

receive due attention, was a canvas bag holding two narrow and flat pieces of wood, about six inches long, showing along one edge a series of small cup-like holes evidently blackened by smoke. It was only when these pieces came to be examined at the British Museum that Mr. H. G. Evelyn-White, then one of my assistants, recognized them as regular fire-blocks meant for the production of fire by the churning of small wooden sticks which fitted the holes. Even then I might have doubted the survival of this primitive method as late as the third century A.D., had not the subsequent discovery of an exactly corresponding block at the ancient site north of Lop-nor, which dates from about the same period, furnished confirmatory evidence.

The search for other old remains in the vicinity of the T'ang fort was continued with care on November 9th; but only in one of the several badly eroded dwellings which I managed to trace, did we come upon datable relics in the shape of two fragmentary Kharoshthi tablets. The ruins of a small Stupa and of a square tower, still rising about eighteen feet high, both built with sun-dried bricks of large size (Fig. 105), were the only surviving remains of more substantial structures near the fort which could be connected with the earlier settlement. The havoc wrought by far-advanced wind erosion was, no doubt, mainly responsible for this scarcity of older structural remains; for pottery débris of very ancient look appeared plentifully on all patches of bare soil for nearly one mile south of the fort, and whatever copper coins were picked up about the latter belonged to the Chinese currency of the Han dynasty.

The most striking evidence, however, of the often-proved accuracy of my Chinese guide and patron saint came to light, when a chance find led me to discover that the clay rampart of the fort, built within a generation or two of his passage, was in one place actually raised over a bank of consolidated refuse which belonged to the first centuries of our era. At a point about a hundred feet to the west of the fort's single gate, wind erosion had badly breached the circumvallation of stamped clay. Searching on the surface thus laid bare, one of the men