

aided by M. Senart and M. l'abbé Boyer, kindly charged himself with the difficult undertaking of editing them and otherwise preparing the way for their elucidation, I was forced by the urgency and extent of the manifold tasks to which I had to devote myself, reluctantly to forego any attempt at systematic co-operation in the arduous but fascinating labours of those learned friends.

Results of
decipher-
ment so far
available.

The painstaking researches carried on by them are not likely to be concluded for a long time, and no definite date can as yet be indicated for the full publication of the texts and the results achieved in their interpretation. But preliminary transcripts and renderings have been recently published of seven documents by Prof. Rapson and of an eighth by M. Boyer; and the interesting information thus rendered available, combined with the notes which Prof. Rapson kindly placed at my disposal early in 1903 for use in my 'Personal Narrative', justifies the attempt to indicate here certain main results which have an antiquarian and historical bearing, and also some of the more curious details. Knowing the exceptional difficulties with which the work of decipherment and interpretation is beset, on account of the very cursive character of the Kharoṣṭhī script and the puzzling phonetic uncertainties of the Prākṛit dialect employed, I recognize that much in the above materials must necessarily remain tentative for the present. At the same time the scholarly acumen and critical thoroughness possessed by Prof. Rapson and his coadjutors make me feel confident that the statements made below will not require modification in essential points in the light of further researches.

Language
and charac-
ter of
Kharoṣṭhī
documents.

Taking then the main facts, it is a source of gratification to me that the conclusions I first arrived at regarding the language and general character of the Kharoṣṭhī documents¹ have been fully confirmed by Prof. Rapson's labours. His exact analysis of the greater part of the collection has made it absolutely certain that the language throughout is an early Prākṛit, closely akin to that of the Dhammapada version contained in the Dutreuil de Rhins MS., and showing a considerable admixture of Sanskrit terms often much garbled. The occurrence of the latter is particularly frequent in the introductory and other formal parts of letters and records, i.e. exactly where the epistolary custom of modern Indian vernaculars has large recourse to phrases of the classical language. As regards a great portion of the documents there can be no doubt that they contain, as surmised by me from the first, official correspondence and records of various kinds, such as reports and orders to local officials on matters of administration and police, complaints, summonses, directions for the supply of transport, &c., to persons travelling on public business.

Kharoṣṭhī
documents
with official
contents.

Of the wedge-shaped double tablets which form so large a proportion of the whole, it appears highly probable that they were generally, if not always, intended for the conveyance of brief orders which concerned the bearer, or in the execution of which the bearer was to co-operate. Of three documents of this class found in N. 1 the translations excerpted above show that they related to the escort or the transport to be supplied to official messengers who are named as carrying the order, and in the third case to a local inquiry to be made into a complaint preferred by the bearer². Among three more wedge-shaped tablets translated by Prof. Rapson and M. Boyer, one (N. xv. 318) directs the provision of camels and an escort to a 'bearer of royal matters'; another (N. xv. 12) apparently relates to a messenger's claim

¹ See the remarks written immediately after the conclusion of the excavations, in my note 'Archaeological discoveries in the neighbourhood of the Niya River', published in the July number of the *JRAS.*, 1901, pp. 569-72; compare also *Preliminary Report*, pp. 50 sq.

² See above, p. 326, for a summary of the contents of

N. i. 104+16 (supply of escort to Ṣameka travelling as messenger from Calmadana to Khotamna); iv. 108 (provision of two camels for Cuvayalina Phummaseva, messenger to Khotamna, and of a third for his companion); i. 105 (inquiry into Opgeya's claim to some property).