

hold and the end of the Hao-shan-k'ou spur northward, were manifestly built for this purpose. Judging from the shape and arrangement of their sun-dried bricks, these advanced towers did not look of a very remote age. Yet their state of decay and the signs of successive repairs plainly indicated that they were older than the wall extending behind them. For the latter it seemed difficult to assume a greater antiquity than that of Ming times, as local tradition asserts; so well preserved were the main wall itself and the enclosures of the towers which served as quarters and rallying-points for the men guarding it.

The disposition of the loopholes in the crenellated clay parapet suggested defence by firearms. Otherwise these towers built inside the wall and adjoining it showed but little departure from the principles of fortification illustrated by the ancient *Limes* in the desert. There was the same solid cone of stamped clay, some thirty-four feet square at the base, with a lightly built watch-room on the top. A double line of foot-holes ascending one of the sides was intended to help the watchmen who had to climb up by a rope. Within the enclosure, some sixty feet square, which guarded the tower, were small quarters for soldiers, now ruined. The main wall showed at its foot a thickness of eleven feet, and with its parapet rose to sixteen feet.

It was at the very first of these towers of the wall, situated only some two miles beyond the great Gate, that I struck the remains of the far more decayed wall, previously referred to, running south-west to north-east. Closer inspection at once proved that my assumption of a different, and probably far earlier, date of construction was correct. This wall, which had only a thickness of eight or nine feet on the ground and reached a height of ten or eleven feet, was also built of stamped clay. But whereas the clay layers in the wall closing the Chia-yü-kuan valley were four or five inches in height, those in the older wall touching it here at right angles were fully ten to twelve inches thick. These measurements at once recalled the almost identical ones observed in the rampart north and west of Tun-huang, which my explorations of the spring had proved to be of early Han times. The conclusion thus suggested received