

of Lâu-lan, which I discovered on the northern shore of the Lop-nor lake. The ruins of Lâu-lan appear to be much older than those of Jing-pen; but on the other hand the latter place was inhabited and kept up for a much longer period than Lâu-lan. When the lake of Lop-nor dried up, Lâu-lan had to be abandoned; whereas Jing-pen was needed down to a considerably later period as a station on the road to Turfan.

Next we turned our steps towards the east-north-east, making for the new Chinese station-house of Jing-pen. We were one or two kilometers from the southern edge of the detritus-slope; it formed here a sharply defined terrace, as though its front had been washed away. Between it and us stretched hard, level ground, dotted with scrub and seamed with small watercourses. On our right we had tamarisk steppe, the bushes being both living and dead, and all standing on their characteristic mounds. A little farther away, towards the south, was a strip of thin toghrak forest, the trees being full-grown and vigorous in a few places only. My guides declared, that the forest accompanied the old river-bed, which they all agreed in calling the Kuruk-darja, and not Kum-darja, the name that Kosloff applies to it — a fact which is somewhat strange, for he had the same guide that I had, namely Abdu Rehim. The Lop-men were also aware of the existence of this river, but they did not know how far it continued towards the east. All they could say was, that it went as far as the district of Saj-tscheke, and that except in a few places it was accompanied throughout by poplar forest. At length the tamarisk-mounds came to an end, and the tamarisks grew directly out of the soft, level soil; there too kamisch was growing. The path crossed over a ravine, beside which were some young poplars. The Chinese caravanserai, called quite simply *örtäng* by the Mussulmans, was built shortly after 1890; but by 1898 it was again empty and deserted, for there is practically next to no traffic for Turfan. With asses it is generally reckoned a journey of 9 days from Jing-pen to Turfan, and with horses a journey of 6 days. Yet the only people who travel this route are merchants, and they use it but very seldom. It is indeed shorter than the route *viâ* Korla and Kara-schahr; but the latter route is preferred because it leads through none but inhabited tracts, where both man and beast are able to procure all they need for their sustenance. By pure chance we fell in, on the afternoon of 12th March, with a little caravan of 4 merchants, who had just arrived at Jing-pen from Turfan. From them I gleaned the following information. They were inhabitants of Tschertschen, and more than a month earlier had passed along this same route on their way to Turfan, their object being to buy, for Chinese silver, asses, mules, porcelain, and various other Chinese commodities, which they intended to sell again in Tschertschen. They expected it would take them yet another 25 days to reach home. They had left Turfan ten days previously, and had encamped at Budschentü, Atschik-bulak, Ärpischme, Singer, a spring without a name, Asghan-bulak, Toghrak-bulak, and Jing-pen. At Budschentü and Singer they had rested for over a day at each place. Between Turfan and Singer there was a good deal of snow on the ground; indeed there had been quite heavy falls of snow in the region of Turfan that winter; but south of Singer there had been none. For 35 days the entire route north of Jing-pen had been buried under snow, and it had snowed several days whilst these people were on the road.