

power in the New Dominions. His régime is of interest as affording a lingering trace of that system of indigenous administration under Chinese political control which the Annals show to have prevailed everywhere during earlier epochs of Chinese dominion in Central Asia.

### SECTION III.—THE RUINS OF ARA-TAM AND LAPCHUK

As late as Marco Polo's time the population of Hāmi appears to have been still wholly Buddhist. Even more than a century later Shāh Rukh's embassy found there 'a magnificent mosque and convent of Derwishes in juxtaposition with a fine Buddhist temple'.<sup>1</sup> No remains of pre-Muhamadan origin are now traceable within the main oasis of Hāmi. Outside Hāmi proper, however, Buddhist structures of a relatively late period are still standing, and, scanty as the available time was, I managed to make a rapid survey of them in two localities. An excursion commenced on October 24 was directed to the north-east, and helped also to facilitate topographical work which was carried out by R. B. Lāl Singh across the southern spurs and valleys of the Karlik-tāgh.

Buddhist  
remains  
outside  
Hāmi.

The first march took us north across the great fan of piedmont gravel to the little village of Törük at the foot of the mountains. It gave me an opportunity of examining *en route* the massive watch-tower known as Akchik-karaul (Map No. 73, c. 1), to which great antiquity is ascribed by the people of Hāmi. It proved to be a solid mass of masonry in sun-dried bricks, about 40 feet square at the base and rising with sloping faces to approximately the same height. The rapid examination I was able to make on the approach of nightfall disclosed no definite clue to the age of the tower, but left no doubt that it was considerably older than the rubble-built wall, also in ruins, about 90 feet square which surrounds it. The tower had obviously been intended to serve as a signal-station and place of refuge in case of sudden attacks from across the mountains. Its position was specially well chosen for this purpose, as it commands a view of the routes which lead down from the passes towards Bar-kul and Tör-kul (Map No. 72, c. 3, d. 4).

Watch-  
tower on  
Bar-kul  
road.

From Törük I made my way along the barren foot of the mountains south-westwards to Ara-tam, at the debouchure of the Bardash stream (Map No. 73, d. 1), where remains of ruined temples were reported. They proved to be situated quite close to a picturesque country seat of the 'Wang', or chief, of Hāmi and surrounded by extensive orchards, which form part of the domain and are famed for their produce. In my Personal Narrative<sup>2</sup> I have fully described the delightful setting provided for the ruins by this mass of luxuriant vegetation. Steep and absolutely bare ridges of reddish sandstone form the background through which the snow-fed stream of Bardash breaks in a tortuous, impassable gorge. The panoramic view in Fig. 192 will help to illustrate it. The scenery was the most pleasant in which it has ever fallen to my lot to do archaeological work in Central Asia, and remembering the very different ground on which my labours before, mainly in the desert, had lain, I could not help regretting that there was not work enough at this site to detain me for more than a couple of days.

Position of  
Ara-tam.

The position of the ruins, as seen in the plan, Plate 48, and their character left no doubt that this was an agglomeration of Buddhist shrines erected at a site which was held sacred as marking the debouchure of a stream precious to the agricultural population. Already in the case of Mount Gośṛṅga, the present Kohmārī of Khotan, I have had occasion to explain how ancient and how tenacious local worship is at such sites where cultivators, during all periods down to the present day, have been accustomed to pray for that main condition of their prosperity, a plentiful volume of water to assure irrigation.<sup>3</sup> Since then I have had abundant occasion on my visits of 1907-8 and

Local wor-  
ship at  
debouchure  
of stream.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Yule-Cordier, *Cathay*, i. p. 273. On the other hand, as pointed out by Yule, *Marco Polo*, i. p. 211, note 1, Hāji Muhammad (circa 1550) 'speaks of Kamul as the first

Mahomedan city met with in travelling from China'.

<sup>2</sup> See *Desert Cathay*, ii. pp. 347 sqq.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 189 sq.