

conscience to become unduly triumphant. It was true that the collected text of the hundred odd tablets I was carrying away as the result of my first day's work could not fall short of, if it did not exceed, the aggregate of all previously available Kharoshthi writings. But might not these strange records prove to be mere replicas of the same text, perhaps a prayer or an extract from some sacred Buddhist text?

Once in the comparative shelter of my tent I began with impatience to examine the best preserved of these tablets. I was prepared from previous experience of Kharoshthi epigraphy for the exceptional difficulties likely to be presented by the cursive character of the writing and by all the uncertainties as to language, etc. Yet, sitting up in the cold of that evening wrapped in my furs—the thermometer showed next morning a minimum of forty-one degrees of frost—I gained assurance on two important points. A series of philological observations convinced me that the language was an early Indian Prakrit. It became equally certain that the text varied greatly, notwithstanding the same brief initial formula with which most of them opened. When later on I had definitely deciphered this formula as reading *mahanuava maharaya lihati*, "His Highness the Maharaja orders in writing", there remained no doubt that these particular documents conveyed official orders. The conclusion seemed thus justified that with the Kharoshthi script an early form of Indian speech had also been transplanted into this distant Central-Asian region, in any case for administrative use. Such a fact might well open fresh and wholly unexpected historical vistas over ground so far shrouded in darkness.

My eager hope for more finds of records proved well founded when I proceeded to clear the southern wing of