

been the fate of whatever ruin the movement of the dunes may have exposed here in recent times. As the dunes at this site rise to heights over 25 feet, and are proportionately large, they are likely to cover more buildings; but only in one place, about a quarter of a mile north-east of my camp, did we succeed in tracing below the sand the remains of a house built with timber. Its walls, including the usual posts, had decayed by previous erosion to within a few feet of the ground. They were found now buried under the slope of a high dune, which, rising immediately above the ruin, rendered it impossible to clear more than a single room. This had formed apparently the south-east corner of the building, and measured 15 by 12 feet.

Only a single find rewarded the search, but this one had special interest. It consisted of an inscribed wooden tablet (D. R. 01), $5\frac{1}{2}$ in. long and $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. high, found broken in two pieces, and of a second tablet (D. R. 02), which originally must have fitted the former exactly, but was only recovered as a fragment. The obverse of the first tablet shows five lines of cursive Brāhmī writing, which, though the ink has faded with the decaying surface of the wood, could yet be completely deciphered by Dr. Hoernle; its reverse is left blank. The preserved portion of the second tablet has on its obverse part of a raised square socket manifestly intended for a seal, while the reverse displays three legible lines of cursive Brāhmī. Three holes drilled through both tablets in identical positions (one in the centre of the seal cavity, and two about an inch from the opposite edge) undoubtedly served for a fastening string. Plate CVI shows the obverse of both tablets, and will help to explain the arrangement. The latter did not suggest itself at once, and I doubt whether it could have been established with full certainty had not the fortunate discovery at the Niya River Site of those many Kharoṣṭhī documents on wood, to be described in the next chapter, readily furnished the clue.

Inscribed
wooden
tablet.

On comparing the 'double rectangular tablets' in Kharoṣṭhī script, of which specimens are shown in Plates XCIV, XCV, XCVII, it will be easily recognized that the arrangement followed in writing these documents and in securing their contents against unauthorized inspection was the model from which the fashion illustrated by these Brāhmī tablets had descended. They too form, in fact, a 'double rectangular tablet', to use the terminology explained in the next chapter, the first forming the complete 'under-tablet', while in the fragmentary second tablet we have a portion of the 'covering-tablet' which took the place of an envelope. But the long period which had passed between the writing of those Kharoṣṭhī documents in the third century of our era and the time of the unique Rawak tablet, probably early in the eighth century, had witnessed minor modifications in the use of this ancient wooden stationery. The side rims of the under-tablet have disappeared in the Rawak document, and this omission has necessitated a change in the ingenious method of fastening, though the seal-socket on the covering-tablet is retained. Instead of being passed transversely over both tablets and secured in grooves below the clay seal, as in the case of the Kharoṣṭhī documents of this class, the string was here threaded in some manner through the three holes above mentioned and sealed down in the socket. The device was equally effectual for the purpose of uniting the pair of tablets and preventing unauthorized inspection of the matter recorded on the inner sides, but it is less neat and strong than the older method, and the only possible advantage of the change could have lain in the simplification of the make of the tablets and a consequent cheapening of their production. Dr. Hoernle's transcript shows that the language of this curious document on wood was the same Eastern Īrānian dialect in which the paper documents of Dandān-Uiliq are written; of its purport nothing can be asserted at present. Independently, however, of its contents, the record may claim interest as another striking proof that the quasi-archaic use of wood as a writing material by the side of paper survived down to the eighth century.

Fastening of
double
tablet.