

At Camp No. XI there were a number of living tamarisks in the bed of the Kuruk-darja, this being there exceptionally wide as well as moist. The following springs were named to me as being situated in the mountains to the north — Noghusuntu, or the Duck Spring; Teschik-bulak, or the Hollow Spring, the water collecting in a hollow or hole underneath a tamarisk thicket; Olun-temen-tu, or the Spring of Many Camels, showing that wild camels are numerous there; and Buru-tu, or the He-Camel's Spring. Thus all, with the exception of Teschik-bulak, bear Mongol names. They lie in fact along the boundary-line between the two languages; and in the geographical nomenclature also Turkish names are gradually replaced by Mongolian.

Upon starting on 21st March we followed, eastwards, a much-trodden camel-track; but it was manifestly made by a single troop, for it is contrary to the wild camel's nature to keep to beaten and well-recognised paths in the desert. The lower saj was now at the same level as the desert, and consequently exhibited no well-marked edge. On the other hand the upper saj on our left still continued to be quite distinct. The ground consisted sometimes of soft material strewn with gravel, sometimes of *kak*, or level expanses of silt deposited by standing rain-water. The latter had cracked into polygonal concave cakes, rather thin and brittle, and had mould or sand underneath them. The upper and bigger terrace step now receded towards the north, and soon disappeared from sight, its place being taken by a smaller shelf, only two or three meters high, which approached quite close to us on the left. But after a while this also came to an end, and was succeeded by a gently undulating surface, which extended all the way to the foot of the nearest mountains. These however, although possessing a distinctly outlined, somewhat jagged crest, were in point of altitude more like a chain of hills. The soil was now absolutely sterile, the scenery terribly dead and desolate. We did not see a single living creature all day, although the tracks of the wild camels became more numerous as we advanced towards the east. Southwards stretched the clay desert as far as we could see, etched, as it were, with innumerable gullies running in the direction of the wind; but there were no dunes. *Kötäk* was rare, and we very seldom saw a tree-trunk standing; tamarisk-mounds were equally rare, and they were without *kötäk*. The well-marked trench known as the Kuruk-darja, which we had hitherto faithfully followed, now came definitively to an end. East of Camp No. XI there was not a trace of any old river-bed; nor was there any marginal forest to indicate a former river-course. The only break in the surface of the clay desert was caused by the smaller gullies. The Kuruk-darja came to an end, as I have just said, at Camp No. XI; as so often happens in the case of a river that discharges into a lake, it expanded and spread out at its termination. South and east of us stretched the bottom of a former lake, to wit Lop-nor, the old Lop-nor of the Chinese, into which the Tarim formerly discharged. Later on, when we came to cross the Desert of Lop from Altmisch-bulak, we failed to discover any continuation of the Kuruk-darja; so that I may with reason claim that I followed the whole of its course from Jing-pen to its ancient mouth, with the exception of a short stretch south of Oj-köbrük and Atschik-jardang-bulak. The point to the south of Altmisch-bulak from which Kosloff thought he could see the Kuruk-darja (*Kum-darja*) lies east of the point where the river-bed actually