

CHAPTER VII

REMAINS OF ANCIENT LOU-LAN

SECTION I.—WORK RESUMED AT AND AROUND THE LOU-LAN SITE

Purpose of
return to
Lou-lan Site.

THE immediate object of my return to the Lou-lan Site, L.A., was to search its vicinity for such further ruins as might have escaped us on my visit seven years before, owing to want of time and the deceptive nature of the ground in this wind-eroded desolation. In order to assure a fair chance of success for this programme it became necessary to establish our base camp at the ancient station and thence to push out reconnaissances into previously unexplored portions of the adjoining desert. Accordingly on the morning of February 11th, the day following our arrival, all camels but a few needed for the extended reconnaissance planned north-eastwards were sent off under Tokhta Ākhūn's guidance to Āltmish-bulak, at the foot of the outermost Kuruk-tāgh, there to enjoy grazing for a few days and a drink from the ice of the salt springs.

Reconnais-
sance to
north-east.

It was to the east and north-east that I was particularly anxious to have a search made for any clue to the line followed by the ancient Chinese high road coming from the side of Tun-huang. I therefore entrusted this important reconnaissance over wholly unknown ground to Afrāz-gul; for previous experience had given me confidence in his energy and power of keen observation. Meanwhile my own stay at L.A. enabled me to turn my diggers to profitable work on ancient deposits of refuse within the station, which owing to their greater depth or for other reasons had escaped attention during our former hurried visit. At the same time it offered a chance for a much closer survey of the site than had previously been possible.

Renewed
survey of
Lou-lan
station.

The results yielded by this renewed survey have been fully utilized already in the detailed description contained in Chapter XI of *Serindia*, which was written after my return from this journey.¹ There is, therefore, no need to record them here separately. But I may point out that it was solely this fresh survey, aided by the experience I had gained, subsequently to my first visit, at other wind-eroded sites far away to the east, which allowed me definitely to trace the position of the ramparts that once enclosed the fortified Chinese station. The extreme force with which wind-erosion has operated at this site, since its abandonment early in the fourth century of our era, could scarcely be better illustrated than by the fact that in 1906 I had been able to recognize the scanty remnants of only those two wall lines which, running from east-north-east to west-south-west, lay in the prevailing wind direction and had thus escaped complete effacement. Of the wall faces once running at right angles to these and completing the quadrangular enclosure of the station I had been unable on that occasion to discover any remains, and it was only by a minute re-examination of the ground that I now succeeded in establishing their exact position as shown in the revised plan to be found in *Serindia*.² The photographs reproduced in Figs. 152-5, 157, will help to illustrate the results of this second survey, as recorded in *Serindia*.³

¹ See *Serindia*, i. pp. 370 sqq. [For an assumed Chinese name of L.A. see M. Maspero's App. A.]

² Cf. *ibid.*, i. pp. 386 sqq. ; iii. Pl. 23.

³ Fig. 152 shows the surviving northern segment of the east (or more strictly east-north-east) wall foundation in its whole length of about 80 feet, as seen from the west.

In Fig. 157 the north end of the same wall segment is seen, with the layer of tamarisk brushwood which has prevented complete erosion. On the right appears a small tamarisk-cone which had grown up later on wind-eroded lower ground. Reference to the measuring rod in the photograph shows that the ground level near by has been lowered by at least a further