

were exposed on the east face and about six on the west face. The thickness of the walls, owing to the accumulation of débris, could not be ascertained without excavation. The bricks which composed them were relatively large, measuring on the average eighteen by ten inches with a thickness of three and a half to four inches. They invariably contained a considerable admixture of pebbles, small stones, and fragments of hard pottery. Loopholes, three to four inches square, were traceable on the east face at irregular intervals.

The top of the mound is not quite flat and is everywhere covered with crumbling walls of houses or interior structures, so that no regular plan or outline is now traceable on the surface. The best preserved ruin was found near the centre. It consisted of a wall built of sun-dried bricks and showing a thickness of two feet eight inches over a length of eighteen feet. It still rose some eight feet above the plinth of rough stones. The bricks, measuring on the average fourteen by twelve inches with a thickness of four inches, showed clay mixed with sheep-dung, a method of brick-making no longer practised at the present day. It seemed unlikely that the extant walls were all remains of contemporaneous structures; some built only of rough stones and others of rubble set in mud bore a manifestly later look. The centre of the small plateau is occupied by a hollow the bottom of which is some ten to twelve feet below the foot of the brick wall already mentioned. This probably is the result of excavations such as I found in progress at other points of the mound. The villagers use the earth here obtained for plastering the walls of their huts, as it is said to be harder than the clay ordinarily obtainable. It may be assumed that the material would be useful also for manuring; but I did not ascertain that it was actually used for this purpose.

Structural
remains of
Noghōro-
dōk.

The only structural features of old date still distinguishable, apart from the enclosing walls of the fort, are a small square bastion near the middle of the east face and a round tower, at the south-west corner of which the brick foundations sloping inwards measure twenty-seven feet in their extant circumference. The entrance to the fort appears to have been near the southern end of the east face, where I thought I could trace remains of the wall of an outer gate. The regular courses of rough stone slabs which form the base of the old circumvallation make it easy to distinguish this from the more recent rubble-built walls of which several appear on the west and south slopes supporting terraces intended for graves. Potsherds are found in great quantity both among the ruins on the top of the mound and covering its slopes. Their colour is generally bright red on the surface, which is moderately glazed, and a dull grey or brown within. The villagers declared that beads and arrow-heads in metal were discovered at times, but would not acknowledge other finds.

The early occupation of the mound is made clear by the height of the artificial deposits which cover it or possibly compose it entirely. Local tradition vaguely ascribes the circumvallation to the time of the 'Kalmak' or Chinese domination. Judging from the great size of the bricks, which recalled those seen in ruined Buddhist structures near Kāshgar, as also from their peculiar make and the hardness of the potsherds admixed, the fort might well go back to some occupation from the Wakhān side earlier than that of the middle of the eighteenth century. Of datable relics there was no trace. But there is little hope of discovering these in valleys where until recently the current use of coined money was unknown, and where objects capable of artistic ornamentation, whether of metal or other hard materials, must have been few.

I was all the more gratified by the opportunity which that night's halt at the hamlet of Mīragrām offered for observing how artistic traditions of unmistakable antiquity have retained their hold on local crafts down to the present day. I had pitched my camp in a pretty orchard between the river bank and the house belonging to Obaidullah Khān, the Deputy-Hākim of the uppermost Yārkhūn Valley. The house from outside had looked a modest rubble-built hovel. But when, attracted by some carved pillars and quaint wall-painting in a veranda-like structure, I paid it a visit

Obaidullah's
house at
Mīragrām.