

obtained. To say nothing of the circumstance, that the inhabitants would surely have known of such a channel and so large a lake, and would sooner or later have told me about them, we ourselves followed the bank of the Tarim, and could not detect any, not even the smallest, rivulet crossing our road. — — — —

Now with reference to the lakes at the mouth of the chief river, of which there are two: Kara-buran and Kara-kurchin or Chon-kul; both are shallow and contain fresh water. — As regards the former the presence of sweet water can be explained by the fact that the Tarim only flows through it, and its water is therefore constantly renewed.

As to the other enclosed lake-basin, it appears at first sight inexplicable why its water should be sweet. But the facts collected by me on the spot explain the apparent anomaly. The fact is, the Chon-kul is nothing more than a wide expanse of land flooded by the Tarim; in all its western parts I observed a current, sometimes very considerable, towards the north-east. In this part the Tarim preserves an independent channel, although reduced to the size of a large ditch. Here the last two villages of Lob-nortsi are situated, and farther to the north-east lie boundless and impassable tracts of marsh-land, which actually absorb the remainder of the Tarim water. In these marshes, and in the great salt bogs extending, as the natives told us, far away in a N. E. direction, the standing water is doubtless salt, just as it is along the shallow western margin of the Chon-kul. — — — — In conclusion, I consider it my duty to repeat, that the inhabitants one and all denied the existence of any other lakes in the neighbouring desert besides those on which they lived. — They likewise did not know of the oasis of »Gast», about which I had so often heard in Tsaidam.»

After the description which I have given of the lowermost Tarim and the Desert of Lop it will be unnecessary for me to examine these different opinions; I will therefore confine myself to calling attention to two or three points only. My second visit to the country of Lop in the years 1900 and 1901 has convinced me that von Richthofen's deductions agree with the actual occurrences that have taken place there in an even higher degree than what I believed in 1896. I ascertained that the Tarim formerly flowed due east along the bed which is called the Kuruk-darja, and that of this the Kontsche-darja was a tributary. At that time the Tarim emptied itself into »the true great Lob-nor». At a certain point, and for reasons which have yet to be set forth, an arm was sent off to the south-east, and subsequently, in the course of a year or two — or it may be after a long period, possibly several decennia — this branch received the entire volume of the Tarim and carried it down to the existing Kara-koschun, a lake which Richthofen identifies with the Khas-omo of the Chinese map. Previous to that the last-mentioned lake was fed exclusively by the Tschertschen-darja, and consequently must have been a very small and ephemeral lake, which only became filled at flood-time. However I doubt whether it was in the same place where we now find the Kara-koschun. It is more likely to have been a movable lake, and more probably coincides with the Kara-buran, and it was just as inconstant as the whole of the Tschertschen-darja delta is at the present time. Had the terminal reservoir of that river been stationary for any prolonged period, we should have found poplar forest along its banks; but