

clay in the sand deposits; but in the former case the clay is decidedly predominant and in the latter the sand.

On 7th March we tramped on foot 14 km. towards the north-west, passing immediately south of the tower of the 3rd March, then crossing, twice, our route of the same date, and passing the three small houses with the brick foundations. Immediately south-east of this little village or steading we came upon another clay tower, in a state of ruinous decay, which we did not see on the former occasion because of its great resemblance to an ordinary clay mound or *jardang*. Here again, then, we have a village protected by a watch-tower. It is true, we found no ruins of houses beside the tower of the 3rd March; but the existence of the tower bears eloquent witness to the former existence of a village, which has now completely disappeared. Yet we did observe a solitary beam or two now here, now there, all soft and crumbling to pieces, the last lingering remains of ruined houses. My men, who were regularly scouring the entire neighbourhood in search of ruins, several times reported the existence of similar beams, but they were always insufficient to warrant any further inferences being deduced from them. One of my Cossacks had discovered however, some kilometers north-west of the village with the three detached brick houses, a solitary small house, but we were now unable to find it again. Without a clay tower to serve as a beacon it is impossible in that flat region to find again any definite, fixed point which has been touched on on a previous journey. The clay mounds look like walls, groups of standing poplars like the vertical posts of houses; you are deceived and disappointed time after time.

To travel to the north-west in a country like that is in the highest degree tiring and trying to the patience, for you have to cross up over each successive *jardang* and down over each successive wind-eroded gully, and have to tack backwards and forwards repeatedly to get on at all. The poplars that still remain standing form groups and rows, stretching in exactly the same direction that they do beside the Tarim and its lakes; but it is impossible to trace out any sure boundary-line for the former lake by means of them. In most cases it is impossible to make out on which side of them the water extended. In some places the *kamisch* is extraordinarily abundant, forming a thick, shaggy carpet. The stalks are seldom more than 1 to 2 dm. high, and are crammed full of sand and salt, and burst at a touch. The leaves on the other hand are often fairly pliant. The vegetation here is always on the elevated portions of the desert, as it is in those parts which have been already described.

At length we reached our own camping-ground of the year before, and were easily able to convince ourselves that the clay towers which we had then seen were the same as those we had just visited. Two or three kilometers farther on we came to another village, which one of my men had lighted upon. This proved to be especially interesting. Generally speaking the work of destruction had advanced farther here than at the village where we encamped, and from such fragmentary ruins as remain it was difficult to make out how many houses there had been; perhaps there were eight, perhaps more. Three of them are however well preserved, and I was able to measure them.

This village, like that where we encamped, extended in a long line towards the south-west, the direction in which the prevailing wind blows, and begins with a