

in a westerly direction to the foot of the Neza Táš Pass. After leaving the Sirikol valley, we entered the Shindán defile, through which a stream flows into the Sirikol river. The defile at several places is extremely narrow, with precipitous rocks towering high above it. The road through is particularly bad for about three miles. Passage is difficult in the beginning of summer when the stream rises from the snow meltings. The following day we crossed the pass (15,000 feet) and reached the Áktáš valley (12,700 feet). The pass is easy of ascent and descent, but the very heavy snow lying on it made the day's work a trying one to the baggage horses. We were joined at this day's camp by a party of Sirikolis, with ponies and yaks, carrying supplies sent by Hussun Shah to accompany us to Wakhán. On the third day we proceeded south up the Aktash valley to its head, where it merges into the Little Pámír, extending east and west; the appearance being that of the same valley making a sweeping curve from east to north. We followed up the Áktáš stream (called Áksú by the Kirghiz) through the Little Pámír to the Gházkúl lake, from which it takes its rise.

We reached the Little Pámír lake (the Gházkul) on the fourth day from Táškurgán, marching forty-five miles on that and the previous day. Almost the entire distance was done through deep snow, with a freezing wind from the front, cutting the face, and inflaming the eyes, in a painful manner. On the first of these two days our difficulties were increased by the track being lost in the snow, our progress being thus considerably delayed.

The Áktáš valley runs in a northerly direction from the Little Pámír across the eastern openings of the Great and Alichor Pámírs, and sweeps into the Siríz Pámír at Ákbálik, the junction of the Áksú with the Múrháb. Its length is said to be about sixty miles, and its average breadth, judging from the twenty miles extent, over which we travelled, is about three miles. It is a pasture resort of the Kizil-Art Kirghiz.

The Little Pámír is similar in character to the Áktáš valley, and of about the same breadth. It has the same grassy downs, slopes, and flats. It is bounded on the south by the continuation of the Neza Táš range, which separates it from the Tághdúngbáš Pámír. The range here appears to sink considerably in height. A broad chain of rounded hills lies between it and the Great Pámír. These hills are low towards the Áktáš valley, and rise gradually towards the lake. The lake is about three miles long, and a little less than a mile broad. We found it and the stream flowing from it entirely frozen. The undulating surface of the ice on the lake showed it to be frozen right through to the bottom, and indicated shallowness. It appeared to be deeper at the western end. The height of the lake is 13,000 feet and the hills on both sides rise some 2,000 feet higher, those to the south being completely covered with deep snow. Extensive glaciers and snow beds lie near the western end. The name "Barkat Yássín," applied to the lake by some native travellers, is properly that of a rocky ravine near its head, "Burgút Yursi," "the eagles' place or nest." The "r" in "Yursi" is dropped in the pronunciation as is common in many Túrki words. Our further journey lay west past the lake. At about half a mile from its head, a water-course filled with ice, appeared leading west down the valley. Six miles lower down, we came upon the ruins of Kirghiz mud huts and a burial-ground. A stream from the eastern Tághdúngbáš Pámír joins the Little Pámír affluent of the Oxus here. The valley closes in at a distance of ten miles below the lake, and the Little Pámír may be said to terminate there. The stream then runs in a deep set course, between steep banks, which rise up to the long mountain slopes along which, by the right bank, the road leads to Langar, twenty-five miles from the lake. A deserted village and traces of cultivation were observed at Langar, and yaks and cattle were seen grazing on the opposite side of the stream. A stream of considerable size joins there from the south-east.

From Langar the road continues in a general westerly direction along the stream to Sarhadd thirty miles. In the depth of winter the frozen surface of the river makes passage up and down easy. We found the ice beginning to break up here and there, and our path had to be sought across and back, over the rocky bed and up and down the high steep banks, making the journey tedious and severe to a degree. In summer the swelling of the stream makes this road extremely difficult, and it is then that the Great Pámír route is followed in preference.

*Oi-kard on map*

*(woods)*