

and the gorges below Āb-i-garm forms more than one defile by the river. When following myself the route above indicated in the opposite direction I certainly had the impression that 'the plain country' was entered on reaching the downs above Faizābād from Āb-i-garm. The statement reproduced in Marinus' own words, 'when the traveller has ascended the ravine he arrives at the Stone Tower (λίθινος πύργος)', clearly takes us to the vicinity of Daraut-kurghān, where the defiles of the Kizil-su are finally left behind and the wide Alai trough is entered. We have distinct confirmation of this in the mention immediately following of 'the mountains that trend to the east [and] unite with Imaos, the range that runs up to the north from Palimbothra' (the present Patna). It has been recognized long ago that by Imaos is meant the great meridional range of Muz-tāgh-atā and its northern continuation, buttressing the Pāmīr region on the east. It thus becomes obvious that by 'the mountains that trend to the east and unite with Imaos' the Trans-Alai chain is quite correctly described.

Traders'
station on
Mt. Imaos.

There is a second point mentioned in Ptolemy's account of the trade route to the Seres as extracted from Marinus which concerns us here. It is 'the station (ὄρμητήριον) at Mount Imaos, whence traders start on their journey to Sēra'. It is mentioned in Book VI. xiii. 1, where the eastern limits of the territory of the nomadic Sakai, including also the mountain district of the Kōmēdoi and the Stone Tower, are described. From the previously quoted statement of Marinus it is certain that this station for the traders to the Sēres lay due east of the Stone Tower. This and the distinct statement as to the station being situated at Mount Imaos make it appear very probable that the ὄρμητήριον must, as rightly pointed out by Baron Richthofen,¹⁰ be looked for close to where the route coming from Kara-tegīn, the valley of the Kōmēdoi, crossed the watershed towards the Tārīm basin. This consideration has already led me to express my concurrence in the belief that the vicinity of Irkesh-tam, the present Russian frontier and customs station, about 16 miles by road from the watershed at Taun-murun, would have been a likely position for the ancient traders' station.¹¹ Such a location, as justly observed by Baron Richthofen, finds support in the fact that the route from the Alai valley is joined at Irkesh-tam by another, much frequented in modern times and probably in antiquity also, which leads from Farghāna over the Terek pass to Kāshgar. If at the period to which the information recorded by Maēs refers (probably the last quarter of the first century A. D.) direct Chinese control over the 'western regions' did not extend beyond the watershed between the Tārīm basin and the Oxus, the vicinity of Irkesh-tam would have offered a very suitable position for one of those frontier control stations, such as Chinese administration has always been accustomed to maintain on the borders of the Empire proper; for the elevation, about 8,550 feet, permits of some cultivation, and facilities for irrigation are assured.¹²

Daraut-
kurghān
and Chat.

I was obliged to make a short halt at Daraut-kurghān in order to arrange for a guide, for transport, and for supplies, and to do some necessary writing. I took advantage of it to make a start with the collection of anthropometrical materials from among the local Kirghiz and for an excursion down the right bank of the river. The track, artificially widened in places, which for about a mile leads along precipitous cliffs above the river, was said to be old and to have always been practicable for camels. Where the Kōk-su stream debouches about 3 miles down I found a large well-cultivated area with groves of trees belonging to the village of Chat. Outside it low mounds, forming an irregular oblong of about 300 yards by 250, mark an old circumvallation said to have been occupied down to the régime of the Kōkand chiefs. Owing to its ample space and sheltered position, Chat seemed to be a place better suited for a large roadside station than

¹⁰ See Richthofen, *China*, i. p. 500.

¹¹ Cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 54 sq.

¹² The ὄρμητήριον discussed above has been placed by

others at Kāshgar, but, as far as I can see, without any convincing evidence for such a location.