

Ancient Chinese Wooden and Bamboo Rolls

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Permanent Seminar on Manuscript Analysis, Description, and Documentation
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Example 1:

MS “Juyan Hanjian 128.1”

Roll (complete), ca. 23 x 91 cm

77 wooden slips, hemp binding strings (largely intact)

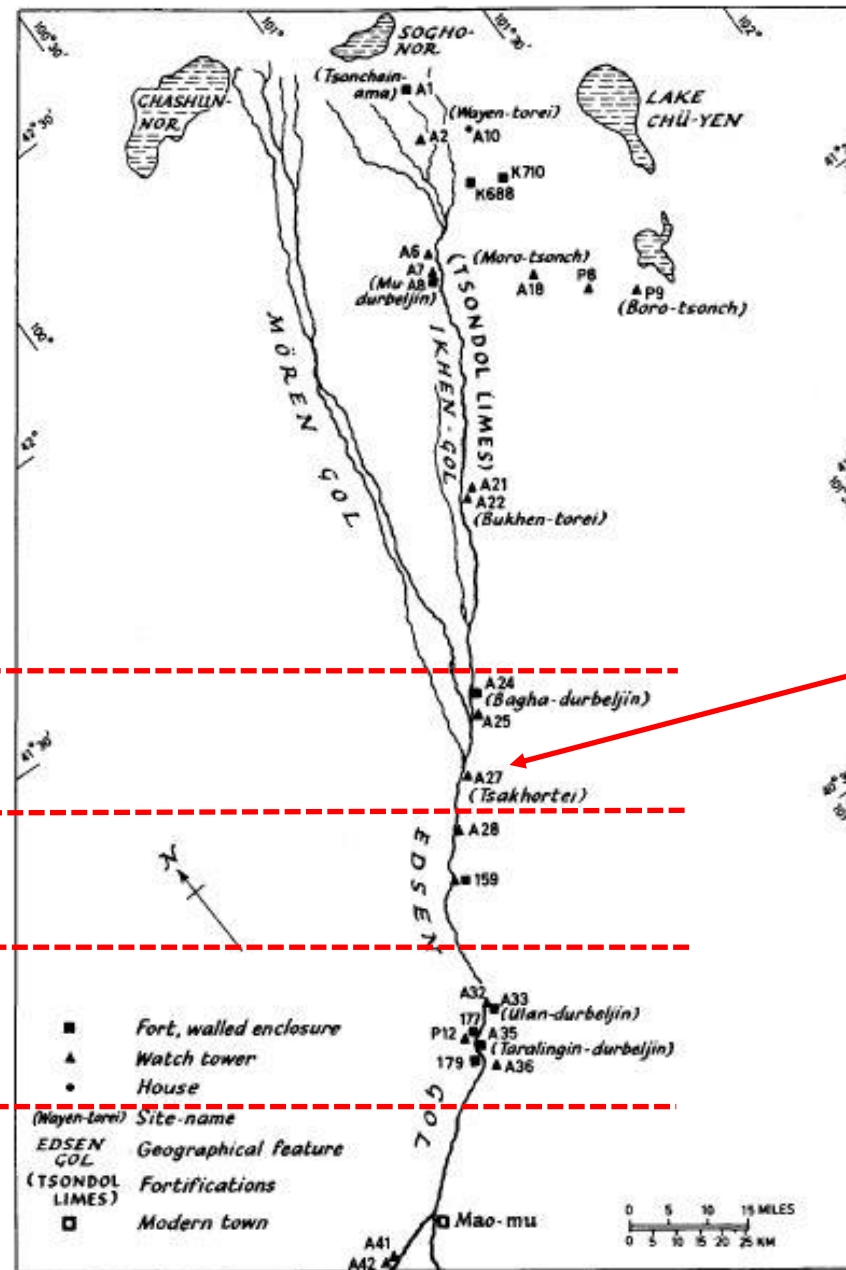
Late 1st c. CE

Excavated 1930 at site A27 (Tsakhortei), Inner Mongolia (PRC)

Collection of Academia Sinica, Taipei



[\(http://museum.sinica.edu.tw/exhibition/38/item/33/\)](http://museum.sinica.edu.tw/exhibition/38/item/33/)



Guangdi
company

Tuotuo
company

Jianshui
company

Jianshui
lieutenant
commander

Site A27 (Tsakhortei),
ruins of an ancient watchtower

(Loewe 1967, 184)

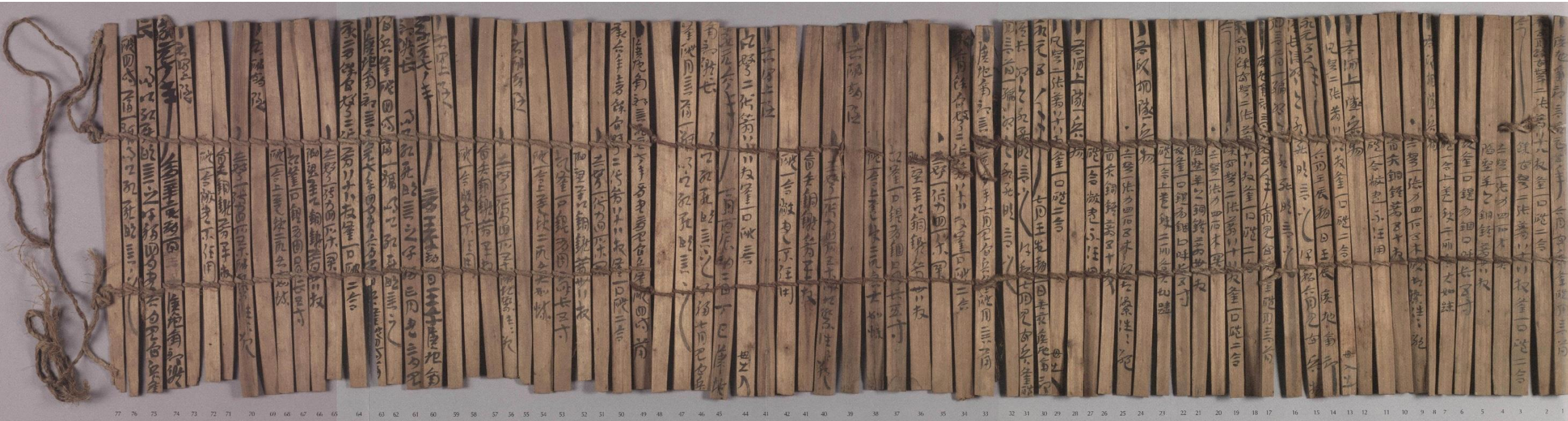
(after Sommarström)



Beacon tower near the
“Jade Gate pass”, Dunhuang
(<https://kknews.cc/zh-sg/culture/mlbnpop.html>)

Folke Bergman (1902-1946)
(<http://museum.sinica.edu.tw/exhibition/38/item/33/>)



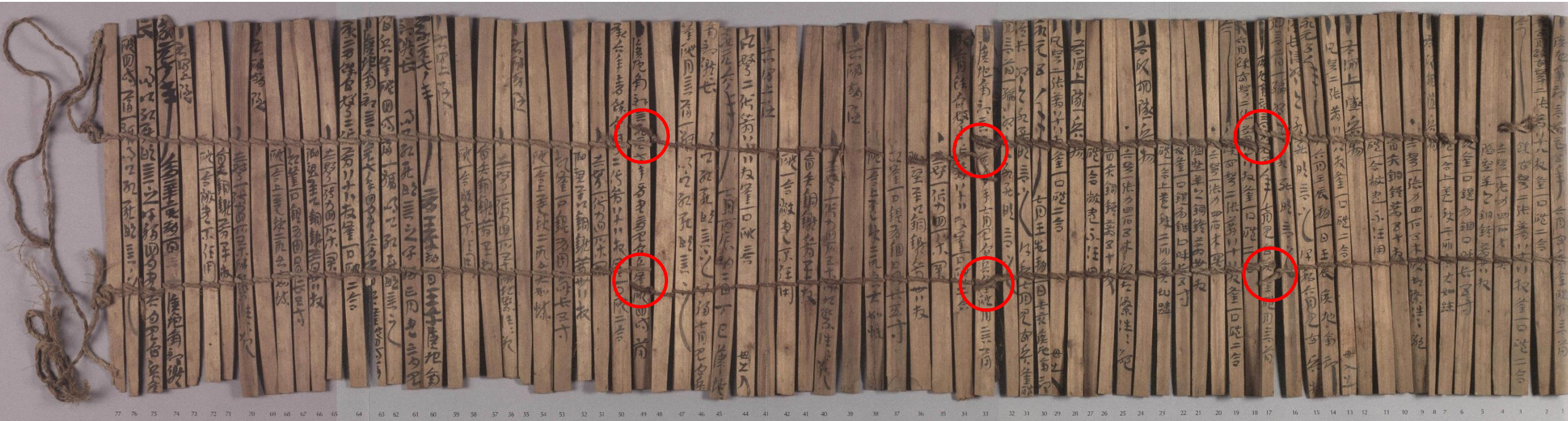


MS “Juyan Hanjian 128.1” (Academia Sinica, Taipei), recto
(Jiandu zhengli xiaozu 2015)

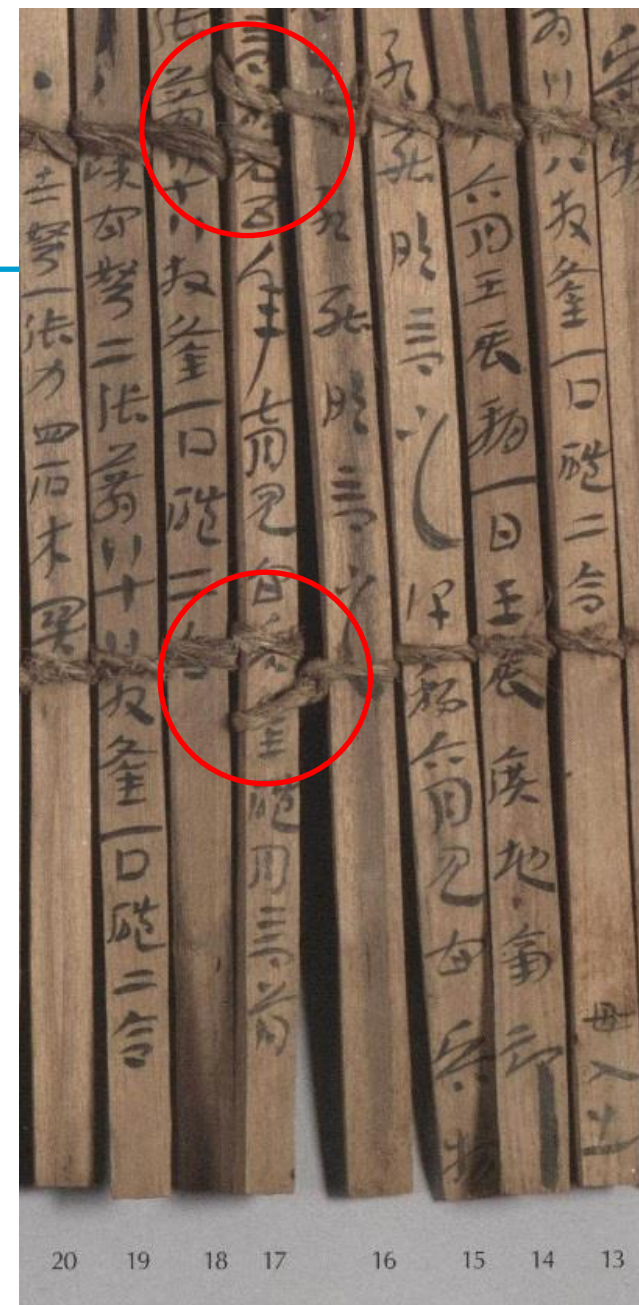
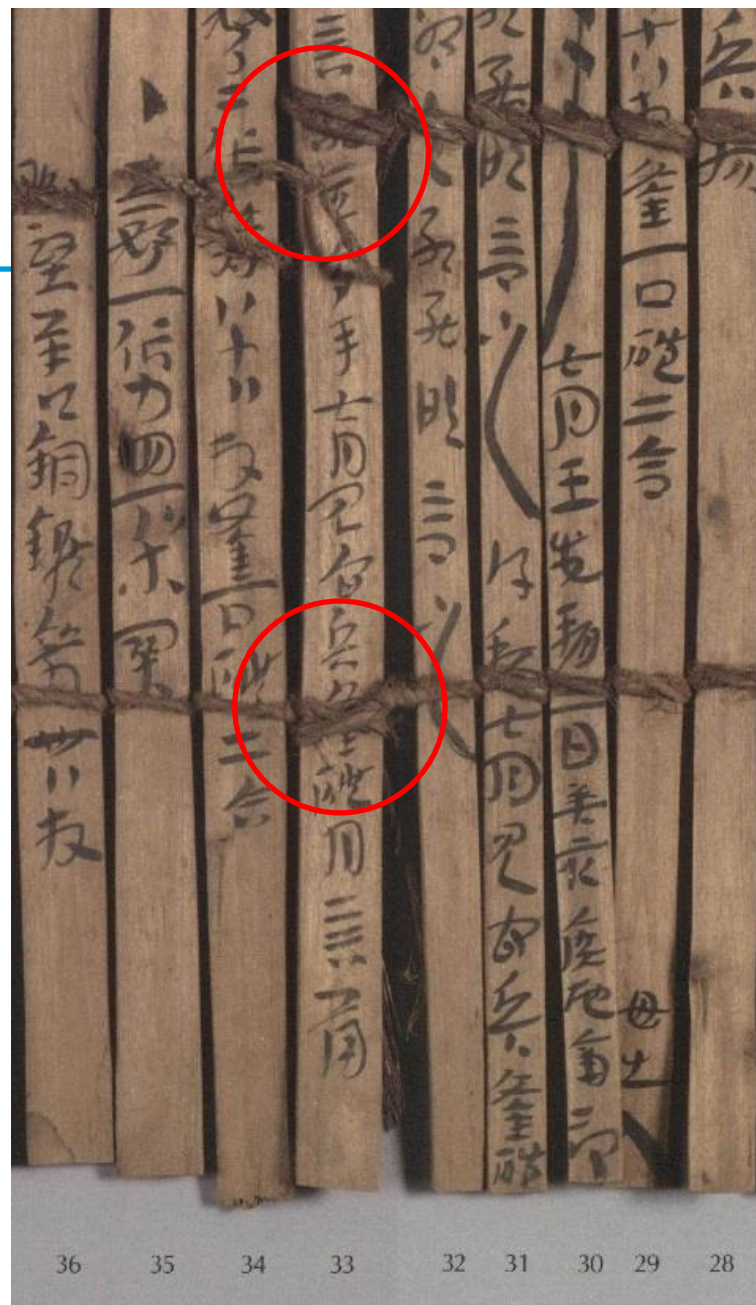
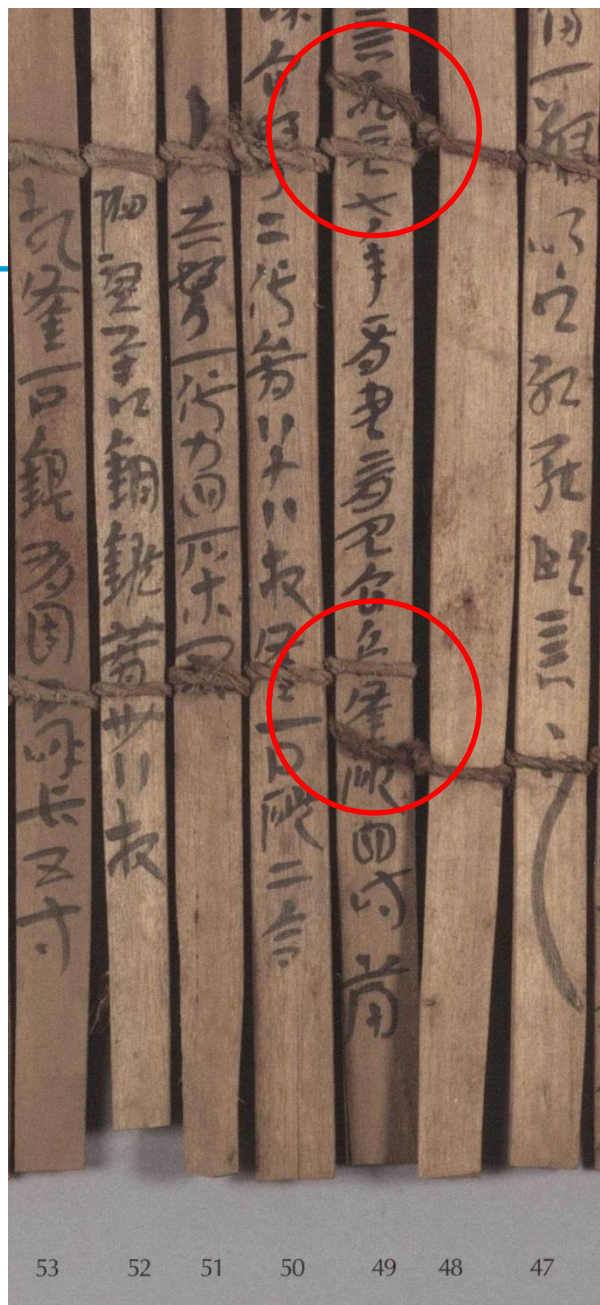
Excerpt from “Table with information on the physical properties and excavation site of the inscribed objects”
(Jiandu zhengli xiaozu 2015, 269)

- Item number: 128.1
- Length (cm): 91.0
- Width (cm): 23.1
- Thickness (cm): 0.3
- Weight (gram): 254.82
- Excavation site: A27/Tsakhortei
- Reproduction: yes
- Comments: binding strings

簡號	長 (公分)	寬 (公分)	厚 (公分)	重 (公克)	出土遺址	收入圖版	備註
127.6	16.3	1.4	0.4	1.86	A8 破城子	v	
127.7	15.3	1.1	0.3	1.23	A8 破城子	v	燒痕
127.8	13.1	0.8	0.3	0.92	A8 破城子	v	
127.9	7.3	1.0	0.3	0.38	A8 破城子	v	
127.10	10.1	0.9	0.3	0.65	A8 破城子	v	燒痕
127.11	9.3	1.9	0.3	1.58	A8 破城子	v	
127.12	7.1	2.4	0.2	0.56	A8 破城子	v	
127.13	7.8	1.9	0.3	0.78	A8 破城子	v	
127.14	2.0	5.6	2.0	7.34	A8 破城子	v	燒痕
127.15	10.1	0.9	0.8	2.11	A8 破城子	v	
127.17+127.16	6.5/11.3	1.6	0.3	1.09	A8 破城子	v	
127.17							參見 127.16 (127.17+127.16)
127.18	5.4	1.2	0.3	0.57	A8 破城子	v	
127.19+185.19	15.6	2.3	0.5	3.44	A8 破城子	v	
127.20	6.6	0.9	0.3	0.23	A8 破城子	v	
127.21	4.4	1.0	0.2	0.18	A8 破城子	v	燒痕
127.22	18.1	1.7	0.4	2.11	A8 破城子	v	
127.23	7.1	1.9	0.3	0.49	A8 破城子	v	
127.24	22.8	1.0	0.2	1.35	A8 破城子	v	
127.25	21.4	1.4	0.5	2.01	A8 破城子	v	
127.26	6.2	1.3	0.3	0.90	A8 破城子	v	燒痕
127.27	23.1	1.6	0.4	3.89	A8 破城子	v	
127.28	23.3	1.1	0.3	2.63	A8 破城子	v	
127.29	12.4	1.7	0.4	1.15	A8 破城子	v	
127.30	11.0	1.5	0.3	0.81	A8 破城子	v	
127.31	6.7	1.9	0.3	0.74	A8 破城子	v	
127.32	7.5	1.0	0.2	0.31	A8 破城子	v	燒痕
127.33	11.3	1.0	0.1	0.36	A8 破城子	v	燒痕
127.34	6.0	0.4	0.2	0.09	A8 破城子	v	
127.35	9.5	1.0	0.3	0.35	A8 破城子	v	
127.36	10.3	1.0	0.2	0.47	A8 破城子	v	燒痕
128.1	91.0	23.1	0.3	254.82 (含編繩)	A27 查科爾帖	v	編繩
128.2	24.0	1.3	0.5	5.08	A27 查科爾帖	v	



MS “Juyan Hanjian 128.1” (Academia Sinica, Taipei), recto
(Jiandu zhengli xiaozu 2015)





slips 1-16

slips 17-32

slips 33-48

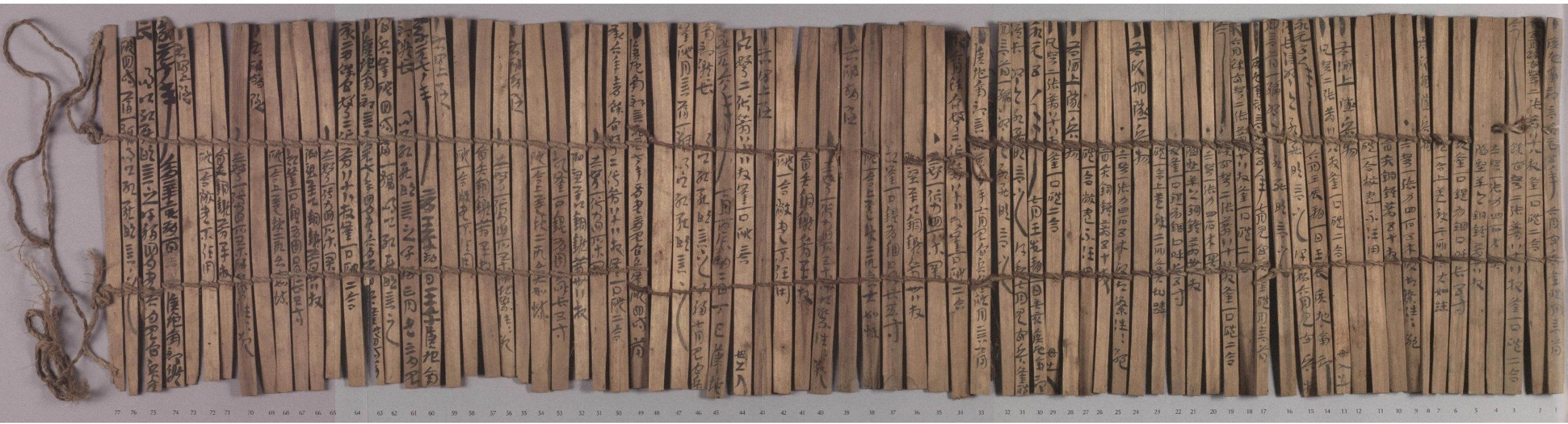
slips 49-77

Production unit 1

Production unit 2

Production unit 3

Production unit 4



slips 49-77

slips 33-48

slips 17-32

slips 1-16

Production unit 4

Production unit 3

Production unit 2

Production unit 1

MS “Juyan Hanjian 128.1”, production unit 1 (slips 1-16): content

- Month-report account by the southern section of Guangdi [company] on the governmental weapons, cooking pots and millstones [in stock at its subordinate units] in the sixth month of the 5th year of the *yongyuan* era (i.e., 93 CE). [1]

Carried over from 5th month: Remaining governmental crossbows: two; bolts: 88; cooking pots: one; millstones: two sets. [2]

At present: Remaining governmental crossbows: two; bolts: 88; cooking pots: one; millstones: two sets. [3]

- Red crossbow: one, strength of four stone, wooden lock(?); [4]
Defective(?) hard sheep-head bronze bolts: 38; [5]
Old cooking pot: one, the lid(?) has a repaired crack of five inches length; [6]
Millstones: one set, the upper part is fragmented at two places, each as large as a [...]. [7]

- To the right are the weapons and utensils of the Puhu watchtower. [8]

[...]

MS “Juyan Hanjian 128.1”, production unit 1 (slips 1-16): content – continued

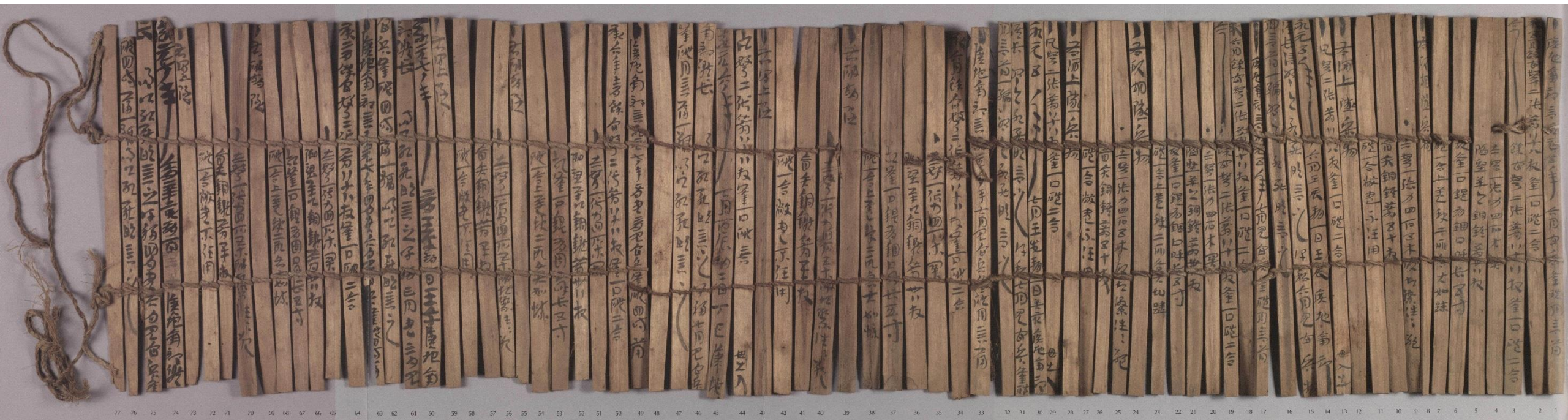
[...]

- Red crossbow: one, strength of 4.5 stone; wood broken, trigger often comes loose(?); [9]
[...] bronze bolts: 50; [10]
Millstones: one set; worn, entirely unusable. [11]

● To the right are the weapons and utensils of the Jianshang watchtower. [12]

● Overall: crossbows: two; bolts: 88; cooking pots: one; millstones: two sets. No change [from the previous month]. [13]

5th year of the *yongyuan* era, 6th month with the first day *renchen*, on the first day, *renchen*, the Head of the southern section of Guangdi company_[14], Xin, knocks his head to the ground [and risks] capital punishment venturing to report the following: I carefully forward_[15] the month-report account on the extant governmental weapons and utensils for the 6th month, one “binding” (i.e., roll). [Xin] knocks his head to the ground [and risks] capital punishment venturing to report this. [16]



slips 49-77

slips 33-48

slips 17-32

slips 1-16

Production unit 4

Production unit 3

Production unit 2

Production unit 1

slips 63-77

slips 49-62

slips 33-48

slips 17-32

slips 1-16

Content unit 5:
seasonal account
(year 7, months 4-6)

Content unit 4:
seasonal account
(year 7, months 1-3)

Content unit 3:
monthly account
(year 6, month 7)

Content unit 2:
monthly account
(year 5, month 7)

Content unit 1:
monthly account
(year 5, month 6)

Example 2:

MS “*Laozi shang jing*”

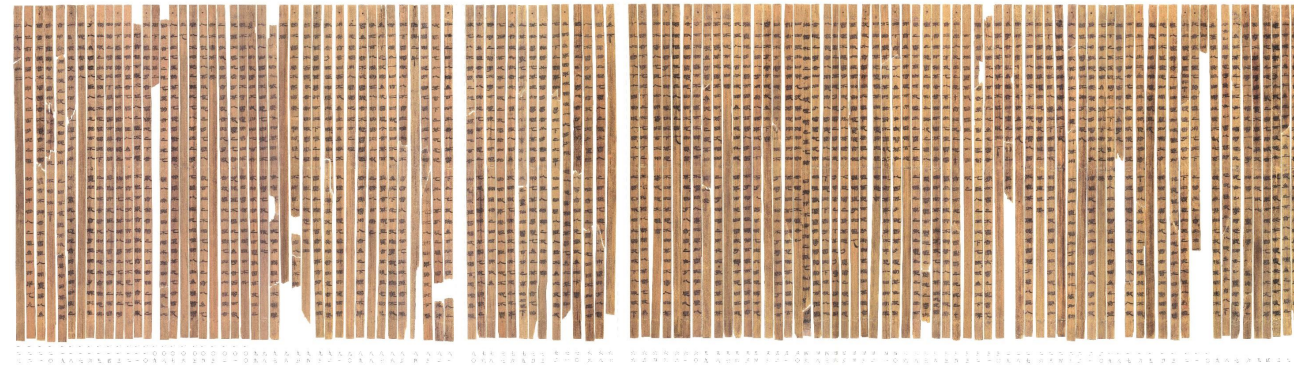
Roll (reconstructed), ca. 32 x 125 cm

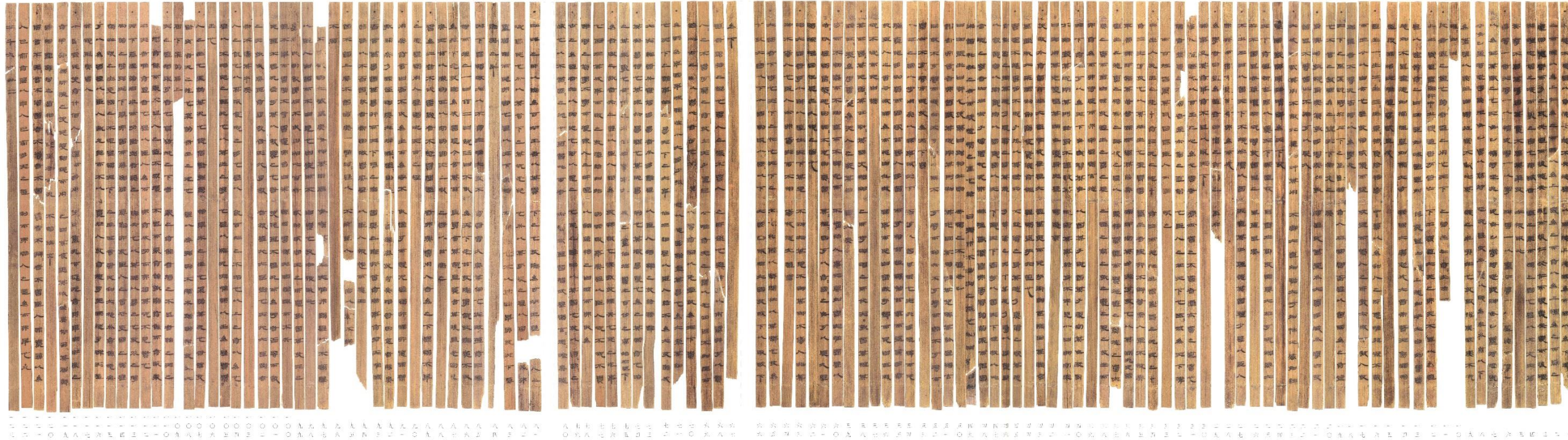
123 bamboo slips, ramie binding strings (fragmentary)

Mid-1st c. BCE

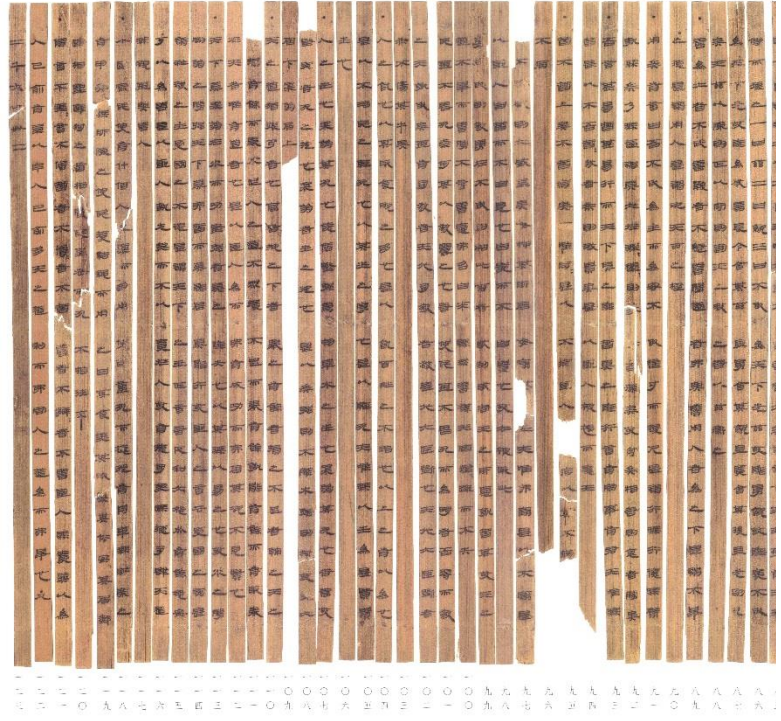
Unprovenanced (purchased in 2008/09)

Collection of Peking University, Peking





MS "Laozi shang jing" (Peking University collection, Peking), recto
(Beijing daxue chutu wenxian yanjiusuo 2012)

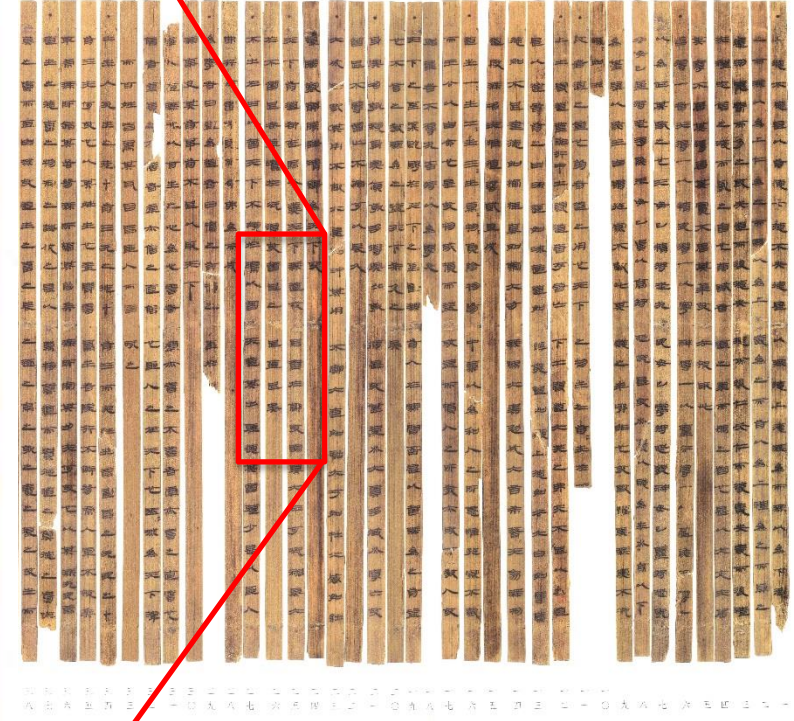


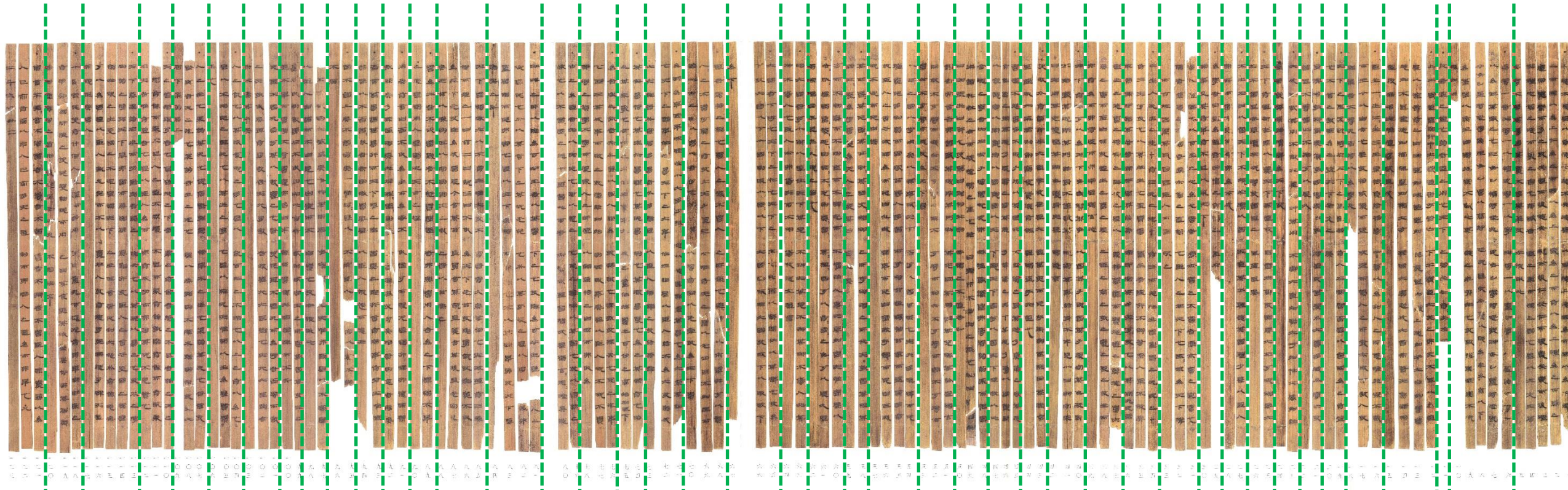
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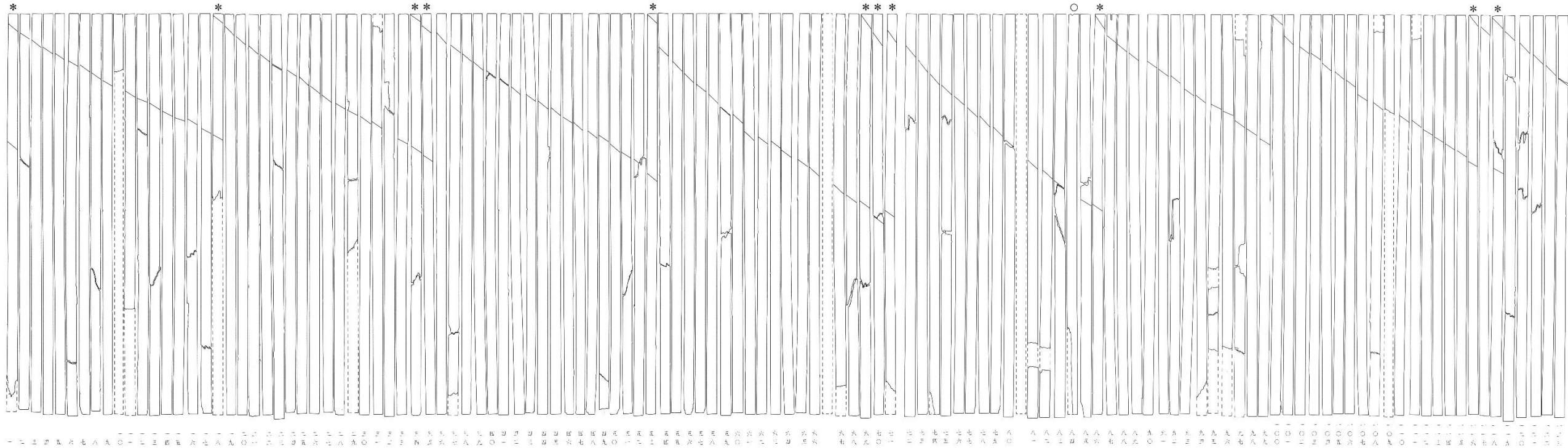
Overall 44 content units (1 to 5 bamboo slips per content unit)

MS “*Laozi shang jing*”, content unit 10 (slips 27-28):

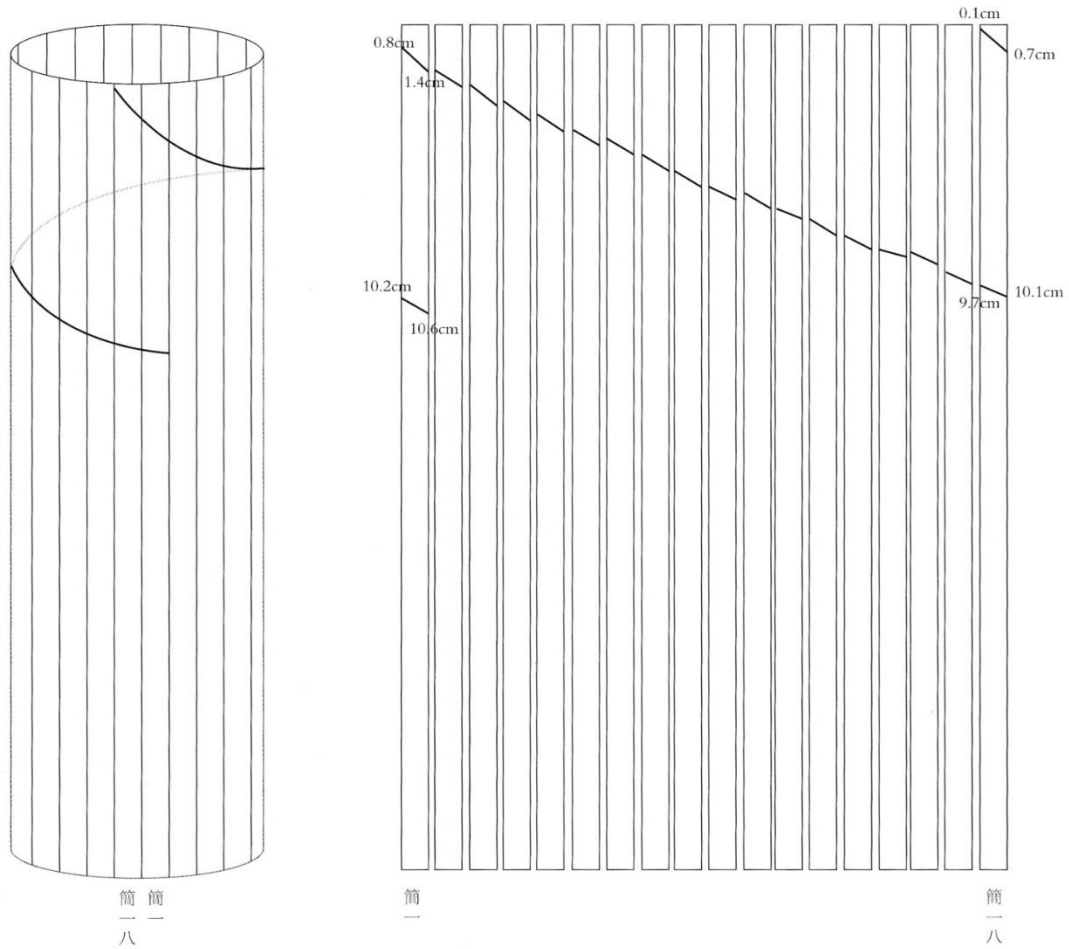
- Without going out the door,
One can know the whole world;
Without looking out the window,
One can know the way of heaven.
The further one goes,
The less one knows.
Therefore the sage, [27]
Knows without having to stir,
Identifies without having to see,
Accomplishes without having to act. [28]

(translation adapted from D.C. Lau 1963)

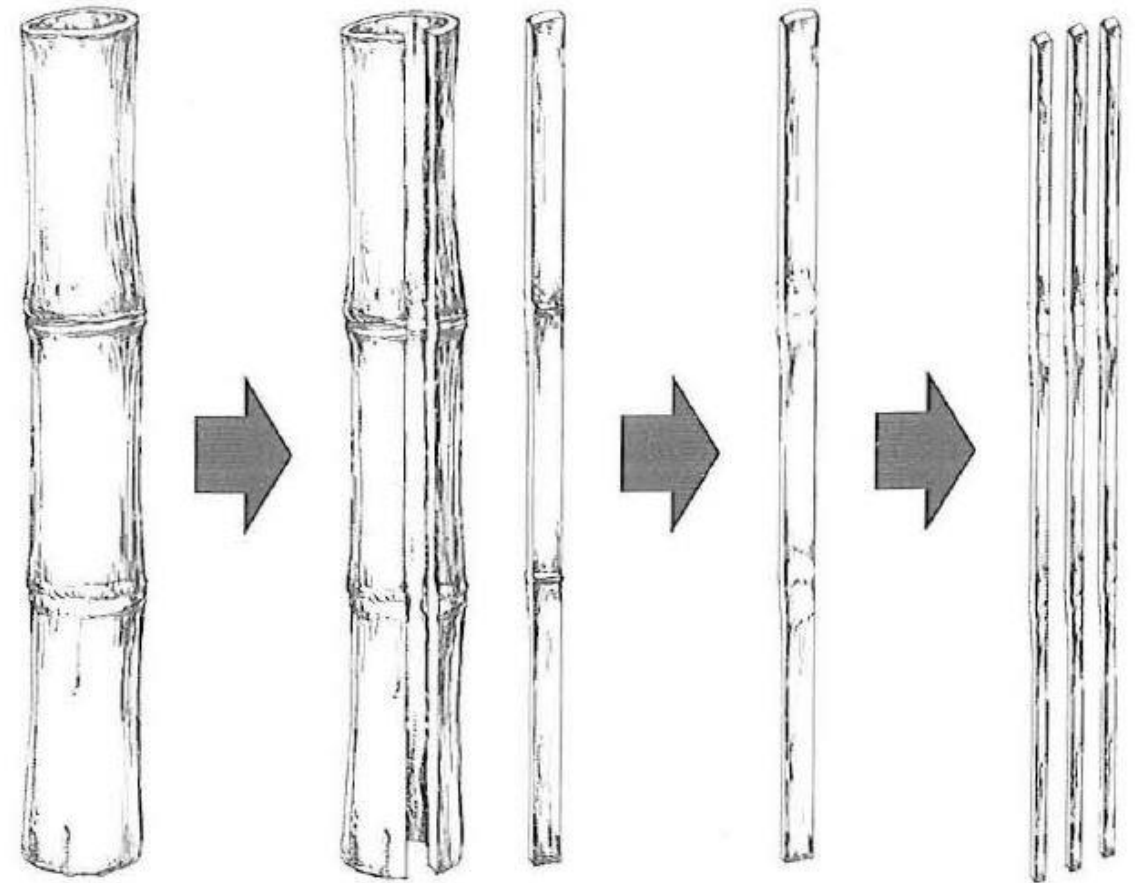
- 不出於戶，
以智（知）天下；
不規（窺）於牖，
以智（知）天道。
其出壘（彌）遠，
其智（知）壘（彌）少。
是以聖人， [27]
弗行而智（知），
弗見而命（名），
弗為而成。 [28]



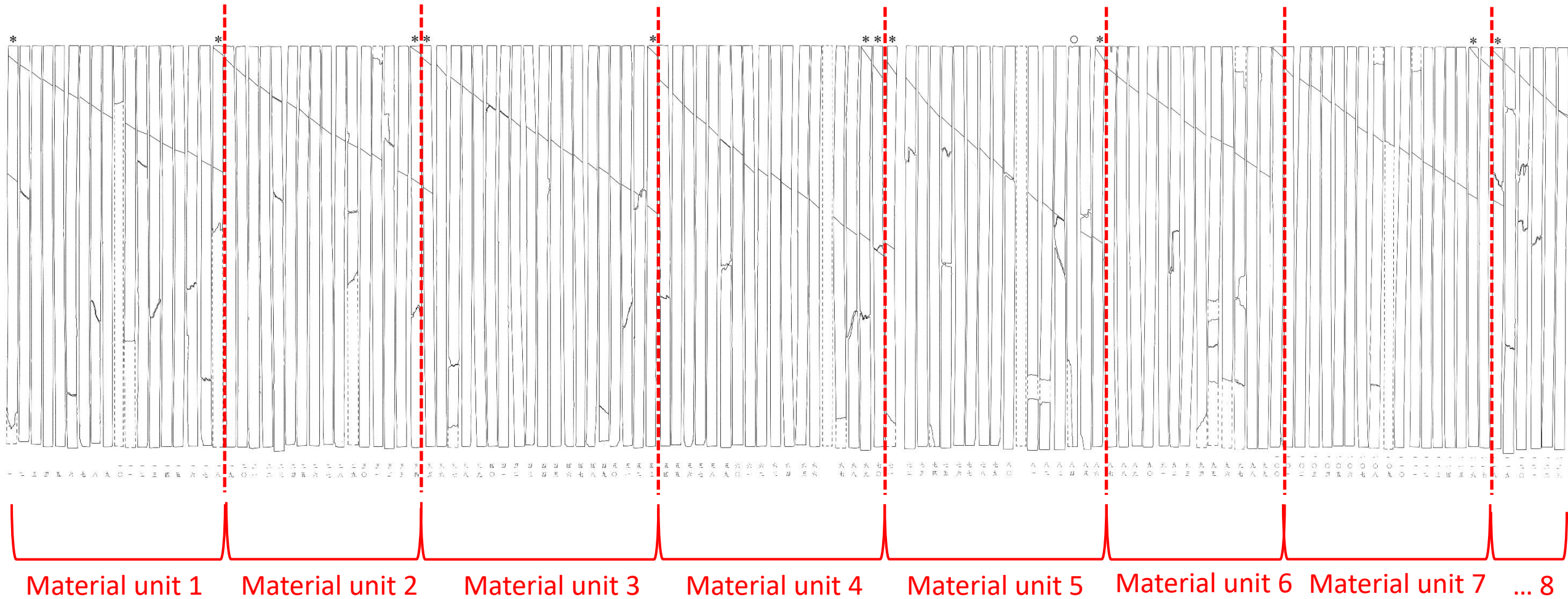
MS “*Laozi shang jing*” (Peking University collection, Peking), verso
(Beijing daxue chutu wenxian yanjiusuo 2012)

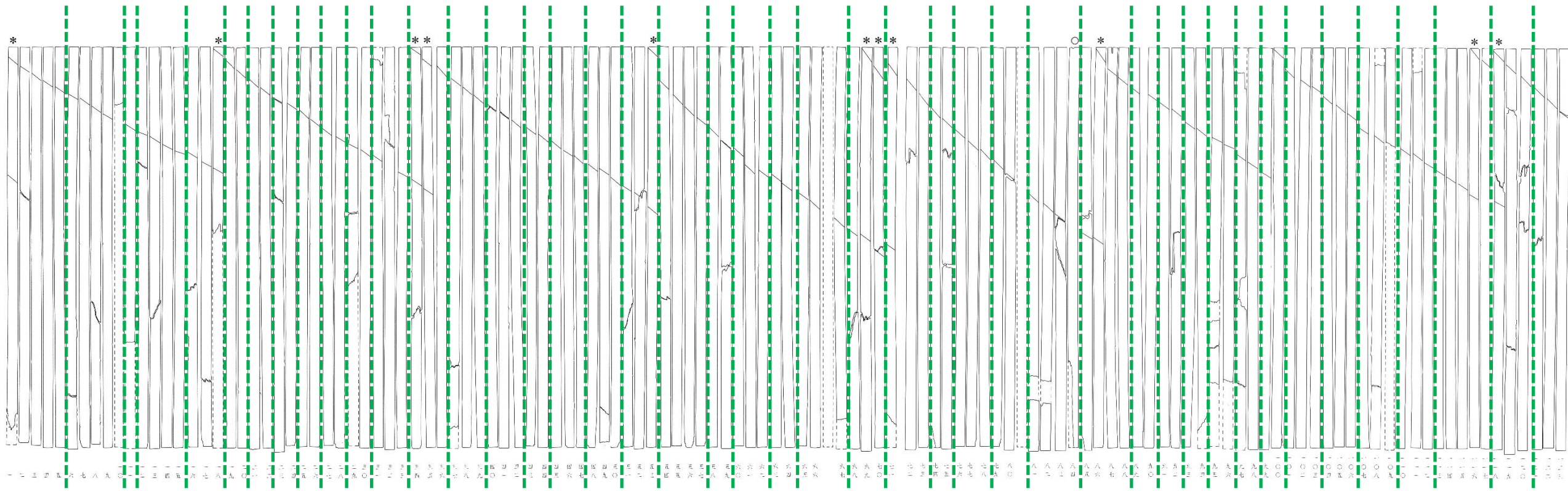


(Han Wei 2012, 229)

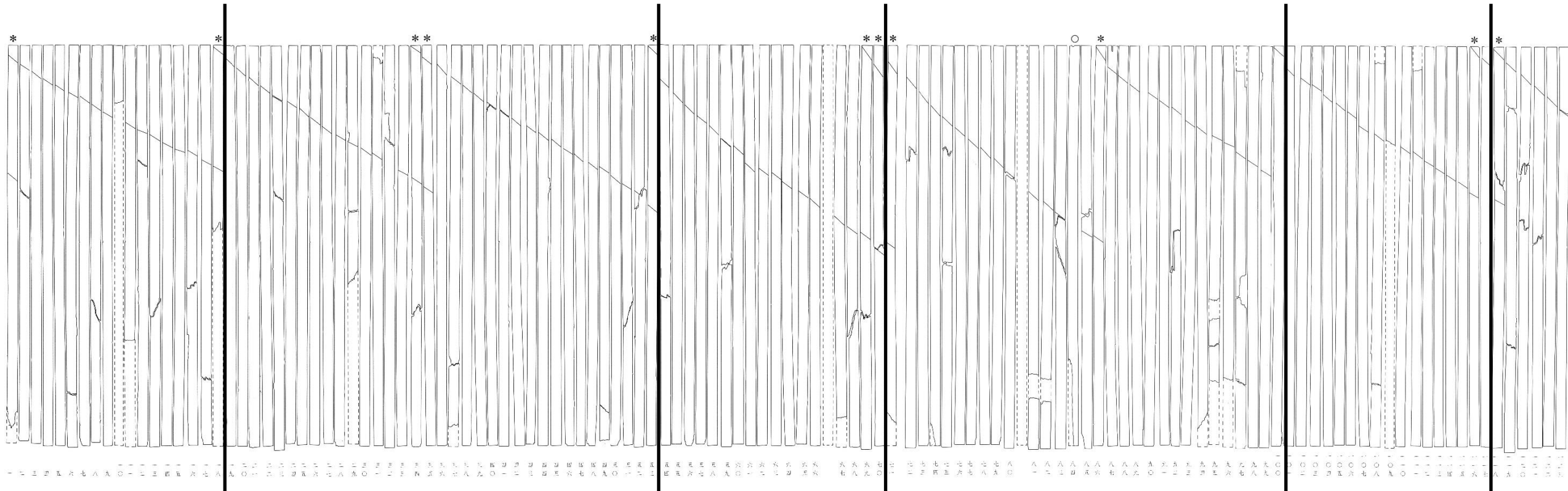


(Jia Lianxiang 2015, 72)





Overall 44 content units (1 to 5 bamboo slips per content unit)



“Coinciding boundaries” (Gumbert 2004) or “convergent discontinuities” (Andrist/Canart/Maniaci 2013)
→ *potential* problems in present reconstruction (Staack 2015)

To conclude...

- Most crucial and yet neglected aspect in cataloguing of wooden/bamboo rolls are “boundaries” (Gumbert) or “discontinuities” (Andrist/Canart/Maniaci)
 - “Evolution” of particular rolls? E.g., combination of smaller to form larger (composite) units (MS “Juyan Hanjian 128.1”)
 - Use of raw materials and reliability of reconstructions? (MS “*Laozi shang jing*”)
- But: examples showed “best cases” rather than usual condition of ancient Chinese manuscripts

References

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