

wood inserted after every five courses. No refuse whatever, not even potsherds, was to be found near this tower.

About 150 yards off to the north, and on the last and almost completely isolated offshoot of the same ridge, rises the lower tower T. xxiii. a. It directly overlooks the caravan route which winds round the foot of the ridge before turning due west towards Yü-mên or south-east towards Tun-huang. As the ground immediately to the north is much broken by small ridges, the route may be said to pass here through a well-marked defile, and this accounts probably for a post having been built to watch it. My surveys of 1914 have furnished additional reasons for the belief that the post marked by the towers T. xxiii and T. xxiii. a served this special purpose and did not lie on the actual line of the Limes, which passed north of it, keeping closer to the foreshore of the lake.⁴

That its origin and occupation was, however, contemporary with the Limes was made quite clear both by the structural features of T. xxiii. a and the relics brought to light there. The tower was built of bricks, measuring 14 by 7 inches and 4 inches thick, with the usual intervening layers of reed straw. It measured 16 feet square at its foot, and contained, at a height of 8 feet above its natural clay base, a guard-room 8 feet square. Owing to the broken condition of the walls and the steepness of the slopes but little débris survived here. However, in a small gully to the south and some 30 feet below the tower considerable refuse-heaps were found, proving prolonged occupation of the post. Evidently the sheltered spot had been used for the accommodation both of men and of beasts. Among the few finds made in the masses of straw and dung, the fragment of a fabric, T. xxiii. a 002, deserves mention, as its material has been proved by Dr. Hanausek's analysis to be cotton. Within a small chamber cut into the clay cliff adjoining this rubbish there was found the fragment of a record on paper, *Doc. No. 708* (Plate XX), relating to some movement of soldiers. Its material, exceptionally soft and of felt-like appearance, suggests an early phase of paper manufacture, and therefore would well deserve expert analysis. A small inscribed wooden label (not traceable at present) was recovered from the refuse outside.

The fact that all this perishable litter had remained undisturbed at the bottom of the gully, though in the very line where any drainage would descend, afforded striking proof of the extremely scant rainfall which this desert region could have witnessed during and since the occupation of the Limes. It is to the exceptional aridity of the climate prevailing here for the last two thousand years that we owe the abundance of ancient remains brought to light by my explorations along the Tun-huang Limes, and with this observation I may fitly conclude their detailed description.

⁴ As mentioned above, p. 576, note 4, these later surveys have shown that the delineation in Map No. 78. B. 3 of the ground east and north of T. xxiii, previously based on an imperfect single traverse, requires modification in various

respects. The Khara-nôr extends considerably further to the east, and the positions of T. xxiii. b, c must be shifted northward. Near those stations the line of the Limes wall was traced with ease in 1914.

T. xxiii. a
guarding
route.

Refuse-
heap below
T. xxiii. a.

Extreme
aridity of
climate.