

No ice found
at salt
spring.

work for several days was awaiting me there. My anxiety about retaining an adequate margin of time for it was much increased when on the evening of December 22 Tokhta Ākhūn, who had taken the camels to the spring of 'Yangi-bulak' at the foot of the Kuruk-tāgh, arrived with the report that the water there was so salt that practically no ice had as yet formed, and this in spite of the bitter cold, my minimum thermometer registering that morning a temperature of 46 degrees Fahr. below freezing-point. For the same reason the camels, even with the thirst of ten days, had refused to touch water there. So with the hoped-for supply of ice from the spring failing, and with the added care about the camels holding out long enough, I could not feel much regret at Tokhta Ākhūn having, during a two days' reconnaissance around the western site, failed to trace more ruins.

Start for
L.B. site.

On the same evening the camels I had sent back to our half-way depot for the reserve of ice and supplies opportunely arrived. With their help it became possible on the following day to shift camp to the western group of ruins. As the distance was less than eight miles, I could use the whole forenoon for the careful examination and measurement of the ruined Stūpas already described, and for getting the remains we had cleared buried again by the men for protection.

Ruined
Stūpa en
route.

The tramp to the new camp with the heavily-laden men was made trying by the constant succession of steep ridges and furrows of Yārdangs which had to be crossed almost at right angles. On the way I was able to examine the ruined Stūpa which had been our first guiding mark to the site (Fig. 97). It had suffered much havoc by erosion, but the two upper stories of the square base and the foot of the cylindrical dome could still be made out clearly (see Plate 26). The lowest story could only be traced with difficulty at the south-east foot, as most of the masonry had slipped away owing to the clay beneath having been undercut by wind-erosion. The base at its foot had measured approximately forty feet square, and the total height of the ruin, including the remnant of the cylindrical dome, was about thirty-four feet from the top of the first story of the base. Here, too, as in the Stūpas L.A. x, xi, the several stories of the base had been built as separate concentric blocks of masonry round a circular core. This, corresponding to the cylindrical superstructure and seventeen feet in diameter, was here clearly distinguishable at the exposed north corner. Embedded in the masonry of the core was a reinforcing frame of timber. The sun-dried bricks showed the average size of those found at L.A.

Group of
ruins L.B.
I-III.

Early on December 24 work was started at the small group of ruins, L.B. I-III (Plate 27), including the little Buddhist shrine which one of Dr. Hedin's men had accidentally discovered in March, 1900, and from which he himself had brought away, in the following year, a number of fine wood-carvings.¹ His visit had then been paid from the camp established at L.A., and had hence been confined to the few hours available between the tramps to and fro. This left hope for more finds here, and I was not disappointed. Besides the badly eroded remains of the shrine L.B. II the ruins comprised those of two larger structures, L.B. I, III, which flanked it to the north-east and south-west, and had manifestly served as dwellings (Fig. 103). The whole, as shown by Plate 27, occupied the top of an island-like plateau, about 250 feet long and rising fully twenty-eight feet above the wind-eroded depression immediately at its foot.

Timber and
wattle walls
of L.B. I.

The dwelling to the north-east, L. B. I, proved mainly of interest owing to the clearness with which the constructive details of the walls, of timber and wattle, could be studied. In the largest room, measuring 36 by 20 feet, the walls to the north-west and south-west had survived only to about a foot or so above the floor. But those to the north-east and south-east had at some early period fallen bodily outwards and, lying flat on the ground, had escaped erosion. The walls showed a framework of posts inserted into the foundation beams at intervals of 15 to 21 inches.

¹ See Hedin, *Central Asia and Tibet*, i. pp. 383 sqq.; *Central Asia*, ii. pp. 641 sqq., Pl. 76.