

Watch-dogs
on ration
strength.

'Indigenous
function-
aries' on
Lines.

Indigenous
population
on Kan-su
border.

Fire-signal
service on
watch-
towers.

heaps, and even within the confined quarters, would also have sufficed to prove it. No doubt, mounted men were often employed for the rapid transmission of letters and messages, as seen from Nos. 614, 662. Apart from the men on picket duty, we find that soldiers passing by on the march are referred to in connexion with the issue of supplies, e.g. the 'soldiers of the escort' in No. 602, or the eighty-seven soldiers accompanying the envoy to Yārkand, No. 311. Finally, it may be noted that the monthly indent for food-supplies from a certain watch-post commandant, No. 487, T. xv. a. ii. 6, includes not only the men but also watch-dogs. They were to receive rations, being evidently kept on the sanctioned strength of the picket. Here, too, we see modern developments anticipated.

In order to conclude our review of the personnel of the Tun-huang Lines it only remains for us to consider the references repeatedly made to the *t'u-li* 土吏, 'indigenous functionaries' or 'local authorities', as M. Chavannes translates the term elsewhere.⁵⁵ We have already had occasion, in connexion with stations of the extreme south-west flank of the Lines, to notice their employment on the border-line.⁵⁶ A number of documents, naming them either together with watch-post commandants or as recipients of orders from such and other Chinese officers,⁵⁷ make it quite certain that they had a regular share in the control and protection of the Lines. That it was a subordinate one may safely be concluded from the low rank of those from whom orders to them emanate. Yet such an order as that contained in No. 150 concerning the supervision of the traffic going and coming through 'the pass' shows that the service with which they were charged had its responsibilities also. It seems on every ground very probable that their position in many respects, as far as administrative control of non-Chinese natives was concerned, may have closely resembled that occupied by the 'Bēgs' of modern Turkestan, whom Chinese petty officials are only too ready to burden with a great part of their own official duties.

That some indigenous population had remained on the north-west marches of Kan-su after the first conquest of these from the Hsiung-nu we shall have occasion to mention.⁵⁸ The constant and increasing passage of trade caravans, political missions, and military forces is likely to have brought it additions from the Tārīm Basin, just as Tun-huang at the present day has its, albeit small, foreign colony. A surmise as to the presence of an Iranian element in that population has been hazarded above on the strength of the tally tablet in Early Sogdian script found at T. vi. c.⁵⁹ The Chinese reproduction of such 'indigenous functionaries' names, as found in Nos. 138, 140, 150, furnishes no safe indication. But we may, perhaps, recognize with M. Chavannes a reference to this indigenous non-Chinese population in the record No. 433, T. iv. b. i. 6, which complains: 'The ramparts are in ruin and are not kept in repair. The population and the soldiers of the garrison do not live on good terms.'

SECTION VI.—SERVICE AND CONDITIONS OF LIFE ON THE LINES

Among the duties which kept the small detachments at the watch-towers of the Lines occupied attendance to the service of fire-signals was of particular importance, and as the information to be gathered about it from the documents is very clear, we may well notice it first. The evidence collected by M. Chavannes from Chinese historical texts¹ proves that a system of optical telegraphy

⁵⁵ Cf. *Documents*, p. x.

⁵⁶ See above, pp. 648, 653.

⁵⁷ Cf. *Doc.* Nos. 51, 138, 139, (140?), 143, 144, 150, 552, 681. In Nos. 49, 145 they are referred to in reports.

No. 375 introduces a certain 'local official' as bearer of a communication to the governor.

⁵⁸ See below, chap. xxvii. sec. iii.

⁵⁹ See above, p. 654.

¹ Cf. *Documents*, p. xi.