

parts of a lake south of our route are known as Toktaghone-kölö and Ansane-kölö; and Sait Bakini-kakbasi is a small lake lying S. 20° W. Here again fishing is only carried on in the autumn after the water has dropped. North of our route we observed during the greater part of the day sand-ridges held together by scanty vegetation. The Tajek-köl is really connected with the Kara-köl, although impenetrable reed-brakes stretch between them.

At this camp we were tormented by gnats, which filled the air in perfect clouds; we were therefore glad to be off again shortly before sunrise on the morning of 27th April, whilst the air was still cool from the night, though unfortunately it did not long remain so, for the hot season had now set in in earnest in this region. We had not gone far before it began to blow pretty strongly across the marshes from the south-west, and although it was a soft, warm wind like the *si-moom*, it nevertheless caused the air to circulate and kept the gnats at a distance. We were now proceeding up the *Ilek*. It still preserved the same character and appearance as heretofore, i. e. it was smothered in *kamisch*, and thus was more like a passage through a reedy lake than an actual river; on the west the *kamisch jangal* (forest) extended in fact as far as we could see. On both sides of our route there were lakes and marshes, though on the east the belt of lakes was but narrow, as we could see from the rounded sand-ridges, tamarisk-mounds, and poplars which towered above the *kamisch*. The features of this peculiar region are illustrated in the accompanying little sketch-map: the only fixed points for the eyes to rest upon are the firm ground of the sand-hills on the east of the lakes. The river gives the impression of not flowing along any definite bed, but of making its way through an inextricable tangle of lakes and marshes. Nevertheless it keeps open a passage for itself through the reeds; probably the main reason is that the trench in which it flows is too deep for the reeds to establish themselves in it.

Our direction was north, with an inclination to the east, until we came to *Suji-sariktake-uj*, a hut standing amongst dunes planted with *toghraks*, where we turned to the west, with an inclination to the south. Next we crossed over the lake of *Suji-sarik-köl*, an elongated sheet of water stretching in that direction. Its depth amounted to 3.14 and 4.57 m. Out of this open basin we plunged into the most disagreeable *tschapghan* I have ever seen. It was a long time since it had been cleaned out, and the heavy masses of reeds, broken by the wind, hung in a dishevelled tangle across the channel, converting it into a dark, narrow, stifling tunnel. The men were obliged to use their paddles to clear a path for the canoes. In some places the prostrate reeds, which grew in 2 m. of water, were so compact that one of my men was easily able to walk on the top of them. It was interesting as well as instructive to see with one's own eyes how important is the part played by the fine material, with which in spring and summer the atmosphere of East Turkestan is loaded, in filling up these shallow lake-basins. The thick reeds were so interpenetrated with it that at the least touch clouds of dust arose, choking us worse than the dustiest of highways. By drawing my hand along a single long stalk of *kamisch* I was able to get it almost full of dust. Nowhere have I been more forcibly impressed by the power which the *kamisch* possesses of retaining and binding together the matter that floats in the atmosphere. This falls, as I have already