

Prolonged
occupation
of T. XI.

There is no archaeological reason to be urged against this dating, though obviously it must remain conjectural for the present. It is true that, as we shall see further on, none of the definitely dated records from the watch-stations west of T. XIV, the locality of the ancient 'Jade Gate', come down later than the period of Wang Mang (A. D. 9-23), and this fact seems to favour a presumption that the guarding of the westernmost portion of the Limes wall was abandoned at a time not far distant from that reign. But, on the other hand, there can be no doubt that the route to Lou-lan and the Lop region always passed close to T. XI, just as it does now, and it seems to me on topographical grounds very probable that this station, being the last where drinkable water was obtainable on the way westwards until the vicinity of T. IV. b or of Toghrak-bulak was reached, may have continued to be occupied, at least occasionally, long after the regular guarding of the wall west of T. XIV had ceased. We shall have occasion presently to consider evidence pointing to the same conclusion in respect of T. XII. a.

Mention of
Kuan-chi
and *Tang-ku*
company.

A third record from the same refuse-heap, T. XI. ii. 1, *Doc.* No. 681, is of interest because it names a certain 'indigenous functionary' of *Kuan-chi* and 'the captain of the *Tang-ku* company'. The fact that *Kuan-chi* is twice mentioned in records found at T. XII. a strongly suggests that the locality meant must be looked for on this section of the Limes, perhaps at T. XII. a itself and the closely adjoining station of T. XII. We are led towards the same conclusion by the name of the *Tang-ku* company, which is otherwise found only in a document from T. XIII, the next station eastwards. In this record, T. XIII. i. 3, *Doc.* No. 401, it is spoken of as 'the *Tang-ku* company of *Yü-mên*', and what I shall be able to show further on as to the identity of *Yü-mên*, or the 'Jade Gate', with T. XIV explains why we may expect to find references to a company having its head-quarters there among the documents of stations that lay only some three and eight miles respectively westwards.

Han foot
and inch
measure
from T. XI.

Chinese records on wood were also recovered from the refuse-heaps iii and iv, which were found on the slopes of the knoll to the south and north-west of T. XI; but none of them call for special notice here. Among the miscellaneous relics from the several refuse layers of this station it will suffice to mention T. XI. ii. 13, a foot-measure carefully made out of a slip of cane and excellently preserved. In exact conformity with the above-discussed foot-rule T. VIII. 4, it has ten divisions, each measuring $\frac{9}{10}$ of an inch, and thus conclusively proves that the foot of the Han period was equivalent to 9 inches.² For an explanation of some half-petrified stacks of reed fascines found to the north of the tower I must refer to the last section of this chapter. Owing to the very confined nature of the ground they were placed on the narrow ridge along which the wall was carried, three of them being within, and four others outside, its line.

Marshy
depression
east of
T. XI.

The marsh which extends with open sheets of water on the east of the plateau bearing T. XI could not be crossed until I moved more than a mile northward, where the surface of the depression turns into a partially dried-up salt bog. Passing this with some difficulty, I reached firm ground again at the northern end of a small island-like plateau, about a mile long and less than half a mile across.³ On this little plateau I failed to trace any remains of the wall, though it fell into the same line. In all probability there was no need for a protecting wall here, since the plateau is isolated on the west, south, and east by deep and quite impassable marshes. From the north, too, it can be approached only over boggy ground which, if the water-level in Han times was but a couple of feet higher than at present, would have been equally impracticable then. As it was, I had to make a not inconsiderable detour to the north before the depression on the east, holding deep water and morass, could be crossed to the long and narrow plateau on which the towers T. XII. a and T. XII stand.

² See above, pp. 374, 660; also below, pp. 672, 701.

³ The configuration of the ground is correctly shown in Map No. 74. D. 3. In Pl. 33, by an error of the draughtsman

which escaped attention, the marsh to the west of the isolated plateau is represented as wider than the one to the east of it, whereas the opposite holds good.