

and of the chase constitutes their entire wealth, as will be described hereafter. The shores of these marshes produce a rich pasture, and the reed belts around harbour great numbers of wild pig, wolves, leopards, and tigers. The climate of this tract is described as extremely insalubrious to strangers though not so to the natives. The heat in summer is said to be very great, but the winter, as compared with the rest of the valley, is a mild season and frosts last only for a few days.

Besides this great swamp tract in the eastern part of the valley there is another similar tract of considerable extent on the shores of the Baghrásh Lake near Karáshahr to the north. The two are separated by the Kúrúgh Tágh range of sand hills, amongst the ridges of which the wild camel=*túga* is said to breed. On the western half of the plain there are numberless minor swamps and marshes scattered about on the hollows of the surface. Some of these assume the form of pools or small lakes and are called *Kol*=Lake by the natives, as Áy Kol on the Aksú road, &c.

*Lake*.—Like the swamps the lakes are in the eastern half of the valley, and very little is known about them. Three principal ones are spoken of, *viz.*, Baghrásh, Lob, and Karya.

Baghrásh is situated to the south and east of Karáshahr, and receives the Káidú River as it debouches from the Yuldúz valley on to the Káshghar plain, and gives it exit to join the Tárim River, which it does at a point seven days' journey from Karáshahr by winding round Kúrúgh Tágh, a wide range of clay and sand hills that separate this lake from the district of Lob. The Lake Baghrash, also called Káidú Kol, may be considered as a mere expansion of the Káidú River over a hollow basin in the way of its course. It is described as a shallow sheet of water six days' journey in length, covered with floating islands of reeds amongst which the river flows, and bordered on each side by a belt of tall reeds, poplars, and tamarisk trees. Along its southern shore in all its length runs the Kúrúgh Tágh ridge, and between the two is a road from Kurla to Ush Aktál—a journey of seven days.

Lob Lake is described as situated on the edge of the Gobi desert at the extreme east limit of the Káshghar plain. In the *Tárikhí Rashídí* of Mirzá Hydar it is mentioned as covering an area four months' journey in circuit, and as giving exit to the great Kará Morán River of China. In this calculation of its extent the swamp tract to the west would seem to be included. Whilst at Káshghar I made enquiries regarding this lake from some Kirghiz and Kalmák shepherds who professed to be familiar with the locality, and also from some of the Amir's officers who had visited Lob district during the Turfán campaign. The accounts of all, though varying considerably in details, corresponded remarkably as to the facts of the existence of the lake, and its connection with the swamps to the west, and as to the general characteristics of the place and people. My most intelligent informant was a native of Karáshahr who had visited the Lob settlement on the Tárim just below the junction of the Káidú River repeatedly during five successive years. His description may be briefly given thus—"Lob is a succession of lakes along the Tárim River. Each lake gives off five or six streams which spread over the plain and reunite lower down to form the next lake, and so on for a journey of thirty days by the road. Beyond this is the Great Desert of which nobody knows anything. All the lakes are fringed by reedy marshes and forests of tamarisk and poplar, but there are no willows. The people live in huts of wattle or in boats on the river. They are rich in cattle, sheep, and horses, but do not cultivate the soil, which is all sand, and forms undulating ridges between the several lakes and the forests on their shores. Tigers, wolves, and wild pig abound in the thickets, and fish are plentiful in the river. Venemous insects, and a large species of scorpion swarm all over the place."

Another intelligent informant was a Kirghiz of Kákshál. He had travelled all over Ila and Kánsuh during nearly thirty years, and was in Bajin or Pekin at the time the city was taken by the allied French and English armies in 1860. He had resided as a shepherd for three years at Lob itself and professed to know every settlement in the whole tract. His statements on this subject correspond in the main with those of the informant above quoted, and add thereto the following particulars:—"Lake Lob or Lop Kol is situated in a great salt desert. It is entirely uninhabited, and is five days' journey in circuit. Nobody can go more than three or four days' journey to the east of the lake owing to the depth of the soft powdery saline soil on which neither man nor beast can find a footing.