

with certainty the introductory formula previously seen less clearly on many of the wedge-shaped tablets: *Mahanuava maharaya lihati*, "His Highness the Maharaja orders in writing." There could be no further doubt that these were official documents. Most of them, I could see, were dated, but only by month and day, while the single lines on the otherwise blank reverses were manifestly addresses. In them I thought I could recognise two personal names or titles appearing again and again. But who were the recipients of these and so many other documents, the administrative officers or simply the clerks of this ancient settlement?

Quite apart from their contents, these documents have a special interest as the first specimens as yet discovered of leather used for writing purposes among a population of Indian language and culture. Whatever the religious objections may have been, it is evident that in practice they had no more weight with the pious Buddhists of this region than with the orthodox Brahmans of Kashmir, who for centuries back have used leather bindings for their cherished Sanskrit codices. The finish given to the leather of those ancient documents indicates extensive practice in the preparation of the material. Small pieces of blank leather of this kind, unmistakably shreds left after the cutting of full-sized sheets and subsequently swept out of the office room, turned up plentifully among the rubbish. The discovery of an ancient pen made of tamarisk wood (see p. 366), in the same refuse heap, helps us still better to realise the conditions of clerical work in that period. The bone knob of the pen had probably served as a burnisher.

But interesting as these details were, they could not compare in importance with the information yielded by the far more numerous finds of Kharoshthi tablets. Many of those unearthed from N. xv. were in excellent preservation and retained intact the original clay seals and strings with which they were fastened. There could be no doubt as to wood having been the general writing material, and it was hence particularly fortunate that I was thus enabled defi-