

number of men, enabled me to clear all remains traceable at the several groups of ruins. No time was lost in sending off the camels. The majority were dispatched to the north, where they might be expected to find grazing at least on reed-beds near a salt spring which was known to Tokhta Akhun at the foot of the barren Kuruk-tagh hills. The rest were dispatched south to our half-way depot to fetch the supplies of ice, etc., left there.

Looking round that morning from the high base of the Stupa, I had before me vistas which seemed strangely familiar and at the same time strikingly novel. To the south and south-west there arose in small clusters ruins of timber and plaster-built houses. These curiously recalled well-remembered ruins at the Niya site, though here the winds had left far less cover of protecting sand. Outside the area occupied by these ruins there was nothing for the eye to rest on but an endless succession of sharply-cut 'Yardangs' of hard clay and deep-scoured trenches, all running in the same direction as that relentless north-east wind had sculptured them (Fig. 58). It was, too, strangely like a picture of the sea, but of one frozen hard and buckled into innumerable pressure ridges.

Excavation was started at a ruined dwelling situated close to the south of the Stupa on the top of a terrace rising fully eighteen feet above the wind-eroded ground. It was but a scanty remnant of a well-built house, and the heavy timber debris covering the slopes showed where rooms had completely disappeared through erosion of the underlying soil. Yet the search of the surviving portions sufficed to bring to light some Chinese documents on narrow slips of wood as well as on paper. Other documents were in Kharoshthi,