

CHAPTER XX.

THE LOP-NOR REGION ON THE WU-TSCHANG-FU MAP.

To judge from the passage quoted above from the *Si-yü-schuei-tao-ki*, which has been translated by Himly, and before him by Uspenskij, it is perfectly clear, that the lake of Khas-nur mentioned therein is situated among mountains and south of an actual mountain-chain. To me also it no longer admits of any doubt, that the Khas-nor of the Chinese map cannot be any other lake except the Tschimen-köl (Turkish) or Ghas-nor (Mongolian), discovered by Prschevalskij in the easternmost part of the valley of Tschimen, on the border of Tsajdam, and generally called by him simply Lake Ghas, a lake which I myself visited subsequently on two separate occasions. On this point I am convinced that Stubendorff and Kosloff are quite right; both the text quoted and the Chinese map make it impossible for me to identify the Khas-nur with the Kara-koschun. The map alone would not have been sufficient to justify this conclusion, for it shows no mountains to the north of Khas-nur, and the name »Nukitu-daban» taken by itself is not sufficient to prove the existence of a mountain-range. For the word *davan* has with the Lopliks a more elastic and wider meaning than it has, for example, with the Kirghis and the Taghliks. The first-named would apply the term to a small notch or saddle in a sand-dune only 3 to 4 m. high, and on one occasion (see vol. I p. 341 above) I came across a district in a perfectly flat country called simply *Davan*. To judge from Wegener and Himly's reproduction of the map in question, which was published at Wu-tschang-fu in 1863, one would be led to very erroneous conclusions if one were to rely without criticism upon the presence or absence of the blunted angles which are there used to indicate mountains. Richt-hofen says also, »Orography is the weakest point of Chinese maps. Where a mountain is marked there is certain to be one; but it is impossible to say, whether it be high or low, steep or rounded, continuous or isolated. The boundary, however, between hill country and lowlands can in most cases be approximately traced.»*

On the Wu-tschang map however there are mountains depicted which do not exist at all. For instance, it shows numerous mountains in the interior of the Tsajdam depression, where such elevations as do in reality exist hardly deserve to be

* Morgan, *From Kulja etc.*, Preface p. V.