

are all the easier that the watershed here is approached on the south by easy trough-like uplands curiously resembling small Pāmīrs.¹⁴ The westernmost of these open high valleys is drained by the head-waters of the Kāghān river. On the north it gives access to a succession of Chilās passes, of which the Bābusar pass (13,680 feet) has since 1893 been traversed by a well-made mule road. This connects Chilās through the fairly open valley of the Kunhār or Kāghān river with the fertile British district of Hazāra, and ever since the occupation of Chilās has carried a considerable amount of trade and traffic proceeding to Gilgit and beyond.

Route
connecting
Chilās with
Hazāra.

Hazāra, the ancient Uraśā, appears during the greater part of the pre-Muhammadan period for which we possess historical records as a territory subject to the rulers of Kashmīr.¹⁵ It may hence be safely assumed that this most direct and easiest of all routes connecting Chilās with India must have also been made use of during the times when the Chinese garrisons placed in Gilgit and Yāsīn were maintained by means of supplies from Kashmīr. This assumption is particularly confirmed by the specific reference made to salt in the letter of the Tokhāristān ruler above quoted. This important commodity is not found in Kashmīr. Obviously when Chinese troops had to be supplied with it in Gilgit, it would be imported, just as it is at the present day for the needs of the garrisons in the Gilgit Agency, by the nearest route from the source of supply in the Salt Range, i. e. by the road leading up to the Kāghān river head-waters and thus to Chilās. In the same way rice, too, which parts of Hazāra produce in plenty, may have been imported by this route and not solely from the Kashmīr valley.

Use of
Kāghān
valley
route.

I have already referred to the fact that the Kāghān valley route as well as those leading to Chilās from the Kishangangā were in need of some improvement before they could be conveniently followed by traffic with laden animals. But this in no way militates against their extensive use for transport in earlier times. Natural obstacles on these tracks could easily be overcome by recourse to men as bearers, and we have abundant historical evidence to show that such recourse

that the Barai route has been chosen by the Kashmīr authorities as an alternative line of traffic to Chilās and Gilgit, and that, since my journey, the improvements have been made necessary to convert it into a regular mule road.

Immediately to the west of the Kamakdōri pass we reach the high but open ground resembling the Pāmīrs to which I have already referred. This extends along the Indus-Kishangangā watershed as far as the Lālusar lake at the head of the Kunhār (Kāghān) river, a distance of some 16 miles. From this grassy upland the head-waters of every one of the Chilās streams can be reached by easy passes, which the map Sheet No. 42 of the Northern Trans-frontier Series shows by the names of Balung, Damagāh, Bābusar, Tatabai, Butogāh.

The lowest among them, the Bābusar pass (13,680 feet), is crossed, as already mentioned, by the well-made mule road which gives access from Kāghān and Hazāra and leads down the Thak Nullah to the chief place of Chilās on the Indus. The great advantage offered by this route is that on it there is only a single pass to be faced, offering a very gentle ascent from the south, with plenty of grazing all the way.

¹⁴ My stay near the head-waters of the Kunhār or Kāghān river during the summers of 1904 and 1905 enabled me to gain some personal acquaintance with the peculiar physical aspects of this high ground. It appears to me of distinct

interest to note that though the watershed west of the Barai pass as far as the extreme head-waters of the Kunhār falls nowhere appreciably below the 14,000 feet level, and elevations rising to 15,000 feet or more are numerous on the crest line, yet there seem to be no permanent snow-beds along its line. Yet such snow-beds and even small glaciers are to be found farther south, both within the Kunhār and the Kishangangā drainage areas, in connexion with peaks which do not rise much above 14,000 feet. We are, I believe, justified in accounting for this feature of the watershed above Chilās by the climatic fact that, as my personal experience showed, the uppermost portion of the Kunhār valley and of the ranges flanking it lies beyond the limits of the Monsoon rains.

This in turn may be connected with the configuration of the Kunhār valley. It twists sharply in the vicinity of the large village of Kāghān, and the high mountain ridges projecting on either side completely intercept the moisture-laden air currents that the Monsoon brings up from the south. This want of precipitation, whether rain or snow, during the summer months may explain both the absence of permanent deposits of snow or ice on the watershed and the steppe climate of those uplands which to me distinctly recalled the Pāmīrs.

¹⁵ Cf. my notes *Rājat*. v. 217 ; II. p. 434.