

dara joins the open valley of Tokuz-bulak coming from the Koi-tezek pass, the Russian cart-road was reached. This brought us, a couple of miles farther on, to the smiling meadow land at Warkhēts in the main Ghund valley, where we halted (elevation about 10,000 feet).

On September 20th a delightful day's march down the Ghund river allowed me to gain some impressions of the middle portion of the great valley of which I had sighted the head, just a month before, from above the outflow of the Yeshil-kul. It showed very clearly the advantages it must have offered for traffic across the Pāmīrs towards Badakhshān, whenever conditions prevailing in Shughnān allowed it to be used in safety. That such could not always be depended upon in modern times was indicated by the forts of the Shughnān Mīrs that we passed at the hamlets of Sardim and Wang, and farther down below Charsim. Before reaching the last-named village (Fig. 416) among verdant fields and arbours, we crossed a formidable barricade of rock debris extending for about a mile and stretching right across the broad bottom of the valley. It had been thrown down at some period by a landslide from the frowning cliffs to the south. Numerous stone breastworks, both on the eastern and western edges of this barricade, proved the defensive use made of it at different times. Several smooth-faced rock fragments bear shallow sgraffiti in Arabic writing containing pious invocations or formulas, besides the usual rude representations of an open hand and of wild sheep. In the local Ak-sakāl's house at Charsim I was interested to note a living hall with the ceiling and skylight arranged in the same ancient style as observed at Mīragrām in Mastūj and fully described below in the case of a Kala-i-Wāmar dwelling.¹⁸ From Wēr, another pleasant village, some six miles below Charsim, we crossed by a very rickety bridge to the right bank of the river and there made our way to Shitam (about 9,000 feet), a village of sixteen households, situated at the mouth of the very steep valley of the same name. By the glacier pass at the head of this we were to cross the high watershed range towards Rōshān.

In main
Ghund
valley.

Necessary preparations here caused delay in the start of the morrow, and I utilized it to listen to such scanty recollections as could be gathered from the greybeards produced as depositaries of Ghund local tradition. This proved distinctly less enduring than in Shākh-dara, not reaching back beyond the time of Shāh Abdurrahīm. Apart from this last but one of the Mīrs of Shughnān and his son Yūsūf 'Alī, there was vague remembrance only of a Mīr Salīm and a Shāh Kirghiz. That at one time Chinese control had extended to Shughnān was, however, known to all my informants. In support of this was quoted a short Persian inscription, said to be engraved at the village of Deh-baste farther down the valley. According to the verbal rendering, which was all I could obtain, it refers in metrical form to the boundary there fixed between Ghund and Sūchan (near Khāruk) 'by order of the Hāqīm of the Khāqān-i-Chīn'. All my informants agreed in stating that during the rule of the last Shughnān Mīrs and the subsequent Afghān occupation the population of Ghund had greatly diminished owing to severe exactions. Emigration to Kōkand, Margilān, &c., became particularly prevalent owing to the Mīrs' practice of selling women and children as slaves to increase their revenue. In consequence places like Wang, Wēr, and Charsim were practically deserted until better conditions were secured through the Russian occupation. That Ghund was still under-populated was proved by the fact that most of the men I measured at Shitam were labourers who had come from the Rōshān side.

Local tra-
dition in
Ghund.

¹⁸ See *Serindia*, i. p. 48, Fig. 16; below, ii. p. 887.