

the Niya site. It was conclusive proof that I had been right years before in tracing all such details of that ancient wooden stationery of Turkestan back to earlier Chinese models.

No trace of the wall itself survived here, nor remains of the quarters sheltering those who had kept watch by the tower. Yet from the refuse thrown out by them it was possible to draw some conclusion as to their conditions of life. The line which the towers guarded must have already in the first century A.D. passed through desert ground. Wind erosion had, no doubt, progressed since; yet from the very position in which the undisturbed horizontal strata of rubbish were found, some ten feet below the level of the tower base, it was clear that the bare clay ridges rising above eroded ground had then already formed the characteristic feature of the site.

A curious indication of the remoteness of the guarded wall line from the inhabited area was supplied by the numerous fragments of coarse grey pottery, remarkably hard, which lay scattered in plenty on the surface, and often were found perforated on the edges with regular drilled holes. The discovery in the rubbish heap of several pieces still joined together by string of some rough vegetable fibre explained these holes (Fig. 172, 6), and bore witness to the value which the quondam owners had attached to their pots and jars however badly damaged. As the material was cheap enough, only the difficulty of transporting larger earthenware from the oasis would account for this continued use after the roughest mending.

On March 29th I took my men to the next tower south-westwards, which I had already reconnoitred. The distance proved to be only one and one-eighth mile. The tower, built of solid layers of stamped clay, rose in fair preservation to over twenty feet, and still bore on its top portions of a brick-built parapet below which horizontal rafters projected. No trace of stairs remained, but some holes on the south face had probably been utilized for a sort of ladder. Here, too, the tower had been built on a small clay ridge, no such advantage of ground being ever neglected by those who constructed the 'Wall.' A peculiar feature here