

the packed bundles within it, were found other reed bundles bound with bark twists after the fashion of fascines and forming a facing. The thickness of the reed bundles was about eight inches and their length uniformly eight feet. The extant height of the wall, where our experimental digging had revealed it, was about five feet.

There was no time now to investigate constructive details about this strange wall, nor could they by themselves furnish a clue to its date and origin. But a lucky chance rewarded this first scraping with finds of manifest antiquity. Within the reed bundles exposed on the top of the wall remnant there turned up a rag of coarse white fabric resembling hemp, such as found at the Lop-nor sites; a birch of Toghrak twigs; several small rags of gay-coloured silk; fragments of wooden boards; and, finally, a carefully cut piece of hard wood about four inches long, mortised on the back and bearing on its flat obverse five Chinese characters of remarkable clearness and good penmanship.

Even to me in my Sinologist ignorance the writing looked strikingly old, and a sort of intuition made me suggest to Chiang-ssü-yeh that it must be of Han times. But my devoted helpmate, modest in spite of his learning, confessed that palaeography had not been his special field of study, and would commit himself only to the cautious statement that the characters looked decidedly older than those used under the Sung dynasty in the tenth to the twelfth centuries A.D.

Often I chaffed my excellent literatus thereafter about the learned restraint he had shown on that occasion, and how my own antiquarian 'bold shot' was destined to prove right! Though Chiang quite correctly read the short inscription, there was nothing in its contents to give a chronological clue. It simply stated that the object to which the little wooden label had been attached was "the clothes bag of one called Lu Ting-shih." This and the other small relics had turned up within a few square feet, and clearly showed that the ground along the wall, in spite of its desert character, must have been occupied at points. But at the time it was less easy to form a definite