

in the body of various tablets, sufficed to relieve me of the doubt that this unexpected wealth of epigraphical finds might after all resolve itself into numerous repetitions of identical religious texts so much in favour with the pious among all Buddhist communities.

Though I could not feel sure as yet in regard to the real nature of the contents, there was enough in the day's discoveries to justify the conclusion that, with the Kharoshthi script transplanted from the extreme North-West of India, an early form of Indian speech had also been brought into popular use within the territories of ancient Khotan, probably from the same region. Such a fact could be accounted for only by historical events of far-reaching importance, which hitherto seemed wholly lost to our field of vision. The fascinating prospect of bringing them again to light made me look out with intense interest for such additional finds as the site might have in store.

That my hopes in this direction had indeed been well founded was proved on the following morning, when I began the clearing of the southern wing of the ruined building. This adjoined at right angles the eastern end of the row of apartments excavated on the preceding day, and communicated with them by a door leading at first into a small room, only 10 ft. broad, which might have served as a kind of ante-chamber. A broad platform, built of plaster some 3 ft. above the floor, and extending along most of the length of the room, looked as if intended to accommodate attendants, an exactly similar arrangement being observed in modern Turkestan houses. A well-preserved oblong tablet, which was the sole find made here, shows a handle at one end and thus closely resembles the Indian 'Takhta' or wooden writing board to which I have already referred in connection with a discovery at Dandan-Uiliq. It also attracted my attention by exhibiting on both sides narrow vertical columns of writing which suggested either a metrical text or else lists.

There was little time to bestow on individual finds when the clearing of the large apartment (N. iv.) immediately adjoining on the south had begun; for from the shallow sand which covered it inscribed tablets of all forms and sizes soon began to crop up in unexpected