

CHAPTER XXII

FROM KORLA TO KUCHĀ

SECTION I.—ALONG THE FOOT OF THE T' IEN-SHAN

Reunion
of survey
parties at
Korla.

KORLA was the place appointed for the reunion of our four surveying parties, and there I had the satisfaction of seeing in succession Lāl Singh, Afrāz-gul, and Muḥammad Yāqūb safely arrive, after completing their respective tasks. Lāl Singh had succeeded in carrying his triangulation from Singer through the western Kuruk-tāgh to the low hills in the immediate vicinity of Korla. His dogged perseverance had enabled him to overcome at the cost of much toil and privation the exceptional difficulties due both to the very broken nature of that barren hill region and to the adverse atmospheric conditions; for he had encountered a succession of violent dust-storms, such as we too had experienced farther south and as are usual at this season. Had he proved to be right in his identification of the distant snowy peak on the Āltin-tāgh which he had sighted in December from the Altmish-bulak side after enduring great and prolonged hardships, the reward would have been the successful linking I had aimed at, of the T'ien-shan range with the triangulation system of the Survey of India extended by us along the northernmost K'un-lun. Afrāz-gul, after leaving me beyond Ying-p'an, had carried his plane-table traverse from Tikenlik by the main road along the Yārkan-daryā to the Konche-daryā at Kara-kum, and thence had completely surveyed the previously unmapped portion of the river-course up to Korla. Muḥammad Yāqūb had reached Korla before me from Turfān by the high road. After depositing there my Chinese secretary and spare baggage, he had started on the survey he had been directed to carry round the shores of the Baghrash lake. But difficulties in securing transport delayed him and prevented the extension of the work beyond the point where the track coming from Singer down the Āltun-ghol strikes the lake shore (Map No. 25. c. 1).

Irrigation
resources of
Korla.

My stay at Korla, in the chief Mullah's pleasant garden, was fully occupied with various practical work in connexion with our respective future moves, with the revision of all mapping work done by our several parties since leaving Turfān, &c. Such local information as I gathered has already been utilized in the account given in *Serindia* of Korla and its ancient sites.¹ I have also fully discussed, in the same work, the data supplied by the Chinese historical texts which prove the identity of the Korla tract with the small kingdom of *Wei-hsü* 危須 and its close connexion with Yen-ch'i or Kara-shahr. Since my former visit in 1907 the reclaiming of new land had steadily proceeded. With such an abundance of water for irrigation as is to be found in no other oasis of the Tārīm basin, a great inrush of new colonists from the side of Kuchā and Turfān was said to be kept back only by the tenacity with which the people of Korla were maintaining their claims to all ground capable of cultivation. Nevertheless reclamation was extending rapidly westwards, where the new colony of Ellik-ketman was just being laid out and inspected by the district magistrate of Kara-shahr. The statement made to me by Qādir Bēg, one of the old headmen of the oasis, that the population was officially reckoned at 600 households before the Muhammadan rebellion and now, including the detached settlements to the south, counted close on 3,000, seemed

¹ See *Serindia*, iii. p. 1230.