

of the water-supply, has died out. The fact of there being no forest beside water-course No. 3 may be explained either by its being so old that its forest has been destroyed, or — and this is the more likely explanation — the river flowed that way for such a short period that the forest had no opportunity to establish itself.

To the north of this third watercourse stretches a tract of barren schor, hard and bare, with patches of thin sand at intervals. The only vegetation that was to be discovered there consisted of a few dead toghraks, white and silvery, and the gnarled and brittle trunks of tamarisks, which in other places have entirely disappeared since they have been deprived of water. Then came a few sporadic *köuruk* bushes (a species of tamarisk), some with, others without, the usual mounds. These were especially numerous and luxuriant in the dry bed of a *sil*.^{*} It is very seldom however that the rain-water comes down this way; when it does, it forms a transient lake south-east of the spot where we crossed it, but it never gets down to the river.

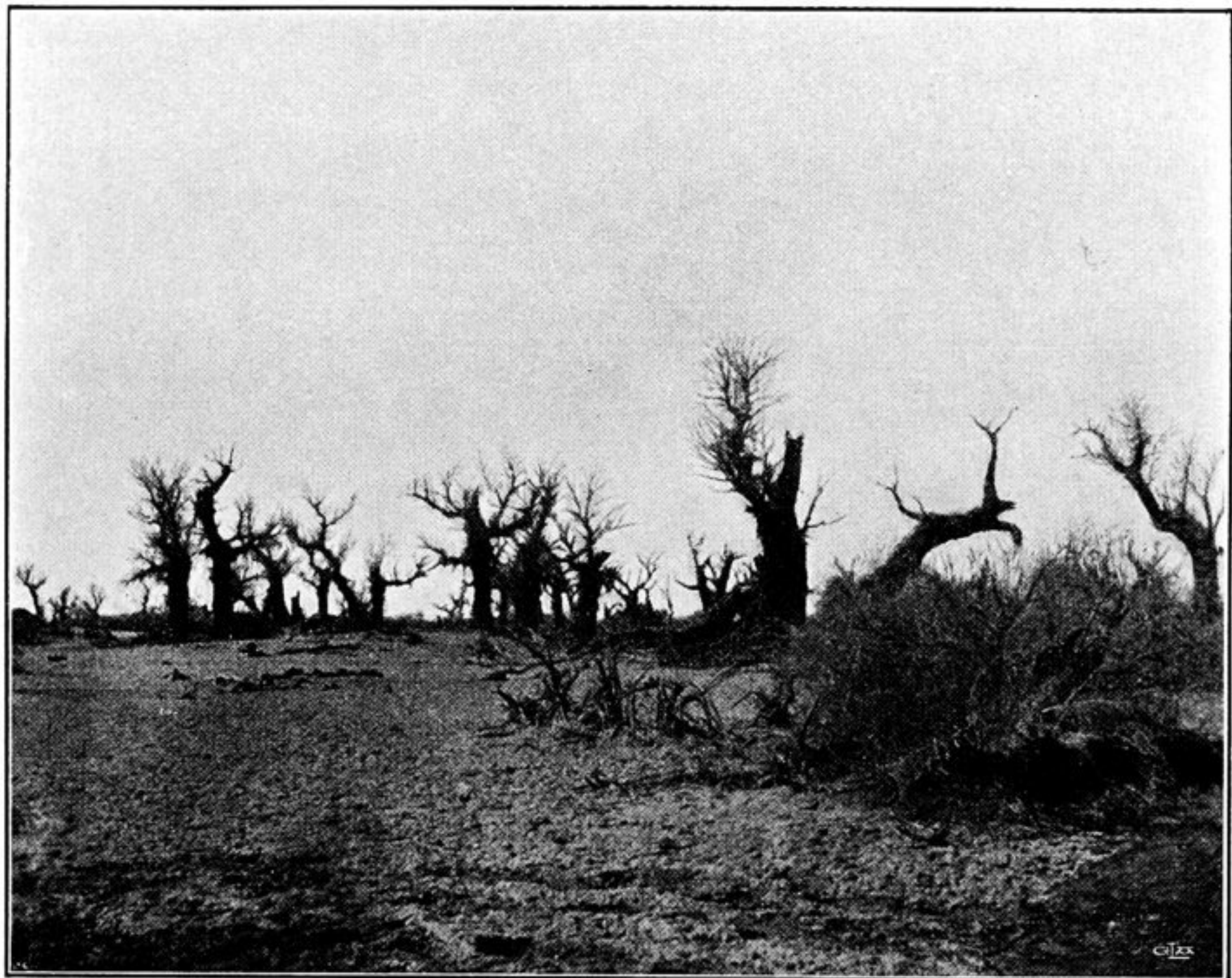


Fig. 11. BASCH-TOGHRAK.

After a region of alternating tamarisk steppe and schor, we crossed a pretty broad depression, in which was some living, though scanty, kamisch. According to my guides, this again was an old bed of the Kontsche-darja; but it was so ill-defined that I was unable to form any opinion with regard to it. Generally the natives consider that the Kum-darja has its origin at Saj-tscheke. In fact on the left side of the Kontsche there are so many old river-beds, that it is not easy to determine which is immediately connected with the Kum-darja, unless one follows up the old

* *Sil* = »overflow» i. e. temporary, occasioned by a violent shower in the mountains.