

CHAPTER XVI.

EXCURSION OF THE TWO COSSACKS.

Before proceeding to describe my winter journey through the Astin-tagh to Anambaruin-ula, I will here interpolate certain information gleaned by the two Buriat Cossacks, Schagdur and Tscherdon, during the course of a reconnaissance which they made between the 25th October and the 4th November. After I had given the former of these two men, who was remarkably intelligent, and able both to read and to write, a thorough lesson in surveying, I sent him off to make a map, however hurried, of a region which I had neither time nor opportunity to visit myself. The object was to give me an approximate idea of those parts of the Tschimen-tagh and the Kalta-alaghan which lie between the route that I followed from Mandarlik to Avras (this must not be confounded with the same name which we encountered in my last excursion) on the east and the route from Temirlik to the Kumköl on the west. The two Cossacks proved themselves fully worthy of my confidence: the observations they brought back with them were such as I have been able to use. All the same I must of course communicate them with a certain amount of reservation, for I have not seen the region in question with my own eyes.

Accompanied by three hunters who were well acquainted with the region, they set out from our headquarters camp at Temirlik on the 25th October, and rode south as far as Basch-balghun-bulak, and then east as far as the eroded watercourse of Komutluk, which I crossed over on the 12th July. Here they made their first halt. Thus far their route was said not to be identical with mine, but to run a little to the north of it.

On 26th October they first marched 27 km. towards the south-south-east, crossing the Tschimen valley diagonally to Korumluk-aghsi, or the lower end of the transverse glen of Korumluk, on the northern side (alt. 3157 m.) of the Tschimen-tagh. Some kilometers from the foot of the mountains they crossed over an eroded watercourse running towards the N. 60° E., plainly making for the Ghas-köl. Between this watercourse and the spur on the left side of the glen-mouth stretches a tract of minor drift-sand dunes, exactly in the same way as we have found they do in the regions farther west. The eroded watercourse which comes down at Korumluk-aghsi is at first directed towards the N. 10° E., but gradually inclines more and more towards the north-east; after rain in the Tschimen-tagh the stream gets