

territory only by the narrow strip of Afghan soil on the left bank of the Ab-i-Panja, was brought home to me also in other ways. Thus when Sarbuland Khan, the Mingbashi or head of the Wakhis on the Russian side of the river, came to greet me on the way, I found that it was his son, settled in the Ashkuman valley controlled by the British Political Agent of Gilgit, who had been in charge of the party which two years before had helped me to cross the difficult Chillinji pass into Hunza.

It was a great satisfaction to find myself in Wakhan. Remote as this open valley of the main branch of the Oxus is, and poor in climate, and now also in population and resources, it has claimed importance since early times as the most direct thoroughfare from the fertile regions of ancient Bactria to the line of the oases along the southern rim of the Tarim basin and thus towards China. In May 1906 I had been able to follow only the uppermost course of the river from Sarhad to its source at the glaciers of the Wakhjir. Access to the main portion of Wakhan was barred to me on either side of the river. Now I was able to move down the big valley in a less hurried fashion and at what probably is the most favourable of its seasons.

After the bleak Pamirs it was refreshing to behold the verdant appearance which the cultivated portion of Wakhan during the first half of September presented, in spite of an elevation from 8000 to 10,000 feet above sea-level. Fortunately, too, I was spared the biting cold east winds which for the greatest part of the year make travel in Wakhan very trying. Crops of wheat and oats were just ripening on carefully irrigated terraces, and the little orchards in more sheltered nooks promised a modest harvest of fruit. Even