

response to a request sent on from Singer. Among them I found to my surprise a Panjābī, Nishān 'Alī, whom I had seen fourteen years before employed as a peon of the British Consulate at Kāshgar. His subsequent drift as a petty trader to the extreme east of habitable ground in the Tārīm basin seemed an apt illustration of a process which in ancient times also might have brought men from India, and from even more distant places in the Near East, to outlying oases like Mīrān.¹ In order to protect myself against possible obstruction, in case excavation work should be called for, I took care to send the little party back to Tikenlik by daybreak with a request for more supplies and a guide towards Korla.

Ruins near
Ying-p'an
station.

Next morning I set out with the few available men of my own party for the ruins to the north-east of the Ying-p'an station. The merit of having noted them belongs to Dr. Sven Hedin, who first passed them on March 26, 1896, on his way from Korla to Lop.² But from the very summary account then recorded, to which a second visit paid on March 10, 1900, by the same distinguished explorer had added but few details,³ I had not been able to form any definite idea as to the character and date of the site. Yet its very name, obviously the Chinese *Ying-p'an* meaning 'military encampment', seemed significant. On the first occasion Dr. Hedin had been inclined to ascribe to its remains a comparatively recent origin. It was therefore a pleasant surprise when after we had covered about three and a half miles, partly over gravel Sai with scanty tamarisk-cones and partly across the wide scrub-covered alluvial fan formed by the flood-bed of the Shindī river, a striking group of ruined Stūpas came into sight near the western flank of the principal mouth through which the river debouches (Fig. 340).

Site of
ruined
Stūpas.

The ruins rise, as seen in the sketch-plan (Pl. 36), on a small isolated plateau which a branch channel of the great flood-bed of the Shindī river descending from the north-east has cut off from the continuous gravel terrace behind. The little island-like plateau rises to a height of about 28 feet above the flat ground to the south, cut up at its foot by a number of small interlacing channels. Erosion by water has turned the steep slopes of the plateau into almost vertical cliffs at the northern end. The plateau itself, which measures about 150 yards in length with a width of about 50 yards where widest, has been eroded into a number of narrow ridges spreading out spider-like and barely leaving space on their summits for the small Stūpas which crown them. The disposition of these structures clearly adapts itself to this configuration and incidentally proves that the much-eroded shape of the plateau is of earlier date than their erection.

Ruined
Stūpa
Y. i. i.

The centre of the plateau top, as seen in the sketch-plan (Pl. 37), is occupied by the main Stūpa Ying. i. i (Fig. 349). Its domed portion had suffered great damage, having apparently been dug into long ago by treasure-seekers, and its original height could no longer be determined. But as the sketch-plan (Pl. 38) shows, its diameter was about 14 feet. It appears to have rested on a threefold base of which, however, only the lowest step, 26 feet square and 7 feet high, could be made out with certainty. A layer of tamarisk brushwood inserted at its top had helped to preserve it better than the two receding steps which surmounted it. A flight of much broken stairs led to the top of this lowest step. The masonry consisted of very hard sun-dried bricks, measuring $15 \times 12 \times 3$ inches. In the base layers of stamped clay and gravel, 5 to 6 inches in thickness, had been introduced between single courses of bricks. A brick wall about 3 feet thick and measuring about 61 feet by 50 appeared to have been built as support for a rectangular platform around the Stūpa; but of this little remained except on the east and west. Low walls adjoining at the south-western corner of this platform marked the position of a small structure which appeared to have been completely destroyed in the course of some recent digging. Its character, whether shrine or quarters for attendants, could no longer be determined.

¹ Cf. *Serindia*, i. pp. 530 sq.

² See Hedin, *Reisen in Z.-A.*, p. 76.

³ Cf. Hedin, *Central Asia*, ii. pp. 30 sq.