

and in a somewhat central position on its east edge, I would place the lake of Kichik Karakul,* about three short days' march north of Táškurghán. Further north again, south of the Kizil, Art Pass, is the larger Lake Karakul, from which a stream is said to flow westward into the Manghábi river. I have shown in my map, what I consider the approximate positions of the various lakes and mountain ranges in those regions, but I of course cannot guarantee the accuracy of anything off our own line of march.

The Tagharma plain presented a very lively spectacle: fully 100 Kirghiz akooes were within view, scattered about in different parts of the valley; their tenants, of the Sark or Syok tribe, being subjects of the Amír of Káshghar. Open, grassy, well watered, and speckled all over with camels, yaks, horses, sheep, and goats it formed a pleasant sight after the wilds through which we had been wandering, and was a striking contrast to the Táškurghan valley, which looked by comparison a picture of desolation, owing to the numerous uninhabited villages and tumble down houses with which it is covered. The water from the warm springs which issue in numerous places from the earth, causes the young green grass to rise (in April) in great profusion.

Formerly in the south-east portion of the Tagharma valley, at Kila-i-Tagharma or Besh Kurghan (the five forts) there were about 50 houses inhabited by Tájiks, under Sarikól. Their history has been a sad one. I got into conversation there with an old man, who told me that nearly each fort had its history. In the principal one, some thirty years ago, resided Mahomed Alum, the Hakim of Sarikól. He was attacked by a number of Andijánís from the north, himself and many of his followers killed, and the remainder carried into slavery; my informant with only one or two others escaping into the neighbouring hills. At the fort where I was standing, fifteen years later, the Kanjudis had made a raid from the south, and had killed or carried into slavery the whole of the inhabitants. Two young men standing by me had been carried off in this very raid as children, and sold as slaves in Yárkand, where they had been released shortly after the accession of the Atálik to power, but they had only within the last month been allowed to return to their homes, where four Tajik families now represent the fifty that had formerly lived there. They were doing their best, with the help of some of the neighbouring Kirghiz, to put their fields into order, and I there saw, for the first time in my travels, the yák yoked to the plough. There is much culturable ground, and it is to be hoped that this recommencement of cultivation on a small scale is only the prelude to a larger.

In the time of the Chinese rule, such was the insecurity in these parts, that the inhabitants of Sarikol dared not wander far from their villages, for fear of being seized and carried off either by the Kirghiz from the Alai, or by their neighbours of Kanjud; *now* they tell me that if a man drops his *whip* in the middle of the plain, he will find it there if he looks for it a year afterwards. This is a favourite saying amongst the people of Eastern Turkestan, which I have heard more than once employed to describe the sense of security enjoyed under the present régime.

On our return to Yárkand we passed along the south edge of the Tagharma plain. The direct distance from Táškurghán to the foot of the Darschatt ravine leading to the Kok Mainák Pass is about twelve miles; thence to the pass itself (15,800 feet) is six miles, by a very difficult and stony road. The pass is four miles from the small lakes on the Chichiklik plain.

The fort of Táškurghán, said to be of very ancient date, and to have been founded by Afrasiab, the King of Turan, has been described by former travellers who had a better opportunity for inspecting it than we had. The "Takhsobai," or Governor, evinced so great a disinclination to receive our visit there, that we had to content ourselves with inspecting it from a distance. The part at present inhabited is apparently of modern construction, and built of

* The waters from this lake are said to form the Yamunyar River, which flowing through the Chakar Ághil defile eastward, under the name of Gez River, enters the plains under the name of Yamunyar, and, as before mentioned, divides into several branches near the villages of Tashbalig and Opal and irrigates a great portion of the country south of Kashghar.