

the walls at a height of eight inches or so did not give any clue.

So all hope of solving this structural puzzle with any certainty rested upon what records or other finds excavation might yield. I lost no time about starting them, but at first with very scanty results. The search made in those portions of the great halls where the original floor still survived, proved fruitless, except along the foot of the north wall in the central hall. There we discovered half-a-dozen fragments of inscribed wooden slips. Some of them seemed to relate to individual soldiers, naming their places of origin far away in Ho-nan and elsewhere; but none of them gave dates or any hint as to the character of the ruin.

Then I had the whole of the fairly well protected narrow court on the north side searched, and was just beginning to wonder at the total absence of any refuse heaps when at last, on scraping the ground at the foot of the tower occupying the north-west corner, we came upon two-score inscribed pieces of wood and bamboo scattered amidst straw and ashes. Still more abundant were blank bamboo slips, all much worn and repeatedly scraped, evidently representing 'waste paper' which had been prepared for fresh use as palimpsest records. The inscribed tablets, too, had here for the greater part suffered badly from moisture, and it was not until the very last piece turned up that Chiang could recognize a precise date. As it corresponded to the year 52 B.C. it now became certain that the ruin dated back to the early period of the *Limes* occupation.

But the doubt about the nature of the ruin did not lift until Chiang, by such prolonged poring over these records as would have done credit to any Western palaeographer, made quite sure that two among them distinctly referred to a granary. In the course of these days the idea occurred to us both, as well as to Naik Ram Singh, independently, that this strange big building might have been erected for the purpose of serving as a supply-store to the troops stationed or moving along the wall. The structural peculiarities above noted; the small openings for ventilation;