

Fire-signals to stations within cultivated area.

inhabited area, there must have been also arrangements for transmitting fire-signals from the line of the wall to the military headquarters and to the *t'ings* inside the oasis.⁷ Even now there are plenty of watch-towers to be found within the cultivated area of Tun-huang and the border districts eastward which may at one time or another have been used for similar purposes.^{7a} But as they are built mostly with layers of stamped clay, and no datable remains are traceable on the surface near them, it is impossible to determine their age. We may, however, probably recognize a reference to such signal-stations at a distance from the Limes wall in *Doc.* No. 61, which gives 'a list of the fire-signals in the [military district of the] *Yi-ho tu-[wei]*', and among the names mentioned for them we find such as *Kuang-chi*, *K'un-lun*, and *Yü-tsê*, which can otherwise be proved to have been those of headquarters stations within the command of Tun-huang.⁸

Traces of signal-fires.

We have other relics of the fire-signal service once maintained along the Limes, besides the watch-towers themselves, which, as their shape and position show, must have been primarily designed for that purpose. Where the tops of the towers were still intact or accessible, I could often trace the mark left by the fires once lit there in the burnt red colour of the clay or brickwork.⁹ But even the perishable materials used for these signal-fires have survived in places to the present day. In the light of the evidence of the above-quoted texts and documents, it can no longer be doubted that the regular stacks of fascines, made up of reeds, brushwood, or Toghrak branches, which I found near a number of watch-towers, T. VI. b, XI, XII. a, etc., either in a half-petrified condition or else reduced to small calcined fragments through burning,¹⁰ had been prepared and kept ready mainly for use in signal-fires. When lit on the spot, they would produce those columns of thick smoke, the true *fêng* 烽, which, as we have seen, were needed for signalling in day-time. At the same time the fascines could equally well be carried off for use as torches for night-signalling on the towers, or put to more homely use in keeping fires going in the picket's modest quarters. The number of fascines needed both in the construction of the wall and for constant supply at the watch-towers must have been very great. Hence it seems very probable that, as suggested by M. Chavannes, fascines are meant in the fragmentary slip No. 609, which mentions a total of 42,330 bundles, *shu* 束, i. e. faggots.

Stacks of fascines for signal-fires.

Look-out kept at watch-towers.

That keeping a careful watch and guard along and beyond the Limes wall was an essential duty for the small detachments posted at the watch-towers does not need special proof. We find this duty often referred to in the documents by the term 候望, which M. Chavannes has fully explained.¹¹ One document, No. 555, where a modified term is used, distinctly tells us that out of four soldiers on duty on a certain date 'one constantly mounted guard', while two others collected fuel and the fourth apparently acted as cook. Elsewhere, too, similarly plain references are coupled with records of 'fatigues'.¹² But more curious is the nexus in which we find this duty of watching enjoined in the fragmentary order No. 265. M. Chavannes translates it: 'Keep your look-out with zeal; clearly *delimitate the celestial fields*; observe the movements which take place beyond the frontier; whatever you learn, at once . . .'

The phrase *hua t'ien t'ien* 畫天田, of which the words in italics in the above translation are

⁷ It is likely that the line of watch-towers traced from T. xiv south towards the extreme end of Nan-hu cultivation near T. xviii. a, b, served such a purpose, and that they existed before the secondary wall, discussed above, pp. 691 sqq., was built along it.

^{7a} The lighting of signal-fires as a means for assuring safety against attacks is specially referred to in the votive inscription of a woodcut, presented by an officer of the Tun-huang force, probably in the tenth century; see M. Petrucci's remarks on Ch. 00205, in Appendix E, 1.

⁸ Cf. the text quoted in M. Chavannes' note, *Documents*,

p. 26, on No. 61; also *Doc.* Nos. 398, 462.

⁹ Thus, e.g., at T. vi. c, xiv, xix, xxi, xxiii. a, etc.

¹⁰ Cf. above, pp. 650, 677 sq., 711. As explained there, the regular 7-feet size of the fascines in these stacks proves that they were available also for any repairs which might be necessary in the Limes wall.

¹¹ Cf. *Documents*, p. xiii; also p. ix, note 3; *Doc.* Nos. 60, 189, 265, 432, 495, 623. *

¹² See No. 279, 281, where the plain *hou* 候 suffices to indicate the guard-mounting.