

the help of my Chinese secretary, who, of course, turned with special eagerness to these finds, I ultimately managed to piece together again most of the fragments.

In the end over fifty wooden documents of this sort were collected, their size and shape varying greatly. Some are flat, showing two smoothed surfaces covered with characters; a few are stick-like, with four inscribed sides. Others are written on what is nothing more than the split half of a branch, usually of tamarisk, with one surface roughly smoothed, showing the writing, and the other left in the original round and sometimes retaining the bark. As far as Chiang-ssü-yeh was able to examine them, all seemed acknowledgments, brief orders, and similar miscellaneous petty 'papers' connected with village administration and matters of irrigation. A few are bilingual, bearing, besides Chinese, inscriptions in cursive Brahmi script and that 'unknown' language of Khotan which seems of Aryan type.

There could be no doubt that I had recovered here 'waste paper' remains of some little office. Their poor state of preservation was accounted for by what Haidul Khwaja, an aged villager and Mullah Khwaja's informant, told us of how the rubbish deposit had been dug into by villagers who searched here for saltpetre some forty years earlier. Disappointed in their quest they abandoned the 'site' after a day, leaving the documents incidentally brought to light to rot on the surface. Curiously enough, local tradition seems to have preserved some inkling of the official character of the ruined structure; for Mullah Khwaja and other greybeards of Domoko knew the spot by the name of Kone-ötang, 'the old postal station.'

Several of the Chinese records on wood bear dates in months and days only, and the detailed examination now proceeding has not yet disclosed any documents with the desired full dating. But even in the absence of this the character of both Chinese and Brahmi writing, and the close agreement between the art - remains unearthed eighteen months later at the closely adjoining ruins of Kara-yantak, and those of Khadalik, suffice to indicate that the relics of Mazar-toghrak belong to the closing