

Jarkent-darja (Tarim), and thence made their way up the Tschertschen-darja to the stony, sandy desert which extends south-west of the locality of Vasch-schaari, where it is commonly reported that the wild camel is still to be found in large numbers.»

The information which Pjevtsoff gathered from the natives with regard to the desert lakes is as follows (pp. 326 ff.). »The inhabitants of the region described live principally by fishing, only in part by agriculture and hunting. They take their fish almost entirely in lakes artificially made in the depressions along the river-banks, and fill these natural depressions by means of canals, 150 to 1,200 saschen long, which were dug by their ancestors. All these lakes have been full of water for many years, with the exception of the Ettek-bair, a lake about 8 versts in circumference, which was only filled in 1886. In the same locality there are counted a dozen such lakes, seven large ones and five small ones. They all lie on the right bank of the river, and their shores are overgrown with tall reeds. The largest lake, Jangi-kul, is about 15 versts long, by 2 versts broad, and its depth amounts to 3 saschen. The next largest, Basch-kul, is 12 versts long, 1 verst broad, and 3 saschen deep. The area of the other five large lakes is only about one-half the area of Jangi-kul; while the five small lakes measure each one to three versts in circuit.

All these lakes are cut off from the river, though each has communication with it by means of its inflow canal, but outflow they have none. All the inflow canals are stopped with earthen dams, and are only opened periodically to let in fresh water from the Jarkent-darja just before the autumn floods. The inflowing currents bring with them into the lakes large quantities of fish; as soon as the river begins to drop, the canals are closed and the fish retained in the lakes. Water is let into the small lakes every second year, and into the large ones every third or fourth, and in some cases every fifth, year. In the year when water is not let in the volume of the lake decreases a little, and its water acquires a slightly brackish flavour, and with each year that the lake remains without a fresh inflow the salinity increases, until in the fifth year it is extremely bitter, and very disagreeable to the taste. Notwithstanding this great salinity, all the species of fish that exist in the Jarkent-darja — *Nemachilus yarkandensis*, *Aspiorrhynchus Przewalskii*, *Schizostorax Biddulphi*, *Diptychus gymnogaster*, are found in these lakes. The lakes are divided amongst the inhabitants of the adjacent villages, each lake having its recognised owners, apart from whom nobody else has any right to fish there.» And then follows an account of the way in which the fish are caught.

This description applies to 1890. Since then a good many of the inhabitants have adopted agriculture as a livelihood, and several of the lakes alluded to have been abandoned to their fate. In the next few pages we shall see what the country looked like ten years later.

The first lake is the Teis-köl, which differs from its sister-lakes in not being immediately surrounded by desert sand. Above this there are said to exist two depressions, Ettek-bajir and Kaltschini-bajiri, though neither contains water. Thus the first real desert lake is the Tus-alghutsch-köl, connected with the river by a canal (dry on 7th December) which winds through the reed-beds and has a hut beside it. This lake is said to be now kept cut off from the river, even at the time of high