

greater antiquity of these ruins became at once evident when in one of the rooms I found some finely carved pieces of wood, with ornaments common in Graeco-Buddhist sculpture, lying practically on the surface.

Marching about two miles farther north across fairly high dunes we arrived at a ruined structure of sun-dried bricks, half-buried under a high conical sand-hill. It proved to be a small Stupa or Buddhist relic tower dug into long ago. There our camp was pitched in a position conveniently central for the exploration of the scattered ruins and near also, so Ibrahim assured me, to the dwelling in which he declared he had come upon those inscribed tablets. As I retired to my first night's rest among these silent habitations of a distant past I wondered with some apprehension whether Ibrahim's story would prove true, and how much of the other precious documents on wood which he declared he had left behind were still waiting to be recovered by me.

Next morning I hastened off with Ibrahim and my diggers to this ruined dwelling. The mingled feelings of expectation and distrust with which I now approached it soon changed to joyful assurance. About a mile from camp I sighted the ruin towards which Ibrahim was guiding us. It also occupied the top of a little terrace rising high above the depressions of the ground eroded by the wind. On ascending the slope I picked up at once three inscribed tablets lying amidst the debris of massive timber that marked wholly eroded parts of the structure (Fig. 37).

On reaching the top I found to my delight many more scattered within one of the rooms. Only a year had passed since Ibrahim had thrown them down there. The layer of drift-sand was so thin as scarcely to afford the topmost ones