

CHAPTER XLI.

HYPSOMETRICAL RELATIONS OF LOWER TARIM BASIN AND OF KURUK-DARJA.

Let us now devote a few words to Pl. 59, which reproduces the contour-lines of the country around the lowest part of the Tarim down from Jangi-köl, and between the Desert of Tschertschen on the west and the Desert of Lop on the east. The contour-lines between 920 and 820 m. are shown for every tenth meter, but below 820 m. for every single meter. That these latter cannot be more than approximate is self-evident, for we possess only one single line, namely that which I levelled, with regard to which we can venture to speak with full certainty. Apart from that we have to rely upon such assistance as is afforded by the position of the rivers and by interpolation. In Dr. Ekholm's tables I have altered the altitude of one or two points in the eastern waterway. The results obtained go to show unmistakably that the eastern waterway lies, as indeed might be expected, at a lower level than the corresponding part of the Tarim; nevertheless its lowest part is somewhat the higher, because the water flows from Sadak-köl to Schirge-tschapghan. What the relation is that obtains between the possible connecting channels between the Tarim branches and the eastern Ilek I have been unable to ascertain. In some places the water flows from west to east, as for instance in the Ilek, which enters the Suji-sarik-köl, and in other places in the opposite direction, as the Almontschuk-kok-alasi. The most probable explanation would appear to be, that both waterways lie at one and the same level. Yet the northern part of the eastern waterway certainly lies lower than the Tarim, and consequently I have here made the 830 m. contour-line describe an angle. Thus the contour-lines for 830 and 840 m. make it appear as though the Tarim flowed upon a terrace, but for this three separate explanations readily suggest themselves. In the first place, the Tarim builds up ramparts for itself, so that as an actual fact the river does flow at a higher level than the level of the adjacent country; in the second place, we have found that the region south-west of this part of the Tarim actually does lie at a lower level than the river; and in the third place, we must remember, that in this part of its course the river's position is prescribed by already existing bajir depressions, so that for long distances the stream is confined within proper bounds by the elevations between the old bajir depressions.