

channel wound backwards and forwards the ribbon of ice, sometimes very thick and with a current running underneath it, sometimes already thin and soft in the mid-day sun. Every now and again the new river divides, but the arms soon reunite. There is not a single poplar to be seen, either young or old; but the reeds are thick and vigorous. Farther back from the banks there is steppe, but its scrubby growths are dried up and withered. For long distances we quitted the left bank, and made our way through a belt of newly formed dunes 3 to 5 m. high. These all turn their steep faces towards the south-west, and are often clothed with vegetation; otherwise the detached free-standing individual dunes exhibit regular and characteristic forms. A little bit farther away from the river they are massed together, and fuse into chains of greater or less regularity, the beginnings of dune-accumulations. The high barren sand continues to rise into dome-like masses some kilometers distant, though during the course of the day it decreased, at the same time that the accumulations appeared gradually to diminish, though this may have been merely an optical illusion. Sometimes we would cross a hollow left by some old water-course, and frequently we traversed lumpy *schor*; which again points to inundations having occurred in this changeable deltaic land. The dark green *köuruk* plants grow crowded together in some places, and make as it were dark islands in the otherwise monotonously grey landscape. Close beside the river are some marshes formed by the last overflow of the high water, but then frozen to the bottom. So far as we were able to see, the country was perfectly level. The new river-bed still continued to move away from the dry arm on the right, and also from the Sollak-darja; and the belts of vegetation beside these last soon disappeared from view.

The place where we encamped is called Koschmet-köli. Toktasin Bek remembers perfectly well that during his youth, 50 years ago, there was here a lake bearing the same name, or rather it was a complex of small lakes, and they were fed by an arm that left the Tschertschen-darja at a spot below Tüschkün, and proceeded as far as the lakes at Basch-aghil. The locality derives its name from a well-known man Koschmet. Probably the same name occurs again in Koschmet-kum, or Koschmet's Desert, that we find in Roborovskij, though by this can only be meant the barren sand-dunes which lie immediately north of the Koschmet-köl. The lakes again discharged into the Lop-köli. The people who lived in this quarter supported themselves almost entirely upon fish. About forty or fifty years ago, however, these lakes dried up, no doubt in consequence of some fresh change in the delta of the Tarim. The village of Lop is said to be at present inhabited by six families, who do not keep sheep owing to the poor pasturage in those parts, but live upon fish. Wild camel are no longer found in the adjacent deserts, but from time to time tigers are seen near the river. The people thought the ice would not last much longer than twenty days, for when the first freshets come from the melting ice above, it is unable to offer any further resistance, but breaks up in the course of a few days. Strange to say, the water which was then flowing along certain open channels was so salt that we could not drink it. This is to be ascribed to the *schor* or saline character of the soil as a whole, coupled with the fact that the river is so new. When it grows older, and the river-mud from the higher Tschertschen-darja has deposited itself along the bottom, the saline impregnation will disappear. At Koschmet-köli there was a scarcity of