

found to be the case later on in the eastern Kuruk-tagh. As a rule, too, the Kuruk-tagh grows increasingly lower in elevation from west to east, as well as at the same time increasingly broader. In fact, the system resembles a broom with the shaft pointing towards the west. I have already thrown out the suggestion, that on the route which crosses over to the Baghrasch-köl there are north of Suget-bulak only one range and one pass. The mountains of Chara-teken-ula, shown on the maps of Russian travellers, are probably identical with the Kuruk-tagh. If that is so, then it will be the two names, one Turkish, the other Mongolian, which have given rise to the idea that these are two distinct chains. Eastwards, then, this system spreads out into a number of ramifications, though the elevations of those in the extreme east are excessively small.

Such is in brief the information I derived from Abdu Rehim. With the view of throwing such light as is at present possible upon the little known region between the mountain ranges of the Tschöl-tagh and the Kuruk-tagh, I will cite a few extracts from the accounts which travellers have given of it who have visited that part of the world. The portion which immediately concerns us has only been visited by two travellers before me, namely Grum-Grschimajlo and Kosloff. Roborovskij crossed over the Kuruk-tagh at its extreme western end. Farther to the east, between Hami and Sa-tscheo-An-si, it has been crossed by several Europeans. This is not a history of geographical discovery in Central Asia; hence I shall content myself with quoting a few of these travellers. Finally I will describe my own journey along a line intermediate between Grum-Grschimajlo's route and the route connecting Hami and Sa-tscheo.

During the journey which the brothers Grum-Grschimajlo undertook in 1889—90 one of them, Michail Jefimovitsch, made an excursion southwards from Luktschin which is of especial importance, because it filled up a serious gap in our knowledge of the geography of Central Asia, and is excellently described by him in a chapter of his brother's book. Valuable though it is, I cannot of course quote it here *in extenso*, but must limit myself to a brief resumé.

The excursion was begun in the end of October (O. S.). The first station was Dga; whence three routes lead across the Tschöl-tagh — (1) an eastern one over the pass of Tasch-ua (ovo = obo?), to the spring of Paluan-bulak;* (2) a western one through the gorge of Urulscha-ause to the spring of Iltirghan; (3) a middle route, between the other two, leading to the same spring *viâ* the glen of Iltirghan or Iltirghutsch-ause. This was the route selected.

Immediately south of Dga the country is a perfect desert, sand and clay, together with gravel; salt crystallisations are common; and the land is excessively arid. Three versts south of Dga the traveller crossed over a large eroded water-course, coming from the south-east (Tschöl-tagh) and proceeding to Assa. The shape of its bottom suggested the inference, that it carries water sometimes, though it may be it does not do so every year. Then the traveller struck into the valley of Iltirghan, which, running from south to north, is excessively desolate, being filled with sand and gravel. South of Chodscha-julghun the rocks consisted of sandstone, argillaceous schist, granite and quartzite; but hard rock is rare as compared with

* Also called Pavane-bulaghi, Pavan-bulak, and Palvan-bulak.