

settle definitely the period to which these records in cursive Brahmi belong.

Dr. Hoernle, judging from palæographic evidence, had suggested the eighth century of our era as their probable date. The correctness of this approximate dating is now fully proved by the fact that I found some of these documents mixed up in the same place and conditions with the Chinese records to be mentioned below which bear definite dates ranging from 781 to 787 A.D. If we are right in supposing for these documents in cursive Brahmi such practical contents as above indicated, it follows with great probability that their language was that actually spoken by the inhabitants of the ruined settlement immediately before it was abandoned. It still remains to be ascertained whether this language is identical with the unknown tongue already mentioned above which appears in some fragmentary manuscript books or Pothis from Dandan-Uiliq written with Brahmi characters. Judging from certain Sanskrit terms found interspersed in the latter texts, it seems probable that they treat, like the Sanskrit Pothis with which they were found, of Buddhist religious matters. They may possibly prove to be translations of Sanskrit treatises from the Buddhist Canon into a Central-Asian language that had obtained literary use in the Buddhist Church of these regions.

The room which had yielded those paper documents in cursive Brahmi held nowhere more than 3 feet of sand. Yet, even this scanty layer had sufficed to protect a variety of interesting remains, found mainly at the foot of the walls adjoining the south-west corner. Two small oblong tablets of thin wood, rounded off on the right end and provided with a string-hole, proved to contain several lines of the same cursive Brahmi script already discussed. Another and somewhat larger tablet, about 14 inches long and 3 inches broad, at once attracted my interest by showing in its shape and handle the closest resemblance to the 'Takhta,' that traditional wooden board which in all native



ANCIENT 'TAKHTA' FOR WRITING.