

But that this point must have been occupied far earlier by a post of some importance soon became evident when my search revealed extensive refuse layers not only on the slopes below the débris mound but also on others farther away. As inscribed pieces of wood recovered from the latter ranged from 61 B.C. onwards, it seems probable that this rubbish had been thrown out from some structures which existed earlier and have completely disappeared. These various refuse deposits yielded so rich a harvest of Chinese documents that from the first I could not doubt that they marked the position of an important post, probably the quarters of some sectional commandant. M. Chavannes' analysis and translation of the records recovered from this post (T. xv. A), altogether over 160 pieces, have fully confirmed this conclusion. They have also revealed the existence of so large a number of specially interesting pieces that I cannot refrain here from at least alluding to a few of them.

Foremost in importance from the philological point of view is a beautifully written and perfectly preserved triangular tablet about fourteen inches long, which contains the first chapter of a lexicographical work, the *Chi-chiu-chang*, famous in Chinese literature and the subject of much learned commentary. As it is known to have been composed between 48 and 33 B.C., and as the tablet discovered by me must have been written within a century or two later, the critical importance which it possesses for the history of the traditional text can be easily understood even by the non-Sinologist. In any case M. Chavannes, in a preliminary notice communicated to the Académie des Inscriptions, has declared this tablet to be the earliest authentic specimen of a Chinese literary text. The particular work has always been much in use among Chinese students; and the discovery of pieces from it, not here alone, but at other *Limes* stations, proves that the studious habits of the race were represented even among the soldiers exiled on this desolate border.

Another very curious find consisted of a batch of eleven neatly written bamboo slips, scattered but clearly marked by their identical shape and writing as originally belonging