoṣṭhī materials brought back from my first journey, the exceptional difficulties presented by their script, language, and contents have revealed themselves only too clearly. The obscurities inherent in this very cursive form of Kharoṣṭhī writing have proved quite as serious as those arising from the use of an early Prākṛit dialect which differs considerably in phonetic peculiarities from the forms represented in Indian literature, and in addition contains a certain admixture of manifestly non-Indian words and terms not yet traced to their origin. But what probably has increased the difficulties of interpretation more than anything else, is the fact that, as recognized from the first, we have in these Kharoṣṭhī documents mainly official records or correspondence relating to the petty details of local administration and daily life, i. e. subject-matters which would often perplex the uninitiated, even if presented at a period less remote and in more familiar script and language, and for the elucidation of which the extant literary remains of India offer practically no help.

The difficulties here briefly indicated may explain why, even with the very valuable aid afforded to Professor Rapson's labours by his distinguished *confrères* M. Senart and M. l'abbé Boyer, the actual publication of the Kharoṣṭhī records brought back from my first expedition has not progressed as yet beyond the specimens made accessible in preliminary transcripts and renderings by 1905.¹⁵ Considerable advance was in fact made in preparing those documents for publication,¹⁶ but it became increasingly clear that for the solution of many remaining doubts and puzzles there was great need of additional materials, and in particular of an adequate supply of complete documents in which the state of preservation should leave no room for uncertainty as to the characters actually inscribed.

¹² Cf. Gardner, *Greek and Scythic Kings*, Pl. XXV. 9 (Kadphises); XXVII. 16 (Huviṣka).

¹³ Cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 158.

¹⁴ Cf. Pl. V, XXIX; *Ancient Khotan*, ii. Pl. L.

¹⁵ *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 364 sqq.

¹⁶ Transcripts, with critical notes, of 160 documents, from N. I-IV, had been actually set up in type for the companion volume to *Ancient Khotan* which was to contain the edition of the Kharoṣṭhī records excavated in 1901, when Prof.

Rapson and his coadjutors arrived at the gratifying decision to embody in the same publication also the fresh documents brought back by me from my later explorations. In view of the further delay thus necessitated I feel double satisfaction at having been able to reproduce relatively so large a number of Kharoṣṭhī documents in facsimile in the plates of *Ancient Khotan* which thus afford sufficient materials for the independent research of fellow scholars.

Seals of local workmanship.

Difficulties of decipherment of Kharoṣṭhī documents.

Publication of Kharoṣṭhī records.