

incidents of administrative routine and the still more numerous records concerning the internal economy of individual detachments, it is of special interest to come upon a few documents which give us a glimpse of the political power creating and protecting this border. The question how such documents, emanating, it appears, from the imperial chancellerie, should have found their way to an outlying military post is not easily answered. But M. Chavannes' scholarly analysis makes it certain that one of the records from the rubbish heap of T. VI. B has preserved for us an imperial edict directing the establishment of a military colony. Unfortunately there is no date given, and the tablet is not complete. Though the colony is evidently to be created in the territory of Tun-huang, the execution of the imperial order is entrusted to the governor of Chiu-ch'üan, corresponding to the present Su-chou. This important centre after its occupation in 115 B.C. seems to have served, in fact, as the main base for the political influence which China under the Emperor Wu-ti (140-85 B.C.) pushed farther and farther westwards. Two thousand soldiers raised from the garrison of the Tun-huang command, and some more troops from Chiu-ch'üan, under a complete staff of officers and accompanied by native functionaries, "were to proceed to the locality to be occupied and to establish there an agricultural colony." The governor in person was charged with the duty of "examining the configuration of the ground and selecting a suitable position. Utilizing natural obstacles, a rampart was to be constructed in order to exercise control at a distance."

This document, with its first-hand record of a phase in Chinese expansion on these marches, is full of historical interest; but we can neither fix its exact date nor determine the location of the new military 'colony.' The reference to 'natural obstacles,' as well as the find-place of the document would, of course, make us think of some locality along the fortified border line. The skill with which the old Chinese engineers utilized the natural defences offered here by lagoons and marshes has been emphasized already more than once. But there remains the plain fact to be