

On the 27th we rode over several narrow, hard plateaus with rather steep falls on either side, but not above a few meters higher than the level ground. At the foot of the first grew a lovely grove of poplars and tamarisks. The ground of the plateaus was otherwise sterile and strewn with a fine gravel. We noticed three old watch-towers in a line.

KHARA-KHOTO

From the top of a new plateau we could see the walls of Khara-khoto at a distance of five kilometers to the north-north-west. But first we had to cross one of those sharply marked billows in the ground and a labyrinth of large, hemispherical cones overgrown with beautiful tamarisks before we could enjoy the splendid and imposingly desolate view over the south and west town wall of Khara-khoto. Not far from the little Mohammedan building without the south-west corner-tower of the town, stood the tents of our caravan.

I climbed up on the town wall and made one or two fugitive sketches of the *stupa* or *suburga* on the north-west corner, the gate-house on the middle of the west wall, and the above-mentioned little Mohammedan building with its cupola. The town wall remains relatively undamaged with its rows of buttresses. Only in the eastern and western walls are there gates. The wall as a whole forms a somewhat irregular square, the sides of which our students paced out. With this method of measurement they arrived at the following dimensions: 425 m for the length of the south wall, 357 m. for the west wall, 445 m. for the north and 405 for the east wall.¹ Inside the walls were insignificant traces of buildings and houses. Sand dunes had accumulated both on the outside and the inside of the town-wall, reaching right up to the top of the wall; and inside the west gate rose a solitary dune just at the point where hard west winds had swept through the open gate for six hundred years.

To give a more detailed account of this town is the business of the archaeologist. A description has already been given by KOZLOV in his book »Zur toten Stadt Chara Choto«, by AUREL STEIN in »Innermost Asia« and by LANGDON WARNER in »The Long Old Road in China«. Without doubt the town is identical with MARCO POLO's City of Edzina, a name that we recognize in the Chinese A-tsi-na and the Mongols' Etsin or Edsen-gol. The place is now known under the name of Khara-khoto or »The Black Town«, but is said also to be referred to as Batu Chiang-chün khoto or »The Town of the Hero-General«.

At two o'clock I left the place. The road led to the north-west, and soon took one between two gigantic vegetation cones resembling a gateway. Similar cones then continued as a regular labyrinth, between which the road meanders and winds

¹ According to a plan afterwards drawn up by BERGMAN it appears that these dimensions are too low, except the last, which is too high.