

Inscribed  
tablets from  
room N. i.

As the room N. i. was gradually cleared the inscribed tablets or portions of tablets now marked N. i. 100-114 turned up at different places on the low platform of plaster along the south-west wall and towards the centre of the room. Most of them lay close to the mud floor or else above a thin stratum of sand. It was clear that they could have reached that position only by accident. Two more tablets, marked N. i. 120, 122, together with a carved piece of wood from a rail or baluster, N. i. 121 (see Pl. LXX), were found lying on the platform that lined the completely decayed north-west wall, while another inscribed tablet (N. i. 180) was the solitary find near the north-east wall. There was nothing directly to indicate that these tablets had been removed at some earlier date from the main deposit of wooden documents which Ibrāhīm had lighted upon in the southern corner of the room; yet their widely scattered positions seemed to suggest this, and the supposition has since been confirmed by Professor Rapson, who has recognized in tablet N. i. 16 the cover fitting to, and completing the text of, tablet N. i. 104<sup>2</sup>. As soon as I had convinced myself that the room held no other remains, I proceeded to collect carefully the tablets which had been left behind from Ibrāhīm's find. Those lying on the surface of the sand in the adjoining room were marked N. i. 1-52, in the order as they were recovered from west to east, while a search in the sand immediately below them, and in the same order, revealed those numbered N. i. 53-85.

Clearing of  
apartments  
N. v. a. and  
N. ii.

The subsequent clearing of this room (N. v. a.) brought to light only a low plaster platform running round three of its sides. In the same narrow room (N. ii.), however, which communicated by still traceable doorways with N. i. and N. iii., and probably served as a mere passage, three more documents were discovered, among them a remarkably well-preserved one, the 'double wedge' tablet N. ii. 2 with its clay seal and fastening still intact.

Arrange-  
ment of  
wedge-  
shaped  
tablets.

The hundred and odd inscribed tablets with which I returned to camp from my first day's work amid these ruins represented a harvest far more abundant than I could reasonably have hoped for. The remarkable state of preservation in which a considerable portion of them was found made it easy for me, even during the first rapid examination on the spot, to recognize certain main features in their outward arrangement; and the few hours of study which I was subsequently able to devote to them in my tent during the bitterly cold evenings soon familiarized me with some aspects of their use as an ancient writing material. Leaving aside the three tablets found in room N. ii. and some ten pieces which were oblong or otherwise of peculiar form, all tablets from N. i. were wedge-shaped and showed unmistakable evidence of having been originally arranged in pairs. Eight of such pairs of accurately fitted tablets (N. i. 9, 12, 64, 67, 78, 83, 105, 122) were still held together by a string, which passed round the square ends of the wedges and also through a hole drilled into both tablets where their left end tapered to a point. One of the complete pair of wedge-shaped tablets showed invariably on its outside surface a square socket sunk into the wood and communicating with grooves which held the string in carefully arranged cross-folds. This socket, of what I may distinguish as the 'covering-tablet', still retained the clay sealing for which it was intended, either complete or in part, not only in most of the complete pairs (N. i. 9, 12, 64, 67, 122), but also in several of the numerous 'covering' tablets found detached (N. i. 14, 17, 35, 51, &c.). Of such detached tablets altogether some 38 are clearly recognizable by their seal-socket as covering-tablets, many of them also retaining portions of their ancient string fastening.

Covering-  
and under-  
tablets.

The string-hole near the pointed end and the peculiar arrangement of the writing to be referred to presently made it easy to recognize in the rest of the detached wedge-shaped tablets

<sup>2</sup> See *Specimens of Khar. Inscr.*, p. 14; also below, p. 326.