

its margins, for banks strictly speaking it had none, or at best they were very faintly indicated. The stream, when there is one, would appear to fill the bed pretty evenly from bank to bank. The bed itself is a couple of meters higher than the level of the Tarim, and shelves down to it right in the mouth of the river. Indeed the natives assert that the Chotan-darja does pour its flood with unexampled violence into the Tarim, which has generally at that time begun to drop. But however great or powerful the contribution of the Chotan-darja, it has apparently no effect whatever upon the main stream, which never deviates in the smallest degree from its settled easterly direction. At the same time the united stream after the confluence is a good deal broader than the single stream above it. Here too steppe and scrub withdraw to a wide distance apart, and the river contains extensive deposits of alluvium. This is unquestionably due to the vast masses of material which the Chotan-darja brings down from the loose ground it traverses in the course of its short existence. And the same story is told by a continuation of the Chotan-darja called Kara-kertschin, which branches off from the Tarim over on the left side of the latter. This stream, now dry and choked with vegetation, wheels round to the east-north-east so as to rejoin the Tarim at Atschik-darja. The space thus inclosed is likewise called Aral, or the Island. Thus the Tarim once flowed here for a considerable distance through two roughly parallel arms, and it is not unlikely that the Chotan-darja, being then of greater volume than it is now, in its efforts to preserve its natural south-north direction, as well as through the pressure of its flood, may have helped to form the bifurcation. When however the Chotan-darja began to dwindle, so too did the Kara-kertschin arm become less and less used. The Tarim was, it is true, still divided into two arms just above our camp at Kanbegi, though the intervening space consisted only of sedimentary deposits. Similar accidental bifurcations, depending upon the local alluvial formations, are quite common in this part of the river. As a rule, however, the current keeps to a single channel, and its cross-sections are fairly well represented in the subjoined cut made at Busuk.

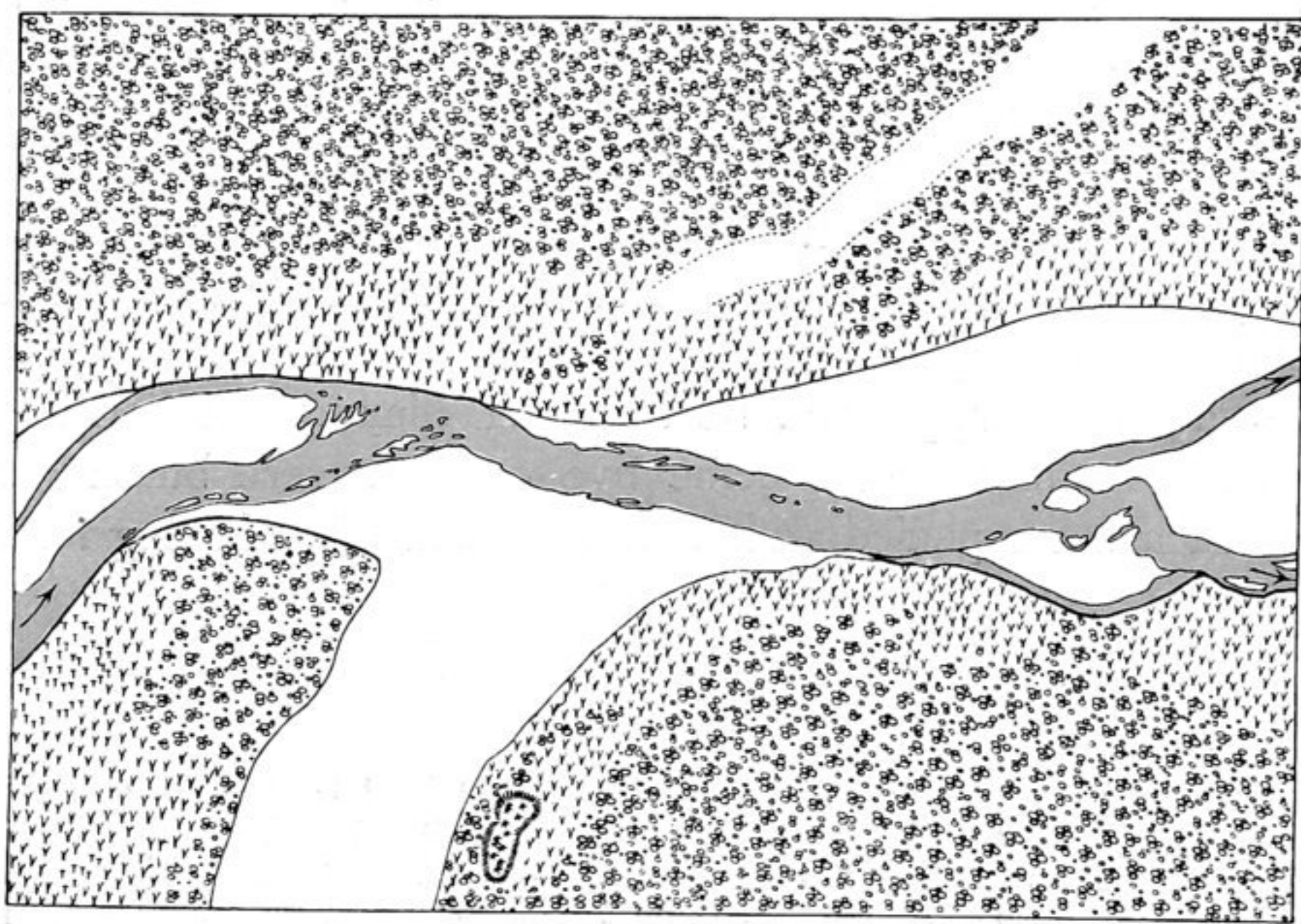


Fig. 82. CONFLUENCE OF CHOTAN-DARJA WITH THE AK-SU-DARJA.