

the right bank. Indeed these abandoned loops of dead water are so characteristic of almost the whole course of the Tarim that the natives possess a special word for them. They call them *boldschemals*, distinguishing them from *köl*, a »lake»; *dschajir* and *uktu*, which mean a »little lake»; *jarsuk*, that is »dead water» in a river-bed through which an active current is flowing; *daschi*, a »salt pool»; *bikar-darja* or *taschkan-su*, i. e. »idle» or »flung away water», indicating arms which break away from the river, and do not return to it again, and thus serve no real purpose. The only point common to a *taschkan-su* and a *boldschemal* is this last, their uselessness; on the other hand, while the former drains the river to a certain extent, the latter is cut off from it once for all, and gradually dries up. In fact, the river's tendency to discard and free itself from these loops as fast as they grow successively »ripe», is an occurrence of such a striking character that it could not very well escape the observation of the natives. In process of time the *boldschemals* get filled with dust, drift-sand, and vegetation, and disappear. I have said it would be a mere chance if one were to be an eye-witness of the actual formation of a *boldschemal*. And yet *boldschemals* are formed every year in numerous places all along the Tarim;

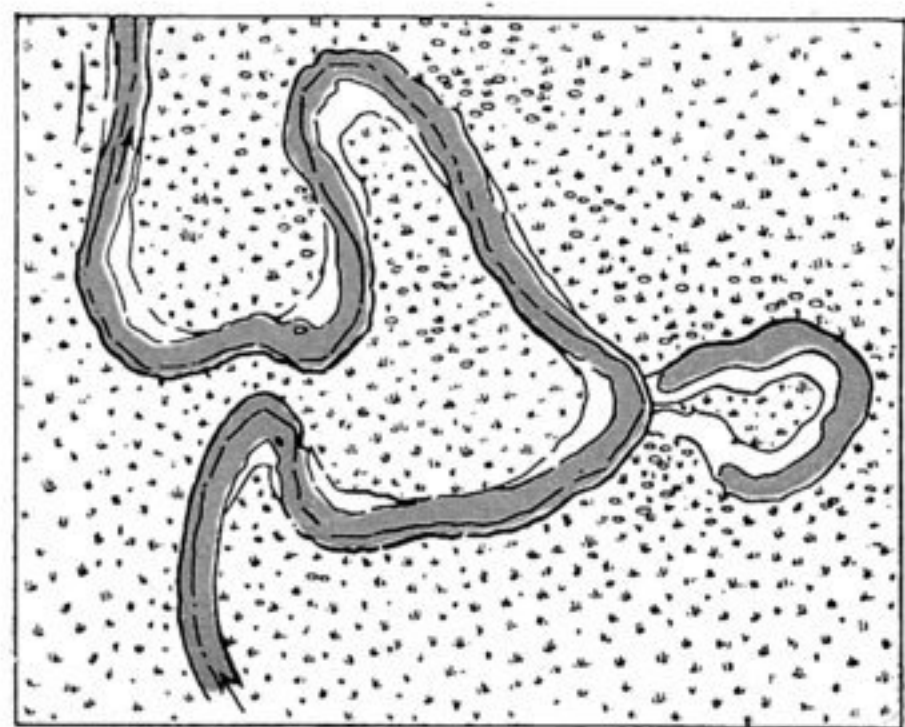


Fig. 165. THE BOLDSCHEMAL OF KALTA-TOKAJ.

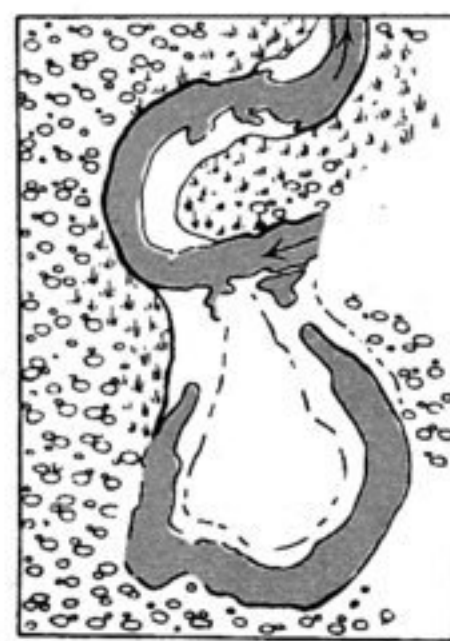


Fig. 166. THE BOLDSCHEMAL OF JAGHLIK-TSCHÖKÖN.

and those which have been abandoned, and left on one side, by the river during the course of its centuries of flow may be numbered by thousands. In the history of the earth the life-story of a river like the Tarim, which, even in the moment of time that makes our epoch, only manages to maintain a precarious existence as the result of an incessant struggle, is nothing more than a merely ephemeral episode, and in the eyes of the historiographer the loops which this great river makes come and go like the bubbles of froth on the dancing tide. And yet, in virtue of their great number, they are a facile instrument in the hand of the river for levelling a broad zone of the country through which it flows. Old loops are cut off and disappear, and new loops are formed, only to perish in their turn. The materials of disintegration are distributed equally over the face of the region, and fresh masses of sand and silt are gradually loosened, separated, and transported down the river.

Returning to fig. D (Pl. 37), — here we have all the conditions necessary for the formation of a fresh loop, one which will come into being inconceivably swifter than the old loop did. For whereas the latter had first to overcome the opposition offered by the roots of the forest-trees and other vegetation which bound the soil together, the new formation will find the ground ready prepared for it, and will