

expedition, led by that well-known geographer and traveller, Dr. R. Rickmers, had in 1929 chosen this grand alpine area for the scene of their systematic explorations and determined the height of Muz-tagh as exceeding that of Mount Kaufmann.

The direct route past the Muz-tagh massif would have led up the Muk-su and thence on to the valley by which the Zulum-art and Takhta-koram passes, giving access to the drainage areas of the Great Kara-kul lake and the Tanimaz river, are approached. But the floods fed by the huge Sel-dara or Fedchenko glacier, as it has been named after the Russian explorer who first saw it, completely close this route from springtime until the late autumn. So we were obliged to make our way over a pass, about 15,100 feet high, at the head of the Kayindi gorge. Ancient moraines completely blocked the latter in places and made the ascent very troublesome.

Beyond the Kayindi the ground assumed an easier Pamir-like character and on descending over a plateau an extensive panorama opened towards the Sel-dara and the valleys draining into it. Then we crossed the Takhta-koram pass at an elevation of over 15,000 feet after an easy ascent past some beautiful tarns of intense green. The necessity of securing fresh transport and a fresh guide for our further move now obliged me to seek contact with Kökan Beg (Fig. 137), the Ming-bashi or headman of the Kirghiz who graze eastwards about the Great Kara-hul lake. So next day, August 8, we crossed the Kizil-bel saddle to this summer encampment close on 14,000 feet above sea-level and were heartily welcomed by this fine old man. Decked with Imperial decorations and a gorgeous silver belt, he looked quite imposing.