

Just in the locality with which we are now dealing the Tarim has shifted its bed, but this time, contrary to its wont, it has deviated to the left, that is to the east. Beginning at Bulung-su, it runs alongside the sand, and formerly gave origin to the lakes of Gölme-käti (No 2), Tschapghan, Karaune-tokkan, Talashti, Baschtage, and Begelik. All these lakes are said to be old, and strange to say, the natives of that district aver, that they are natural depressions in the desert, which have been filled by letting in water through canals dug from the right bank of the former river. It is however greatly to be doubted if this was the case, at all events as a general rule. It is more likely that the river, at some period when it carried a bigger volume than it does now, overflowed its banks at the season of high water. But as the river has also for long distances embanked itself between natural ramparts, it is possible that the natives have in places cut these through with the view of procuring for themselves fresh fishing-grounds.

But the river having altered its course, some of these lakes are now cut off from it, and are consequently shrinking and turning salt. Those of them, however, whose canals are sufficiently deep still continue to be augmented from the old river-bed. The canal which furnishes water from the new river to that part of the old river-bed in which we found the Katik-arik is the Talashti-kok-alasi; both above and below this canal the old river-bed is dry. But as there is a limit to the amount of water contributed by this canal, even in the high-flood period, there is doubtless a period of desiccation in store for most of these lakes, and they are advancing towards it at a rapid pace. Beside both the Baschtage and the Talashti-köl there were formerly villages, which are now deserted. The water in the last-named is however still so far fresh that it affords profitable fishing. Every now and again it is visited by a fisherman's canoe, the crew of which find occupation for a few days.

The Begelik-köl gets its name from the fact that it afforded the best fishing, and consequently was always let to the beks. Below it there comes yet another chain of desert lakes, about which I possess nothing but oral information. Amongst these are the Kök-köl, or the Blue Lake, and Baschtage-köl (No 2), the breach in the dunes leading to which we saw south-south-west from Ottak-köl. Although neither receives now any fresh inflow, they both contain fresh water. On the 28th May I passed the now dry canal which leads to the lake of Ettek-köl; this too is no longer fed at the high-water season, and consequently has been converted into a concentrated salt *daschi*. And the same fate is also said to have overtaken the Schikak-köl. The next lake in the series is the Ghodsche-tutghutsch-köl, which is also embedded in the sand. It lies a pretty long way from the river, and its feeding-canal is now dry, so that its water is salt. But that it did contain fresh water formerly is evident from its name, which means »Where the Feathers of the Wild-Duck were Gathered». The Kotschkatsch-köl on the other hand does receive water at the season of high flood. On the first of June we passed the last lake in this long chain. It is situated just above Arghan, and bears the name of Baschtage-köl (No 3), but is also known as the Muhamedning-baschtage-köl (the Upper Lake of Muhamed). It is said to be divided into three basins — Aghis-köl, Tughadake-köl, and Tschapghan-köl.