

which, as described in the next chapter, came to light on my second visit to the site. Other rectangular double tablets have proved to contain letters dealing with private affairs which their writers obviously wished to keep between themselves and their correspondents. Of considerable philological interest are some tablets containing passages from Buddhist texts in Sanskrit.

The language used throughout all these Kharoshthi documents is an early Indian Prakrit with a large admixture of Sanskrit terms. We have good reason to suppose that not only the script, but also this language was derived from the extreme north-west of the Panjab and the adjacent trans-Indus tracts. In India no writings of such early date, concerned with everyday life and administration, have survived. This fact invests these records found so far away to the north of the Himalayas with still greater interest. Their discovery in this region seems curiously bound up with the old local tradition, recorded by Hsüan-tsang and also in old Tibetan texts, that the territory of Khotan was conquered and colonized about two centuries before our era by Indian immigrants from Takshasila, the Taxila of the Greeks, in the extreme north-western corner of the Panjab.

The titles given to the rulers in whose name orders are issued and with reference to whose reigns the more elaborate documents are dated (*Maharaja*, *devaputra*, 'son of the gods', etc.) are purely Indian. They agree strikingly with the official nomenclature observed under the Kushana or Indo-Scythian princes who ruled over the extreme north-west of India and Afghanistan in the first centuries of our era. The names of the persons which occur in the documents