

(e) A last and weighty argument is furnished by the only hydrographical measurements taken by Prejevalsky of the rivers observed by him. — — — — It appears, then, that the united river only brings down a part (probably less than half) of the aggregate volume of water contained in all its branches. — — — — Now Prejevalsky's route lay between two separate arms of the river; it is therefore possible that the eastern arm discharges part of its water by a channel not seen by him, flowing eastwards to an impassable salt desert, to which the name Lob-nor heard by him, but so mysteriously passed over, may refer.

If it may be assumed as a certainty, that a sweet-water lake, which lies in a steppe of saline loam, and does not serve as a passage for a river like Kara-buran, but allows the water it receives to evaporate, must be of recent origin, our argument with reference to Prejevalsky's Kara-koshun will be confirmed.

We must picture to ourselves the Khas-lake as in former times a small salt-water basin, fed by tributaries from the Altyn-tagh and by the Cherchen-darja and the considerable extension of its area by the irruption of the Tarim, at a comparatively recent period owing to a deflection from its earlier and only eastern course. — — — — Highly as we must value that which Prschevalskij has accomplished for the exploration of Lob-nor, we cannot yet consider the problem for which he has endured such hardships as finally solved.»

Thus far von Richthofen. I have omitted one or two passages of minor importance. This was answered the same year by Preschvalskij, and his reply is contained in Morgan's book. The following passage from it may be quoted here: — — — »In order to reconcile the discrepancies between the Chinese statements and the results of my investigations, Baron Richthofen supposes that the Lower Tarim in comparatively recent times altered its course; a small channel, probably, as the Baron thinks, unexplored by me, continues to follow the former direction to the east towards the true Lob-nor, whilst the chief mass of water, diverted to the south-east, entered Lake Khas-omo, and here formed with its overflow the lakes which I discovered.

It is impossible to deny that such a phenomenon may have occurred. A river with such a rapid stream as the Tarim, flowing in a loose alluvial soil, might easily have changed its course. My opinion, however, is that no such important change has occurred within comparatively recent times, but that the contradictory statements of Chinese maps and descriptions of the Lower Tarim and Lob-nor may be readily accounted for *by the misleading and inaccurate information which the Chinese themselves possessed of these localities.* — — — — It is unnecessary to repeat the statements contained in my report regarding the hydrography of the Lower Tarim, and I will only add, that the chief cause of the diminution of the volume of its stream, as it flows farther to the south-east, is the diversion of its water into artificial lakes and marshes occupying vast tracts along its lower course, and these, owing to strong evaporation continuing the greater part of the year, absorb an immense quantity of moisture, subtracted from the principal river.

Regarding the possibility of there being another channel by which, as Baron Richthofen supposes, the Tarim carries part of its water to the east, and there forms the true Lob-nor — such a supposition is not supported by the facts hitherto