

localities still identifiable in Kan-su. Unfortunately the 'nien-hao' is missing and the wooden slip incomplete. Hence it is impossible to make sure whether the order referred to originated from the central authorities of the empire or from one of the local chiefs of the Chang family who, in the fourth century A. D., ruled as practically independent princes of western Kan-su.¹¹ Another fragment, No. 885, a mere 'shaving', names an officer 'in charge of official correspondence under the orders of the *Chang-shih* of the Western Countries'. In a third, No. 887, 'the general-in-chief, *Chang-shih* of the right [of the name] Kuan', is referred to. I have already,¹² on account of its archaeological interest, had occasion to mention the inscribed wooden lid, No. 751, which must once have closed a small box containing an official report or petition. It is in due form 'addressed to Mr. Chang, *Chang-shih* of the Western Countries, for transmission through the medium of Superintendent Wang [by] me Yüan who express myself in this letter'. The document itself, which judging from the shape and size of the lid is likely to have been written on wooden slips, may have been carried away by the *chancellerie* of the high dignitary. But the cover which was thrown into the 'waste-paper basket', to use an anachronism, remained behind for us to attest the great man's passage.

We owe in all probability to a similar procedure the survival of the far more important document which, as already mentioned, Mr. Tachibana had the good fortune to light upon, in 1910, in the wall of the small room L.A. II. iv.¹³ This find comprises, in addition to some fragments, a crumpled-up but complete sheet of paper containing what obviously is the rough draft of a letter sent by Li Po, *Chang-shih* of the Western Countries, to the king of Yen-ch'i or Kara-shahr. The same personage is mentioned by the *Chinshu* in connexion with events of the year A. D. 324. The purport of the letter, arranging a meeting with the king, clearly points to its having been written by Li Po on his passage into the Tārīm Basin, and the fact of a second copy of the rough draft, besides fragments connected with the latter, having been found in the same place makes it appear highly probable that Li Po's letter was actually dispatched from the Lou-lan station. It is thus safe to conclude that the old route leading through the desert and past the site was still in use at that date.

An official communication, apparently emanating from a *Chang-shih* and reporting some fight, is the subject of an unfortunately incomplete tablet, No. 768. Better preserved is a letter on paper, No. 928, in which affairs of administration, involving movements of some high officials, are reported in a quasi demi-official fashion. An imperial edict is referred to in the fragment No. 902; an official promotion to high rank in No. 878 b. The remnant of an official report to a high military officer, No. 895, is of interest as mentioning Kuchā. We have references to notifications and other official correspondence also in Nos. 725, 821, 921, without the subject being made clear by the surviving context.

Glimpses of military action are furnished by No. 765, where the movement of an army is reported in localities probably distant and not yet identified, and by No. 920, which reports on

Letter of Li
Po found at
L.A. II.

Other
official cor-
respon-
dence.

Pettyadmin-
istrative
records.

¹¹ Cf. M. Chavannes' notes, *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 543 sq., on this Chinese family, which after the close of the Western Chin dynasty (A. D. 316) ruled the region of Liang-chou and the territories dependent on it as far west as Tun-huang or Sha-chou. *Chinshu* passages translated by M. Chavannes, *loc. cit.*, mention successful expeditions sent into Chinese Turkestan by two of these princes as late as A. D. 345 and 384. But there is nothing to prove that these proceeded through Lou-lan and not by the northern route via Hāmi and Turfān.

¹² See above, p. 382.

¹³ See above, p. 377. According to M. Chavannes' note,

Documents, p. 162, the document was reproduced in facsimile by Mr. Haneda, in the *Tōyō gakuho*, fasc. 2, p. 54. It is also described in M. Péri's article, *B.E.F.E.O.*, x. p. 652.

I owe my knowledge of its character and contents to the translation and notes which M. Chavannes was good enough to communicate to me in 1910 after seeing a photograph of the document kindly placed at my disposal by Mr. Tachibana. This translation has been reproduced in Appendix A, as revised by M. Chavannes in 1913 with reference to M. Péri's article quoted above.