

plentiful restorations in small bricks showed that it had been kept in repair until recent times. Close by was a small domed structure which our Nan-hu guide declared to have been tenanted until some seventy years ago by a guard watching the road from Tun-huang. He was quite positive about travellers even in his own recollection having followed the line of the embankment right up to the tower, and thence struck across the river bed and the Tati towards the oasis.

It was the flood of 1893 which, by cutting the bed into a sort of cañon, had made the direct road between the tower and Nan-hu impassable for carts, and had caused the diversion of the route southward. Clear traces of a cart track descending from the tower to the edge of the 'Yar' and there suddenly ending, confirmed this statement. It thus became highly probable that the gravel embankment which the people of Nan-hu knew as the 'fêng-chiang' or 'wind-wall,' had, as indeed our old guide thought, been intended as a road-mark across the desert, useful at times of dust storms and as a protection against the winds from the north and north-east. But it seemed equally clear that a work of such magnitude, the construction of a dyke for over eight miles through the desert, would never have been undertaken except at a period when the oasis of Nan-hu and its population were far greater than at present.

It was on the same day that I was able to investigate also those curious tumuli which had puzzled me on my first approach to Nan-hu. Going from the tower about a mile to the south-east we came upon the high brick-built gateway and adjoining rectangular enclosure then noticed. The flanking walls of the gate, about five feet thick and but little longer, still rose to fourteen feet or so, the material being coarse sun-dried bricks of a large size. The low lines of gravel enclosing the quadrangle were almost invisible while the sun stood high. The main tumulus which rose within, just facing the gate from the north, showed an annular shape and measured about eight yards across; it was of loose stones and coarse gravel heaped up to a height of about three feet. By cutting