

'envelope,' about six inches by three, with the exact counterpart of the seal-socket and string-grooves familiar from those Niya finds, now placed my conjecture beyond all doubt. It is true, this particular 'envelope' had served to cover, not a tablet, but a box, as was proved by a small rim sunk on the under surface, and by the Chinese inscription in fine big characters, which indicated that the receptacle of which only this lid remained had been "the medicine case belonging to the Hsien-ming company." But seeing the radical difference between Chinese writing arranged in vertical columns and Indian script for which oblong material, whether birch bark, palm leaf, leather, or wood, was the traditional and most convenient form, the turning of the lid shape to use for a covering tablet was but a kind of intelligent adaptation.

In any case I had here the true prototype of my wooden 'envelopes,' but some three centuries older and used where everything else in the way of writing materials was purely and unmistakably Chinese. Subsequently, when clearing the great refuse heaps of T. XIV., I had the satisfaction of bringing to light Chinese records written on tablets exactly reproducing the shape of the Kharoshthi 'wedges' and dating in all probability from the first century B.C. Thus the Chinese origin of this kind of stationery, too, is placed beyond question.

The selection of this particular ruin for my first excavation proved fortunate also in respect of certain structural features which the protection offered by the adjoining débris made it possible to ascertain. Among these I may mention here only the existence of regular stairs which led up to the roof from the principal guard-room and thence probably to the top of the tower. Another feature was the abundant plastering and painting bestowed on the tower, probably with a view of making it better visible from a distance. On the east side we counted the layers left by four or five plasterings and more than a dozen coats of whitewash. The top coat bore the rough sketch of a camel (Fig. 171). As another curious detail I may mention that, on scraping the level ground south of the mound, we came upon two stout posts fixed in the