

picked up on my renewed visit to the ruins along the portion of the Limes previously explored will be found recorded in the Descriptive List below.

Work at  
watch-  
towers S.  
of Khara-  
nōr.

I may accordingly turn at once to the ground where I knew that there were remains of the Limes still waiting to be cleared. I refer to the series of ruined watch-stations to the south of Lake Khara-nōr, of some of which I had been able in May, 1907, to obtain a distant view, but which practical considerations had obliged me reluctantly to leave for future exploration.<sup>3</sup> But now again the task immediately before me was beset with difficulties of a similar kind; for the supplies both for men and beasts brought from Mīrān were running short, labour for excavation was limited to my own few men, and the need to husband time for the spring's work elsewhere was pressing. So on March 19th I sent off ahead to Tun-huang all heavy baggage together with those men who could not be used for digging, thereby saving their rations for the rest. We were preparing to fix our camp at the mouth of a marshy depression near the watch-tower T. xxii. d, sighted in 1907 but not then visited (Map No. 38. A. 4), when a very fortunate chance made us fall in with a small party of Lopliks who had helped in our digging at Mīrān and were now taking their drove of donkeys back from a trade venture to Tun-huang. What with the few men they could spare and a couple of Chinese obtained from a party who were grazing their camels near the same springs, which are known as *Ta-ch'üan*, a set of diggers for the next few days' work was readily improvised.

Methods of  
exploration  
adopted.

In order to carry out the exploration of the line of the Limes eastwards expeditiously and yet thoroughly, I found it necessary once again, as in 1907, to push reconnaissances for its survey ahead in person. My capable 'handy man' Naik Shamsuddīn was to follow behind with the improvised gang of diggers and to clear any remains I had traced. The preliminary search for the ruined watch-stations and the line of wall which might have connected them was attended with interesting experiences, and in places to which the spring inundation from the Su-lo-ho extended was not free from difficulty. But for the reasons already explained in *Serindia*,<sup>4</sup> it will be best to follow the topographical order in recording my observations on the physical features of the ground and on the results yielded by the survey and clearing of the ruins.

'Wet  
border'  
provided  
by Khara-  
nōr.

The series of watch-stations starting from T. xxii. d and stretching along the southern shore of the Khara-nōr forms the eastward continuation of what I have described in *Serindia* as the 'lake section' of the Limes.<sup>5</sup> I have already explained there that where this section faced either the Khara-nōr or the wide lacustrine marsh-bed farther to the west, lake and marsh belt had been utilized as a sort of 'wet border' line to replace the wall of the Limes.<sup>6</sup> This explains why no

very fair preservation for a distance of about three miles across the depression towards the next watch-tower T. vii; cf. *Serindia*, ii. pp. 569, 656; iii. Pl. 33.

In Fig. 204 this tower T. vii appears as seen from the south-west, with the upper portion on the south face still showing rough foot-holes on the plastered surface intended to assist a person climbing to the top. The holes on either side once carried beams to secure the ropes that had to serve as hand-rails. Along the north-east corner the ends of thick ropes of twisted reeds are exposed, which, embedded in the stamped clay, helped to bind together posts of Toghrak wood reinforcing the structure; cf. *Serindia*, ii. p. 571.

In Figs. 193 and 198 we see stacks of reed fascines, more or less petrified through the action of salt, as they rise in rows, quincunx fashion, near the watch-towers T. xi and T. xiii respectively. As fully explained in *Serindia*, ii. pp. 677 sqq., these regular stacks were primarily intended to keep material conveniently ready for the lighting of

signal fires.

Fig. 195 shows the watch-tower T. xiii, with the remains of rooms adjoining on the east, as excavated in 1907, and of a flight of stairs once leading to the roof; cf. *Serindia*, ii. p. 681. Comparison with Fig. 180 in *Serindia* illustrates how slight is the change which seven years' exposure has caused in the condition of the ruin.

Figs. 200 and 201 bring before our eyes the remarkable state of preservation in which the line of the wall, built here as along most sections of the Limes west of Tun-huang of layers of reed fascines and stamped clay, has survived for some little distance east of T. xiii. As seen by the figures standing at its foot, it still rises in places to a height of over 10 feet above the sand and gravel heaped up at its foot; cf. *Serindia*, ii. pp. 681 sq.

<sup>3</sup> See *Desert Cathay*, ii. pp. 157 sq.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Serindia*, ii. p. 632.

<sup>5</sup> See *ibid.*, ii. pp. 717 sqq.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, ii. p. 718.