

From Camp No. XXXV we traversed a couple of sharp bends until we came to the point where the Sollak-akin (the Stagnant or Suspended Current) enters the river from the north. This channel formerly carried the Ilek, until, according to what I was given to understand, it was deserted by the river about a score of years ago, though the bed itself is still full of water. Leaving this on our right (i. e. on the left bank), we turned in upon the lakes which give rise to the Ilek, steering towards the north-west. The first of these is the Tokaleshti-mandscharighi, with depths amounting to 4 m. The kamisch is here very high and strong, and through it winds a narrow passage, the Osagh-koghul. The next lake, the Podulaklik-köl, is 2.8 m. deep. Here there are several tunnel-like tschapghans, narrow and difficult, through the dense kamisch, which seems as though it were smothering and stifling the young green shoots of spring, that are endeavouring to force themselves up between its coarse yellow stalks. In order to afford the young growths breathing space, it is customary early in the spring to set fire to the old kamisch, and indeed we already observed big black patches of burnt reeds in two or three places. Next in the chain of lakes come the Kum-köl, with depths of 4.46, 4.53, and 6.73 m., and the Tosghak-tschantschdi, with 3.42 and 4.52 m. as its maximum depths. Almost everywhere there was a perceptible current, slight indeed in the lakes, but in the tschapghans quite as lively as in the Ilek. In the last two lakes there were no less than 36 fishing-nets set, and their owners were busy overhauling them as we passed. The nets were quite short and were fastened to two poles stuck into the bottoms of the channels; the natives call them *mandschar*, in contradistinction to the long nets without poles, which they call *gölme*. As regards the fish, I was told that the lean ones come from the Tarim higher up, but that the fat ones belong to the lakes. Fishing, I may add, is also carried on in the lakes.

The two huts of the little village of Tosghak-tschantschdi, situated on the reed-grown bank, embraced 3 ujlik of 19 persons in all. These people do not possess any ground at Tscharklik. They settled here seven years ago. This lake is evidently the one that Kosloff calls Soghot, for it was at Soghot that these people dwelt formerly. But in supposing that the Arka-köl which I discovered is identical with his lake Soghot, Kosloff is in error. For, apart from the fact that Soghot never was a lake at all, but merely a boldschemal or abandoned loop on the left bank of the Tarim, which does not contain water even all the year round, there exists between the Arka-köl and the spot where Soghot formerly stood, yet another lake, namely the Tosghak-tschantschdi. In fact it is impossible to get any clear conception of this tangle of lakes, marshes, and old and new river-arms without personally visiting the region, and mapping them in the fullest detail. The natives declare, that the lake of Tosghak-tschantschdi has been in existence for over twenty years, and before it arose the country was *tschöl*, or »waste»; but this is rendered improbable by the old and magnificent toghraks which grow on the banks of the Tarim. Probably what is true of the river lower down applies also here, namely that a former irrigation period was followed by a waterless period, during which however the poplars did not wither. It is evidently this intervening period that the natives refer to.