

We reached Kila Panj on the 13th of April. Mír Futteh Ali Shah rode out to meet us, and conducted us to our camp, which was pitched on an open plain in the close vicinity of his fort. He is an old man, of tall form and good face, but feeble from age and infirmity. He welcomed us to Wakhán, and expressed himself in the usual oriental complimentary terms as happy to see us at Kila Panj.

Kila Panj is on the left bank of the Oxus (or the Panja as it is there called), about six miles below the junction of the two Pámír streams. The place is so named from five forts which stand together. Only two however can properly be styled forts, even according to local notions; the other three being merely towers planted on high up-standing rocks and hillocks in their vicinity. The principal fort is occupied by the Mír. It is an irregular building of stone and mud, with high walls, and many towers, situated on an eminence close to the river. We found the river about sixty yards broad and easily fordable; when in flood it is crossed by means of inflated skin rafts.

We paid a visit to the Mír in his fort in the evening. We were received in a centre room, with a roof opening, and spaces on the four sides, similar in style to the village houses, but larger and higher. The entrance was, as with them, through the stables. The Mír received us attended by many of his people. There was no attempt at display of any kind, the Mír being dressed in the plainest manner possible, his people likewise, and the room comfortless in the extreme. Everything was rough except manners, which were exceptionally good. We observed what we had seen before with the "Mír-Záda" (Ali Murdán Shah), respect paid by kissing the hand; the people kissing the Mír's hand on arrival, on departure, and on receiving an order.

We remained thirteen days at Kila Panj. The weather was very severe most of that time. Snow fell on six days, and an intensely cold wind blew regularly till within three days of our departure. Wood speaks in his book of the withering blast of the "bád-i-Wakhán" (wind of Wakhán). It prevailed during a great part of our stay at Panja, and only ceased occasionally, to be followed by an equally chilling wind from the opposite direction, Badakhshán. These winds swept across the open plain on which we were encamped, with such a cutting violence, that our horses and baggage ponies were as much starved by the cold as by scarcity of fodder.

Our party was a large one, amounting with our sepoy guard of five men of the Guide Corps, and a similar number of Káshgharis, to forty-eight men and seventy-two horses. We arrived at the most unfavorable time for supplies. Most of the excess, above the wants of the inhabitants, being sold in the end of the summer and during the autumn, to the merchants who pass with their "káfilas" in those seasons, the matter of our daily supplies and a sufficiency to take us back over the Pámír was one of great difficulty.

Wheat (beardless), barley, beans, and peas are the principal crops in Wakhán. Melons and apricots ripen at Zong, the large village previously mentioned, above Kila Panj. The climate of the Sarhadd district, extending thirty-five miles down from the first village at the head of the valley, is too cold for wheat.

The only timber grown is the white poplar, and that, by reason of the violent wind of the country, requires a sheltered position. Stunted red willow and other bushes are plentiful in the sandy stretches by the river.

There appears to be little or no mineral wealth in Wakhán. Iron is procured from Badakhshán. We could not get sufficient even to make the necessary horse shoes for our animals, and had to give our iron tent pegs to the smiths to be so worked up.

The present trade between Eastern and Western Túrkhistán is very limited. It consists chiefly of "churrus" (intoxicating drug) and cotton cloth of Khoten manufacture from the former, and of horses, indigo, kincob, and sundries from the latter. The indigo and kincob are obtained from India. The Mír of Wakhán levies transit dues at a uniform rate of one Muhammadshahi rupee (equal to one rupee and three annas of Indian money) per horse-load, irrespective of value. No dues are levied at Sirikol, this being done on the goods reaching their destination.