

called by the natives *sägisghan*. But of antelopes or the wild camel we did not perceive a single sign.

After a perfectly clear night, during which the stars shone out, though faintly, the morning of the 31st Dec. was quite as cloudy and quite as disagreeable as it had been before, and the wind was still blowing from the same quarter. Bright nights followed by cloudy days, with thick dust-haze, — such seemed to be the rule. The natural consequence of such an alternating sequence is to chill the surface of the earth. There is nothing to prevent radiation during the night, while there is everything to prevent insolation during the day. The only way to keep our spirits up was to walk.

Although more than half of the day's march was through sand, we nevertheless covered 24.3 km., but the sand was low, and did not force us to make any great deviations whereby time is wasted. Crossing the first sandy isthmus we found ourselves in bajir No. 34; it was quite small, and contained some tamarisks. But we nowhere found these bushes so plentiful as they had been at Camp No. X. Bajir No. 35 was all the greater, and lay exactly along the line of our route. Here, in addition to the ordinary kamisch, tschige, and tamarisks, another steppe-plant occurred in great abundance; it is called by the natives *äschäk-kamutsch*. At the south-south-west end of this bajir we reached, after a long climb, the top of the dividing sandy isthmus, and then saw on our left a fresh bajir, which, contrary to the rule, extended to the south-south-east for as far as we were able to see through the blurred atmosphere. We had encountered the rudimentary beginnings of a similar irregular arrangement of the sand in bajir No. 28. This departure from the normal produced also an interruption in the long steep sandy wall which had hitherto accompanied us on the left. But although it too inclined to the south-south-east, it was in all probability for a short distance only. The steep dune-wall which shut in bajir No. 37 on the east and north-east belonged thus to a fresh chain of dunes, which here thinned out, as it were. The bajirs still continued to be distinctly perceptible, and still preserved their usual shape; but the irregularities which now began to appear seemed to indicate, that we were approaching localities in which the prevailing winds are less regular than they had been hitherto. As I have already mentioned, owing to the feverish haste with which we marched, and to the weariness which we consequently felt, I was unable to take any precise observations of the height of the dunes; but I think I may trust my own eyesight, and may affirm that they decreased in altitude, though at a very slight rate, in proportion as we advanced southwards. The masses of sand were neither so gigantic nor so imposing here as they are beside the Tarim.

As for bajir No. 36, running with its chain of dunes towards the south-south-east, — if one were to regard the prevailing winds alone, one would be tempted to say, that every chain of dunes and every string of depressions in that desert *must* necessarily stretch from north-north-west to south-south-east, for it is from the east-north-east and the north-east that the prevailing winds come. But instead of the dunes lying in this way at right angles to the direction of the wind, the latter strikes them at an acute angle; the only bajirs in which it strikes them at right angles are Nos. 28 and 36. But I shall have something more to say on this topic later on.