

establish itself on its shores. The only reason there is not any as yet is that it has not had time to get rooted; in other words, it is because the lake is an altogether too recent creation. On the shore of the Tojaghun there also lay three pretty big poplar trunks, belonging to old dead toghraks. They had been brought by means of oxen from a place half a day's journey to the north, and had been intended as the corner-posts of a hut it was proposed to build. In connection with them, Nias Baki Bek, the chief of Kum-tschapghan, himself a man of 64 years of age, told me that his father, who died twelve years before, aged 110 (?), had, when a young man, seen poplars growing in the place from which the three tree-trunks were fetched. They had lain for some time buried in the ground (old mud and recent drift-sand); and this might also be inferred from the fact that they were especially well preserved, and not cracked and dry as the trunks are which one finds in the desert, but they were moist, with the bark and bast still fresh. There cannot be the slightest doubt, that these poplars did once grow on the shore of the Schirge-tschapghan arm (the Tokus-tarim), which is described in vol. I chapter XXVII. Nias Baki Bek averred, that 150 years ago the entire flood of the Tarim flowed through this more northern bed, and issued into a lake situated north of the existing Kara-koschun. At that period the basin of the existing lake was nothing but *tschöl* and *gobi*, that is to say »desert». In the time of the bek's grandfather poplars were plentiful beside this northerly arm; but when the stream deserted it in favour of a more southerly course, they withered up and decayed. This information agrees in the minutest detail with the observations which I was shortly afterwards able to make for myself.

If you ask a Loplik, who was born, and has lived all his life, in Abdal, Kum-tschapghan, or Tusun-tschapghan, where the Kara-koschun is, he answers, there is no such lake. And if you ask about the Lop-nor, he is still more mystified. In the case of the latter the reason is that Lop-nor is an old desiccated lake which he has never seen, or even heard speak of; in the case of the former, his reason is that there really is no lake of Kara-koschun. This name is by origin Mongolian, and an old word, which seems to have been applied to the entire region, just as nowadays the Chinese apply the same name to the whole of the district of Tscharklik. Prschevalskij lighted upon the village of Kara-koschun, but was so incautious as to apply the name of Lop-nor to the lake in its vicinity. Kosloff uses sometimes this same name, sometimes the name invented by himself, Kara-koschun-köl.\* But, as I have already said, there really is no such name. The different parts of the lake bear different names. Every sheet of open water, that is bordered by shallow thresholds or thick reeds, has its own name; and, as for various reasons these basins change from year to year, so also do their names. The names become, as it were, like the lakes themselves — overgrown with reeds; new basins come into existence and acquire new names. The natives possess no gift of generalisation; it is very rarely that one name is applied to one continuous geographical object. I have already called attention to the fact that the Tarim has several different names, and

\* Both these names were, it is true, printed on my map in *Peterm. Mitt.*, Ergzhft. No. 131; but that map was printed when I was absent in Asia, so that I had no opportunity to correct the mistake.