

touch with those who had helped in building up this most recent of Hindukush 'states' and could give first-hand information about the process.

Nor did I fail to appreciate the advantage of the fact that quick-witted Shāh 'Ālam and his intelligent henchmen, while fully familiar with the ground and the people, were yet, from the very character of their employment, apt to keep a mental detachment from local interests. Regard for these, among more settled subjects, might well have induced reticence on various topics. I may add that the knowledge of the Paṣhtō language which we found among many of Pakhtūn Wālī's retainers and the steady spread of which up the Indus Kōhistān is a noticeable fact, made it easier for us to obtain information than it might otherwise have been among the Shiṇā-speaking Darēlīs.

From the left bank of the Khanbarī river, where our first camp in Pakhtūn Wālī's territory had stood at an elevation of about 5,500 feet, the route led north-westwards up a well-watered side valley known at its mouth as Domōt. The Khanbarī river, where we crossed it by a rough bridge above the junction, carried a volume of water probably greater than that to be found in any of the Chilās streams. This, as our survey showed, is due to the fact that its head-waters drain a long stretch of the Gilgit-Indus watershed, probably fully twenty-eight miles in a straight line from east to west and falling nowhere much below 14,500 feet. Though our line of travel did not allow me to touch the main Khanbarī valley anywhere except at Domōt, yet both the views gained from subsequent survey points higher up and the information collected showed conclusively that along the Khanbarī river itself and in the upper side valleys there is abundant ground sufficiently open for cultivation and an ample water-supply for its irrigation. In striking contrast with these favourable conditions, the area actually occupied proved very limited, and everything I could observe or learn pointed to scarcity of population as the chief or sole cause. In fact, the Darēlīs were said to have contented themselves, before Pakhtūn Wālī's conquest, with using only the extensive grazing grounds at the heads of the valleys drained by the Khanbarī river. The slow immigration of Gujar settlers from the south and west appears to have commenced only since the advent of more peaceful conditions.

Resources
of Khanbarī
valley.

The main facts here briefly indicated are well illustrated by what we saw on our march up the Domōt valley on August 14th and in turn give additional interest to our observations. For about a mile from its mouth the path led past fertile fields, overlooked from cliffs to the north by the ruins of an old village fort. Farther up, though the valley bottom remained wide for a distance of about three miles, there extended a succession of abandoned cultivation terraces, carefully levelled but overrun by luxuriant scrub and reeds. Groves of big plane trees, which had once been planted by the side of irrigation channels, still flourished and gave grateful shade; all of them showed great age. Only in small scattered patches had cultivation been resumed during the last few years, and showed rich crops of wheat and maize. At the foot of a conspicuous rocky spur known as Gaubē-chesh the valley bifurcated, and as the track turned up the branch trending westwards at an elevation of about 7,000 feet, it became completely covered by magnificent forest, mostly of Deodars (Fig. 9).

Cultivation
in Domōt
valley.

Though the bottom of the valley grew steeper and gradually narrowed, there were everywhere traces of ruined walls that had once supported carefully terraced fields. The size of the great trees that had grown up over them left no doubt that cultivation must have been abandoned here for centuries. Splendid forest growth, quite untouched by the axe, clothed the slopes on

Forest of
Dalgīn
valley.

been influenced early in his adventurous career by the rôle Umrā Khān had played on a bigger scene—and also that he remembered the lesson taught by the final fate of the

Pathān chief. It was probably on this account also that in the later stage of his own career he was anxious to open friendly relations with the representatives of the British Rāj.