

between the Shighnis, the Wakhis, the Kirghiz of the Alai, and the Kanjudis, having rendered the country quite unsafe. The highest inhabited village in the northern valley is Langar Kisht, only a few miles above the junction, and on the right bank of the stream. The Sarhadd valley (the southern branch) is inhabited from Sarhadd downwards, and there are villages scattered along both banks of the Panjah river down to Ishkashim. Wakhán formerly contained three "sads" or hundreds, *i.e.*, districts, containing 100 houses each—

1st.—Sad-i-Kila Vost or Sarhadd extending from Langar to Hissar.

2nd.—Sad Sipanj* from Hissar to Khandut.

3rd.—Sad Khandut from Khandut to Sad Ishtragh.

To these three Sads has recently been added that of Sad Ishtragh, which I believe only became a portion of Wakhan in recent times. It lies between Khandut and the State of Ishkashim.† Abdúl Subhán estimates the number of houses in Sad Ishtragh at 250, and allowing 100 for each of the other districts this gives a total of 550 houses, with a population of about 3,000 souls.

The Oxus below Wakhán.

I have now to deal with one of the most interesting geographical problems of the day, *viz.*, the probable course of the Oxus or Panjah from the point where it leaves Wakhán to where it emerges in the plains north of Said village on the frontiers of Koláb, where it has been seen and described by our countryman, Lieutenant Wood. My assistant, Abdúl Subhán, left us at Kila Panjah (the most westerly point reached by the European members of the Mission), and followed the course of the Oxus through Wakhán for 63 miles to Ishkashim, thence turning northwards he followed the same river for nearly a hundred miles, passing successively through the districts of Gháran, Shighnán, and Roshán, countries which have hitherto been known to us hardly even by name. From his report I have obtained the information following.

The small State of Ishkashim forms, together with Zebák, one of the numerous petty feudal States tributary to Badakhshán. The present ruler of both these small districts is Sháh Abdul Rahim, a Syud of Khorassan, who was placed in power by Muhammad Alum Khan, the present Governor of Balkh. It is said that the hereditary Chief of the country, Mir Hak Nazar, was ejected in order to make room for Abdul Rahim. The present territory of Ishkashim extends for about 16 miles to the north of the village of the same name, which now contains about forty houses, and consists, as is generally the case in those parts, of numerous scattered farm houses. There are small villages throughout this district on both banks of the Oxus; Sumchún and two others on the right bank, and Yákh-duru and Sar-i-Shakh on the left. These belonged to Sad Ishtragh, which was once a separate principality, but is now a district of Wakhán.

The road from Ishkashim runs along the left bank of the river up to six miles beyond Sar-i-Shakh, where the river is crossed by an easy ford. In the month of May the water flowed in a single stream, which was $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep and about 200 yards in width. In summer it is impossible to cross the river at this point, and a very difficult path leading along the left bank is followed. Down to this point the valley is open, four or five miles in breadth and richly cultivated. The ford marks the boundary between Ishkashim and the district of *Kucheh Gharan* or "narrow caves," which has been for centuries famous for its ruby mines.

The Gháran country extends along both banks of the Oxus for about twenty-four miles, and was once upon a time rich, flourishing, and populous. Remains of large villages exist on both banks, and bear witness to the oppression that has been exercised by successive Governors of Badakhshán. The fields near these deserted villages are now cultivated by the inhabitants of the neighbouring districts of Rágh (the chief town of which is Kila Masnúj) and Sar Gholám‡ which are at a distance of a long day's journey on the further side of a range of hills, running parallel to and on the left bank of the river. *Barshár*

* Sad-i-Panjah.

† Written in the vernacular Shikashem.

‡ Subordinate to Badakhshán.

*Ishkashim
State*

Gharan