

No. 720, refers to the dedication of a statue of S'akyamuni and contains various Buddhist prayers and the like. The discovery here of the first-named fragment, apart from its chronological value, has an interest of its own as a fitting tribute to the memory of Hsüan-tsang; for there can be no doubt that the pious traveller on his return journey in A. D. 645 to Tun-huang must have passed within a few yards of the hillock where a relic of his devoted labours was discovered twelve and a half centuries later.

SECTION II.—THE POSITION OF THE YÜ-MÊN HEADQUARTERS

We shall see that the discovery of this T'ang shrine, built over the remains of a site which was abandoned in Han times, is a fact of considerable archaeological interest. But before we explain its reason it will be advisable to review the evidence to be gathered as to the character of the site both from the records and from the miscellaneous 'finds' which the ancient refuse-deposits yielded. I may deal with the latter first because their close agreement in type with the relics found at other stations of the Limes is obvious and renders detailed treatment unnecessary. That their number is relatively large is shown by the Descriptive List in Chapter XX, and, considering the almost total absence of structural remains, this abundance serves by itself as a proof of the importance of the site. It was not the protection afforded by heavy débris from fallen towers or walls but the extent and thickness of the refuse accumulations themselves which account for both records and miscellaneous objects having survived here in plenty. Among them it will suffice to single out for mention the numerous remains of lacquered bowls showing neat ornamentation (T. XIV. 001; ii. 001; iii. 002, 003, etc.); a painted ivory fragment, iii. 0020; an iron axe blade, 003 (Plate LIV); a piece of cane matting, iii. 0016 (Plate LIV), perhaps from a fan, and the wooden knife sheath, vii. 005. Among the plentiful fabrics, both of silk and of a variety of coarse materials, the small fragment of a finely worked silk embroidery, i. 005, is of special interest as foreshadowing a class of needlework well illustrated by later examples from the 'Thousand Buddhas' of Tun-huang.

Miscellaneous objects from T. XIV.

Dated records range from 96 B. C. to A. D. 19.

Turning now to the written remains, we must note in the first place their large number. Eighty of them are included in M. Chavannes' publication, and there would be far more of them if those coming from the well of T. XIV. i had not suffered from damp and thus become undecipherable.¹ The dated documents belong mainly to two distinct periods, separated by about a century, and this chronological division approximately corresponds to the two main groups which can be distinguished among the records by their *provenance*. Among those found in the refuse layer T. XIV. iii on the top of the hillock we have no less than five (Nos. 304-6, 308, 309) which go back to the years 96-94 B. C., and thus to the time of the first establishment of the Limes beyond Tun-huang. A sixth dated document found here, No. 307, shows the year A. D. 14, marked by a *nien-hao* of the usurper Wang Mang. On the other hand, we have five documents, *Doc.* Nos. 367-9, 371, 372, with dates ranging over the years A. D. 9-19, all comprised in Wang Mang's reign, among the finds from the tunnel and well T. XIV. i. Dates intermediate between these two periods are found among the records from other refuse deposits. T. XIV. ii has furnished a fragmentary slip, No. 338, dated 48 B. C., and another, No. 339, on which Chiang Ssü-yeh was able to read the date 45 B. C. From T. XIV. iv comes No. 355 of the year A. D. 4, while No. 356 from T. XIV. vii probably was written in A. D. 15. It seems reasonable to conclude that the beginning of the first century B. C. and the time of Wang Mang were periods when this station received a particularly ample flow of official correspondence, representing probably also increased activity.

¹ See *Documents chinois*, pp. 71-86; Nos. 343-6, 348, 349 have not been counted, as they come from another site T. XIV. a.