

tower we passed a low mound some twelve yards to the south of the wall line. It did not require much archaeological insight to recognize in it the débris of a completely ruined watch-station, as excavation later on proved it to be, nor to draw the obvious conclusion that the wall must have been meant to face north.

From here onwards the rest of the day's task was easy. A perfectly straight line of wall, clearly traceable throughout, brought us after two miles to a massive tower already sighted from a distance. T. IX., as I numbered it, looked quite an imposing structure, rising on a commanding knoll of the plateau edge to a height of over twenty-five feet. Its remarkably solid masonry showed a base about twenty-three feet square. The bricks here too were sun-dried; yet the admixture of salt in the soil or in the water with which they had been made, seemed to have given them unusual hardness.

The bare gravel plateau now fell off to a wide scrub-covered depression, across which we could follow the line of wall for another three miles to the north-east without much trouble in spite of the growing dusk. A big 'Pao-t'ai' perched on a high isolated clay terrace served as an excellent guide-mark. I reached the ruin at nightfall, and had just time on scrambling up to its base to ascertain a marked difference of construction. Instead of courses of bricks there were here regular layers of stamped clay, each receding somewhat from the edge of the lower one, and the whole thus presenting the effect of a small truncated pyramid. Heavy impregnation with salt made the structure shimmer in the darkness.

The very mode of construction suggested that water could not have been far off at the time of building. Nor did it prove distant now; for looking out from that height we caught a flicker of light coming from the camp-fires lit by our caravan. We reached them after a couple of miles' ride through high scrub and large groves of luxuriant Toghraks. About half-way we crossed a small and very salt stream; but on arrival we found that camp had been pitched by the side of a small lake which, though itself salt, had several springs of quite drinkable water on its margin.