

'stovana'; the oblong tablets with envelopes as 'lihitaka,' or "letter"; the documents on leather as 'anadilekha,' or "rescript," &c. It is evident that the clerks of those ancient offices had quite as keen a sense for bureaucratic distinctions of this kind as the Babu of modern India, who would never make a mistake about supplying himself with "octavo note" for his D.O's, foolscap for his "fair dockets," or slips for his "office memos."

The necessarily brief notes here presented will suffice to show that these Kharoshthi documents are bound to bring back to light many aspects of life and culture in an early period of Central-Asian history which seemed almost entirely lost from our field of vision. The very nature of the contents and the complete absence of similar records of ancient date in India itself will render their full elucidation a slow and laborious task. But whatever revelations of interesting detail may be in store for us, one important historical fact already stands out clearly. The use of an Indian language in the vast majority of the documents, when considered together with their secular character, strikingly confirms the old local tradition recorded by Hiuen-Tsiang and also in old Tibetan texts, but hitherto scarcely credited, that the territory of Khotan was conquered and colonised about two centuries before our era by Indian immigrants from Takshasila, the Taxila of the Greeks, in the extreme North-West of the Punjab. It is certainly a significant fact that within India the Kharoshthi script used in our tablets was peculiar to the region of which Taxila was the historical centre. Neither the language nor the script presented by our documents can satisfactorily be accounted for by the spread of Buddhism alone, seeing that the latter, so far as our available evidence goes, brought to Central Asia only the use of Sanskrit as the ecclesiastical language, and the writing in Brahmi characters.

It seemed strange that these ruins far away in the barbarian North, overrun by what Hindu legends vaguely knew as the "great sand ocean," should have preserved for us in an Indian language records of everyday life older than any written documents (as dis-