

end of the crest. Between the narrow ridge occupied by the walls and bastions and the continuation of the spur westwards a broad dip seemed to offer an easy descent towards the hamlet of Karkat on the Oxus.

It was manifestly for the purpose of guarding this approach that the little fort had been erected on this exposed height. On the north and east, where the end spur falls off in unscalable cliffs to the valleys of the Oxus and Baroghil some 1600 feet below, structural defences were needless. But the crest slope of the ridge and the narrow neck to the south had been protected by a bastioned wall for a distance of about 400 feet. Three bastions to the west and the one at the south end still rose in fair preservation, in parts to a height of over thirty feet. The connecting wall curtains had suffered more, through the foundations giving way on the steep incline. Of buildings inside the little fort, if the limited ground, scarcely 200 feet across at the broadest, and the rocky surface had ever admitted of such, there remained no trace. But some antiquarian indication was supplied by the construction of the walls. Outside a core of closely packed rough stones they showed a solid brick facing, four to six feet in thickness, with regular thin layers of brushwood separating the courses of sun-dried bricks.

The size of the bricks, about eight by seven inches and four inches thick, furnishes no definite evidence. But in the use of the brushwood layers I could not fail to recognize a peculiarity with which ancient Chinese construction in the Tarim Basin had made me familiar. It was, no doubt, intended to assure greater consistency, and must have been used, as my subsequent explorations much farther to the east showed, from the very commencement of Chinese expansion into Central Asia. But later discoveries in the Lop-nor region and elsewhere have proved also that the Tibetan invaders of the T'ang period, when building their own forts, did not neglect to copy this constructive expedient of their Chinese predecessors and opponents in this region. So, in the absence of other remains, it can scarcely now be decided whether the construction of the Kansir walls was due to