

Limes
advanced
beyond
Tun-huang,
101 B. C.

Wherever the Jade Gate may have been situated in 103 B.C., it is certain that this important frontier station must have been advanced within a very few years after that date to the site of T. XIV on the Limes west of Tun-huang. We know from the concordant record of Ssü-ma Ch'ien and the Former Han Annals that immediately after the great success achieved by Li Kuang-li's second expedition against Ta-yüan (102-101 B.C.) the Limes was pushed forward beyond Tun-huang. By that exploit Chinese prestige among the states in the 'Western Regions' was greatly raised. 'Most of them sent envoys to China with offerings of tribute; while the Han imposed office on more of the Western region potentates.'¹⁹ Thus there followed at once a rapid increase in the diplomatic relations of China with the West, and in trade also. In order to safeguard the passage of envoys and of caravans, and to assure supplies for them *en route*, it is stated that 'military posts were established from place to place from Tun-huang westwards to the Salt Marsh'.²⁰ That the construction of the line of the Limes beyond Tun-huang must be meant here is made perfectly clear by the result of my explorations along it. The discovery of exactly dated documents, such as the one of 98 B.C. at the watch-tower T. XXII. c (*Doc. No. 271*) and of those ranging from 96 to 94 B.C. at the site of the Yü-mên headquarters, T. XIV (*Doc. Nos. 304-6, 308, 309*), affords conclusive confirmation of the chronological accuracy of the historical records.

Western-
most ex-
tension of
Limes
reached by
96 B. C.

The last-named documents leave no doubt that the Limes reached the site of T. XIV, and that the Jade Gate was established there, by 96 B.C., if not several years earlier. Considering that one of these documents, No. 304, of the year 96 B.C., mentions [*Ta*]-*chien-tu*, the name borne by the westernmost section of the Limes proper comprising the watch-stations T. IV. a-c,²¹ and that a record actually found at T. IV. b (*Doc. No. 430*) bears a date which can safely be read as corresponding to 94 B.C., I feel justified in concluding that the extension of the Limes following Li Kuang-li's second expedition must have been carried right through to the extreme end of the wall by 96 B.C., if not earlier.

Rapid con-
struction of
Limes wall.

This rapid construction of the Limes wall and watch-stations over absolute desert in the course of a few years can cause no surprise. Great as the physical difficulties must have been on ground bare of all resources and over considerable distances even devoid of water, the historical records show us how well prepared Chinese military organization at this period was to overcome them. When Li Kuang-li set out in 104 B.C. for his first expedition against Ta-yüan, a force of 10,000 men raised in China was dispatched with him by the Lop Desert route. Not more than one or two tenths of those who had set out are said to have returned then.²² Yet two years later, on Li Kuang-li's start for his second expedition, we read of military movements on a much bigger scale proceeding along this most difficult route. 'There marched out of Tun-huang a force of 60,000 men, not including camp followers, accompanied by 100,000 cattle and upwards of 30,000 horses,' etc. It is but reasonable to suppose that a certain portion of this force was utilized for the construction of the Limes beyond Tun-huang, which would help to safeguard the army's line of communication and facilitate its provisioning.²³

By the extension of the 'Great Wall' beyond Tun-huang, which resulted in the placing of the Jade Gate headquarters at T. XIV, the last forward step had been taken on the Limes which was

¹⁹ Cf. Wylie's translation from the *Ch'ien Han shu*, *J. Anthropol. Inst.*, x. p. 22. See also Kingsmill, *Intercourse of China*, etc., *J.R.A.S.*, 1882, pp. 28 sq.

²⁰ Cf. Chavannes, *Documents*, p. vi, with note 5. The text there quoted assigns the construction of these military posts to the year 101 B.C.; see also Wylie, *J. Anthropol. Inst.*, x. p. 22.

²¹ See above, pp. 636, 648, 691.

²² For a rendering of the account in Ssü-ma Ch'ien's *Memoirs*, chap. cxxiii, cf. Kingsmill, *Intercourse with China*, *J.R.A.S.*, 1882, pp. 23 sqq.

²³ According to Ssü-ma Ch'ien the Chinese army on its arrival at Ta-yüan 'numbered some 30,000 men'. When, on its return in 101 B.C., it entered the Jade Gate, it is stated to have been 'about 10,000 strong, with a thousand horses'; see Kingsmill, *loc. cit.*, pp. 25, 28.