

their position in Gilgit, and the relations maintained through it with such distant territories as Kashmīr, Kābul, and Udyāna¹⁵.

Supplies for
Gilgit
garrison.

The record just summarized is the last glimpse we obtain of Gilgit from Chinese sources. It is hence particularly gratifying to find so clear a reference to that great difficulty attending any military occupation of the Gilgit Valley, its dependence for supplies on Kashmīr. The situation there described as resulting from the presence of a Chinese garrison must, to those acquainted with the modern history of Gilgit, vividly recall the efforts and sacrifices which the maintenance of a military force from the Kashmīr side has entailed ever since the Sikhs, soon followed by the Dōgras, established their first footing in the Dard mountains across the Indus¹⁶. The Chinese record supplies us, in fact, with striking evidence how little the lapse of a thousand years and momentous political changes can affect the conditions of life and communication prevailing in these mountain regions, or the aspects of military activity which equally depend on unchanging geographical features.

Transport
of supplies
from
Kashmīr.

The difficulties which the letter of the T'u-ho-lo ruler so graphically represents, and of which the Tibetans were scheming to take advantage, are exactly those with which the Kashmīr rulers, and in more recent years the military authorities of the Indian Government, have had to contend in their occupation of Gilgit. Though the Dōgra force employed in Gilgit and on the line of communication leading to it, probably never much exceeded 3,000 men, their maintenance, being wholly dependent on food supplies brought from Kashmīr, involved a severe strain on the Mahārāja's resources, and often led to serious suffering and loss of life among his Kashmīrian subjects¹⁷. The very restricted area available for cultivation in the Gilgit Valley renders it practically impossible to feed a garrison on local produce; nor can surplus supplies be secured from any base nearer than Kashmīr. The barrenness of the mountain region which the route from Kashmīr traverses for a distance of over 200 miles would alone suffice to make the regular transport of supplies a matter of great difficulty; for whether pack animals or men are employed, the food needed by them in transit has likewise to be provided from Kashmīr. In addition, account must be taken of the natural obstacles presented by the two high ranges which have to be crossed *en route*, and the passes of which, owing to the heavy snowfall, rarely remain open for laden traffic during more than four months of each year.

The placing of a small Imperial garrison in Gilgit in 1890 was rapidly followed by the construction of the 'Gilgit Transport Road', with all the resources of modern European engineering, and by the introduction of systematic transport arrangements under the control of the Indian Commissariat Department¹⁸. These changes have made it possible to dispense altogether with human labour for transport purposes, and have greatly reduced the risk with which the use of this route, whether for the annual provisioning of Gilgit, or on occasion of

¹⁵ Compare for these diplomatic relations maintained during the first half of the eighth century, M. Chavannes' lucid exposition, *Turcs occid.*, pp. 295 sq.; as to the events connected with Kao Hsien-chih's defeat and the collapse of Chinese rule in Western Turkestan, *ibid.* pp. 297 sqq., also pp. 142 sqq.

¹⁶ An excellent sketch of the operations of the Sikhs and Dōgras which brought Gilgit and the adjoining Dard tracts into dependence on Kashmīr, and thus within the sphere of Indian political interests, is given, up to the year 1875, by Drew, *Jummoo and Kashmir Territories*, pp. 437 sqq. For the events which have since led the Indian government to assume a more direct share in the occupation of Gilgit and

the adjoining Dard valleys, and to extend its political control to the Hindukush watershed, publications on the Hunza (1891) and Chitrāl (1895) campaigns may be consulted.

¹⁷ For characteristic facts concerning the hardships which the requisitions of carriage for transport to Gilgit inflicted upon the village population of Kashmīr until the construction of the 'Gilgit Road,' compare Sir Walter Lawrence, *Valley of Kashmir*, p. 413.

¹⁸ As to the working of these arrangements and the curious manner in which they recall to the historical student certain features of the watch kept in ancient times over these mountain-routes of Kashmīr, compare my *Ruins of Khotan*, pp. 12 sq.