

had already been examined on different occasions, and at several sites also fully described, by the German, French, and Russian archaeological expeditions which had successively followed this high road. These sites were also seen by me; but a discussion of them must be left to those who explored them. My own account will be restricted to observations which have a wider antiquarian bearing or concern remains that appear not to have been previously examined, and to brief notes on the general character of such areas as were visited away from the main road and have probably not been hitherto described.

Start for
Kuchā.

On the morning of April 6th our concentration broke up, and I started with Afrāz-gul and the main camp towards Kuchā. Keeping as long as possible amidst the rich fields near the northern edge of the Korla cultivation, where the young wheat was shooting up and the fruit trees still carried their blossom, we moved parallel to the high road which runs along the foot of the gravel glacis. There could be no doubt that the road coming straight from the defile through which the Konchedaryā debouches must here have followed the same line in earlier times in order to avoid the marshy ground to the south-west, where the canals on the right bank of the river discharge their surplus water and the soakage from the fields collects. It was therefore interesting to observe that near the western end of the continuously cultivated area, beyond the village of Durbil, the remains of a ruined post of decidedly ancient appearance rise about 200 yards above the high road and the canal leading along it. The surviving portions of its northern and western walls, built of stamped clay and some 16 feet thick, still stood at the time to a height of about 26 feet; by their solidity they reminded me of the Limes forts seen at the site of the Jade Gate, T. XIV, and at Shih-êrh-tun (T. XLII. d). The exact size of the small enclosed area could not be determined, as much destruction had been done both by the erosive force of a neighbouring flood-bed from the hills and also by digging for manuring earth. The ruined post might well go back to Han times. But however this may be, I could not help thinking how often these barren black hill-sides, furrowed and scoured by erosion, may have seen Chinese columns pass by on their way to far-off outposts of the Empire, on the Ts'ung-ling or even beyond, whence so few were ever likely to return to their homes.

Ruined
tower of
Tim.

There was direct proof that the ancient high road had run here in the imposing ruined mound known as *Tim*, by a designation for old towers and ruined structures common on the Kāshgar and Khotan side. It was reached after a march of about sixteen miles, and stands near a collection of roadside hovels which is found above a newly established patch of cultivation and forms the usual first stage beyond Korla. The watch-tower, for this undoubtedly it was, had become a shapeless mass of clay and brickwork owing to much digging for manure. On a base or platform apparently of stamped clay, about 53 feet square and still 18 feet high, there rose the remains of a tower now reduced to a height of only about 8 feet and measuring about 26 feet square on the top of the extant masonry. This consisted of bricks measuring 15" × 7-8" × 3", just like those used in the towers of the Ying-p'an-Korla line. Layers of reeds, badly decayed, intervened between single brick courses. The previously mentioned ruined post could be seen from the 'Tim'. Adjoining to the south of the latter, walls of an enclosure built of the same masonry could be traced in places, parts of the western wall still standing to a height of about 5 feet for a distance of 70 odd feet. Much-decayed remains of an eastern wall could be made out at a distance of about one hundred feet from it. Elsewhere the enclosure had been completely destroyed by manure diggers. Potsherds of ancient-looking red ware lay about in abundance, and I felt strongly inclined to attribute this ruined watch-station also to Han times.

Scantiness
of water.

Our next day's march to Charchi, about 22 miles off, still led close along the foot of the gravel glacis, but showed no remains suggesting that this was the line which the road followed in antiquity. It appears to me very likely that the ancient route lay farther to the south, and led in a more or less