

DEFENDING GYEUR KALA

The city walls are square and run for 15li (about 8000 metres). The inhabitants made the city gates with iron..

This is part of a description of Antiochia Margiana by a Chinese prisoner, called Du Huan, held in Merv in AD 765 under the Abbasids (see next section). Each section of the square walls are about 2 km long and there were originally four gates, one on each wall.

The ancient city of Gyeur Kala was surrounded by an 8 kms defensive wall. The fortifications are now corroded but survive up to a height of 20m. They consisted of a city wall strengthened with towers at regular intervals and four gates which led in and out of the city

A cut bulldozed through the walls of Gyeur Kala by the Russians in the early 20th century (to pipe water into the inside for irrigation – a scheme which was abandoned) allowed an archaeological investigation of a complex sequence of defensive walls.

The first wall was built around 280 BC and consisted of an earthen wall, about 6m high, with a gallery walkway. After that, the wall was repeatedly strengthened and enlarged to withstand the military demands of the time.

Distinctive features which can still be recognized today include in-filled gallery walkways, arrow-slits, and a huge corner-bastion.

Interpreting the defences

The photographs on the right have been annotated to show each phase of the defensive walls of Gyeur Kala.

On the right you can see the three main phases of the wall around Gyeur Kala:

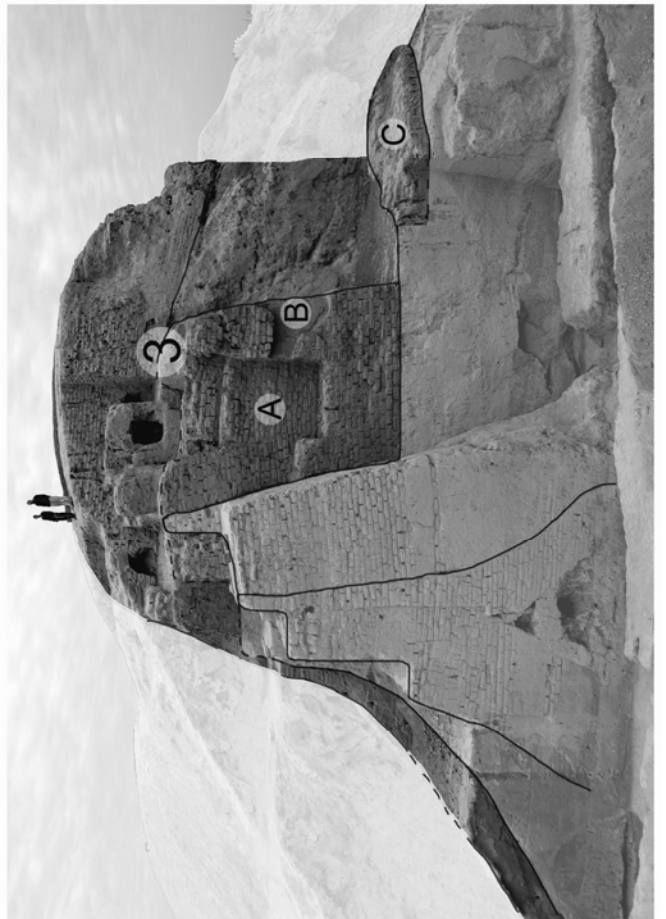
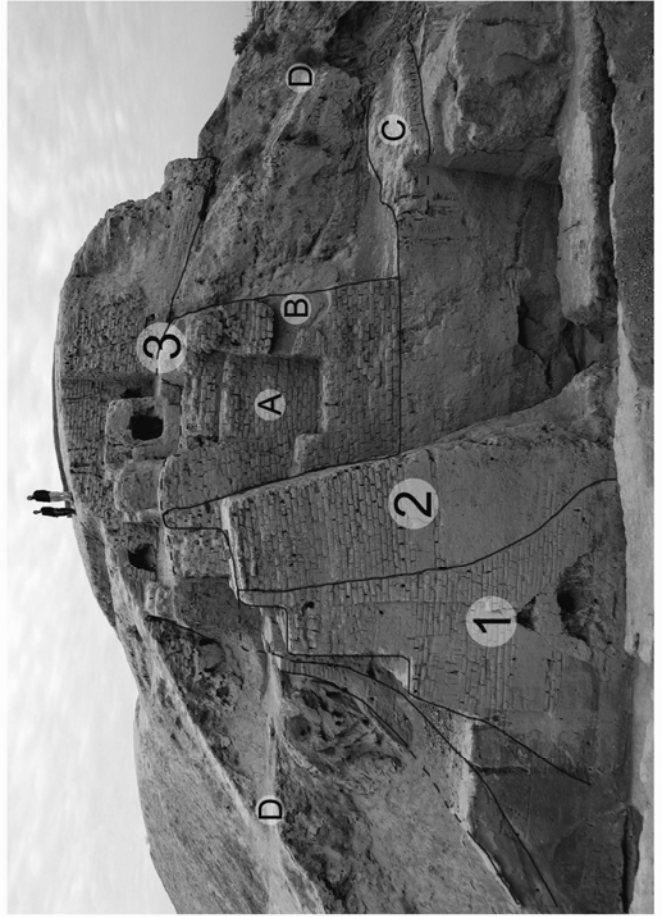
1. Seleucid wall, around 280 BC.
2. Parthian wall, around second century BC.
3. Late Parthian wall, around first century AD.
4. All phases.

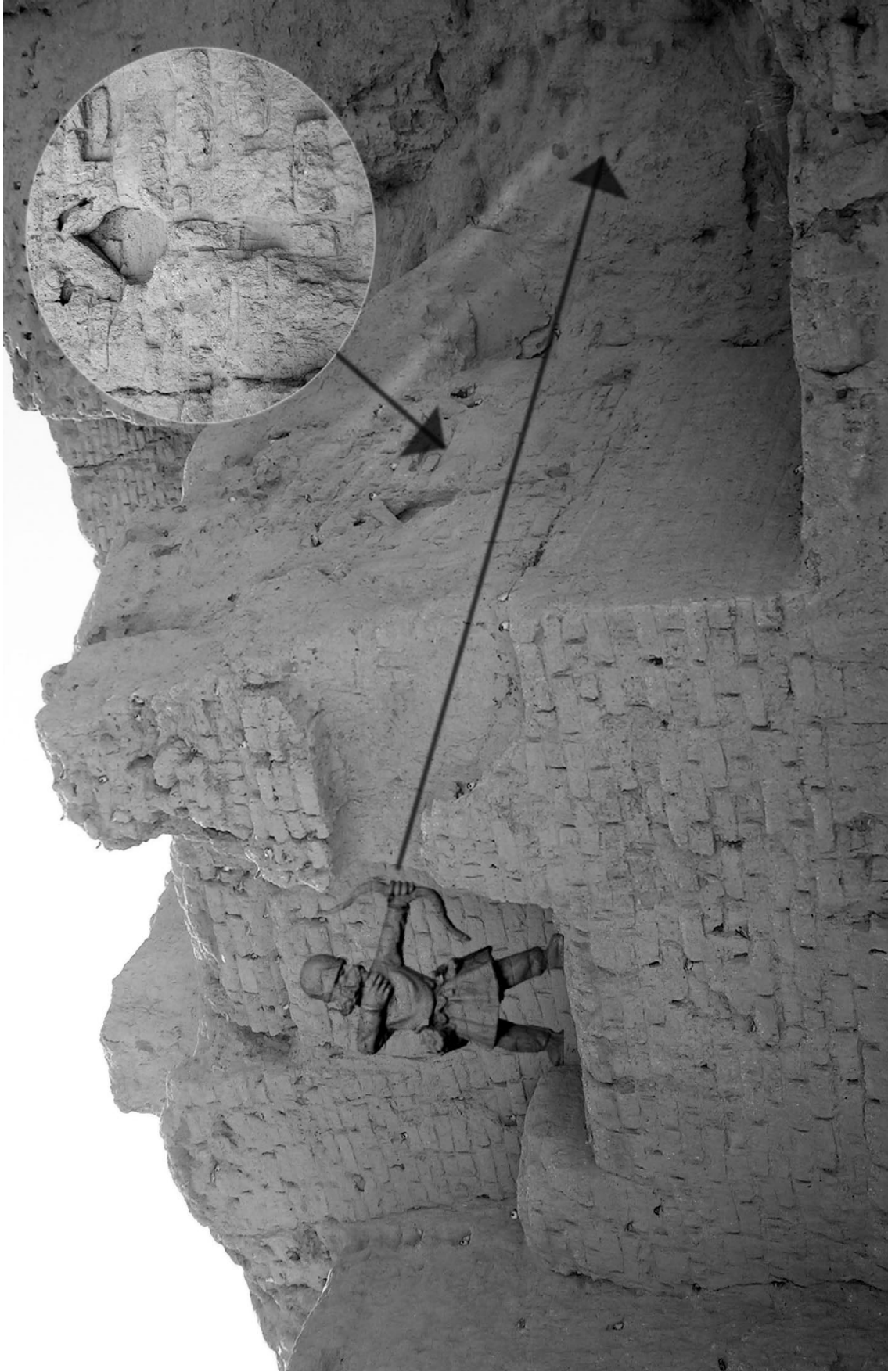
A. Filled-in access gallery.

B. Arrow slit.

C. Outer defences.

D. Erosion debris.





Part of the upper wall surrounding Gyaour Kala. A model of a Sasanian archer has been placed in the photograph to show how he would have fired on the enemy outside. To the right of the arrowslit he is using is a false arrowslit (see below).



A false arrow slit was constructed in the walls of Gyaaur Kala to give the impression that the city was more heavily guarded than it was.



Photograph taken to show how a Sassanian archer could have used an arrowslit to fire down on attackers.



A view from the top of the walls of Gyaur Kala.

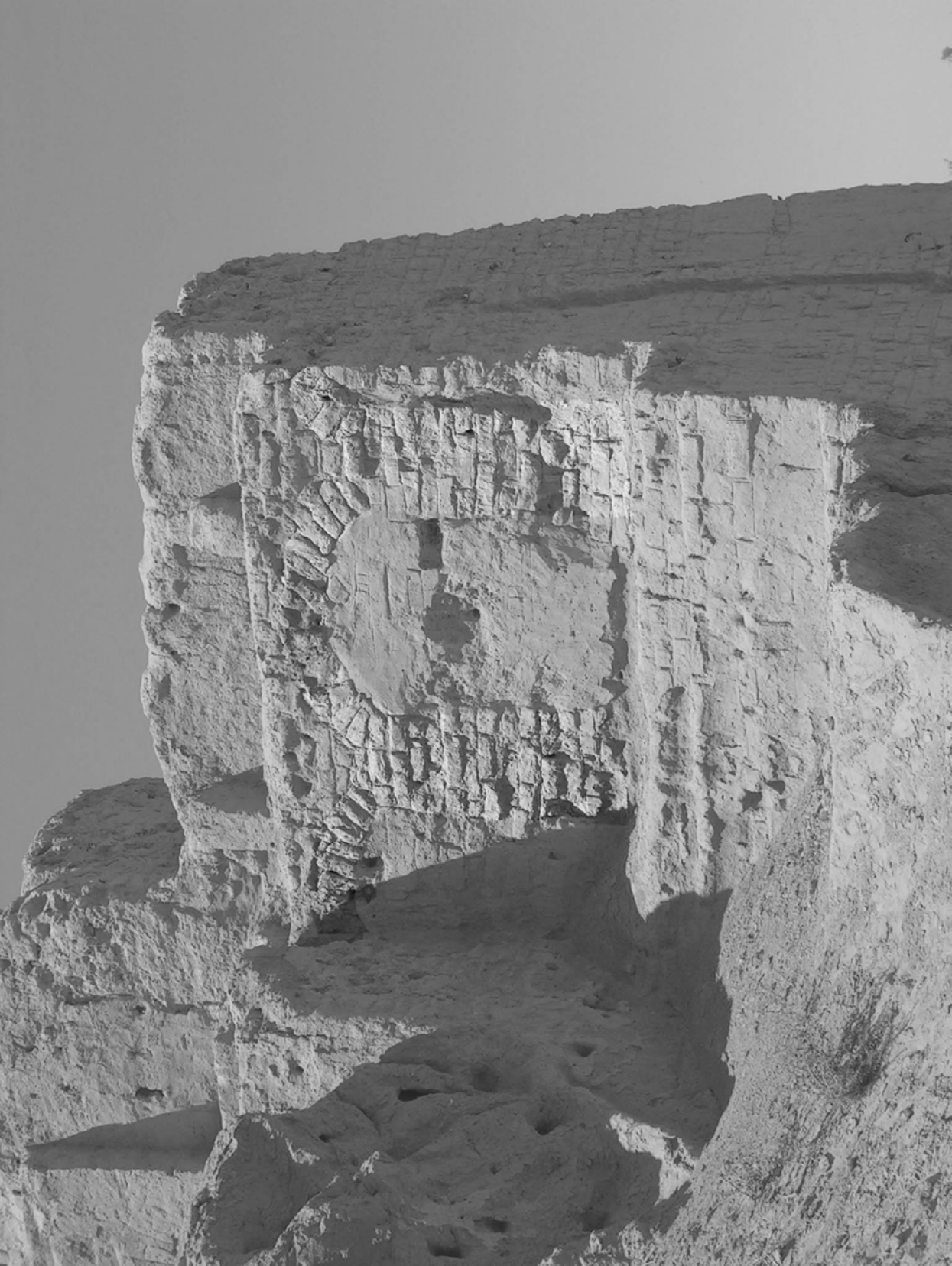


Photo taken from inside the walls of Gaur Kala showing the blocked gallery.