

below the pass, and in the narrow valleys beyond. Two or three miles of the next day's march lay through the "Tangi-Tár" (the narrow way, common name for defile), over about the worst piece of road we met with throughout the journey. The Tangi-Tár is a very narrow defile, with a stream rushing over fallen boulders and blocks of rock, flowing through it, and occupying the roadway to such an extent, that in many places the stream-bed is the only available passage. Holes cut in the wall-like sides of the rock, rising from the stream at one particularly confined place, show that in former times the passage was by means of a supported stage-way above the water. The attendant Kirghiz also mentioned this. There are several hot springs in this gorge, temperature about 116° . Birch, willow and gigantic juniper are plentiful in it. This day's march took us to the foot of a great elevated slope leading to the Chichiklik pass, plain and lake (14,700 feet), below the Yámbulák and Kok-Moinok passes, which are used later in the season on the road between Yangi-Hissár and Sirikol, to avoid the Tangi-Tár and Shindi defiles. As the season advances these passes become free from snow, while the defiles are rendered dangerous and difficult by the rush of the melting snow torrents. From the Chichiklik plain we proceeded down the Shindi ravine, over an extremely bad stony road, to the Sirikol river, up the banks of which we travelled to Táshkurgán, reaching it on the tenth day from Yangi Hissár. The total distance is one hundred and twenty-five miles.

After leaving the Káshghar plain we met with Kirghiz every day, and always found their felt tents prepared for our accommodation at each halting place, till within two days of Táshkurgán, when we entered the inhabited part of the Sirikol valley. The Kirghiz tents, having roof openings, admit of fires inside, and were thus infinitely more comfortable than our own in winter weather.

The open part of the Sirikol valley extends from about eight miles below Táshkurgán to apparently a very considerable distance towards the Kunjút mountain range. Its average breadth is about three miles. Cultivation is confined chiefly to the western slopes and is the work entirely of the Tájik inhabitants, who occupy a length of about twelve miles of the valley in the immediate vicinity of the fort. The centre of the valley, through which the river flows, is used as a pasture ground, and gives rich and abundant grazing. The hamlets are at present in a wretched looking state, the houses having fallen to ruin during the late wholesale banishment of the population to Káshghar.

The ancient name of Táshkurgán is Várshídi. The ruins show it to have been of square or rectangular form, with projecting towers, and built of rough unhewn stone. It does not appear to be of great antiquity, or very remarkable in any way.

The Sirikolis are Shíah Muhammadans. They say that they have been in the valley for seven generations, as a distinct people, with a Chief of their own, and are the descendants of wanderers who came from all quarters; from Badakhshán, Wakhán, Shighnán, Hindostán, Kunjút and Túrkestán. Hence, as my informant (Dáda Ali Shah, a Sirikoli Múllah,) said, "The language peculiar to us is a mixture of what is spoken in all these countries." Persian however is also spoken by them all. The men differ from the Kirghiz, Ozbegs, and inhabitants of Eastern Túrkestán in having regular features and full beards. Their salutation of respect is made with the hand to the forehead, and not with the arms crossed in front, as among the Túrks. Dáda Ali Shah told me that the towers still standing in most of the hamlets were built for refuge and defence in the slave hunting raids, from which they had suffered cruelly for many years, and that he himself had witnessed no less than twenty of these attacks, which have entirely ceased since the establishment of the Atálik's rule.

The valley is 10,250 feet above the sea. The cultivation consists mainly of beardless barley, beans, peas, carrots, and turnips. The domestic animals are camels, yaks, ponies, cattle, sheep and goats. The yaks are smaller than the Thibetan species. A murrain carried off nearly all the oxen and cows a year ago, and fresh cattle are now being obtained from the plains and lower hills. Willows grow thickly by the streams, and poplars appear in sheltered spots close to the hamlets. The valley extends to a great distance above the Fort, the river (variously called Tághdúngbásh, Táshkurgán, Sirikol, Tisnáf and Yárkand,) which flows through it, taking its rise in the Tághdúngbásh Pámír and Kunjút range. Kirghiz occupy