

eleven by fourteen feet, partly cut out of the live clay of the narrow ridge occupied by the tower. On clearing it and a little terrace or loggia which faced it from the south, we recovered two dozen more Chinese records on wood, nearly half of them complete and in good preservation. One of these, as we recognized with joy on the spot, showed a clearly written date corresponding to 35 A.D. This meant a farther step back in antiquity. Chiang was sure that almost all the 'slips' referred to military posts or individual officers, though he could not make out all the details. So I concluded that the room by the side of the watch-tower had served as quarters for some officer or clerk attached to the troops guarding this part of the line.

M. Chavannes' analysis has since fully confirmed my conjecture. One neatly written label, with a string still attached, had evidently been taken from a bundle containing a soldier's outfit. From my learned collaborator's translation I now know that it mentions the company (*Hsien-wei*) he belonged to, as well as the locality (*Wan-sui*) which he helped to guard. Over a dozen blank tablets of the regular size evidently belonged to the stock of stationery kept ready at this little office. Small miscellaneous finds were abundant among the refuse within the quarters and strewn the slope. Apart from remains of cups of glazed stone-ware, spoons of wood, a broom, a wooden seal, I may mention a fire-stick (Fig. 173, 3), exactly conforming to the pieces found at the sites of Niya and Endere as regards shape and arrangement of the holes in which fire was produced by rubbing.

On the evening of that day we were joined by eight fresh labourers sent with a Ya-mên attendant, and I was heartily glad to get them; for the men of the first batch already complained of exhaustion. Even the chance of gaining rewards by lucky finds failed to retain them longer, though at first it had appealed to them greatly as confirmed gamblers. Inwardly I could scarcely condemn them altogether; for with the temperature falling that night to a minimum of seven degrees below zero Fahrenheit, the strong wind still blowing from the west made itself felt intensely. Luckily fuel was abundant.