

then partially flooded, where the reclamation of old abandoned fields could be seen actually proceeding in places.

Ruined town
of Shih-pan-
tung.

The 'kōne-shahr' of which Zahīd Bēg had told me, and to which our Chinese companions gave the name of Shih-pan-tung,⁵ proved a ruined 'town', indeed, but one abandoned only since the great Tungan rising. Nevertheless, there was something of archaeological interest to be learned from an examination of its remains. They were those of a typical small Chinese town enclosed by crumbling ramparts of stamped clay, which formed an approximately orientated square of about 375 yards on each face. Its dimensions thus showed a close approach to those of the ancient Lou-lan station. The little town, which had served as an administrative centre for the northern portion of the oasis, had been sacked by the Tungan rebels some forty years before, and had since fallen into complete ruin. The enclosing walls had crumbled away in places into a mere *agger*, or mound. Heaps of shapeless débris, with remnants of walls of sun-dried bricks, extended over the greater part of the interior, marking the position of houses. Any timber that they once contained had long been carried away, and plentiful tamarisk scrub was growing both among the low débris heaps and over the empty spaces. But the alignment of the usual two main streets crossing each other at right angles, somewhat after the fashion of a Roman *castrum*, could still be made out clearly.

Wrecked
temple and
Ya-mén.

Through the gate in the centre of the southern wall passed the main road towards a ruined temple, raised on a mound and masking the north gate (Fig. 151). Its walls, built of hard bricks with plenty of terra-cotta relief work in the usual Chinese style, still carried a roof over the second story, which, raised on a massive base of sun-dried bricks, formed a separate shrine. The stucco images which it sheltered were all badly broken by vandal hands, but manifestly still objects of worship, and a large decorated bronze bell was left *in situ*, in spite of Tungan wrecking. There was evidence here that continuity of local cult was asserting itself amid the surrounding desolation. I found similar proofs of its tenacity again and again among the many ruined sites of recent date within the parts of Kan-su that I subsequently visited. Less successful than this continuance of the gods in old quarters, but perhaps equally significant in a way, was the attempt which seemed to have been made to reoccupy a small *Ya-mén* situated on the central road and not far from the south gate. It was solidly built and comprised some rooms still roofed, but in a state of collapse. Some petty official appeared to have returned here after the town was deserted, perhaps charged with an attempt to re-colonize it. Auspicious sentences penned on scarlet paper and other written relics of official occupation still stuck to walls and posts. As I walked across the débris area and along the line of the decayed walls, passing more than one rubbish-heap, I thought of the rich archaeological deposits which might await some successor in the distant future—if only the ground would dry up completely!

Ruined
tower
T. xxiv.

On the following morning the march was resumed to the north-north-east, where, from the height of the town wall, I had sighted a watch-tower. It was reached after crossing for close on four miles a scrub-covered steppe, bearing obvious marks of old cultivation, where large patches had been recently cleared by burning and were now being flooded for sowing. The tower, T. xxiv in Map No. 78. D. 3, occupied the top of a small clay ridge about eleven feet high and was manifestly of old construction; for its masonry, consisting of hard lumps of clay impregnated with salt, which had been quarried on the spot and used as bricks, showed the same regular layers of reeds and tamarisk twigs, here at intervals of about ten inches, which were characteristic of the masonry

⁵ This and all other Chinese local names recorded in the Kan-su sheets of the Map have been carefully transcribed by Dr. L. Giles from the record in Chinese characters which was made at the time by Chiang Ssŭ-yeh in connexion with our

survey. This record, I regret, is not accessible to me at present. Hence the Chinese forms of the names cannot be shown here.