

The necessity of 'making both ends meet' is more than once emphasized in a fashion which allows us to realize how hard the task must have been. Yet in accordance with an administrative policy which seems to have been followed by the Chinese from the very beginning of their military activity in the Tarim Basin, there was a systematic effort kept up to make the local garrison self-supporting by turning the soldiers into military colonists. We have indisputable proof of this in the numerous inscribed tablets which specify allotments of lands, either already under irrigation or prepared for it, or yet to be cleared, to small sections of troops for purposes of cultivation. The kinds of cereals and fodder crops which were to be grown on particular areas are sometimes set forth in detail.

A superintendent of local agricultural labours is referred to, and he was probably the official responsible for the issue of agricultural implements, such as spades, saws, and ropes, receipts or requisitions for which are numerous among the records. A special officer in charge of irrigation is mentioned. Elsewhere we read a report of the flood having broken through an irrigation embankment in several places, an apt illustration of the danger which always threatens agriculture in low-lying deltas of Turkestan rivers. Of another ever-present risk we catch a glimpse in a letter which was to assure its recipient that certain shepherds sent south with their flocks had after several marches reached water. It was evidently a case when particular tracts of riverine jungle had become useless for grazing owing to their water-courses running dry or getting diverted.

Reports from or to an inspector of the armoury about articles of military equipment lost, materials required for leather armour, helmets, crossbows, etc., show that the peaceful preoccupations of those responsible for the small colony did not altogether efface its military purpose. But characteristically enough, in the great majority of the cases where individual soldiers, apart from officers, are specified, we find them described as 'Hu' or barbarians. It is of considerable interest that their nationality, wherever more