

archaeologist of the distant future, had my Ho-shang guide not explained that they served to guide the course of mounted soldiers when practising musketry exercise at the gallop!

Ruined
temple by
Limes
wall.

But an observation of true antiquarian interest awaited me when I reached the point on the Limes *agger* where the caravan track to Hāmi crosses it, about 350 yards from the north-west corner of the *ch'êng*. A row of five small Stūpas was found here standing just outside and parallel to the low gravel mound, and another of three more 'within the wall'. These little Stūpas, meant for funeral monuments, would by themselves have sufficed to attest some lingering sanctity in the spot. But even more definite evidence that local worship still clung to it was provided by a large ruined shrine, which rises here immediately to the south of the Limes line and close to the east of the route. A portion of it had been restored recently, as I was told, in memory of those who fell while defending Ch'iao-wan-ch'êng against the Tungans, and quarters of Tibetan Lamas in an outer court showed that the shrine was, indeed, still 'in being'.

Survival
of local
worship.

I have repeatedly had occasion to show that Chinese sentiment has since early times invested with a kind of religious respect all those places where routes passed 'outside the wall' of the Empire.⁵ We are therefore fully justified in assuming that here, too, it is the survival of ancient local worship that accounts for the presence of the modern shrine and Stūpas, just where topography enables us to locate a true 'Gate station' of the Limes. I was unable to trace any ancient remains at the spot. But such may well lie hidden under the large modern temple. In any case it deserves to be noted that the point where the Hāmi route crosses the *agger* lies exactly half-way between the ruined watch-towers T. xli. h and T. xli. i, these standing a mile distant to the west and east respectively. The distance of one mile is the usual one between the towers located farther east along this portion of the Limes. It is accordingly very probable that this point, too, once had its watch-post well placed for guarding the route to Hāmi.

Advantages
of route
guarded.

It only remains for me to add a few remarks about the geographical and quasi-strategic advantages that favoured the selection of the Ch'iao-wan-ch'êng site as the starting-point for an alternative route from the Kan-su marches to Hāmi. They also explain the placing of a garrison here, probably early in the eighteenth century, to guard this and other possible approaches from that side. The route, as already mentioned, represents the most direct line of communication between Su-chou and Hāmi practicable for laden animals. It could not compete in importance of traffic with the An-hsi-Hāmi route, because the greater height and ruggedness of the successive Pei-shan ranges on the line it follows precludes the use of carts, for which the more westerly route starting from Hāmi is on the whole well adapted.⁶ On the other hand, it appears to offer greater facilities for camel grazing than the latter route, and the same advantage holds good also, as we shall see, of its eastward continuation towards Ying-p'an (Hua-hai-tzü) and Su-chou.

Vicinity of
cultivable
ground.

The selection of Ch'iao-wan-ch'êng as a base for this desert route during Manchu times was probably influenced by the fact that it was the place to which supplies from the cultivated area south of the Su-lo-ho could be brought most conveniently. As the Map No. 40. B. 4, 5 shows, a long belt of cultivation extends towards it from the vicinity of the large village of San-tao-kou on the Yü-mên-hsien-An-hsi high road. In consequence of the devastation attending the Tungan raids many farms had been abandoned in this belt, and in spite of the irrigation facilities offered by the large canal-like branches of Su-lo-ho descending here over the river's alluvial fan, much of the land still remains untilled. Yet, even so, patches of cultivated ground are to be met with to-day within two or three miles of the abandoned station. At the same time communication with this ground from the northern bank of the Su-lo-ho is here particularly easy. The river is here confined

⁵ For references to such sites along the Han Limes, see above, p. 369, notes 14, 15.

⁶ Cf. Futterer, *Wüste Gobi*, p. 4.