

and the fragment of a well-known Chinese lexicographical work. A great mass of wooden 'shavings' showed that here as elsewhere some officer or clerk, eager to improve his penmanship, an important matter for Chinese until late years, had used improvised tablets for writing exercises, by paring them down with a knife again and again to obtain a fresh surface.

We must now leave this westernmost section, already occupied, as we have seen, from the time of the first construction of the *Limes*, in order to turn to a rapid survey of its remains farther east. Plenty of interesting observations and finds were to be made also along what I may call the marsh sections of the *Limes*. Before, however, touching upon these I may briefly mention the watch-station T. VIII met on the way eastwards. When first seen by us it presented itself as a mere low mound covered with gravel. But its position pointed to a watch-tower having once stood here. On excavation it proved to contain the debris of a brick-built tower which had, perhaps through faulty construction, completely collapsed and in its fall buried the walls and roof of the guard-rooms adjoining.

When these had been cleared there were found among other curious relics (Fig. 75) a measure in the shape of a bootmaker's foot-rule marked with the inches of the Han period; and wooden seal cases with grooves arranged to hold a fastening string just as on the covers of Kharoshthi tablets from the Niya and Lou-lan sites. There was a wooden label stating that the box or bag to which it was once attached contained a hundred bronze arrow-heads of a specified type belonging to the Hsien-ming company of the Jade Gate. Of such ancient ammunition for crossbows there were