

was due mainly to Colonel Jagello's willing help and forethought that I succeeded in covering so much interesting ground, far more than my original programme had included, within the comparatively short time available and without the loss of a single day. I shall always remember with sincere gratitude his friendly interest and all the kind assistance that I invariably received from him and also from his assistants, officers at the several Russian posts of the Pāmīr Division.

Historical
interest of
Alai valley
route.

Prominent among the reasons which had prompted me from the start to plan the extension of my journey across the Pāmīrs and adjacent Russian territories on the Oxus, was the hope that I might thus be able to study on the spot questions of historical geography directly bearing on the routes along which the earliest intercourse between China and Western Asia had been carried on. This explains the special satisfaction I felt when on July 28th I started to travel down the whole length of that great Alai valley.² On the return from my first Central-Asian expedition in June 1901 I had been able to see only the head between the Taun-murun saddle above Irkesh-tam and the foot of the Taldik pass. Topographical facts, climatic conditions, and local resources all support the conclusion that through this wide natural thoroughfare, skirting the high northern rim of the Pāmīrs from east to west and continued below by the fertile valley of the Kizil-su or Surkh-āb in Kara-tegīn, there once passed the route which the ancient silk traders from China followed down to the Middle Oxus. Before I refer to that much-discussed record of classical geography preserved by Ptolemy, where Marinus of Tyre describes the progress in the opposite direction of the agents of 'Maēs the Macedonian' from Baktra to the country of the Sēres or China, I may briefly note the observations made on my passage down the Alai valley to Daraut-kurghān.

March down
Alai valley.

Various practical considerations rendered it advisable to keep in contact with M. Zampoin, the Russian Customs Officer, who was bound for the same place, and this caused me to move down the Alai valley more rapidly than I should have otherwise done. It was fortunate, therefore, that on my start from Pōr-dōbe on the morning of July 28th a view of that highest portion of the Trans-Alai was obtained (Fig. 359) which stretched to the west of Kizil-art and probably includes Mount Kaufmann, close on 23,000 feet; for during the rest of that long day's march light clouds kept the summits of the great range hidden. Our route first descended along a wide drainage bed known as Janaidar-sai, past grassy plateaus; then crossed the glacier stream of Kizil-akin which comes apparently from the north-eastern slopes of Mount Kaufmann; and about 22 miles from the start brought us to the left bank of the Kizil-su opposite to the point where the Jintik valley debouches from the Alai.

Absence of
Kirghiz
camps.

The wide belt in which the river flows with a number of interlacing branches offered abundant grazing, as did the grassy plateaus that we crossed before and after. Yet neither that day nor on the following, which brought us to Daraut-kurghān, after a total march of some 70 miles from Pōr-dōbe, did we meet any Kirghiz camps. Local information explained this by the fact that both the true nomads of Kirghiz stock who move up with their large flocks from Farghāna for the summer, and their semi-nomadic congeners living lower down in the valley, prefer to visit the high side valleys, better watered by the melting snow and ice of the great flanking ranges, during the warmest months, and to graze the wide trough of the main valley later. At the small shrine of Sakeyār Mazār we struck the main road of the valley, which throughout keeps to the foot of the spurs running down from the range on the north. The reason, no doubt, lies in the need of avoiding the marshy ground near the river, which would be a cause of serious trouble in the spring. Following this well-marked track till long after nightfall we reached the debouchure of the Yamān-karchin

² For a lucid description of the Alai valley, gathered from Russian accounts, see Geiger, *Pamir-Gebiete*, pp. 75 sqq. ;

also Schultz, *Forschungen im Pamir*, pp. 40 sqq., with references to other modern accounts.