

Watch-towers guarding defile.

in size. Layers of thin tamarisk branches were inserted between the courses, a clear indication of early date. The tower rested on a walled-up platform about 10 feet high on the north, and its present height above this seemed about 15 feet more. From where the crest of the ridge running down to the defile northward becomes less steep it is crowned by the remains of a solid brick wall, which could be traced for about 120 yards. In places where drift-sand had offered protection it still stood to a height of about 12 feet, with a thickness of $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet. Its material was the same as in the tower just described. Seen from the level ground of the gap, the wall appeared to turn first to the east and then to the south, ending below the tower. But owing to wind-erosion, which had carved out small Yārdangs, the exact line of the wall was here difficult to trace. I estimated the irregular area thus enclosed at approximately 300 yards across. The level portion of the interior was mostly covered with small dunes; but on one of the erosion terraces rising above these the foundations of a brick-built base, about 24 feet square, survived to a height of 5 to 6 feet. Potsherds of a coarse kind were found on eroded patches both within and outside this little circumvallation. On the opposite side of the defile which it was intended to guard a rugged foot-spur of the Bēl-tāgh bore the remains of another watch-tower. This was built of solid stamped clay with tamarisk twigs inserted in layers. The extant portion rose to a height of about 12 feet above the rock and measured about 30 by 27 feet on the top. This tower or watch-post stood about 100 feet above the level ground of the defile, in a position particularly easy of defence owing to its isolation and the steepness of the rock ledges below it.

Reported remains of Lāl-tāgh.

The very extensive view enjoyed from this point embraced all the detached rugged hill chains, from those first sighted at Chong-tim and Tumshuk to the big Mazār-tāgh in the south and the long-stretched Lāl-tāgh ridge in the north (Map No. 14. C, D. 5). It was at the foot of the latter that my guides pointed out to me in the distance the position occupied by what from their description I took to be the ruins of a Buddhist shrine of some size. Between Bēl-tāgh and Lāl-tāgh there stretched a wide belt of bare steppe partly covered with low dunes, and as the plane table indicated a distance of some 7 miles I had to renounce all hope of reaching the site on this occasion. Stories of 'Kōne-shahrs' seemed to cling particularly to the Lāl-tāgh, and the Kelpin people, too, whose desert route to Marāl-bāshi passes this hill chain on the north, had told me of 'Tati' remains to be found there in places. The verification of all this had to be left for a chance in the future. Before my departure from Khotan I received, however, some assurance that the Lāl-tāgh site was not altogether a creation of the 'Kōtek-shahr' type; for Ayib Mīrāb then sent me through a trader the small collection of stucco relieve fragments described in the List below which, as he declared, he had secured from the 'Būt-khāna' of Lāl-tāgh. In October, 1913, I was able to make sure that the statement was correct—and also that his experimental burrowing had not been the first.

Journey via Yārkand to Khotan.

From Marāl-bāshi five rapid marches, made trying by heat and violent sand-storms, carried me to Yārkand. For archaeological observations they offered no scope. But in the course of survey work I was able to acquaint myself with the physical conditions which affect irrigation along the Yārkand River, and which must at all times have caused considerable fluctuations in the cultivated area of these straggling oases. At Yārkand a few days' halt was necessitated by a variety of practical tasks preparatory to my return to India, including the disposal of my brave camels from Keriya, which had rendered such valiant service on my desert travels. Then I set out for my base at Khotan and reached it by eight marches done mainly at night and diversified by a succession of seasonal 'Burāns'. The route was necessarily the same as I had first followed in 1900, and this enabled me to supplement the collection of small antiques from the old sites near Moji, already fully described in *Ancient Khotan*,³ by some additional specimens.

³ See *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 110 sq. for Togujai; for the 'Tati' of Kakshal, *ibid.*, i. pp. 106 sqq.