

of sand and dust, and the track was easy to follow. On our left we had low sand-dunes overgrown with vegetation; this is called *kara-kum* or »black sand». On our right the sand is barren; this is called *ak-kum* or »white sand». Between these two expanses of sand the road ran along a narrow strip of steppe, a sort of continuation of the chain of oases watered by the *Kan-arik*. At length however vegetation grew more abundant, though it consisted only of tamarisks, dead as well as living, growing on their characteristic conical pedestals, and thinly scattered *toghraks* or poplars, with short stumpy stems, several of these also in a state of decay. After crossing a belt of sand with continuous and regularly formed sand-dunes, which consistently turned their steep faces towards the east and south-east, we approached the caravanserai of *Lenger*. This consisted of two small huts, overhung by poplars, a *köl* or reservoir, and a canal coming from the *Jarkent-darja*, which is said to leave the left bank of this river about 6 *potaj* above *Lajlik*. We formed our camp, which was to be the starting-point of our long journey down the river, about half an hour north of the station (*örtäng*) of *Lajlik*.

CHAPTER II.

THE JARKENT-DARJA FROM LAJLIK TO KURUK-ASTI.

After this short introduction, which has carried us from *Kaschgar* to the threshold of the region that is to be described in the course of the present volume, I now pass to an account of the *Jarkent-darja*, or, as the river is called after its confluence with the *Ak-su-darja*, the *Tarim*.

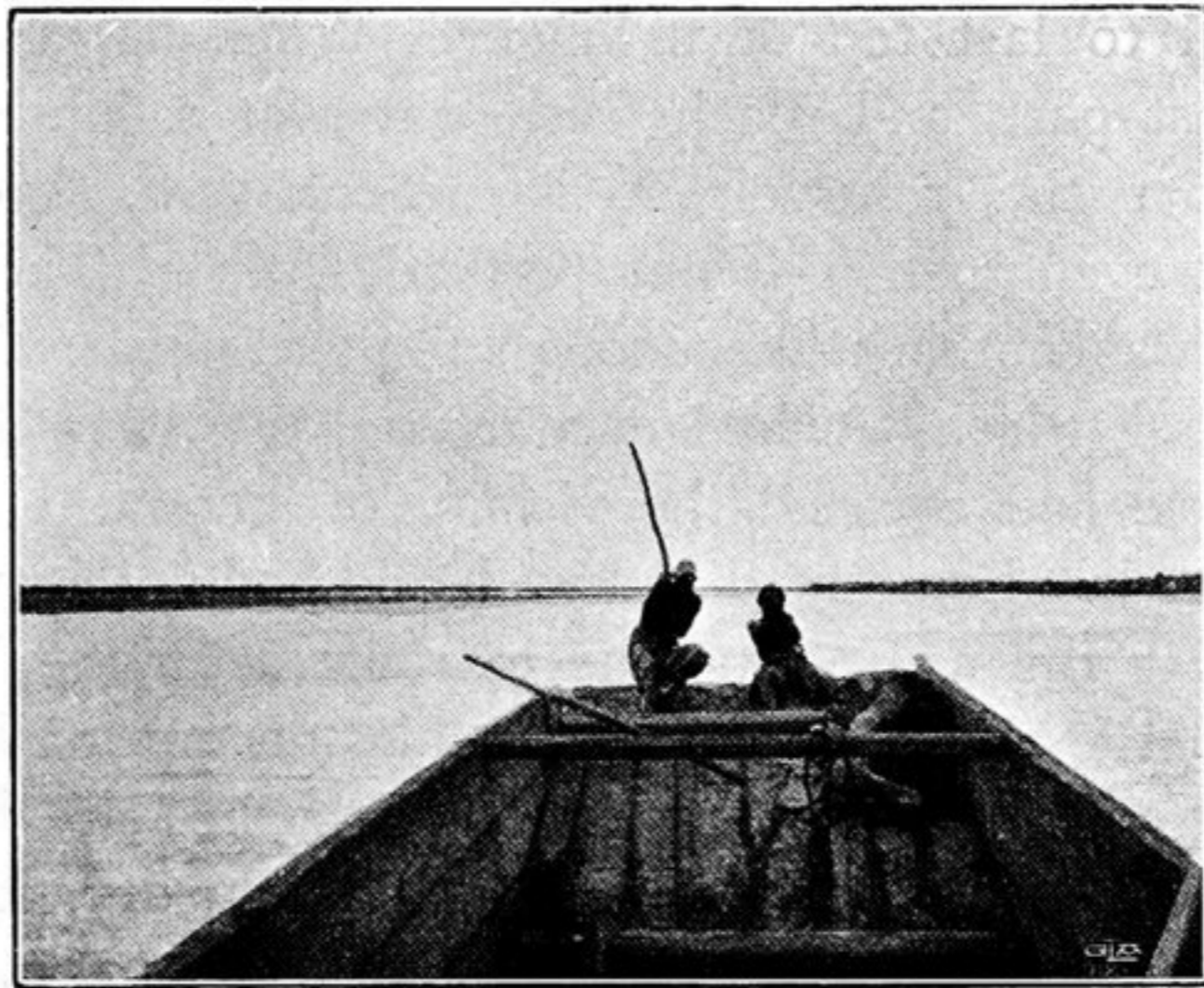


Fig. 6. THE STERN OF A FERRY-BOAT CROSSING THE JARKENT-DARJA.

My investigations into this river fell in two separate periods, the first extending from the 17th September to the 7th December 1899, the second from the 19th May to the 21st June 1900; and they were made from an ordinary ferry-boat of the type which is commonly employed in the district of *Jarkent* for crossing the river on the great caravan routes. It was 11.51 m. long, 2.37 m. broad, and 0.83 m. deep, and was constructed of planks of poplar-wood. As the only means of progression I used was the river, my itinerary was of course entirely determined by the velocity of the stream, which is naturally