

of a bronze dagger or spear-head, L.Q. i. 01 (Pl. XXVI); the bronze disc i. 02 (Pl. XXVI); the fr. of a miniature bronze horse (?), i. 03 (Pl. XXIV). The bronze bolt L.Q. 01 had been picked up before on wind-eroded ground some four miles to the north of L.Q.

Visit to  
watch-post  
on Mesa  
to S.

Afrāz-gul completed his search at L.Q. on February 18th in the midst of a violent sand-storm like the one which had overtaken us at L.E. almost exactly on the same date a year earlier.<sup>7</sup> He then visited the Mesa about half a mile due south on which he had noticed a year before what looked like the ruin of a tower. His account records its height as 15 feet, but gives no details of construction. All round it were found reed-straw and dung of cattle, with marks of burning. Clearing of this refuse yielded no 'finds'. In view of the vicinity of the *castrum* L.E. the assumption seems justified that the height of the Mesa had been utilized for an outlying watch-post.

Return to  
Āltmish-  
bulak.

Next day Afrāz-gul returned to Āltmish-bulak by a route slightly to the west of the one previously followed and already surveyed. No structural remains were sighted, but the bronze buckle L.Q. 02 was picked up after three miles' march, and some two miles farther on a Chinese copper coin of Han type. Near by small bits of ore seemed to indicate a smelting-place. The physical features of the ground as recorded agree very closely with those noticed by me on the former route.<sup>8</sup>

Start for  
dried-up  
Lop sea-  
bed.

After a day's halt at Āltmish-bulak, used for securing two loads of ice and one of fuel, Afrāz-gul started for the next and difficult task indicated by his instructions. He was to regain the Mesa where on February 28th, 1914, we had found Han coins and other relics marking a halting-place of the ancient Chinese route near the western shore of the great dried-up sea-bed.<sup>9</sup> From there he was to search this shore for indications, if any, of the line which the route might have followed across that salt-encrusted bed. Subsequently he was to survey its extension south-westwards by moving in the direction of the terminal Lop marshes. The first day's march led for the most part along stony or gravel Sai, forming the glaxis of the outermost Kuruk-tāgh hills and traversed by numerous shallow drainage beds. Towards the close of the long march outliers were passed of the great belt of Mesas representing Li Tao-yüan's 'Town of the Dragon'.<sup>10</sup> To the north and north-east of Camp ccxxxvii. a. salt-encrusted Yārdangs of the 'White Dragon' type were sighted extending over what seemed a wide depression.

Mesa of  
coins,  
dagger, &c.,  
regained.

At the beginning of the next march a well-marked dry bed about 50 yards wide and 20 feet deep was passed. Its direction was from SW. to NE., suggesting a possible connexion with the bed noted the year before near L.J.<sup>11</sup> For some 15 miles an easterly bearing was followed across easy ground with plentiful disintegrated gypsum (the erroneous 'mica' of Map No. 32. A. 3) and occasional Mesas. Farther on a belt of soft *shōr* between salt-encrusted Yārdangs suggested approach to the ground near the Mesa where the coins, dagger, and other relics had been found, and which now was to serve as a landmark. Having failed to recognize this Mesa or to find traces of our passage of the previous year, Afrāz-gul turned to ESE. and pitched his Camp ccxxxviii. a. where a patch of soft clayey ground overlooked the ancient sea-bed with its hard crust of salt (Map No. 32. B. 3). Going back the same evening to the NW. for about 3 miles he succeeded in finding that Mesa and could thus exactly locate his position with reference to the previous year's route.

Search for  
line of  
ancient  
Chinese  
route.

On the morning of February 23rd Afrāz-gul, leaving the camp where it stood, proceeded with Abdulmalik NNE. and after going about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles came upon our track of 1914 at the point where we had changed our eastward direction to NNE.<sup>12</sup> From here they turned due east to reach once more the shore of the ancient sea. Having moved in this direction for one mile they found on the

<sup>7</sup> See above, i. p. 267.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. above, i. pp. 283 sq.

<sup>9</sup> See above, i. pp. 296 sq.

<sup>10</sup> See above, i. pp. 292 sqq.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. above, i. p. 288.

<sup>12</sup> See above, i. p. 298.