



Fig. 68. THE »CHANEKA» OF MASAR-CHODSCHAM.

the latter below at their feet. Occasionally also their base is bathed by an elongated pool, left by a lateral branch of the river when in full flood. At the angles the depth is always considerable, 5 to 6 m., and sometimes our 6 ft punting-poles failed to touch the bottom. The soil is arenaceous; in several places the banks are actually formed of sand-dunes eaten into by the stream. At Nurma, on the left bank, we found three shepherds guarding 300 sheep. At Kokul the distance to the great desert was given as about 12 km.; and there the Kona-Jarkent-darja was reported as still hugging its margin, though now in great part levelled up and choked with drift-sand. The forest gradually thins out from the river towards the desert. About 6 km. north-west of Nurma, in a locality called Kuruk-köbrük, there is another old river-channel. Kuruk-köbrük signifies the Dry Bridge, and is probably derived from a bridge which once spanned the old stream at that spot, though it now lies high and dry; indeed traces of it are said still to survive. On the other side of this old river-bed, which begins at Atschi-dung and rejoins the Jarkent-darja at Mäsälik, lies the district of Dötschun, on the ancient road beside the Kaschgar-darja, about 20 km. north-west of Nurma. Still farther distant in the same direction, that is at 40 km., stands the station of Tschilan, on the great Ak-su road. Thus in this region there exists an old bed on each side of the existing Jarkent-darja. On the left we next passed an abandoned loop, containing stagnant water; on the right we were still accompanied by the forest path which begins at Tapsi and goes,