

Then we stood on the line of walls which was meant to defend the rim above mentioned. For a length of some 450 feet the walls could be traced first running from south-east to north-west and then, near a massive corner bastion, taking a turn due north. Rising still to over twenty feet where in fair preservation, elsewhere decayed almost to their foundation, they once protected completely that portion of the isolated rock top facing westwards on which alone an attack could be attempted. But even here, excepting the narrow neck we had followed, the slopes were far too steep to be climbed by armed men in any numbers. Everywhere else sheer walls of rock descending for hundreds of feet formed unscalable natural defences. From the west rim the top of the hill sloped to the north and east in a series of terraces which must have afforded ample space for structures of shelter. But these, having probably been built of rough stone, were traceable only in much-decayed heaps of rubble. In two places I recognized the positions of small reservoirs intended to collect water from melting snow or rain.

The solid construction of the bastioned walls would alone have sufficed to prove for the site high antiquity. They showed an average thickness of sixteen feet, and, apart from large rough slabs used in the foundations, consisted of remarkably regular and closely laid brickwork. The bricks, sun-dried yet solid enough, were about five inches thick and measured on the average fifteen by twelve inches. Neither the material, a fine clay plentifully mixed with pebbles, nor adequate water for making them could have been obtained on the spot, and their transport to this height must have greatly increased the trouble of construction. Both here and at Kansir the conjecture suggested itself that the insertion of thin layers of twigs and brushwood (here from the juniper growth which is still to be met with in some of the neighbouring side valleys) was primarily intended as a substitute for an adequate supply of wet plaster to set the bricks; want of water at such a height must have rendered this difficult to obtain. And the observations subsequently gathered along the ancient Chinese border wall