

CHAPTER XI

FINDS ALONG THE ANCIENT CHINESE *LIMES*

BEFORE proceeding to describe finds of special interest among the ruins of the Chinese *Limes* reference may conveniently be made here to the historical facts, already briefly mentioned in the second chapter, which throw light on the construction of this border line and explain its main purpose. When the great Emperor Wu-ti had ousted the Huns from their grazing-grounds at the northern foot of the Nan-shan in the year 121 B.C., military colonies were at once established in that passage land which was to serve his 'forward policy' towards Central Asia. The Han Annals tell us that at the same time the construction of a wall was started westwards in extension of the earlier 'Great Wall' of China. There can be no doubt that its main purpose was to protect the great highway thus opened for trade and political expansion into the Tarim basin.

As the Huns were still hovering all over the desert tracts to the north, it was obviously essential to make this long line of communication safe both for trade and troop movements. The wall of the Emperor Wu-ti, intended to serve as the instrument of China's expansion westwards, thus offers a striking analogy to the earlier *Limes* systems of the Roman Empire; for we know now that the lines of the