

walls of sun-dried bricks stand undoubtedly on far more ancient foundations. Outside them now all is silence and desolation. The rubble-built dwellings, whose ruins fill part of the area, were tenanted as long as the insecure condition of the valley made it impossible for the scanty cultivators to live near their fields. Since peace has come to Sarikol new villages have sprung up near all the cultivated patches of land, and the stronghold has become deserted. When the earthquake of 1895 shook down most of the dwellings, there was no need to rebuild them. The walls of the town had already suffered by earlier earthquakes, and show in many places wide gaps as if they had been breached. Rebuilt undoubtedly again and again after successive periods of neglect, and always of unhewn stone, they cannot afford any distinct criterion of age. But the high mounds of débris over which the extant walls rise, in some places to a height of over 25 feet, show plainly that these fortifications mark the lines of far more ancient ones.

In order to prove my identification of these and other old remains, such as that of a ruined Stupa, just beyond the north wall, an exact survey of the site was essential. To make it required some diplomatic caution, as the Chinese commandant or his subordinates might easily have mistaken its object. M. Sher Muhammad's local experience obviated any trouble on this score. After I had gone over the site with the Sub-Surveyor in an apparently casual fashion, we waited with the surveying until the hours after midday, when the whole garrison is wont to take its siesta. When the work continued beyond this safe period, the clever diplomatist went to see the Amban and so skilfully occupied his attention with various representations concerning my journey that he and his underlings had no time to grow suspicious about the work around their stronghold.

What I saw of the Celestial soldiery quartered at this frontier station, showed them as peaceful gardeners or harm-