

a route leads to the high Yulduz plateau.⁸³ From Kuchā he proceeded again northwards and keeping throughout along the line of the highest localities with cultivation, many of them never surveyed before, made his way to where the Muz-art river debouches from the mountains into the basin-like district of Bai. He then ascended the river to its headwaters below the ice-clad T'ien-shan in the vicinity of the great Tengri-khān peak. Notwithstanding the heavy winter snow still covering the glacier approach to the Muz-art-dawān he pushed up to within about a thousand feet of the top of the pass; the summit of it was quite impracticable at this early season.⁸⁴ When coming to meet me at Ak-su he had to follow the route already surveyed in 1907, none other being available.

I myself after visiting a number of interesting Buddhist sites in the district of Bai away from the high road which crosses it, reached the 'Old Town' of Ak-su on May 17th. At Kara-yulghun, two marches to the east, Afrāz-gul had rejoined me. From Kuchā he surveyed an old and more direct track through the scrub-covered desert belt along the foot of the barren hill range fringing the Bai basin.⁸⁵ During my two days' halt at Ak-su I was able to secure the needful official help and the guidance which enabled Lāl Singh to proceed to Kāshgar by a new route leading over ground almost wholly unsurveyed. It took him through and along the utterly arid hill ranges which form the southern and outermost rampart of the T'ien-shan, first to the small oasis of Kelpin and then past the Kirghiz winter grazing grounds of Kara-jol to Kalta-yailak, the north-eastern outpost of Kāshgar cultivation.⁸⁶

I myself was obliged to proceed to Kāshgar by forced marches in order to secure adequate time for manifold and urgent labours, and had hence necessarily to follow the main road *via* Marāl-bāshi. My regret at this necessity was tempered by the fact that this journey of close on 300 miles covered in eleven days made it possible to complete our survey of the northern main trade route of the Tārīm basin right through to its western terminus.⁸⁷

I reached Kāshgar on May 31st and was during the following five weeks kept incessantly busy at the British Consulate General with the careful repacking of my collection of antiques (eighty heavy camel-loads in all) for dispatch to India; I had also to prepare for my own journey across the Russian Pāmīrs to Bokhāra territory and Persia. Within a week of my arrival I was rejoined by Lāl Singh and after a fortnight also by Muhammad Yakūb who had safely effected his long journey along the left bank of the Tārīm from west of the Inchike junction to above Ābād.⁸⁸

The inundations caused by the spring floods had considerably impeded his progress and confined his plane-table work, somewhat rough as was usually the case when carried on by him independently, to the close vicinity of the track followed from one riverine shepherd station to another. The defects inherent to a plane-table traverse of such length from the accumulation of errors in distance estimates, etc., could fortunately be checked by reference to previously surveyed route lines which crossed or touched this traverse at a number of points between Shahyār and Merket. During the remaining weeks of my stay at Kāshgar the surveyors were kept fully occupied by the preparation of tracings from the many plane-table sheets (157 in all) which our combined surveys had yielded.

The completion of all my arrangements allowed me by July 6, 1915, to leave Kāshgar

⁸³ See Sheet No. 20. A. 4; for Lāl Singh's route from Korla to Kuchā, see Sheets Nos. 21. A-D. 1; 17. C, D. 1.

⁸⁴ See Sheet No. 11. A, B. 4. Lāl Singh's route from Kuchā to the Muz-art river is shown by Sheets Nos. 17. A, B. 1; 16. A, B. 4; 12. B-D. 1.

⁸⁵ For Afrāz-gul's route, see Sheets Nos. 17. A. 1, 2; 12. B-D. 2; for my own between Kuchā and Ak-su, see Sheets Nos. 17. A, B. 1; 12. A, B. 2, C, D. 1; 7. D. 2.

⁸⁶ See Sheets Nos. 7. A, B. 4, C. 3, D. 2, 3; 4. B-D. 4; 5. A, B. 1.

⁸⁷ See Sheet No. 7. C. 3, 4, D. 2, 3; 8. A, B. 1; 5.

A. 2. B. 1, 2. C, D. 1.

I must regret that the rapidity of the journey and the difficulty about water at that advanced season rendered it impossible to search in the desert northward of the stages between Chilan and Chādir-köl (Sheet No. 7. B, C. 4) for remains of the line which the Chinese high road is likely to have followed in ancient times; cf. above p. 26.

⁸⁸ See Sheets Nos. 21. A-D. 2, 3; 17. A-D. 2, 3; 12. A. 4, B. 3, 4, C. 3, D. 3; 7. D. 4; 8. A. 1, 2, B, C. 1; 5. D. 2, 3.