

dulating» which they place on the map below the words »Makhaj District», that is to say south of the basin, seems to point to the existence of at any rate a swelling; and there must unquestionably be a similar swelling on both the west and the south of both its lakes, otherwise neither could have come into existence. It is very possible that the north-western half of Tsajdam, which is perfectly unknown, is broken up into several separate basins. The south-east part of the same great expanse also appears to consist of several smaller basins rather than of one single great basin, each possessing its own salt lake; but then these smaller basins are undoubtedly separated from one another by remarkably low and insignificant thresholds or swellings.

With regard to the basin of Tsädum, its two lakes are called by the Russian map Iche-Tsajdamin-nor and Baga-Tsajdamin-nor, though to me the names were pronounced as Ike-tsädemin-nor and Baga-tsädemin-nor. The name Tsajdam, which is found on all maps of Asia, is apparently an incorrect form, due to Prschevalskij's first journey. The correct name is Tsädum, and this is the form I also heard given to it by the Tadschinur Mongols in 1896; but at the same time it is not probable that the Mongols apply the name to the whole of the great basin, or mosaic of basins, which we call Tsajdam. All the same I have not ventured to eradicate entirely the accepted form: it may be retained in the meantime as the designation of a sharply defined geographical entity. The small basin of Tsädum proper ought possibly to be regarded as more correctly two, each with a salt lake. Into the Baga-tsädemin-nor flows the large river of Kaktin-gol. The small mountain stream or brook of Takelgan empties itself into the Ike-tsädemin-nor. The country between the two lakes is called Tavun-älesun, or the Five Sandy Deserts, so that it is evidently a sandy region; possibly the Five Dunes would be a better translation. The mountainous tract to the north of it is called Chargoldschin-ula, lead being found there, and extracted by smelting. With regard to the population, I was told that of the four basins Särtäng is the most thickly inhabited, and in each succeeding basin it grows less and less, so that the basin of Kurlik-nor and Tosun-nor contains the fewest inhabitants of all.

The rebellious Tungans, of whose flight westwards I have in the last chapter related one or two incidents, also paid a visit to Särtäng. My Mongol informant described dramatically how the Tungans to the number of 10,000 (this is of course exaggerated) came streaming down from the pass of Kökö-ussun and like a flood poured themselves across the plains of Särtäng, and they came down so swiftly and so unexpectedly that the Mongols only just had time to fly up into the mountains on the north, leaving behind them their flocks and their tents, which were plundered of everything they possessed. A lama, who had loaded up his possessions upon 30 camels, was perceived just at the moment when he was about to set off, and was attacked and plundered so thoroughly that he had much ado to save even his cloak. But not one of the Särtäng Mongols was killed. When they ventured down upon the plains again, after the departure of the Tungans, they were met by a distressful scene; it was as though the country had been visited by a plague of locusts, and heaps of bones lay in every direction, showing where the invaders had feasted upon the sheep of the Mongols. The horses and camels they took with them.