

official report or petition, addressed in due form 'to Mr. Chang, Commander-in-Chief of the Western Regions, by me Yüan, for transmission through Superintendent Wang.' The document itself, which is likely to have been written on wooden slips in accordance with conservative office tradition, may have been carried away elsewhere by the Commander-in-Chief's *chancellerie*. But the cover was left behind on the rubbish heap, and for us attests the great man's passage.

There are slips, unfortunately mere fragments, which give us glimpses of military action on a stage manifestly not local and probably far away on the north or west. But the great majority of the records are such as plainly indicate the modest range of the duties and interests looked after by those whose offices fed the rubbish heap with their 'waste paper' (*recte* wood). Theirs was the business of looking after the maintenance in food-supplies, arms, and arable land of a small Chinese military colony, which was intended to guard and keep open one of the main routes linking China proper with the far-flung Central-Asian outposts of imperial policy.

Yet even the petty records of administrative routine acquire a distinct interest for the historical student by the light they throw on practical details of organization, which had their importance in the story of Chinese political expansion, but are never noticed by the dynastic Annals. Most numerous are the statements and orders relating to the storage and issues of cereals by the officials in charge of the local military magazine. The elaborate system of control in vogue is illustrated by the list of those who had to check inventories and countersign orders. Detailed statements of issues to individuals or small detachments acquaint us with the daily rations of grain sanctioned per man, and with the way in which the keep of camels and donkeys placed at their disposal for marches was provided for. Difficulties must often have attended the provisioning of the local garrison, besides keeping supplies available for those who passed through. This is curiously illustrated by repeated orders urging the reduction of issues in due proportion for the several classes of officers and men.