

condition in which those left undisturbed by later 'treasure-seeking' visitors were found, left no doubt as to this large apartment having served as an office. That it was that of some local official became clear later on from an examination of the tablets. Their variety in respect of size and shape was remarkable. The wedge-shaped tablets reappeared again, but in numbers they were far surpassed by inscribed boards of wood, all of oblong form, but showing great variations in detail and arrangement. Some of them were of considerable dimensions, up to thirty inches in length. The great majority showed plainly, by the irregular arrangement of their writing, in small columns often ending with numerical figures; by the appearance of various handwritings, erasures, etc., that they did not contain texts or even connected communications, but in all probability memoranda, accounts, drafts and other casual records.

Two series of oblong tablets largely represented among the finds of this room showed far greater regularity and care in writing but were none the less puzzling at the time of their discovery. One series consisted of tablets of rectangular shape, from four to sixteen inches in length, with a raised rim resembling a margin at the narrower sides of their single inscribed surface (Fig. 39). The initial line of writing ordinarily contained figures preceded by Prakrit words which I soon made out to mean "in the year . . . month . . . day". Obviously I held in my hands regularly dated documents. The other series consisted of rectangular tablets, smaller in size, with rarely any writing on their flat reverse, while the obverse, in its raised centre, invariably showed a square or oblong socket, obviously intended for the insertion of a seal, together with a transversely written line