

of which was that the overflow area was then at a higher level than the river itself. The natural canal from Jangi-köl still remained, plainly and distinctly outlined. During the rest of the day's march the ground everywhere bore indications of having formerly been a lake-basin, being littered all over with mollusc-shells as well as containing an abundance of old and dead kamisch stubble. We observed the first three dead poplars on our left. Here was also a thin sprinkling of dead tamarisks, some with, others without, mounds, and indeed the country was nowhere entirely without them; but it was only rarely that we observed a living bush. Thus the scenery grew decidedly desolate, though of sand there was indeed little; the few solitary dunes lay generally in semicircles on the leeward side of the mounds, or were gathered in the old river-beds and depressions. But a little reflection is sufficient to convince one, that it cannot very well be otherwise, for the former

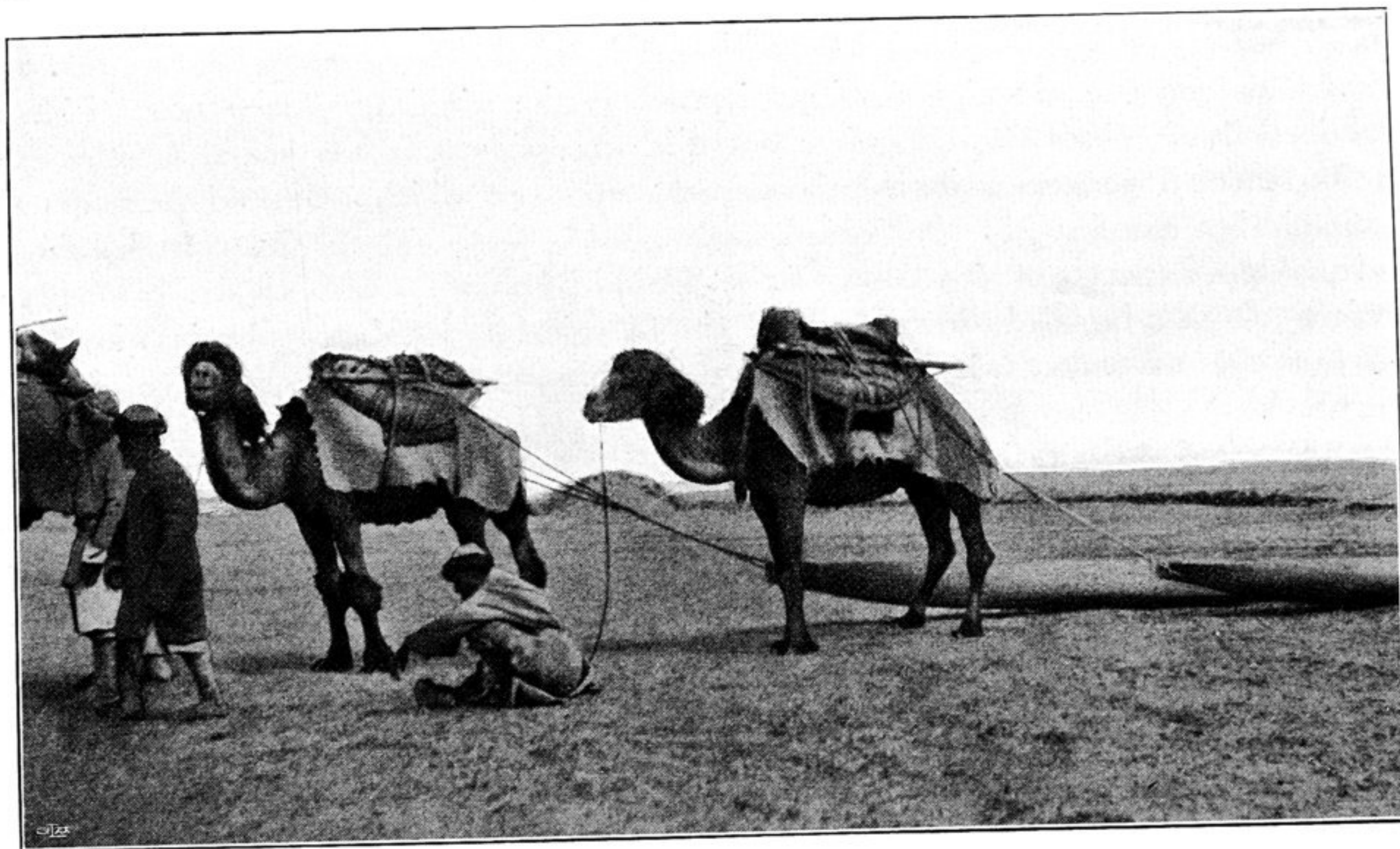


Fig. 381. CAMELS DRAGGING OUR CANOES OVERLAND FROM THE TARIM TO JANGI-JER.

lake, to the presence of which the kamisch and shells bear witness, prevented the formation of sand-dunes. And Numet Bek of Abdal, the chief of the district, also told me explicitly, that ninety years ago there was a lake here. A shallow lake-basin such as this can indeed be overwhelmed by migratory dunes, but even where the sand of the Desert of Lop lies thickest it is incomparably lower than in the Desert of Tschertschen; and in former times Lop-nor itself prevented the sand from extending towards the south-west.

As we advanced dead poplars became more numerous; they still retain some quite thin branches and twigs, from which it may be inferred that it is not so very long since they were deserted by the water. This old forest is densest on both sides of an ancient river-bed, which is still remarkably distinct, and stretches in both directions as far as one can see; this must in its time have had precisely