

SECTION III.—THE CHINESE OCCUPATION OF GILGIT AND THE ROUTE TO KASHMĪR

Kao Hsien-chih's expedition into Yasin, 747 A. D.

The situation thus created obliged the Chinese Government to make special efforts for the recovery of their lost hold upon the Gilgit Valley. Three expeditions led against 'Little P'o-lü' by the Protector of 'the Four Garrisons' proved fruitless. But a fourth, entrusted in 747 A.D. by Imperial decree to his Deputy, Kao Hsien-chih, a general of Korean origin, was crowned with complete success. The military operations connected with this expedition deserve to be briefly considered here, in view both of the historical importance of the result and of their interest for the ancient topography of these regions¹.

Kao Hsien-chih was specially appointed by the Emperor Hsüan-tsung to take charge of the campaign against the Tibetans in Little P'o-lü, under the title of 'director of camps' with a force of ten thousand cavalry and infantry². Starting from An-hsi, the present Kuchā, he reached Su-lê or Kāshgar in thirty-five days, apparently via Maralbāshi. Twenty days later his force arrived at the military post of the Ts'ung-ling mountains, which occupied the position of the present Tāsh-kurghān in Sarīkol³. The march thence, through the valley of Po-mi or the Pāmīrs into Shighnān, called by the Chinese 'the kingdom of the five *Shih-ni*', occupied forty days.

His march across the Pāmīrs.

Kao Hsien-chih then divided his troops into three columns, which were to march by different routes to the attack of the fortress of Lien-yün held by the Tibetans. The localities by which the routes for two of these columns are indicated (*Pei-ku*, 'the northern gorge', and *Ch'ih-fo-t'ang*, 'the hall of the red Buddha') cannot be traced at present; but the route of the third column, under Kao Hsien-chih himself, which is described as leading through the kingdom of Hu-mi or Wakhān, undoubtedly lay up the valley of the Oxus. Lien-yün itself, where the several columns effected their junction on the appointed day, the thirteenth of the seventh month, had the river of P'o-lei or So-lei in front of its walls. M. Chavannes has shown good reason for assuming that this name designates the main branch of the Oxus now known as the Āb-i-Panja, and that Lien-yün occupied a position corresponding to the present village of Sarhad, but on the opposite or southern bank of the river. From Sarhad starts the well-known route which leads southwards over the Barōghil Pass to the headwaters of the Mastūj river, to this day representing the easiest line of access from the Upper Oxus to Chitrāl as well as to Gilgit.

The position of this locality also readily accounts for a concentration of the attacking forces from three different directions, such as the Chinese record indicates. Besides the main column ascending the Āb-i-Panja Valley from Kala Panja and the lower part of Wakhān, another might with advantage have co-operated from the opposite direction by descending from the headwaters of the Āb-i-Panja. These could be reached without serious difficulty from Tāsh-kurghān over the Tāghdumbāsh Pāmīr and the Wakhjīr Pass, or via the Naiza-tāsh Pass

¹ The details of Kao Hsien-chih's memorable march over the Pāmīrs and across the Hindukush are contained in his biography, which has been reproduced from the T'ang Annals and annotated by M. Chavannes in his *Turcs occid.*, pp. 152 sqq. The learned translator deserves special credit for having recognized that Kao Hsien-chih's route lay over the Barōghil and Darkōt Passes. He did not, however, attempt to identify the several localities mentioned along the route across, and

south of, the Hindukush. These, therefore, have required special discussion here.

² The biography notes particularly that 'at that period the foot-soldiers all kept horses (i.e. ponies) on their own account'. The use of these animals for the transport of food supplies must have increased the mobility of the Chinese force.

³ Compare *Turcs occid.*, p. 125; also below, pp. 28, 36.