

sank in 35 cm., until we landed upon the underlying deposit of blue clay. Neither I nor any of my three attendants had the least knowledge of that country, or of the distance to which the lakes extended; and that year (1901) they appeared to be especially active. We should certainly have crossed over this channel and endeavoured to push on west, where we should soon have been stopped again by other new sheets of water, only just at that moment fresh guides arrived from Kum-tschapghan. We now traversed perfectly level, barren schor until we at length reached the distant pool which we had first seen on the 20th March, and which, in opposition to the prevalent law, stretched from south-east to north-west.

Seen from Camp No. CLXX, this sheet of water stretched away to the S. 80° E., but farther on it turned an angle and proceeded S. 50° E. We were unable to see the end of it; but from the wide open expanses of water which appeared to the south and south-east, it was possibly connected with them, or else terminated quite close to them. At our camp the breadth of the stream was 15 m., though lower down it amounted to 30 to 38 m., and to judge from the limpidity of the water, the depth was considerable. The sp. gr. was 1.0033. The tamarisks here, especially on the north-east shore, grew on mounds formed of drift-sand, which they had thus arrested. On the lee shore there were, on the contrary, neither mounds nor sand, though there was indeed an occasional tamarisk standing on the bare ground. On the shores, and especially on the south-west shore, a narrow strip of kamisch was growing. To the south the ground nearest to the pool was overgrown with steppe-plants, and they were in a more thriving condition than anywhere else in this part of the desert.

A glance at Plate 15 will be sufficient to convince the reader that this depression cannot be anything else but a river-bed. In shape it resembles the lower Tarim, down to the minutest details. But it is clearly older than that part of the Tarim which lies between the Kara-buran and the Kara-koschun. What role this stream formerly played it would now hardly be possible to ascertain. Did it form the continuation of the Tarim at the time when the entire volume of the river poured through the Tokus-tarim? In that case it probably formed a link between the Utschuköl and some other lake to the south of it. Or perhaps this arm discharged the same function, and occupied an equivalent position, to the waterway the right side of which we had lately followed towards the north? The former is the more likely alternative, for the tamarisk-mounds, being so high as they are, indicate that the arm has been in existence a long time, and its shape points, as I have said, to an actual river.

From this spot we travelled on the 26th March mainly north, leaving our former route immediately on our left, and soon came to a large sheet of water, which formed a link in the waterway we followed on the 23rd. During the four days that had elapsed since our new guides first rode that way several fresh expanses of water had formed. One little pool was manifestly quite new; it pointed as usual to the north-east, and was fed by a channel, 3 m. broad, 0.1 m. deep, and flowing with a velocity of 0.55 m. per second. We rode round it, and even whilst our animals were drinking at it, the water advanced so rapidly that their footprints were gradually blotted out.