

Lake Baghrash.<sup>11</sup> Since then I have had repeated occasions on my third journey to make similar observations elsewhere.

Reasons for locating fortified camp.

Taking account of all these facts concerning the ground which adjoins the wall between T. iv. a and T. iv. b immediately on the south, I retain the impression that we have here traces of a fortified camp established at an early date just where the Lou-lan route passed outside the walled line of the Limes. Here at the foot of the plateau, on ground possessed of abundant desert vegetation and hence well provided with grazing and fuel, there was shelter also from the bitter winds of this region, and no difficulty about reaching water by means of wells.<sup>12</sup> A larger station for troops was here justified by the risks against which it was necessary to guard at an obviously exposed corner on the extreme western flank of the Limes proper. But most important of all was, perhaps, the consideration that this was the last permanently occupied place within the borders of the Empire which the Chinese troops and missions would pass as they went by the dreaded desert route to Lou-lan and the 'Western regions', while, for those fortunate enough to return, it was the very first to enter *kuan li-t'ou*, or *intra muros*. Thus a fortified camp established here would serve as a depot station, or bridge-head as it were, for the long and difficult journey through the Lop desert, just as the ruined Chinese *castrum* L.E., which I discovered in February, 1914, undoubtedly did on the Lou-lan side of the route.<sup>13</sup>

'Well of Protector-General' of *Wei lio*.

It is by these clear topographical indications that I am led, as already explained in a previous chapter,<sup>14</sup> to place at this very point 'the Well of the Protector-General' which the detailed itinerary of the 'central route', i.e. of the route to Lou-lan, preserved in the *Wei lio* mentions between the *Yü-mên kuan* and the northern extremity of the *San-lung*, or 'Three Ridges' sands. I have shown above that by the latter are meant the three dune promontories to be crossed to the south-east of Bēsh-toghrak. That Yü-mên, or the Jade Gate, at the period to which the account of the *Wei lio* goes back was situated at the ruined station T. xiv is proved beyond doubt by archaeological and documentary evidence to be discussed further on. If we now look at the detailed map of the Western Limes in Plate 33, it shows us that the area protected by the towers T. iv. a, b, c lies exactly half-way between the two points, being about twenty-five miles, as measured on the map, from either. Toghrak-bulak close by has now taken the place of the ancient station. From there caravans nowadays cover the distance to either point in two marches, and no doubt did the same in Han times. Hence I do not hesitate to place the 'Well of the Protector-General' in this area.

Advanced line of towers on Lou-lan route.

Before leaving this western termination of the wall I may conveniently describe what I learnt from a long day's reconnaissance, made beyond it on May 2, 1907, along the ancient Lou-lan route north-westwards. It furnished definite proof that, though there had been no extension of the wall in that direction, the towers I had passed on my first approach to Toghrak-bulak in March dated back to the same time as the Limes proper. Their position close to the route now leading to Lop, and once to the ancient Lou-lan, clearly shows that they were intended to serve as watch-posts from which reports about movements, etc., along the road could be sent in advance, eventually by means of fire-signals such as the records discovered at the Limes stations so often mention,<sup>15</sup> to the detachments guarding the line of the wall. As the tower T. II, the furthestmost of these outpost towers actually traced, was over seven miles distant from T. iv. a, signals dispatched from it might be received in useful time to serve for alarms, etc.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. below, chap. xxix. sec. i.

<sup>12</sup> The advantages offered by this area were proved by an abandoned and ruined station of Chinese graziers which I found by the side of a clay terrace about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles south-south-west of Camp 171. a (see Pl. 33), and by the fact that in March,

1914, I observed a small camp of Mongols actually grazing their horses and cattle south of T. iv. a, b.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. above, pp. 423, 553 note 3.

<sup>14</sup> See above, pp. 556 sq.

<sup>15</sup> See below, chap. xx, sec. vi.