

a fight seen from the top of a watch-tower. But the great majority of the official records are such as plainly indicate the modest range and humdrum nature of the duties carried out by those whose offices provided most of the 'waste paper' (*recte* wood) thrown on the rubbish-heap. We see clearly that their business was chiefly concerned with the maintenance in food-supplies, arms, and arable land of a small Chinese military station which was intended to guard and keep open one section of the earliest of the routes linking China with the Central-Asian outposts of imperial policy. Yet the very pettiness of the administrative routine which these records illustrate invests them with a distinct historical interest; for they throw light on practical details of organization which had their importance in the story of Chinese political expansion right across Central Asia, and which manifestly helped to maintain it for centuries in the face of vast distances and great physical obstacles.

Statements  
concerning  
granary.

Most of these documents are statements or orders which relate to the storage and issues of cereals by the officials holding charge of the local granary. We read in No. 759 of 'a superintendent of the granary respectfully submitting a specified list of the various cereals under his administration with a forwarding letter'. The provision of an adequate clerical staff for dealing with this branch of administration is attested by numerous slips mentioning accountants and other officials (see Nos. 728, 731-46). They also illustrate the elaborate system of control in use by showing the lists of those who had to check inventories and countersign issue orders or receipts. From detailed statements, such as Nos. 728, 729, 731, 734, 739-41, etc., recording issues to individual soldiers, petty employes, etc., or small detachments, we learn the daily rations of grain sanctioned per man. The long statement No. 928 acquaints us with the manner in which the accounts of grain issues were kept and checked. No. 798 is of special interest as mentioning rations issued to letter-carriers from Yü-t'ien or Khotan. Loan transactions of grain are referred to in Nos. 749, 766.

Orders  
about sup-  
plies.

Besides provisions for the local garrison, supplies had to be kept available for officials and others who passed through. Difficulties about supplies were bound to be caused by the limited extent of local resources in a colony situated, as this was, in a deltaic region ill adapted for permanent cultivation. Of this we have clear evidence in the document No. 826, in which the unnamed recipient is directed 'now, in view of the circumstances, to make fresh reductions in the rations of the general, the chiefs, the officers, and soldiers, and to draw up a list of these reductions, article by article'. Another fragmentary slip, No. 830, enjoins 'the gradual restriction of expenditure in order to make both ends meet'.

Orders for  
agricultural  
operations.

The demands for supplies arising from the traffic along a great trade-route must have made it doubly important from the outset to render the local garrison self-supporting. We know from the Han Annals that it was an essential part of the administrative policy followed by the Chinese from the very beginning of their military penetration of the Tārīm Basin to turn the troops which were to assure their hold upon important points into military colonists and thus to facilitate their maintenance.<sup>14</sup> We find striking confirmation of the systematic efforts made for this purpose in those records of the Lou-lan Site which concern agricultural operations. The well-preserved tablet, No. 753, gives details of the allotments of lands, either already irrigated or prepared for it or yet to be cleared, which are to be made to specified sections of troops for purposes of cultivation. Particular orders about sowing operations, etc., are contained in No. 925. In No. 882 a superintendent of agricultural labours is referred to. No. 760 is a specific order issued to the chief of a certain section about the irrigation of a hundred acres in the *Pei-ho* 北河 tract.<sup>15</sup> No. 774 enjoins the abundant planting of vegetables for the sake of winter provisions. That the agricultural implements for these

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Wylie, *Notes on the Western Regions*, *J. Anthropol. Inst.* x., pp. 22 sq., 27.

<sup>15</sup> *Pei-ho* means literally the 'northern river' and may

well be a local designation intended for an area of cultivation on a northern branch of the ancient Kuruk-daryā.