

the water was open, although its temperature was down as low as -7.9° . It was only along the western shore, in which direction the belt of vegetation gradually thinned out until it came to an end altogether, that there was a fringe of ice barely 100 m. wide, the eastern edge of which was thin and ragged. In the west the lake is naturally far less salt, for it is into that part that all the freshwater springs discharge. Wild-duck and wild-geese are said never to stay beside this lake, because of the absence of the vegetation that they love to feed upon.

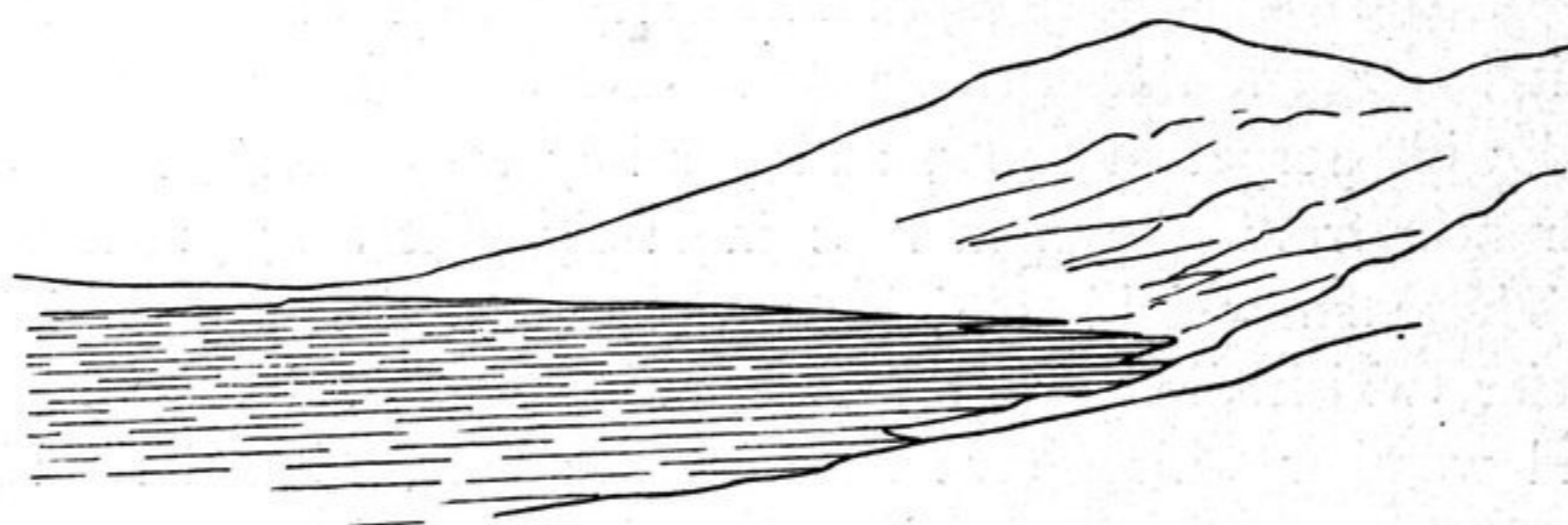


Fig. 197. VIEW OF A BAY OF USUN-SCHOR.

With regard to the shape of the lake, we obtained no clear conception of it; but the southern shore, which we followed, is said to be the longest, and this is probably true, for the deepest part of the valley lies just under the foot of the mountains. The long axis of the lake would thus seem to run from east to west, but from its western end a not inconsiderable bay appears to project towards the north. Travelling is said to be impossible along the northern shore owing to the ground being marshy and refusing to bear. The only way to get round the lake on that side is to keep a good way out from it. According to the statements of my guides, the lake maintains the same dimensions winter and summer alike, and this is probably true, for it is fed almost entirely by perpetual springs. All the same it is pretty certainly augmented temporarily after rain on the neighbouring mountains.

After crossing over yet another small peninsular spur, that juts out into the lake from the mountains, we became aware, at a couple of hundred meters from the shore, of a small rocky islet, or rather peninsula, for although it is completely separated from the other ridges, it is nevertheless connected with land, that is to say soft mud, on the north, and is said to be always connected with it in the same way. After that the lake contracts towards the north-east to a long, narrow marshy bay. The shore scenery which gradually unfolded itself as we advanced was altogether unusual and picturesque. On the left we had the smooth expanse of the lake devoid of vegetation, and on the right the fantastically shaped mountain headlands leaping forwards *en échelon* one behind the other, while in front of us towered the massive dome of the Akato-tagh, seamed with its thousands upon thousands of ravines.

In the extreme east of the lake, where the salinity is presumably greatest, the areometer remained with nearly half its length projecting above the surface of the water; the sp. gr. amounted to 1.21. Still it may not always be as much; for in the glen that we entered after leaving the eastern end of the lake, we per-