

stones and mud, but there were in places remains of "roughed" stone facings on the sides of the rock on which the fort is built. In its neighbourhood are numerous fragments of broken wall, but I could not recognize any continuous line marking out its former limits. Taking a hint from Sir Henry Rawlinson's writings, I kept on the look-out for Buddhist remains, but could see nothing. The Pandit (who accompanied us as far as Sarikól), seemed to think that the custom which prevails throughout the whole country between Turkestan and Wakhán of heaping up skulls and horns of sheep and wild animals at the different zírats or tombs, was a relic of ancient Buddhism. I believe that the custom is common throughout the whole of Central Asia. It certainly is so in Ladákh and Eastern Turkestan.

From Tashkúrghán to Panjah there are two roads commonly used by merchants; the first, over the little Pámir, was followed by us on the outward journey, is generally used in winter; the second is over the great Pámir and is used in summer. The latter is the easier road, but passes over much higher ground than the former and is impassable for caravans in winter, on account of the deep snow lying on it. A third alternative road is by the Tághdumbásh Pámir* at the head of the Sarikol valley. It lies high, and in midwinter is deep in snow: in former years it was much used by the Bajaori † merchants, who used to go from Bádákhshán to Yárkand by the Taghdumbash and Tung valley roads, thus keeping at the greatest possible distance from the Alai Kirghiz, whom they seem to have feared more than they did the Kunjúdis.

On the Great and Little Pámir routes the first two marches, *i.e.*, to the west foot of the Neza Tash or Shindi Pass, are common to both lines of road, which meet again opposite the village of *Zang* at the junction of the two large streams which form the Panjah River, the most southerly branch of the Oxus.

Leaving Táshkurghán on the 2nd April, our road lay nearly due west for four miles, up a stream which issues from the Shindi mountains through a narrow and difficult defile. ‡ The water, which even thus early in the season flows in considerable quantity, combines with the rocky nature of the bed of the river, which has to be crossed and recrossed in numerous places, to make the road exceedingly difficult for laden horses. After passing four miles up the defile we reached a camping ground called Jangalik situated in a well wooded open valley, about two miles long by half a mile broad. It is often used as a halting-place by travellers, but we continued up the valley to Kanshubar, a march altogether of 16 miles. Shortly before reaching camp we passed numerous hot springs. We pushed on the next day in a south-west direction until we reached the foot of the Neza Tash Diwan, where we turned westward, and passing over a low spur continued our way up the valley, entering a large basin with lofty mountains towering above us on both sides, very bold and precipitous, and of a very peculiar and striking ferruginous colour. § A stiff pull through the snow to the top of the pass (14,915 feet above the sea level), and we were standing on the water-shed between Eastern and Western Turkestan.

I had been given to understand that we should here come in view of the "Pámirs" and was somewhat surprised at seeing in front of me nothing but a long range of low red colored hills about ten miles distant, a portion of which to the right was pointed out to me as the Great Pámir, and another on the left as the little Pámir. Nothing was visible but an irregular mass of hills whose serrated tips did not appear to rise more than 1,000 feet above the Pass on which I was standing. In front lay a large valley running in a northerly direction which subsequently turned out to be that of the Aksu River, the principal source, as now appears of the Oxus ||. The apparent continuity of the range in front of us was, as we shall hereafter see, a delusion; the hills really form the ends of broad transverse ranges, running in a westerly

* It is said that Alif Beg fled from Sarikol by this route.

† The district of Bajaor or Bajaur lies to the west of Swat, and its inhabitants are well known as enterprising traders.

‡ The rocks forming this defile were composed of gneiss.

§ These mountains, Dr. Stoliczka informed me, were composed of triassic limestone.

|| Which name is perhaps derived, as Venoikof suggests, from Ak-sú.