

deltaic arms, gradually decreasing in volume as they divide; in a word, one would look to find the water spreading out over the flat land like the ribs of a fan. After all it is not so strange, that the water does fill the bed flush with the brim, for the lowest part of the river-bed serves as a sort of reservoir or provisional lake, which is kept filled by the constantly flowing water, small though that may be in quantity.

In April 1896 the Kara-buran contained a great deal more water than it did in June 1900; but in April 1900 the quantity must have been very appreciably greater than in the corresponding month of 1896. The bend which the river makes after receiving the Tschertschen-darja had not changed during the four years, and was still fenced in by the same alluvial barriers and the same narrow belts of reeds, though the alluvial deposits alongside it were for the most part dry. The locality on the left bank is known as Sejt-uji; formerly there was a village there, but it was deserted ten years ago. Just below this point the river is joined by a channel from the Semilaku-köl, which however only carries water in the autumn. The region, consisting of low dunes with tamarisks, which stretches northward from

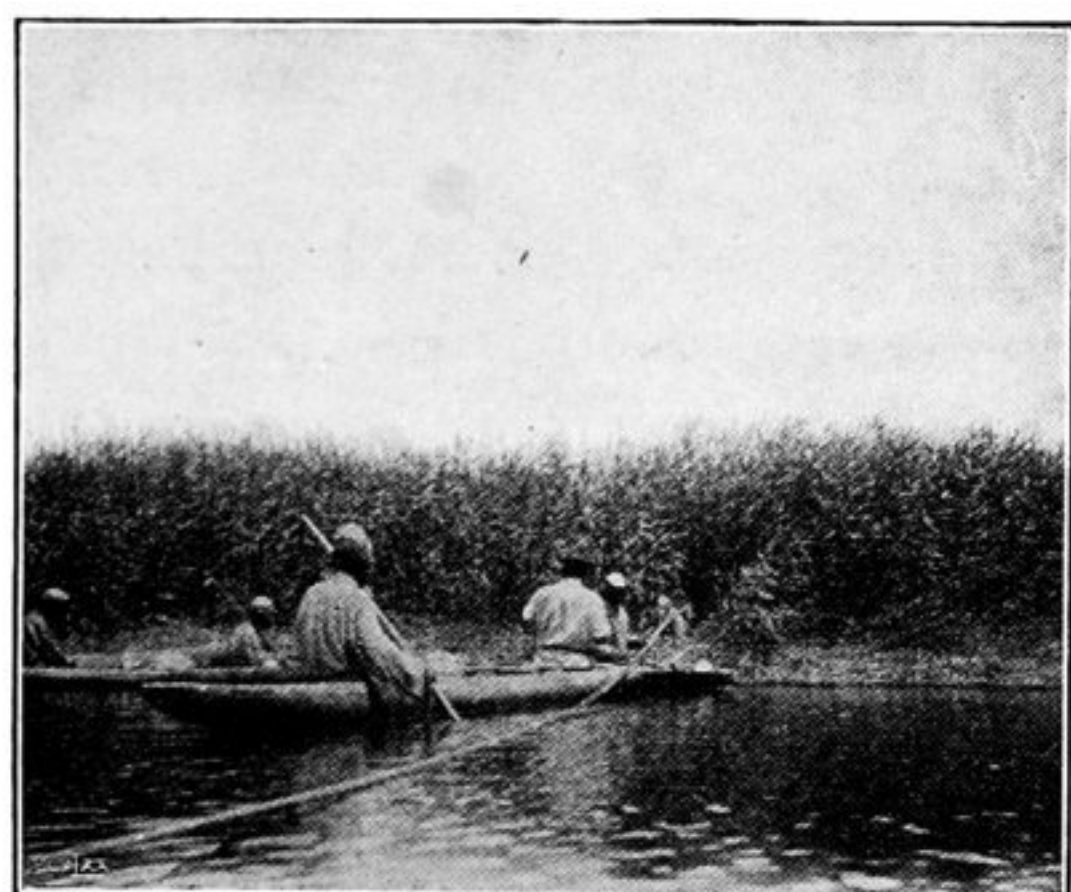


Fig. 197. REEDS ON THE BANK OF THE TSCHERTSCHEN-DARJA.

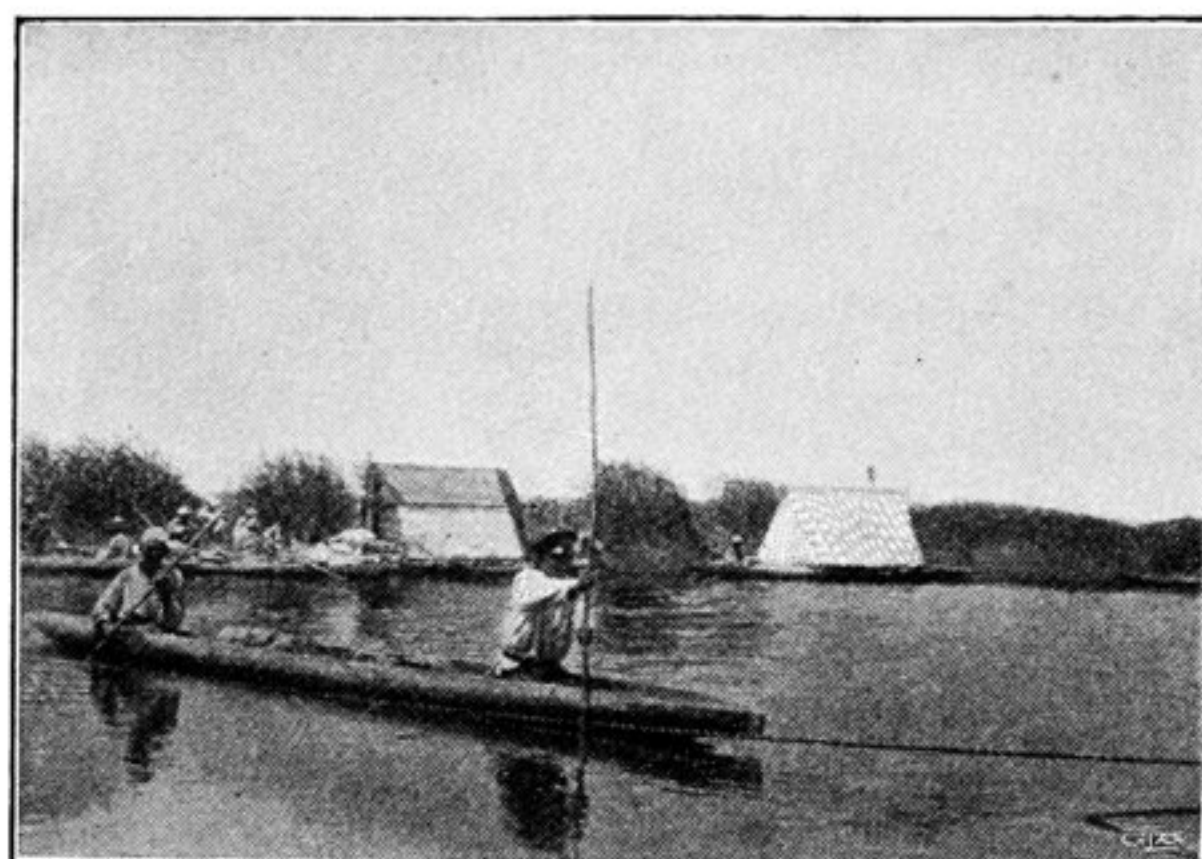


Fig. 198. MOUTH OF THE TSCHERTSCHEN-DARJA.

Basch-kumluk, or the Beginning of the Sand, is no longer inundated, not even by the autumn flood; though in places the river-side is bare, pointing to recent overflowings. On the south of the river there is no sand, and here inundations still occur sometimes. All day we only passed two poplars, standing close together and about 10 to 15 years old. If only the river could maintain its existing channel for a sufficient length of time, its banks would, beyond doubt, become clothed with luxuriant forests similar to those which exist beside other older portions of the Tarim. The very absence of forest here points indubitably to a formation of the river-bed so recent that there has not yet been time for forest to grow up. If it be objected, that it is *impossible* young shoots and seed should grow up here, seeing that they would have to force their way first through the lakes of Kara-buran, where they would be arrested by the dense reeds, I would reply, that such *à priori* reasonings are deceptive; for, while we should expect to find forest on at least the older shores of Kara-buran, these are as a matter of fact perfectly bare of trees.

Immediately above Tschirak-tschantschghan we passed the mouth of the easternmost deltaic arm of the Tschertschen-darja, containing perfectly stationary water. Here