

CHAPTER III.

THE KURUK-DARJA AND THE COUNTRY SOUTH OF THE KURUK-TAGH.

Kosloff gathers up the results of his own observations with regard to the Kuruk-darja (i. e. Kum-darja) in the following passage: — »Thus at some former time the Kontsche-darja flowed in another, more easterly channel than its existing bed. As time went on, the river gradually inclined more and more towards the south; in proof of which we have the old river-beds south of the Kum-darja, between that river and the existing Kontsche-darja. After the Kontsche-darja had diverged 40° to 45° from its original direction, the river settled down into the bed by which it now travels to Ajrilghan, where it unites with the Tarim. At any rate, at that distant period the Kontsche-darja flowed, as it flows to-day, towards the lowest part of the desert, i. e. to Lop-nor. There was a time when the Lop-nor was unquestionably bigger than it is now, and extended much farther towards the north; its western shore coincided with the line Urten (Örtäng)-Abdal-Ajrilghan, while its southern shore-line was pretty much the same as it is at the present time.»*

On the whole this view agrees with my own, except that, for sufficiently good reasons, I consider that the Kuruk-darja was the principal artery of the whole of the Tarim system, and that the lake into which it discharged was situated solely in the northern part of the desert; but this question will be discussed lower down in a separate chapter. The »dry river-bed» south of Jing-pen is however of interest, for it proves that the Kuruk-darja did not change its position from east to south-east all at once, but did it step by step, and that the stream adhered no doubt to each successive new channel for at any rate a certain period. Ju-jing-pen or Jing-pen are situated just at the pivot upon which the river wheeled when it turned to the south-east. If we confine our attention to the upper limb of the angle, that is the southern one going down to Avullu-köl, we find that the angle is 30° ; but if we push our observation as far as Tschigelik-uj, then the angle is 70° . The reason the southern river-bed, Kosloff's »dry river-bed», is less well preserved than that at Jing-pen is simply the fact that the latter contains spring-water. In point of actual fact the southern watercourse is the younger. In all probability there exist several other

* See *Lop-nor*, p. 57.