

labourers and all supplies needed for prolonged work on the desert border in the west. My new route took me first to the small outlying oasis of Nan-hu, a mere hamlet, where I was able to locate the ruins of that ancient 'Yang Barrier' which the Han Annals mention in conjunction with the 'Barrier of the Jade Gate'. It was a military station, intended to guard the alternative 'southern route' into the Tarim basin. This passes along the high and utterly barren slopes of the easternmost K'un-lun, and still serves nowadays for occasional traffic when the desert route from Tun-huang to Charkhlik is closed from the late spring till the winter on account of the saltiness of the wells by the shores of the ancient dried-up sea-bed.

The archaeological observations to be made around peaceful little Nan-hu did not detain me beyond April 10. Then we moved off into the scrub-covered desert to the north, and by the second day struck the line of the *Limes* close to where our first camp had stood. I felt elated on being back again by the old frontier wall, and all the more glad for the chance of fully exploring its remains, since our discoveries along the section to the north-east of Tun-huang had definitely established its high antiquity. The length of the line to be carefully surveyed and searched was great, and what with climatic conditions increasingly trying and the distance from any local resources, the task was bound to prove hard. But it was fascinating work, and its reward proved more abundant than I could foresee.

It would be quite impossible within the limits of this book to attempt a systematic review of all the essential facts revealed by that busy month's explorations as to the way in which that oldest of all *Limes* lines was guarded, and as