

SECTION IV.—THE EARLY SOGDIAN DOCUMENTS FROM T. XII. A AND THEIR PAPER

The most important find made at T. XII. a was undoubtedly the collection of paper documents in a previously unknown script, T. XII. a. ii. 1-8. Their outer appearance, after unfolding, will be found fully detailed in the Descriptive List of Chap. XX below. All of them, when discovered, were folded up into neat little convolutes measuring between about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  and 5 inches in length and between approximately 1 and  $1\frac{1}{8}$  inches across, as seen in Plate CLIII. This shows seven of them in their unopened condition. Three, T. XII. a. ii. 1, 3, 5, still retained their original fastening with tightly drawn string, apparently of silk. One, T. XII. a. ii. 2, was found wrapped in brownish silk and thus enclosed in an envelope of coarse fabric, probably linen. This envelope was sewn down on the edges and bore outside seven lines of the same script, probably meant for an address (see Plate CLIV). The document T. XII. a. ii. 4, which Plate CLV reproduces after complete opening, was also found folded up; but as it was not tied and was less brittle than most of the others, it could be partially opened, and the inside examined on the spot. The subsequent complete unfolding of all the documents was a difficult task, and was effected in 1910 by competent hands at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, under the careful supervision of my friend Dr. A. Cowley, who at my request had undertaken the first examination of their script and contents.

Paper documents found at T. XII. a.

All the documents had been originally folded along the shorter side into a narrow convolute, which was again doubled before being tied down. This compact folding of the letters—for as such they could at once be recognized from the address written on the back of almost all the rolls—is likely to have helped to preserve the writing, nearly everywhere black and clear. But it also explains the damage from fraying which the paper, as seen in Plates CLIV-CLVII, has suffered on the middle line parallel to the longer side.<sup>1</sup> Except for this damage and minor injuries which have occurred on the outer edges of some, the eight documents have survived in a remarkable state of preservation, a circumstance which is likely to prove of great help for their final decipherment. It may be noted here that the method of folding just described agrees in essentials with that observed in the Kharoṣṭhī documents on leather and paper which I recovered from the Niya and Lou-lan Sites respectively.<sup>2</sup> But in their case the outside of the folded-up document does not display an address written on the back of the sheet, as is found on all the complete paper documents from T. XII. a. ii.<sup>3</sup>

Folding and addressing of letters.

The rectangular sheets of paper on which these letters are written show a certain regularity of dimension which suggests the prevalence of a standard size for the material used. In six out of the seven complete documents, viz. T. VI. a. ii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, the length varies only between about  $15\frac{1}{2}$  and  $16\frac{1}{2}$  inches. We have an equally striking agreement as regards the width, which in six out of the eight pieces, viz. T. XII. a. ii. 1-6, measures from  $9\frac{1}{2}$  to  $9\frac{3}{4}$  inches. Without having access to original Chinese sources of information as regards the early manufacture of paper, I am unable at present to state more about the usual length of these

Size of paper sheets.

<sup>1</sup> The only exception to this is T. XII. a. ii. 1 (Pl. CLIII, CLV), which has remained quite perfect in the middle. In T. XII. ii. 6 (Pl. CLVI), on the other hand, the left half of the document appears to have been lost owing to this doubling up.

It is, perhaps, not merely accidental that in the latter document the top portion of the inscribed inner surface of the letter was found displayed on the outside of the convolute, as originally discovered (see Pl. CLIII), instead of the

address as usual. The letter must have been opened and folded up again, but in the wrong way, before it found its way on to the rubbish-heap, probably in a torn condition.

<sup>2</sup> For reproductions of such Kharoṣṭhī documents see *Ancient Khotan*, ii. Pl. XCI-XCIII; *Serindia*, Pl. XXXIX.

<sup>3</sup> See Pl. CLIII. The only document on which no address can be traced is T. XII. a. ii. 7 (Pl. CLVI), and this has lost most of the middle portion of the sheet.