

continued towards the north-east, but without joining the main watercourse. Immediately to the left of the ice we followed a broad, shallow watercourse, covered with detritus, then dry, though in the spring, when all these ice-sheets melt, it is reported to be traversed for some days by a pretty lively stream, which however soon runs into the Kurghan-ileghi. It is only after the thawing of the ice and after rain that this watercourse carries water; at all other times it is dry. On its left bank there are hills 4 to 5 m. high. In the Kurghan-ileghi, which we next crossed, a little water was flowing; it was not frozen because its springs were situated close at hand. In the summer it is said to carry a good deal of water; it was a little higher up on its bank that we had our Camp XCVI. The watercourses which we crossed over at first all ran towards the north-east; now they had a more easterly direction and gradually united before entering the Ghas-nor, where we shall presently have an opportunity to study their common embouchure. Shortly after passing the last watercourse we encamped in a district called Julghun-dung, named from some tamarisk-mounds. Here too there was a small rivulet trickling out of a spring, and beside it balghun bushes and kamisch were growing. This was therefore one of the well-known localities in which water, grass, and fuel can all be obtained.

December 13th. Our march was towards the N.  $70^{\circ}$  E. Immediately north of Julghun-dung rises a little hill, composed in part of hard rock. Its almost flat top is crowned by the ruins of a *tasch-uj* (i. e. Stone House), or »old fort«, from which perhaps the name of Kurghan-ileghi is derived. The walls are constructed of stone, for the most part only  $\frac{1}{2}$  m. high, seldom as much as 1 m. The ground-plan and dimensions are shown in the accompanying sketch (fig. 198). In the east wall there is a breach, a door, and on that side the hill is not so steep, though its western side is almost perpendicular. What object this little fort may have served it is difficult to say; its only *raison d'être* seems to be the little 5 m. high hill itself, which commands all the flat country around it. Perhaps it was once a Chinese *karaul-chaneh*, or »watch-post«. On two or three of the spurs on the southern shore of the Usun-schor we had seen small circular walls of barely 2 m. in diameter, built during the last Tungan revolt, with the object of protecting East Turkestan against invasion from the mountain regions. The fort we are now discussing, which is known simply as *Tasch-uj*, dates from a much older period. South of the hill there were two small springfed brooks, containing good water at a temperature of  $+2.5^{\circ}$ .

On the other side of the ruined hill-fort we passed several similar brooks, forming more or less extensive sheets of ice; the country was mostly bare except for a thin sprinkling of kamisch. After that came a belt of white schor, dotted with a number of small round salt lagoons, 1 to 4 m. in diameter, and surrounded each by a low, but distinct, circular rampart. The bottom of these pools was generally about  $\frac{1}{3}$  m. lower than the adjacent surface and was in many cases covered with a fairly thick layer of white salt. At this time they were dry, but in the summer the entire region is marshy and impassable. It is difficult to say to what cause these characteristic formations owe their existence; we already came across instances of them on 5th Dec. west of Temirlik. It can hardly be the numerous springwater brooks that produce this effect, especially as circular lagoons occur also in places where there are no brooks, equally as in the vicinity of brooks. It is