

"For twelve days the course is along this elevated plain, which is called Pámír."—*Marco Polo*.

"The hills and mountains that encircle Lake Sirikól* give rise to some of the principal rivers in Asia. From a ridge at its east end flows a branch of the Yárkand river, one of the largest streams that water China, while from its low hills on the northern side rises the Sirr or river of Khokand, and from the snowy chain opposite both forks of the Oxus as well as a branch of the River Kúnúr are supplied."—*Wood*.

In the last extract, I see how an excellent, careful, and reliable observer like Wood falls into error directly he trusts to what he *hears*; and I must say that from my own experience I have little confidence in geographical information extracted from the inhabitants of Central Asia, unless from trained and educated men who are accustomed to take notes of what they see. I feel it incumbent on me therefore to discriminate clearly between what I have *seen*, and what I have *heard*, and with that end in view I propose first briefly describing that portion of the country which has actually come under my notice. I may then perhaps hazard a few remarks on what I have heard.

We started from Káshghar on our journey to Panjah on the 17th March, reaching Yangí-Hissár (36 miles to the south) on the following day. Halting a couple of days to make preparations for our journey, we left on the 21st, starting by the same route by which the "Mirza" went to Káshghar from Cabul in 1868-69. Our first march was to Ighiz-yár, eighteen miles; crossing the low broken sand hills that ran down to Yangí-Hissár from the mountains on the west, we followed for about three miles the direct road to Yárkand; then crossing the Yangí-Hissár stream at Karabash village we passed in a southerly direction for five miles, over a flat salt waste, to the large but scattered village of Sugat, which it took us nearly half an hour to traverse. On the sandy tract a number of people were digging and collecting a very inferior kind of fire-wood, which is carried off on donkeys to Yangí-Hissár, where fuel is very scarce and dear. From Sugat none of the large mountains on the west were visible on account of the haze; the ridges before mentioned, and another low sandy ridge running parallel to, and on the other side of the Yárkand road, were all that could be seen. Sugat is situated on a slope, and our road lay up the bed of a water-course, one of many coming from the Kinkol stream, whose banks we were about to follow for several days' journey. When we passed there was but little water in the stream, and what little came was eagerly swallowed up by the thirsty soil. The villagers, on the approach of spring, were commencing to plough their lands. As the summer advances the heat increases, and with it the water-supply from the melting snow, which comes at the time when most wanted by the husbandmen for their early crops. I was informed that in summer a very small quantity of water trickles from the irrigation canals through a large ravine (which, surrounded by much broken ground, is formed at the foot of the Sugat village) and joins the Yangí-Hissár river. The chief source of supply of the river is from a number of springs situated about six miles west by south of the town from which it derives its name. I visited them the day we halted at Yangí-Hissár on our journey to Káshghar; they are surrounded by several villages, Kargoi, Kona† and Yangí Sálip, and others. At Kona Sálip the bed of the river is dry, and is formed by numerous short ravines meeting there. A little lower down, at Kargoi, the banks are fifty feet deep, and a considerable quantity of water bubbles out of the ground; fresh springs issue for a considerable way down the river, so that by the time it passes south of Yangí-Hissár there is a considerable body of water in the stream, whose bulk is also augmented by drainage from canals supplied from the River Kusán which is said to rise in the Kizil Art mountains in the neighbourhood of Tagharma Peak. The temperature of the canals from this stream was 42°, while that of the river (from the springs) was 47°. The Yangí-Hissár river, after receiving accession to its waters from the Kusán, flows eastward, and is said to lose itself in the desert near the villages of Keltarim and Chakar. The river shortly after its issue from the mountains divides into four artificial branches or canals, the Pasín, the Párách (or Kusán river), the Sailik,

* Wood's "Victoria Lake."

† In Turki *Kona* means *old*, and *Yangi* means *new*.