

had been cut down to some extent in order to provide a safe and adequately wide foundation for the tower. From this again it could be reasonably concluded that the general shape of the ridge must have been in Han times much the same as now. Nevertheless, the progress made by erosion was clearly indicated by the fact that both to the north and east the outer masonry of the tower had disappeared along with its clay foundation.

As seen from the plan and section, the original clay bank between tower and room had been left standing to a thickness of about three feet, and still survived to about the same height. In the south-east corner of the room there was found a low platform, six feet by two, in plaster, and facing it in the south-west corner a projecting post of brickwork which, judging from the blackened surface of the adjoining remnant of the wall, is likely to have served for lighting fires. The smoke, in accordance with common Chinese practice to this day, would be allowed to find its way outside through a hole in the roof. It was interesting to note that the entrance had been approached on the south by a kind of ramp, cut into the live clay and about three feet wide, leading up to a narrow terrace or landing in front of the entrance. This ramp could be traced down to a level about ten feet below that of the floor in the room, and this indicates the minimum extent of erosion which the ground adjoining the ridge must have undergone before Han times. The deepest point of the depression immediately to the south appeared now to lie about seventeen feet below the level of the floor and the base of the tower. But, of course, it is impossible to say exactly how much of this difference of seven feet is due to erosion subsequent to the erection of the watch-station. About twenty yards to the west of the foot of the tower there was found a small heap of millet straw with a piece of reed-matting, which had found shelter under the clay debris fallen from a small knob of the ridge and was lying on a level about six feet beneath the tower base. Being in all probability coeval with the occupation of the post, it makes it probable that the ridge even then had an irregular outline not very unlike that shown by Fig. 153.

Watch-tower built on clay ridge.

Depth of erosion.

It was in the refuse lying to a height of a foot or two above the landing previously mentioned outside the entrance that the first documents of T. XXVII had been found. The complete clearing brought to light in the same place over a dozen more inscribed slips, among them some intact and the rest either broken or mere shavings. To these were added seven more pieces, T. XXVII. 13-19, from the interior of the room. One of the new finds (now No. 562), as we recognized with much satisfaction on the spot, showed the clearly written date of the 11th year *Chien Wu*, corresponding to A. D. 35, and marked a further step back in antiquity. Another, No. 565 (*Doc.*, Plate XVI), in excellent preservation, furnished the date of A. D. 53. Thus the dates represented among the seventeen records from this ruin which M. Chavannes has included in his *Documents* as being decipherable (Nos. 562-78) are now proved to range over A. D. 35-61. Chiang Ssü-yeh felt sure that the great majority of them referred to military posts or individual officers, though he emphatically disclaimed any attempt to make out the details. So I could not fail to arrive at the conclusion, to which every archaeological fact also pointed, that the room by the side of the watch-tower had served for the accommodation of some officer or clerk attached to the troops that guarded this section of the Limes.

Discovery of Chinese records dated A. D. 35-61.

This conclusion has since been fully confirmed by M. Chavannes' decipherment and lucid interpretation of the documents. It would be supererogation and, indeed, of little practical utility if, on the basis of his exhaustive labours, I should attempt to review the records from the ancient Chinese Limes separately as they were found at each of the many sites along its far-flung line. I shall instead restrict myself, here and elsewhere, to a brief mention of such points attested by the documents as have a direct bearing on the date, locality, purpose, and similar features of each individual ruined structure. For a general synopsis of the data which M. Chavannes' unsurpassed

Chinese records discussed by M. Chavannes.