

Eventually this arm contracts and describes a gigantic curve, having on the left (its right) dead poplars and tamarisk-mounds, and on the right (its left) living tamarisks and kamisch, and after that dense reeds on both sides. The erosion-terraces are clearly defined, and at least one meter high. Here too there are numerous indications of a former water-level. When the entire volume of the Tarim formerly travelled this way, the banks were heavily wooded, so that they exhibited very different characteristics from the bare and desolate region through which the new Tarim flows to the south.

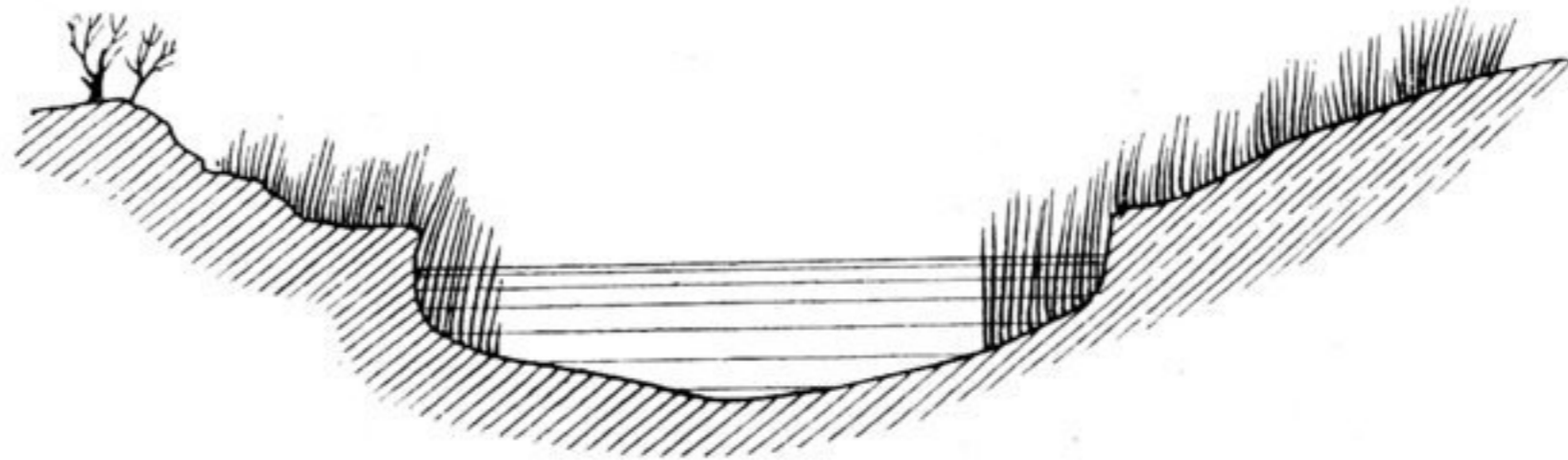


Fig. 390.

The shepherd led us to a hut, the owner of which then accompanied us in his canoe; and fortunately for us, for without a sure guide we should have found it absolutely impossible to make our way through the intricate labyrinth of waterways which lay ahead of us. To begin with, leaving the broad river-bed in which we had hitherto travelled, we turned into a small side-channel hidden among the reeds. The former is said to come from a lake a little higher up, which during the last few years has become entirely overgrown with reeds and sedge, so that it would have been utterly impossible to keep to it any longer. The little side-channel up which we penetrated was only 0.7 m. broad and rather deeply trenched. Its banks were smothered in reeds of extraordinary density. The velocity was at first 0.42 m. in the second, but afterwards it quickened. Every now and again the channel expands



Fig. 391. THE POINT WHERE WE LEFT THE BROAD RIVER-BED AND ENTERED THE SMALL SIDE-CHANNEL.