

Records of
postal
service.

A number of records prove the maintenance of a postal service along the line of watch-towers, the dates of receipt and dispatch of letters, with their numbers and addresses, being duly noted.²⁰ In one case (No. 614) it is specially recorded that the communication was brought by a mounted man. As M. Chavannes has duly pointed out, provision for sending urgent orders, etc., along the wall by means of couriers using relays of horses was important for occasions when atmospheric conditions rendered the use of fire-signals impossible. A poem of T'ang times which he quotes puts the transmission by this method of a report concerning a Hsiung-nu attack on the westernmost Limes graphically before our eyes.²¹ To M. Chavannes, too, we owe the right explanation of the numerous 'slips' found at different watch-posts which merely announce messages from certain officers or are confined to the dispatcher's name and the date. These were, no doubt, meant to accredit persons entrusted with verbal orders or communications to the respective recipients.²²

Control of
traffic
through
Limes
'barrier'.

We have already had many occasions to observe that the control of those who entered or left the 'barrier' of the frontier must have formed an important duty for the officers and men stationed on the Limes.²³ References to this passage across the guarded border-line are frequent in the documents. It is significant that almost all these were found at watch-stations which by their very position necessarily played a prominent part in the exercise of control over this trans-border traffic. Thus at T. VI. b we have documents enjoining strict compliance with the official orders about 'the men, domestic animals, carts, and arms which leave or enter through the pass'.²⁴ At T. XIV, the Jade Gate headquarters, we find an order to the captain of the company there stationed prohibiting for the time being the departure from the 'pass' of caravans that transport objects other than those of ordinary use.²⁵ From T. xv. a, the place where, as we have shown, the 'new route of the north' passed out of the line of the Limes, comes a document referring *inter alia* to the regulations which concern 'the leaving and entering' (*ch'u ju* 出入) of the barrier.²⁶ From the same three watch-stations we have also plain records of specified soldiers having passed, or being about to pass, outside the barrier on particular dates.²⁷ I may here conveniently mention that all references we have to carts, such as, no doubt, were used largely for the traffic which passed through the barrier, are found in documents from T. xv. a or T. XI, the latter a watch-post on the actual caravan route as followed to this day.²⁸

Receipts
for food-
supplies.

The importance of careful arrangements for provisioning the detachments on guard and the troops passing along the desert Limes has been duly emphasized before. Details connected with these supply arrangements are referred to in numerous documents. Particularly frequent are receipts for food-stuffs, usually specified as wheat, millet, or rice, issued to individual soldiers or groups, and other similar statements.²⁹ Three such records, Nos. 563-5, dating from A. D. 50 and 53, are of special interest as they mention specified food contributions received by certain soldiers

²⁰ See Nos. 275, 367, 454, 455, 614, 615. In Nos. 80-83 the dispatch of 'official tablets', bearing registration numbers, through subordinate officers is recorded.

²¹ See *Documents*, pp. xii sq.

²² Cf. Chavannes, *Documents*, p. xv, with detailed references; also p. 21 on No. 45, where he justly points out the analogy furnished by the fact that many of the 'demi-official' Kharoṣṭhī wedge-shaped tablets found by me at the Niya Site were still unopened. See also above, p. 653, note 5.

²³ Cf., e.g., above, pp. 655, 677 sq., 691, 693, 709, 733.

²⁴ See Nos. 148, 149, 150.

²⁵ Cf. No. 379, T. XIV. i. 9. No. 380, T. XIV. i. 10+19, is an urgent order which apparently gives authority for allow-

ing certain persons to proceed on reaching Yü-mên.

²⁶ See No. 553; for the position of T. xv. a, cf. above, pp. 705 sqq.

²⁷ Cf. *Doc.* Nos. 67, 219, 541. No. 436, from T. v, seems to record the arrival of a certain official bringing arms and the time when he passed the barrier (*ju kuan* 入關).

²⁸ See *Doc.* Nos. 466, 475, 688; above, pp. 666 sqq.

²⁹ See *Doc.* Nos. 223, 226-8, 326-8, 405, 406, 418, 428, 435, 441, 602.

For lists of documents specifying the several kinds of food-stuffs (wheat, millet, rice), see *Documents*, p. xiv, notes 7-9.