

We left the last fire-wood at the mouth of the ravine leading from the Neza-Tásh pass to the Áktásh valley. Up to that willow and myricaria are found. No wood of any kind grows on the Pámírs, but the Thibetian "burtzi," a small prickly shrub with woody roots, forming a good substitute for bush fuel, is found in abundance over them. Twenty-five miles below the Little Pámír lake, birch, willow and gigantic juniper appear in thick clumps, and fire-wood is plentiful from that downwards to Wakhán and Badakshán.

The valley opens out about a mile above Sarhadd and remains more or less wide to Kila Panj, and beyond. Habitation and cultivation commence at Sarhadd and continue down the valley, with large tracts of dense low thorn and willow jungle and pasture flats intervening between the villages.

A letter of welcome from Futteh Ali Shah, the Mír of Wakhán, was received at Langar, and we were met at Sarhadd by Ali Murdán Shah, the Mír's eldest son, sent to receive us, and escort us to his father's fort residence, Kila Panj. The son is very fond of field sports, and was accompanied by a number of men with his hawks and dogs. Among the dogs were a pair of ibex hounds, two spaniels from Koláb and a terrier nondescript from Chitrál, it was said, but looking uncommonly like an importation from the vicinity of the British Infantry barracks at Peshawár. The ibex hounds are said to run the ibex to a stand-still from paralysing alarm, when they are generally easily shot. Resaidar Muhammad Afzul Khán rejoined us at Sarhadd. He reached Kila Panj on the 2nd April, travelling in fourteen days from Yangi Hissár.

We reached Sarhadd on the seventh day from Sirikól, and Kila Panj on the twelfth. We were compelled by the extreme severity of the weather to make short marches the first three days from Sarhadd. A violent and blinding snow storm met us each day on the march, accompanied by a wind so intense in its coldness, as to freeze the driven snow flakes on our faces. On the fourth day we encamped at Zong, a large village on the right bank of the Oxus, immediately below the junction of the Great and Little Pámír affluents.

The majority of the inhabitants of the villages from Sarhadd to Bába Tangi, thirty-three miles down the valley, migrate with their flocks and herds in summer to extensive grazing grounds at the Baróghil, and other passes leading into Chitrál. A few people remain in each village to attend to the growing crops, which are harvested on the return from the summer pasture lands. The inhabitants of the lower part of the Sarhadd valley, Zong, Langar-Kisht and Kila Panj, similarly resort to the hills in their neighbourhood. The flocks and herds consist of sheep, goats, cattle and yaks. Most of the horses in the country are obtained from Badakshán and Kattaghán; they are small, well bred, and hardy.

The people as a rule are very poor. They appear avaricious and particularly fond of money. The Mír himself showed the same disposition, and is moreover extremely miserly in his habits. The snow storms which prevailed during our first five days in Sarhadd drove us sometimes to seek shelter in the houses of the villagers, where we had several opportunities of observing their domestic life. The houses are flat-roofed, and built of stone and mud. The outer enclosed rooms are used as stables for horses and cattle. The family occupy one large centre room, which has a large opening in the roof immediately above an oven-like fire-place, sunk in the middle. On the four sides round this room are raised platform sleeping places, one of which is partly enclosed and allotted to the women and children. The men are warlike, hardy, and enduring. They do all the field work, the women being chiefly occupied about the house. The women do not veil, and appear to have more control in the household than is usually the case in the East. We observed the same in this respect among the Kirghiz. Whenever money was given as a present in return for shelter, the female head of the house was generally called to receive it. The men are all given to field sports, and appear fond of arms. Every house showed the arms of its male occupants slung on the walls of the inner rooms. The Wakhis as a people are good looking; many faces were seen of an extreme regularity of feature. Fair hair is not uncommon. They all speak Persian in addition to their own peculiar dialect. They describe themselves as descended from wanderers who assembled and settled in Wakhán, from all quarters.