

less likely to suggest the former presence of forest than the southern shore of the Kara-koschun. Hence Littledale's vanished »considerable forest» is a puzzle to me. Why should he suspect that there was a forest here just in the very place where there exists nothing at all indicative of such a thing? Kosloff actually advises the traveller along that route to carry fuel with him. Prschevalskij says, with regard to the district south of the lake, »Leaving Atschi-bulak we travelled at first 10 versts to the southern shore of Lop-nor, and then 27 versts along that shore (to Abdal). It was a horrid region, a bare salt plain, with irregularities on its surface resembling »petrified» waves. In the district we crossed there was a similar belt, which was formerly a part of the lake-bottom; there it was 10 versts broad, though farther east no doubt considerably broader. On Lop-nor itself there still remained a continuous ice-sheet more than one foot thick. The belt of pure, reed-free water, now frozen, which extended along the southern shore of this lake, and which in 1877 was 1 to 3 versts broad, had now contracted to less than one-half, a consequence of the general shrinkage in the volume of the Lop-nor».

Prschevalskij is the only traveller who has enjoyed the opportunity of studying, after an interval as long as eight years, the southern shore of Kara-koschun, and noting how it is travelling to the north, though this is not to be ascribed exclusively to the steady shrinkage in volume, but is also due to an equal extent to the bodily movement of the lake-basin in the same direction. The belt of old lake-bottom, 10 versts wide, was certainly exposed in the years immediately preceding, that is since 1850. In the period 1877 to 1885 the southern shore of the lake travelled yet $\frac{1}{2}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ versts farther north. It is evident it would be idle to look for traces of forest in a strip of shore so recently exposed as this, especially as the lake itself along that side is open and barren.

Finally I will quote yet one more passage from Pjevtsoff: all that he learnt about the lake of Kara-koschun agrees almost to the minutest detail with my own observations. He says that the lake »at the present time consists of an extensive sheet of water, overgrown for the most part with dense and exceptionally tall reeds, reaching in places as much as 4 saschen (8.5 m.), and more than one inch in thickness. The lake is oval in shape, and stretches fully 100 versts from southwest to north-east, and runs to 40 versts in breadth. Kuntschekan Bek, who rode all round the lake, told me that it took him exactly five days, travelling every day about 50 versts. According to his calculation therefore the circumference of the lake measures about 250 versts. From what he also said, the lake is encircled by immense expanses of hard broken saliferous ground, perfectly barren, and strewn occasionally with mollusc shells. It was extremely hard work riding across this irregular hardened surface; in fact it was only possible on the very verge of the reed-grown places, for there the ground was a good deal softer as well as leveller. But his search for a suitable site for a dwelling was entirely in vain: there was none to be formed anywhere all round the shores.»*

So long as this same journey has not been performed by any European we must content ourselves with the old bek's account, and this is in my opinion all

* *Trudij* etc., p. 304. Also quoted in *Petermanns Mitteilungen*, Ergänzht. 131, p. 132.
Hedin, Journey in Central Asia. II.