Start for Yurung-kāsh sources.

After the surveyor had rejoined me towards the end of July, I dispatched my heavy convoy of antiques to the foot of the Kara-koram passes and started myself with Lāl Singh on my long-planned expedition to the sources of the Yurung-kāsh river. My previous explorations in the Karanghu-tāgh region had shown that the furthest headwaters of the river were quite inaccessible through the narrow and deep gorges in which it has cut its way westwards past the massif of 'Muz-tāgh' (Pk. 1/61 A, 23,890 ft.). My fresh effort was therefore to be made from the east where that unexplored mountain region adjoins the extreme north-west of the high Tibetan plateaus.

Ascent above Pōlur.

We reached the latter by ascending the very confined gorges above Pōlur and by crossing the northern main range of the K'un-lun to the Seghiz-köl lake.[68] A two days' halt here enabled Lāl Singh to effect some supplementary triangulation based on peaks first fixed by Captain Deasy. Fortune secured the guidance of a hunter of wild yaks, and this enabled us by proceeding thence westwards to discover the deep-cut valley of Zailik, draining into the Yurung-kāsh. It had remained unknown to previous explorers, though its extensive old gold-pits, now almost deserted, must have been worked for many years.[69]

Discovery of Zailik valley.

The Zailik valley proved of great value for our survey work. In spite of its extremely confined nature it became possible to ascend from it several spurs falling steeply from the main range on the north and thus to map a considerable portion of the grand and wild mountain system containing the unexplored headwaters of the Yurung-kāsh. On the magnificent snowy range which flanks them on the south, visible from these hill stations for a distance of over 60 miles, a number of glacier-clad peaks rising to more than 21,000 feet could be sighted.[70]

Exploration of uppermost Yurung-kāsh.

By collecting from among the little groups of miners still toiling in this gloomy gorge of Zailik a small number of carriers for the transport of instruments and a minimum of baggage we managed to push our way into the main valley of the Yurung-kāsh and to follow it upwards over a succession of high side spurs. Above one of the passes crossed, the Mandār-köl-dawān, an excellent hill-station was climbed at an elevation of 18,612 feet and fixed by triangulation. Finally after seven trying marches from Zailik we penetrated through the extremely confined gorge of the main river to the great glacier-bound basin, about 16,000 feet high at its bottom, where its easternmost and largest branch takes its rise.[71]

Passage to Keriya R. sources.

After thus tracing the river to its ice-bound head, we turned eastwards and having by September 3rd picked up near the Ulūgh-köl our depot of spare transport and supplies, crossed the southern main range of the K'un-lun by the Bāba-Hātim pass (17,584 feet). Thence for three marches we followed the Pōlur–Lanak-lā route to the south-west.[72] It led us to the bleak plateau, over 17,000 feet in height, where the Keriya river gathers its sources at the foot of a line of glaciers. Our survey proved these to descend from the same ice-clad range which encloses the head basin of the Yurung-kāsh sources from the east.[73] From the watershed at the head of the Keriya river sources we moved westwards to survey the ground which in our atlases has generally figured as a high plain with the name of *Ak-sai-chin* but which the provisional issue of the Survey of India's 1 : 1,000,000 map for this area rightly showed as a blank.

Instead of a plain we found there high snowy spurs separated by broad valleys, and

[68] For the route to Pōlur village, see Sheet No. 14. A. 2, 3, B. 3, 4, C. 4; for that across the range Nos. 14. C, D. 4; 15. C, D. 1. Cf. *Desert Cathay*, ii. pp. 440 sqq.

[69] See Sheet No. 15. C. 1; *Desert Cathay*, ii. pp. 444 sqq.

[70] See Sheet No. 15. A, B. 1, 2; *Desert Cathay*, ii. pp. 446 sqq.

[71] See Sheet No. 15. C. 1; *Desert Cathay*, ii. pp. 449 sqq., Panorama XII; Fig. 324, 327-330.

[72] See Sheet No. 15. D. 1, 2; *Desert Cathay*, ii. pp. 456 sqq. The triangulated stations and points shown by Sheet No. 15 along the portion of the Pōlur-Lanak-lā route here followed, with the exception of those on and beyond the snowy range enclosing the Yurung-kāsh sources from the south, are taken from Captain Deasy's work.

[73] See Sheet No. 15. D. 2; *Desert Cathay*, ii. pp. 457 sq.