

company of 'Yü-mên.' So at last I had found the name of that famous 'Jade Gate' which I had thought from the first was to be located somewhere along this westernmost part of the *Limes*. Again and again in the course of subsequent excavations I felt grateful for the *amor scribendi* which seems to have prompted these ancient 'military Babus'—like those whom one now meets in queer corners of the fortified posts scattered along the Indian North-West Frontier—to beguile their *ennui* and demonstrate their own importance by a constant flow of 'memos,' reports, store statements, and other documents so familiar to soldiering men in most regions.

But here, as at other watch-stations, records with a pleasant touch of actuality and personal interest were not wanting. How strange it seemed to hear my secretary explain the record left on the four sides of a roughly carved wooden stick, telling of a visit which three persons named had intended to pay to their friend stationed here, perhaps the petty officer in charge of the post. Finding him 'out' they had left their 'card,' scribbling down their regret at a missed chat on the best substitute for orthodox 'note wood' they could pick up from the fuel store. No doubt, they left it in the hands of the men on guard; hence they did not think of putting down the date for our benefit.

While Chiang delighted in scrutinizing the hand-writings, finding elegant penmanship here or execrably cursive 'grass script' there, I was gratified by a palaeographic discovery of my own of considerable interest. Among the peculiarities of the wooden stationery used for the Kharoshthi documents which I had the good fortune first to unearth at the Niya site, the cleverly fastened oblong envelopes (Fig. 94) had always seemed to me a specially ingenious device. Without definite evidence, but guided by a number of general considerations, I had in *Ancient Khotan* ventured to advance the opinion that this device, with other equally clever arrangements in the form and fastening of those Kharoshthi letters, might have been originally derived from Chinese models.

The discovery of a perfectly preserved wooden