

The remarkable state of preservation in which many of the wooden tablets were found made it easy for me even on the spot to recognize the main features of their use and outward arrangement. With the exception of a few oblong pieces, all the tablets found that day were wedge-shaped, from seven to fifteen inches long, and showed evidence of having originally been fastened together in pairs (Fig. 38). I shall presently describe the ingenious method used for this fastening. The text, which was invariably in cursive Kharoshthi writing, running from right to left and parallel to the longer side, occupied the inner sides of the tablets. Other tablets bore on their outside surface a sunk socket for a clay seal and soon proved to have served the purposes of a kind of envelope. By the side of the socket there usually appeared brief entries forming a single line. These at once suggested the address or name of the sender. Where double tablets had remained together, and thus protected each other, the black ink of the writing on the inner surfaces looked as fresh as if penned yesterday.

Thus it was easy to recognize that the tablets, though written by many different hands, showed throughout the characteristic peculiarities of that type of Kharoshthi writing which in India is invariably exhibited by the stone inscriptions of the Kushana or Indo-Scythian dynasty. Its kings ruled over the Panjab and the regions to the west of the Indus during the first three centuries of our era. Thus even before any careful examination became possible I felt assured as to the high antiquity and exceptional value of the materials I was busy gathering.

And yet during that day's animating labours there remained a thought that did not allow my archaeological