

is to be found along its southern slopes all the way from the Karlik-tāgh east and north of Hāmi to the mountains above the Turfān basin.

The view opening westwards from the broad grass-covered saddle was extensive and most striking in its contrast with what I remembered seeing, on my passage in 1907, of the dreary wastes of stone or gravel between Hāmi and Pichan. The open valley that slopes down towards the lake of Barkul between the ranges north and south displays a wide expanse of flat grass land at its bottom, and above it either forest-clad slopes or rolling downs covered with vegetation.³ Considering that this great valley of Barkul stretches fully a hundred miles from east to west and that its width, as measured between the crest of the two bordering ranges, is as much as thirty miles, it is easy to realize the economic importance that a distinctly moister climate must impart to it, whether it is held by nomads or a settled population.

Climate of
Barkul
valley.

In the easternmost portion of the valley, extending to about 93° 30' longitude, the greater elevation necessarily makes the land chiefly profitable for grazing. We accordingly found this tract, of which the grazing grounds of Nārin-kür are the centre, held by Turkī 'Tāghliks', subjects of the Wang of Hāmi, living in felt tents and moving their camps according to the seasons. It was easy to gather some idea of the extent of the flocks and herds owned by their headmen from the comfort and comparative wealth displayed at the summer quarters of one of them, the 'Kurmāl' Sürük Niāz, who hospitably received us at Kutārlik. Large stacks of wool, skins, &c., were there awaiting disposal to enterprising Kāshgarliks, who trade from Barkul to distant Siberian markets.

Grazing
grounds of
Nārin-kür.

There was a complete and significant change in the ethnic setting when on October 2nd, after camping at Shōr-bulak, to the west of Nārin-kür, we left behind us the last felt tents of the hill nomads and passed out of the Wang of Hāmi's territory near a lively stream that flowed from a thickly wooded side valley lying to the south-east. The steadily widening plain at the bottom of the valley afforded grazing grounds as rich as those we had previously passed; but hence onwards no flocks or herds were to be seen, only scattered patches of well-tilled fields with small groups of farms unmistakably built and occupied by Chinese settlers. The aspect of the country remained the same all the way to the roadside station of K'ou-ssū (Map No. 34. c. 1), where we struck the highway from Hāmi, and also during the long march of the next day, which under a grey wintry sky, with snow clouds hanging over the mountains, brought us to the town of Barkul. The crest of the high range to the south is under permanent snow practically all the way from west of the Barkul-dawān (Map No. 34. d. 2) to above Barkul town. Numerous streams descending from it give verdure to the slopes below the broad zone of conifer forest, which here reaches down to a level of about 7,000 feet; and where they debouch into the valley plain they provide abundant water for the irrigation of village lands.

Chinese
cultivation
in valley of
Barkul.

The limited extent of the lands actually under cultivation in this wide fertile valley, the total absence of the flocks and herds for which it is so obviously well adapted, and finally its present occupation exclusively by Chinese, all these existing conditions find their ready explanation in the historical past of Barkul. This past is itself the outcome of the valley's geographical position. It will therefore be convenient to consider the geographical facts first before we briefly review the available data regarding the role played by Barkul in early and in recent phases of China's relations with the regions on either side of the T'ien-shan. The basin of Barkul, like the much smaller basin of the Tur-köl adjoining it on the east, owes its existence to the T'ien-shan mountain system; this for a considerable distance farther west is represented by a single chain of no great height, but rises here, between the approximate longitudes of 92° and 94° 30', in two parallel ranges and

Geogra-
phical
position of
Barkul.

³ There was plenty of fir forest to be seen also in the small valleys descending towards Nārin-kür from the north

and north-east, though the map (No. 34. d. 2), through a draughtsman's error, does not mark it.