

is directed against those officers who receive gratifications for ignoring acts against regulations and neglecting the duties of their charges.<sup>77</sup>

Records of appointments, border incidents, etc.

Among official communications dealing with specific incidents we find some where officers are inculpated or accuse themselves of shortcomings.<sup>78</sup> But far more numerous are those where new appointments, returns to duty, and similar service orders are notified.<sup>79</sup> Official announcements in advance of 'inspections along the barrier', such as we find in certain documents, obviously deprived these inspections of any risk of causing awkward surprises.<sup>80</sup> Yet even thus we read of cases of unauthorized absence among the men when inspected.<sup>81</sup> In a few records we are afforded glimpses of attacks and alarms such as must more than once have disturbed the peaceful, if physically trying, police routine of the Tun-huang border.<sup>82</sup>

Calendar records from Limes.

With the official 'papers' may be suitably classed also the very numerous pieces containing portions of calendars, written on wooden slips and tablets of varying sizes and often fragmentary.<sup>83</sup> Such were obviously needed in order to enable the clerical establishments to date reports, etc., correctly, to make out accounts, and so on. Usually these portions of calendars show in order the cyclic designations, arranged according to the sixty years cycle, which a particular day bears in the successive twelve months of the year. This system has enabled M. Chavannes to fix in many cases the exact year intended, and in this way to restore complete calendars with absolute precision for the years 63, 59, 39 B.C., and A.D. 94, 153.<sup>84</sup> The result of his painstaking calculations affords valuable help for the verification of the tables prepared by Chinese chronologists. In this connexion it is of some interest to observe that an otherwise exactly dated document, No. 255, of May 10, 68 B.C., bears an erroneous *nien-hao*. The year is shown as the sixth of the *Pên-shih* period, which in reality had been replaced in 69 B.C. by the *Ti-chieh* period. This inaccuracy clearly points, as M. Chavannes observes, to the fact that the communications between the capital and the extreme western border were interrupted at the time.<sup>85</sup>

Erroneous *nien-hao* indicated.

Private letters found on Limes.

By the side of the official communications and records, private letters figure in considerable numbers among the written remains from the Limes.<sup>86</sup> Most of them are too short or fragmentary to yield information bearing on the life of the border or to be otherwise of antiquarian interest. But special mention is due to two letters on silk, one long and well preserved, T. XIII. i. 003 (Plate XX),<sup>87</sup> which were found sewn up into a small bag for holding some medicine or condiment—luckily with the written surface turned inside. They were both addressed by an officer of superior rank stationed at Ch'êng-lo on the northern border of Shan-hsi to another exile on the Tun-huang Limes, the long one being intended to serve as a letter of recommendation for a colleague transferred to a post on the latter. Amidst much polite verbiage it also expresses the writer's disappointment at not having, after five years' service 'on the northern frontier, in a miserable country', attained the desired charge of a command, for which he appears to have repeatedly petitioned the Emperor. In two other letters also we find the writers lamenting the hardship of the guard service on the

<sup>77</sup> Cf. No. 404.

<sup>78</sup> See Nos. 171, 204, 536, 567.

<sup>79</sup> See, e.g., Nos. 137, 150, 155, 255, 493.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Nos. 37, 51, 140. <sup>81</sup> See No. 536.

<sup>82</sup> See Nos. 172, 408, 548.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. *Doc.* Nos. 9-24, 25-35 for the series from T. VI. b, containing the calendars for 63 and 59 B.C.; also Nos. 36 (57 B.C.), 256, 260, 264, 429 (39 B.C.), 537 (A.D. 94), 538, 591, 595, 640, 680 (A.D. 153), 685, 697.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. *Documents*, pp. xvii, 14.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. *Documents*, p. 61. For similar cases of dates given

in elapsed *nien-haos* see above, p. 408, and *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 275, note. M. Chavannes' remarks, *ibid.*, pp. 533 sqq., make it quite certain that the erroneous *nien-haos* named in the Dandân-oilik documents of A.D. 781-7 were due to the isolation of Eastern Turkestan from the Empire through the Tibetan occupation of westernmost Kan-su in A.D. 781.

<sup>86</sup> See *Doc.* Nos. 151-4, 174, 178, 180, 243, 254, 344-6, 348, 349, 398, 398 a, 419, 468, 489, 501-2, 573, 607, 629, 706-7 (the last two on paper).

<sup>87</sup> See *Doc.* Nos. 398, 398 a (where the site-mark has been wrongly read as T. XIII. i. ii. 001. a).