

CHAPTER I

FROM KASHMĪR TO THE PĀMĪRS

SECTION I.—THE GILGIT ROAD AND KĪṢANGAṅĀ VALLEY

KASHMĪR, where in 1898 the first plan of my explorations had been formed, and where two years later, in May 1900, I completed the practical preparations of my journey, was by reason of historical associations and geographical position alike a most appropriate starting-point for my archaeological enterprise. I may therefore fitly commence this detailed account of my antiquarian observations from the same ground.

Kashmīr,
the starting-
place.

The labours which I devoted during the preceding ten years to the elucidation of Kalhaṇa's *Chronicle of Kashmīr*, and the manifold historical researches necessitated by this task, had made me eagerly look out for whatever traces survived of ancient relations between Kashmīr and the Central-Asian regions lying beyond its great mountain barriers. The information to be gleaned from the sources accessible to me was scanty, even in regard to the tracts immediately adjoining Kashmīr, which were undoubtedly subject from early times to its cultural influence. But the results of the close study I bestowed on the ancient topography of Kashmīr, assured me of at least one interesting fact, which at the time of my start (May 31, 1900) appeared like an auspicious omen: there could be no doubt from the first that the route I was to follow through the mountains on leaving the Kashmīr Valley for the north had a claim to considerable antiquity and historical importance.

Practical advantages as well as geographical interests had made me decide for the route through Gilgit and Hunza, and over the Tāghdumbāsh Pāmīr, as the most suitable line of approach to Kāshgar, my immediate goal in Chinese Turkeṣtān. The 'Gilgit Transport Road', which I was authorized to use for the first portion of my journey, from Kashmīr to Gilgit, dates in its present form only from the years 1890-92, when the placing of an Imperial garrison in Gilgit and in the adjoining valleys leading towards the Eastern Hindukush necessitated the construction of a military road fit for laden transport during at least a portion of the year. But the route which it follows, between and over the high ranges separating the Kashmīr Valley from that of the Indus, is marked out by nature as the most accessible line of communication from Kashmīr to the Dard territories northward, and there is historical evidence to prove its use at an early period.

Antiquity of
the 'Gilgit
Road'.

In the *Memoir on the Ancient Geography of Kashmīr*, accompanying my annotated translation of Kalhaṇa's *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, I had occasion to point out the historical interest of the mountain routes leading from the north shore of the Volur Lake into the part of the Upper Kīṣangaṅā Valley which is known as Gurēz¹. Only through the valley of the Burzil stream, here joining the Kīṣangaṅā from the north, is it possible to gain the high passes which cross the snowy watershed between the Kīṣangaṅā and the Indus and give access to Astōr and thence to the other Dard Valleys. The Kīṣangaṅā itself, though draining an extensive mountain area, flows

Routes
into the
Kīṣangaṅā
Valley.

¹ Kalhaṇa's *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, translated, with an Introduction, Commentary, and Appendices, by M. A. Stein,

London, 1900, II. pp. 406 sqq.; also note on *Rājat.* vii. 1171.