

the *Hsi-yü-chi* and adds no fresh information. So we can turn at once to the data about ancient Darēl supplied by the above-quoted notices of our Chinese pilgrims. Their mention of the miraculous wooden image of Maitreya, which necessarily interested them most and about which they record interesting and concordant details, must be left for discussion below. Of other points it deserves to be noted that Fa-hsien speaks of the kingdom as small and yet containing many monks. Here, I believe, we may recognize a clear indication of the fertility of the Darēl tract. Evidence of this is to be found also in the fact that both Darēl and Tangīr attract, at the present day, a large number of Saiyids and attendant 'Tālib-ilms' from neighbouring parts to the south and west, who find ready welcome and live on the fat of the land. It is mainly to their presence that the two valleys owe the reputation of containing fanatical elements. Gold is still washed in the Darēl river and along the adjoining course of the Indus, though, as elsewhere in the Indus valley, the output is now very limited. I did not hear of saffron being cultivated at the present time in Darēl. But the fact that the climate so nearly resembles that of the Kashmīr valley, still famous for its saffron fields, seems sufficient to support Hsüan-tsang's statement. Finally it deserves to be noted that his reference to Ta-li-lo as 'the old seat of the government of Udyāna' points to a territory of some importance, such as Darēl with its adjoining tracts might well become again under favourable political conditions.

Valley
above
Nyachūt.

The abundant resources, actual and potential, that Darēl offers, even in its present state, impressed me forcibly during the few days I was able to spend in its main valley. On the morning following our arrival at Nyachūt a glorious view opened before me northward up the broad wooded valley. At its bottom there extended rich meadow land, almost flat, flanked on either side by magnificent forest clothing all the slopes of the main valley and side Nullahs (Fig. 11). The high peaks visible in the background were those overlooking the passes of Dōdar-galī and Suj-galī, by which access can be gained during the summer and early autumn to Gūpis at the confluence of the rivers of Yāsīn and Ghizar and thus to the main Gilgit valley.

Looking up towards those passes I thought of the delight with which Fa-hsien, and other Chinese travellers who may have followed this route from the Pāmīrs and the Barōghil, must have greeted the fine open valley with its rich alpine vegetation, after all the wastes of rock, ice and high barren plateaux they had traversed. It must have appeared to them like an enticing gate to the fair lands of India. Riding back to where the Ishkobar stream debouches into Nyachūt, at an elevation of about 7,500 feet, I noticed how little of the cultivable ground on either side, all bearing traces of old terraces and canals, was occupied by the present fields of barley or maize. The abundance of water for irrigation was proved by the fact that the main stream alone at the above point had a flow of some 180 cubic feet per second, even at that early hour of the morning when the snow-beds high up on the ranges had not yet commenced to melt and contribute to the volume.

Descent
from
Gabar.

From our camp at Gabar a very gentle descent led down through splendid forest to near the mouth of the Kiner-gāh Nullah, where the last Deodars were left behind (Fig. 15). There the valley opened to a width at the bottom of over a mile and a half. Old cultivation terraces, now deserted, were seen here too in plenty. But in pleasant contrast to this familiar sight I was struck by the care bestowed on the solid embankments that here confine the main stream and canals, and by the shady rows of trees planted along the latter. This sight and the rich crops, mainly of wheat, which covered all cultivated ground from below the outlet of the Gilich Nullah (Fig. 17) left no doubt that, however much else might have disappeared from Darēl in the course of centuries of misrule and anarchy, agricultural skill survived.

That there was ample scope for its use and also far more ground than the available population