

N. 10° W., and S. 10° E. In the middle is quite a small pyramid, but situated excentrically towards the north. The ground in the interior is furrowed by water-courses, the water having probably found its way in at a later period through the gates, and there are also a few tamarisks, each growing on a low mound. It is this circular wall to which the natives restrict the name of Kona-schahr or Eski-schahr. If now this wall had really been intended to defend a miniature town, one would expect to find some traces of the houses, seeing that this outer wall would obviously have protected them to some extent against wind and weather; yet of old houses there is not a trace to be seen. If it were originally a fort, one would suppose the four gates to be superfluous; one would have been sufficient. I am inclined therefore to look upon the inclosure as an ancient kan or caravanserai, or place of refuge, on the former highway from Lop-nor to Korla, and infer that the men whose duty it was to provide

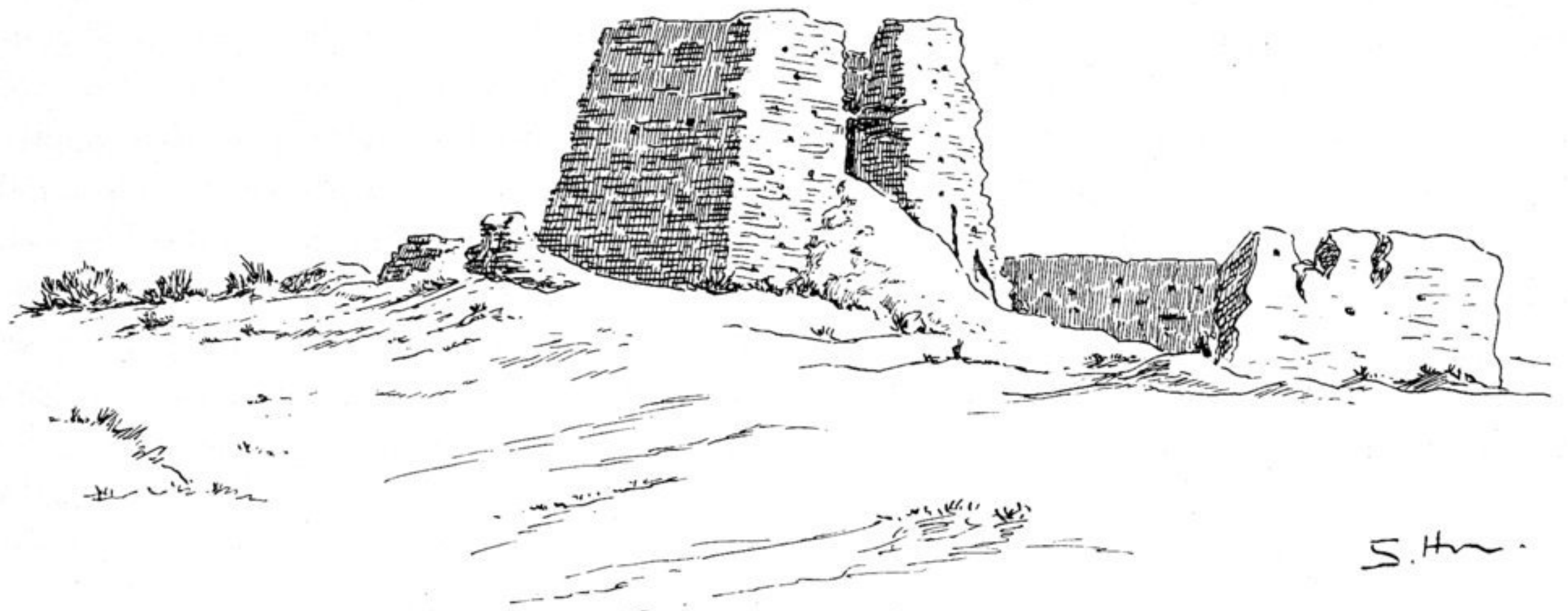


Fig. 35. «KURGHAN» BETWEEN KALTA AND JU-JING-PEN.

relays of horses, to forward the post, and keep guard generally, may have dwelt in tents within the inclosure, in the same way as the little Kirgis garrison of Ullugh-tschat dwell in jurts within their wall, though that is square, not circular. In that case the wall of the Kona-schahr will have served a double purpose, first to screen the tents against the violent storms of spring, and secondly to provide protection against any possible hostile attack. The eastern and western gates lie exactly across the old highway, and this probably ran right through the inclosure. The northern and southern gates stand astride of another important road, namely that from Turfan-karaul on the Kontsche-darja to Turfan, a route which was used not so very long ago by the beks of Turfan when they visited the Lop country to collect the tribute for the Chinese. Thus this road too no doubt crossed the interior of the inclosure, cutting the before-mentioned road at right angles. Without doubt another route ran from Turfan-karaul to Merdek-schahr, likewise an important station with a circular wall, it too fortified. Whatever purpose this circular wall of Jing-pen* may have served, it is certain that a great caravan highway ran past it, and as I shall show later on this great highway can have come from no other place except the town

* I have also heard this place called Jim-pen, but I have never heard applied to it the name which Kosloff gives it, namely Empen; this is plainly a corruption of Jim-pen.