

The slight undulations of the ground, and the increasing frequency of terraced banks for fields told that we were nearing the foot of the Kun-lun. Is it possible that Karghalik owes its luxuriant trees to a climate rendered slightly less dry by remnants of monsoon moisture passing here across the mountains from Baltistan and the great Muztagh glaciers? However that may be, it was a special pleasure to find all impressions of my first visit to this tract revived so faithfully. I always enjoy greatly revisiting familiar places—old friends, as it were, of a geographical order; but I like to approach them by new routes. So, too, old friends who have never been absent from one's mind seem dearer still when regained after long wanderings in new fields.

An imposing posse of Hindu money-lenders which received me some three miles from the town showed that the business of these sharp Shikarpuris flourished more than ever. Since 1901 their community had increased by some thirty per cent of new arrivals. I cannot pretend to any personal regard for these Shylocks from the lower Indus, who even in their best clothes have an undefinable air of meanness and clammy dirt about them. But their hardy ways and perseverance must exact a certain grudging respect. On seeing these lank, weak-looking figures I can never forget how Shikarpuris had worked their way all through Central Asia, in spite of Muslim contempt and fanaticism, long centuries before British power was established throughout India to give them protection.

When Forster, about 1782, travelled through from Bengal to the Caspian he found them flourishing and evidently long established throughout Afghanistan and far to the north of the Oxus. In Bokhara and Samarkand large colonies of them used to thrive until recently. Did they reach there only in Muhammadan times, or is it possible to conjecture that Sogdiana already knew these irrepressible leech-like seekers of Mammon when Alexander conquered the northernmost outposts of ancient Iran? The thought came naturally to me, since among the Shikarpuris who subsequently in a solemn deputation came to pay their respects at my temporary quarters, there was one who