

tagh. But instead of finding a well-defined and considerable single range, a southern border-chain of the Bej-sän swelling, such as is shown on the maps, we had discovered, as Prschevalskij and Futterer did too, a flat swelling on the north side of the Gobi, diversified by a number of extremely insignificant ridges and lines of heights, stretching from west-south-west to east-north-east, and separated by broad, shallow, flat latitudinal valleys, which slope now in one direction, now in another.

Kosloff is probably the only traveller now living who has seen the whole of the eastern extension of the Kuruk-tagh from the south, namely when he journeyed from Abdal to Sa-tscheo. With respect to it he says, »On the seventh day (from Abdal), when at Panscha-bulak, we observed mountains on the north. Although the atmosphere was thick with dust-haze, we were able to make out pretty clearly the silhouette of the flat range of the Kuruk-tagh, extending from north-west to south-east. At Korot-bulak the range became distinctly visible. It now assumed a more majestic aspect, and inclined more to the east, though it is remarkably desert-like in character. Its southern slope, looking towards the route we were following, was free from snow. Generally speaking, this eastward extension of the Kuruk-tagh exhibits the same swelling as its western part, but the chains and ridges of which it is composed are alike more numerous and more massive than in the west. The system comes to an end in the Desert of Hami on the meridian of Chala-tschi.»\* The reason the mountains, when seen from Korot-bulak, appeared higher than in the west, was due simply to the fact that at this point Kosloff approached to within barely a day's journey of them. As an actual fact, they are a good deal lower than in the west. Kosloff was misled by the desert haze and his near propinquity to the range. The above quoted descriptions demonstrate conclusively, that the Kuruk-tagh, as compared with its neighbours, is in truth an insignificant chain; and its altitudes are the best proof that the term »majestic» is inappropriate to it. If any part of the system deserves to be called »massive», that part must be sought for in the west. The farther east you go, the more discontinuous and undecided grows the system, and the less massive you find that it is. Nor can it be correctly described as coming to an end at the meridian of Chala-tschi, for it is continued a long way east of the roads that lead from Hami to Sa-tscheo and An-si. The only difference is that the name Bej-sän (P'e-schan) is substituted for Kuruk-tagh.

On 14th February we travelled S. 54° W. through the same inconceivably desolate and inconceivably arid country; not a spring, not even a salt one, not a depression that exhibited signs of moisture! Such misguided plants as some time or other have struck root in these ravines appeared as if they had to wait years between their successive waterings; indeed it was amazing to find them still alive. On our left we had an exceptionally broad and flat latitudinal valley, the lowest point in which appeared to be about 5 kilometers distant. Its bottom was in places occupied by expanses of white dry schor. On the right, at the distance of two or three kilometers, was a mountain-group 50 to 70 m. high, gleaming in various shades of pink and white. Farther on, we travelled along the foot of a ridge which did not appear to be more than 10 m. in relative altitude. Then the surface became ex-

\* *Trudij Eksp. Imp. Russ. Geogr. Ob. 1893—95*, vol. 11, p. 101.