

In my work »Scientific Results of a Journey in Central Asia» (Vol. II, p. 355), published in Stockholm in 1905, I had written:

»And in the light of the knowledge we now possess, as to the relations of level that obtain in the Desert of Lop, it is not too bold a thing to say that some time the river *must* go back to Kuruk-daria . . . It is merely a question of time, but the country hereabouts (Qara-qoshun) will become so choked with alluvia that the river will be forced to return to its northern bed. The lowermost limb of the river thus oscillates backwards and forwards like a pendulum, and even though the periodic time of each oscillation does amount to 1500 years, yet that, counted by the clock of geologic time, is relatively of no longer duration than one of our seconds.»

The river that in former times flowed just to the north of the town Lou-lan has thus returned to its old bed, precisely as I foretold that it would in the year 1905, and although the period for the swing of the pendulum amounts to many centuries I have had the happiness of myself living to ascertain the correctness of my theory.

The information I was given in Turfan, however, might be supposed to be pure fantasy or based upon misunderstanding. Both NORIN and I were therefore agog to confirm the fact by a visit to the place itself. No European had been there since the water had changed beds. It was, however, not possible to make the visit there and then, as Governor-General YANG had summoned the whole expedition to Urumchi.

## TURFAN

As is so often the case in Eastern Turkistan, Turfan consists of two towns. The burgomaster and the commandant have their official premises in Kohna-shahr, i. e. The Old Town (= the Chinese town), that is inhabited by only one hundred families. It is surrounded by a wall and has four gates, though that to the north is scarcely ever used. A little over a kilometer to the west of the Chinese town lies the Turki town, Yangi-shahr (The New Town), founded in 1873 by YAQUB BEK and inhabited by six hundred families. Only a twentieth part of the inhabitants of Turfan are said to be Chinese.

Going through Yangi-shahr we drove along a long bazaar-street provided with canopies of straw mats supported by poles. On either side of the street were booths with red signboards and blue, green or red strips of cloth with inscriptions along the edge of the roofs. A break in the line of booths is made by the mosque with grey cupolas that stands on the south side of the street. But the narrow thoroughfare itself, which is also the highway to Urumchi, is a perpetual jam of the liveliest traffic imaginable. We found the greatest difficulty in making our way between riders and carts, camels and asses, customers and tramps, dervishes and beggars, women in white head-cloths, afoot, riding on asses or driving in little blue carts. There were two-wheeled *arabas* loaded with coal, jostling asses bearing water in wooden tubs, strings of camels loaded with bales of cotton. Merchants