

pottery and the well-preserved small bronze buckle, T. VII. 001, shown in Plate LIII. I have also described above how on my first passage the line of wall was picked up again on the gravel plateau to the north-east of T. VII, after having been lost for about a mile from this tower onwards.³ Its total disappearance just at this point, where the present caravan route from Lop passes within the line of the ancient Limes, is certainly curious.

Excavation
of quarters
at tower
T. VIII.

Continuing eastwards along the well-marked *agger* formed by the remains of the wall, I had then come, nearly 3 miles from T. VII, upon a small mound which lay about 24 yards to the south of it (Fig. 166). Pieces of timber protruding from the north-east corner and stones lying on its top had suggested that it was the much-decayed ruin of a watch-station, and the excavation started on April 14 immediately after my return to the Limes soon confirmed the surmise. The mound measured about 45 feet in diameter on the ground level and rose to about 10 feet above it. From the coarse gravel which covered its top and slopes, as seen in Fig. 166, there first emerged on the north-east rough Toghrak posts and plentiful bundles of reeds embedded in masses of sun-dried bricks. They soon proved to be the débris of the tower, which in its fall had completely crushed and buried the walls and roofing of the adjoining quarters. The clearing of this débris was heavy work for my small band of Chinese labourers, as yet untrained for such tasks and all opium-smokers; but it was at once rewarded by interesting finds and, when it was completed, it showed the plan of the tower and the quarters fully and clearly.

Tower
plastered
and white-
washed.

As seen in Plate 38, the tower measured 23 feet square at its base and was built of bricks, measuring 14 by 7-8 inches, with a thickness of 4-5 inches. At the north-east corner, which the photograph in Fig. 168 shows after excavation, the brickwork still stood to a height of about 6 feet. Where, on the north and east, quarters had been built against the base of the tower, the face of the latter retained a heavy coating of plaster and whitewash, amounting to 2-3 inches in thickness altogether. Naik Rām Singh, an expert in such matters, counted here no less than 13 successive coats of whitewash, with 4 or 5 replasterings in clay. It is very probable that we have here an illustration of those recoatings of walls which are mentioned, with details as to the procedure and the square surfaces treated, in numerous records from T. VI. b (*Doc.*, Nos. 102-111). It is certain that these frequent plaster coatings, so familiar in all countries of Asia where sun-dried bricks are used, were applied to the faces of the watch-towers not only for repair but also to make them more visible at a distance when the light was poor or the air filled with dust. But, of course, it is impossible to say in the case of T. VIII how many of the existing coats were applied before or after the quarters were built on to the tower. The topmost coat at the north-east corner of the tower bore the rough outline sketch of a camel, as seen in Fig. 168.

Construc-
tion of
quarters.

Of these quarters there survived to the north parts of the walls enclosing two rooms, each of which had a length of about 20 feet. The one next to the tower base, i, had a width of 6 feet; the other beyond the outer wall could no longer be traced. At the western end of i there remained a few steps of a staircase, probably once leading up to the roof and giving access thence to the top of the tower. From the eastern end of this room there led a narrow passage, ii, into another small room, about 7 by 8 feet, which may well have been added later, as the heavy wooden posts set into the walls of the passage, and containing sockets for thick wooden door bars, clearly suggested an entrance from outside, not a door between two rooms. The enclosing walls of the quarters were badly broken in most places, but showed a peculiar arrangement of the masonry, the bricks being set on edge with the longer and shorter sides facing outwards in alternate courses, as seen in Fig. 168 on the left.

³ See above, p. 571.