

river, where we should always have water, fowl and fish at hand. There was an element of adventure and risk about our journey, but that only heightened its fascination.

In 1899 I had drifted right down the Tarim in a ferry-boat; and in the following year I had made a canoe-tour of the winding, watery arms of the delta (as it then was) and mapped them. In 1907 I had made a very short but unforgettably beautiful journey on the Tsang-po, or Upper Brahmaputra, in Tibet, in a boat made of yak-hides sewn together. Nine years later I had travelled 1,040 km down the Euphrates by boat from Jerablus to Feluja. And in 1930 I had been in a Chinese boat down the river Luan-ho, from Jehol towards the coast.

Now I was starting another idyllic journey on a river in Asia. But this new journey was of greater importance than the earlier ones. It was to provide a contribution to the final solution of the complex of hydrographic and quaternary geological problems connected with »the Wandering Lake«. For this reason the voyage on the Konche-darya and its continuation the Qum-darya seemed more alluring than any of my previous river-trips. Now I was to see with my own eyes that my prophecy of 1905 had been fulfilled. (Cf. Part I, p. 238).

The journey undertaken by NILS HÖRNER and PARKER C. CHEN in the winter of 1930—31 had disproved the statement that the river went as far as three days' journey from Tun-huang. We knew, too, where the new Lake Lop-nor was situated, and where the Qum-darya stopped. The only question was whether the river was navigable as far as the region in which HÖRNER and CHEN had explored the arms of its delta.

OUR FIRST DAY ON THE KONCHE-DARYA

As we now travelled down the stream, following the slight bends whose general tendency was to carry us E. S. E., we noted that the concave banks were sharply eroded by the water and were for the most part perpendicular, being from 1 to 2 m high. On the opposite side the banks were convex and fell gradually, usually with a narrow strip of mud close to the water. Poplars grew on the banks, in small groves or singly. They were not the tall Lombardy poplar, but the *Populus diversifolia* with its low, round head, which is the prevalent variety throughout Eastern Turkistan. Between the trees prickly bushes, tamarisks and reeds grew thickly; and here from time to time we caught sight of a herdsman with his flock of sheep and goats.

There was no wind; the surface of the water was often as smooth as a canal, sharply reflecting the picturesque canoes. Some of the boats were ahead of us, some behind, but the grouping was continually changing — sometimes I would