

scrub, where a rude enclosure made of high bundles of reeds afforded convenient shelter for the night. Attracted by the light of our camp fires four shepherds joined us late in the evening. From them I learned that in order to water their flocks they had to drive them a long distance north to the channel known as Lop Darya, the only one which then held water or ice. This diversion of the whole Charchan Darya into the northernmost bed accounts for the large lagoons we had crossed north of Lop, and also for the reported drying-up of the Kara-muran marshes which the Russian explorers had found at the eastern end of the delta.

Our march on January 12th to the vicinity of the old site proved long but pleasant. First we moved along the dry river bed through low jungle steadily increasing in luxuriance, came on isolated Toghraks farther on, outposts of the true riverine forest, and finally, after eleven miles or so, struck a narrow ice-covered channel near the dried-up lagoon of Yekinlik-köl. The channel was only some fifty yards wide, and, a short distance to the north-east, seemed to end in a small, ice-covered expanse. Along the bank of this channel westwards we passed miles of fertile grazing lands which the shepherds were manifestly bent on improving by taking off regular irrigation cuts. At last our channel led us up to the main river bed, which suddenly came into view as a continuous sheet of glittering ice fully four hundred yards wide. No such imposing sight had met my eyes anywhere on the Tarim.

Splendid, too, were the groves of big Toghraks lining the banks; and the beauty of the silent sylvan scenery, as it presented itself in the light of a brilliant sunset, made me forget all the fatigue and cold. Just as darkness came on we pitched camp in a fine poplar grove between the river-bank and a dry lagoon to the south known as Shah-Tokhtaning-köli (Fig. 133). There was shelter from the biting breeze, with good water and plenty of fuel. But our contentment became still greater when the men sent out to reconnoitre for shepherds, came upon a small convoy of supplies which the Beg of Charklik, in response to a message despatched from Tokum, had sent out to meet