

flood, owing to its mouth having been stopped up with branches, brushwood, and clay. The fish which are imprisoned in it are said to become fatter and to acquire a better flavour after the water has in great part evaporated, and the rest of it thus become slightly salt. In the winter the fish are taken in nets let down through holes hewn in the ice, the fish being driven into them by the men stamping and jumping on the frozen surface of the lake. In the summer the fish are caught from canoes. The lake, which is entirely surrounded by high barren sand-dunes, is said to attain a depth of three fathoms (*kulatsch*)*. Nine families, who formerly dwelt on its shores, abandoned their huts in 1892 and flitted over to the left bank of the Tarim in order to carry on agriculture. The name Tus-alghutsch-köl conveys implicitly an indirect explanation: it means the Lake whence People fetch Salt. Possibly its shores are saliferous. In area the lake is very small, and on 7th December it was entirely frozen over.

The next lake is the Sejt-köl, connected with the river by three canals (*utschu* or *aghsi*), now stopped up. All three canals have forced their way through the sand-dunes, though the immediate banks of the middle one and the lowest are quite flat and overgrown with reeds. The lowest, when open, turns a mill. The northern portion of the lake lies for some distance parallel with the river, and so close to it that the two upper canals are each only a couple of hundred meters long. But, as was well seen from the top of the dunes, not far short of 100 m. high, on the east shore of the Sejt-köl itself, the larger portion of the lake extends S. 27° W., and resembles a fjord penetrating between mountains of sand. A long way off we observed a *bughas* («neck» or «contraction») between two projecting headlands, and beyond that a fresh expansion, terminated towards the south by relatively low sand-dunes.

Strange to say, the natives everywhere asserted, that the lakes are «artificially made». According to them, long, long ago canals were dug, and these were widened by the high-flood water, and in this way the depressions, which already existed amongst the sand-dunes, became gradually filled; and in part the sand was even thrust back by the encroaching water. This simple explanation can of course only be partially correct. That the depressions have not been artificially made is perfectly self-evident; they existed indeed before the Tarim ever flowed through that part of the country. That they have been filled, and are kept filled, with water from the Tarim is equally clear, and will shortly be sufficiently proved on the basis of exact measurement. On the other hand it is not likely that all these connecting channels have been made by human agency; it is more likely that the river, by shifting to the right, and in consequence of its overflowing, has carved paths for itself into the depressions. But of this more later on.

At the foot of the vast accumulation of sand on the east shore of Sejt-köl there is a village of the same name, but its huts, built of poles and kamisch towards the end of the seventies, now stand empty and deserted. The twenty-three families who inhabited them flitted, like the twenty-five families of Teis-köl, to Ak-tarma, on the great highway, in 1892. The reason of their changing their habitations was an outbreak of small-pox (*tschätschäk*), which raged in this district

* A *kulatsch* is the distance between the finger-tips when the arms are stretched out at full length,