

The fact already mentioned that the débris of the falling tower had crushed at least a portion of the quarters, together with the roofing of reed bundles laid over Toghrak beams, explains why more fittings and implements, left behind after the abandonment of the post, were found at this ruin than at other stations where the deserted quarters had probably lain exposed for many centuries. No place, however, within the quarters had been turned into a dust-bin before they were abandoned, and hence the number of inscribed pieces found here was not great, only about a dozen in all. But several of them are of special interest on account of their local associations or for some other reason. A definite date is furnished by the 'slip' fragment T. VIII. ii. 2, *Doc.*, No. 585 (Plate XVI), which mentions the year corresponding to A. D. 8, and thus agrees with the chronological evidence contained in T. VIII. i. 9, No. 586, which refers to Tun-huang by the name *Tun-tê* 敦德. This was the designation borne by the district at the time of the usurper Wang Mang, A. D. 9-23. The fact that both these dated records were found within the rooms of the post, and are not likely to have been left there a very long time before its abandonment, deserves to be noted. We shall see that none of the documents discovered at stations to the west of the ancient 'Jade Gate', marked by the remains at T. XIV, nor those at T. XIV itself are of a later date than the reign of Wang Mang.⁴ This points to the conclusion that the westernmost section of the Limes may have been abandoned not long after that period.

Remains of roofing.

Document of A. D. 8 found at T. VIII.

Two records relating to objects which undoubtedly belonged to this watch-station are curious in themselves, and also claim importance because they give us the name of the detachment entrusted with the guarding of it. The inscribed lid T. VIII. 5, *Doc.*, No. 588 (Plate XVII), was a particularly interesting discovery, the value of which I at once recognized. The obverse of this piece of wood measuring about $6\frac{1}{2}$ by $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches, with its rectangular socket for a clay seal and its string grooves, exactly reproduced the shape and arrangement so familiar to me from the envelopes of the rectangular Kharoṣṭhī tablets of the Niya and Lou-lan Sites. A small rim sunk on the under surface proved that this particular 'envelope' had served to cover not a tablet but a box, and there was the Chinese inscription, written in fine big characters above the socket for the seal, to show that the receptacle, of which only this lid remained, had been 'the medicine case belonging to the Hsien-ming company'.

Inscribed lid of medicine case.

Here we clearly have the true prototype of the wooden envelopes from Niya and Lou-lan, some three centuries older than they are and used where everything else in the way of writing materials was purely and unmistakably Chinese. It confirms, in the strongest possible way, the conjectural opinion which I formed on the strength of my first Niya finds and recorded in *Ancient Khotan*,⁵ that the device of those wooden envelopes, with other equally clever arrangements in the form and fastening of the Kharoṣṭhī letters and documents, was originally derived from Chinese models. But, apart from this important evidence concerning the ancient stationery in wood, the lid T. VIII. 5 (found, I may add here, in the débris covering the stairs in room i) is of antiquarian interest as proving that regular medicine cases were already included in the military equipment of troops in Han times.

Chinese origin of sealed wooden envelopes.

Less curious, perhaps, but equally valuable archaeological information is furnished by the wooden label T. VIII. 6, *Doc.*, No. 587 (Plate XVII), which on the obverse is inscribed: 'The Hsien-ming company of *Yü-mên*,' and on the reverse: 'Hundred bronze heads for arrows of the Mêng type.' There can be no doubt that the label was meant to be attached to a bag or small box holding this quantity of ancient ammunition provided for the company named, and the presumption is that the guard for the post T. VIII was at the time furnished by the company. The fact that the Hsien-

Ammunition of Hsien-ming company.

⁴ See below, pp. 688, 694.⁵ Cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 361 sq.; also above, p. 382,

for similar confirmatory evidence supplied by inscribed wooden lids of the L.A. Site, Lou-lan.