

15.15 m. and 12.80 m. respectively and 0.68 m. in thickness. The material of which they were built is sun-dried clay, baked into bricks, precisely as similar bricks are made to-day in the same part of the country. Alongside the ruins runs an old arik, though it is only discernible at intervals. Besides these, we observed also patches of cultivated land, and a place where a threshing-floor had been; and there was, further, a ring of piled up, but rotten, straw. All this goes to show, that it cannot have been very long since the place was abandoned.

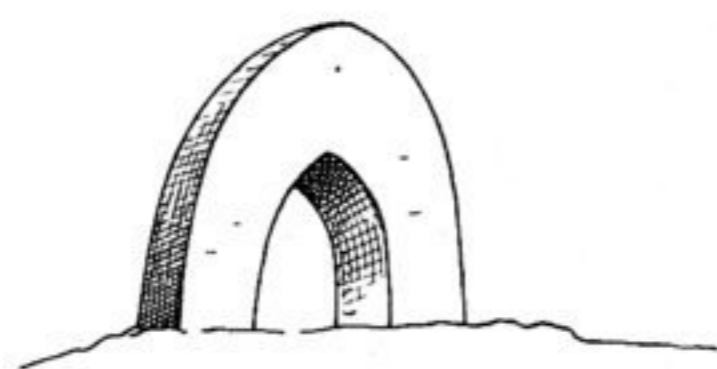
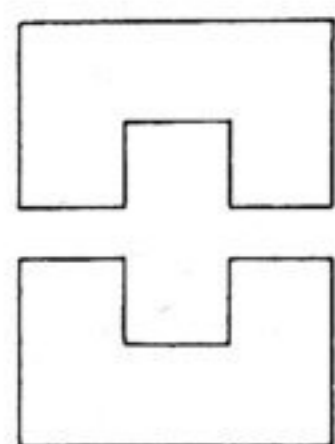


Fig. 342.

A »GUMBES».

Fig. 343. ARCHED GATEWAY.

Fig. 344. VERTICAL SECTION OF AN OLD ARIK.

After that travelling was in many places very hard work owing to the strips of sand, mounds, tangled bushes, dead wind-fallen timber, and kamisch. The sand lies parallel to the river in long, narrow strips, and between them are similar long beds of perfectly level kamisch.

On the 4th February we came upon the curious graves, of comparatively recent date, which I have described in *Central Asia and Tibet*, and consequently I have no need to dwell upon them here. I merely append a sketch of one of the coffins; they were made of fresh, hard poplar wood, which was in a good state of preservation.

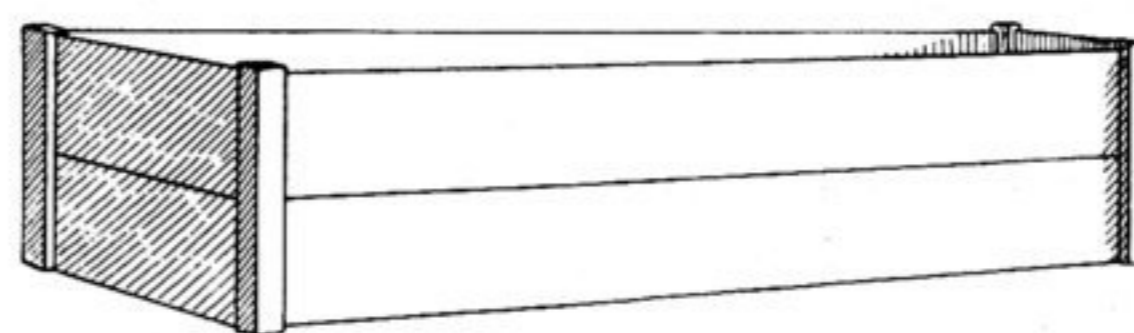


Fig. 345. A WOODEN COFFIN, FOUND ON THE RIGHT BANK OF THE TSCHERTSCHEN-DARJA.

Continuing north-east, we travelled across steppe-land alternating with toghrak forest. Here we perceived traces of an old arik, possibly a continuation of the one already mentioned. Here was a shepherd's hut known as Kijik-talning-baschi. The high sand to the south was now visible 8 to 10 km. distant, the intervening space consisting principally of barren *schor*. Tigers, wild-boar, red-deer, roe-deer, and hares were plentiful. After crossing a depression, which is said to contain water at the season of high flood, we travelled for the rest of the day along the ice of the Tschertschen-darja, and an excellent road it proved, being hard and level, and we no longer had to contend with the tangled thickets which made travelling along the banks so slow and exasperating. Off those parts that were exposed to the prevailing north-east wind the snow was swept away, but in other places it lay to the depth of about 1 dm. Generally speaking, the conformation of the river-bed bears a very close resemblance to that of the Tarim, though its detailed features were masked and confused by the ice. For instance, it was very rarely we saw any alluvium or mud islands, because they were underneath the ice. All along, close in to the banks, there grow reeds, while as a rule tamarisk-mounds, in many cases half washed away by the river, crown the sharp-cut scarped banks. In places pieces