

which are shown on our maps do not exist, indeed never can have existed, because the topographical relations of the region forbid it. To this I replied, I seize the opportunity to observe, that the lakes Chua-chai-tsi and Alak-tschì, shown on our maps, really do not exist now, as G. E. Grum-Grschimajlo has pointed out; but there is nothing in the topographical relations of the locality to prevent their existence, as that traveller supposes, and without doubt the lakes did once exist, and existed probably in the historical period (otherwise they would never have been shown on the Chinese maps), and, equally without doubt, they have left behind them marshes, salt expanses, and beds of kamisch, which in certain places come to light in consequence of the paludal character of the region, though not at all seasons of the year. In the desiccation of these lakes an important part was undoubtedly played by the rivers and brooks which formerly fed them and were subsequently employed for irrigation, thus acting as a drain upon them, and this did happen of course within the historical period.»

Notwithstanding this unambiguous correction by Obrutscheff, Grum-Grschimajlo proceeded, in the second volume of his voluminous book of travel, to speak of these lakes in the following terms, according to Obrutscheff's quotation of his words: »The biggest of these troughs (depressions), the western one, contains the lower part of the river Su-lai and the basin of the lake Chara-nor. On the east it leans upon the ridge San-sjan-tsi, which, after crossing over the valley of the river Su-lai-che, is almost connected with the Bei-schan mountains; these last reach all the way to the vicinity of the stream just mentioned, and then bend towards the north, and advance very nearly all the way to the meridian of the fortress of Tschì-dao-gou. Nevertheless the bend is but slight, and only a few versts farther on the Bei-schan again approach the Su-lai, leaving between themselves and it a not very broad (3 to 8 versts) strip of firm ground, which, except in moist places, where it is overgrown with kamisch, is entirely barren, unless we count the rare bushes of *Eurotia ceratoides* and *tschi*. The occurrence of these features led me to observe, that the lakes Tschin-schen-che and Chua-chai-tsi, which are depicted on our maps, not only do not exist now, but never can have existed in the situations shown. And in the same way the lake Alak-tschì, as we shall see lower down, can hardly have existed to the east of the last-named, at all events within historic times.»

»Obrutscheff however is unable to accept these conclusions, for he writes, that the lakes in question, 'after having left behind them marshes, salt expanses, and beds of kamisch, which in certain places come to light in consequence of the paludal character of the region, though not at all seasons of the year', must undoubtedly have existed during the historical period, because 'otherwise they would never have been shown upon the Chinese maps'».

»Now, seeing that Obrutscheff travelled to Bei-schan by the same route that I followed, I understand distinctly what it was he took for traces of the 'historical' lake of Chua-chai-tsi. It was the region bordering upon the river Bulungir, which in the Mongol period was artificially irrigated. Into the channel then excavated the water penetrates pretty often even now, and proceeds north as far as the well of Si-dun, where it forms what the natives of the lower part of the river Ob call *sor*. But may we, properly speaking, apply the term lake to such artificial sheets of water?