

valley took me up to the encampment of the Kirghiz Beg Mangush (Fig. 302) and into Alpine coolness, it was easy for me to ascertain that these legends had their origin in the remarkable appearance presented by a high and fantastically serrated portion of the range towering above the valley from the south. Its peaks, curiously recalling the Dolomites of the Tyrol, though lacking the charm of ice and snow, rose above the Kara-shilwe side valleys to heights over 13,000 feet, and with their extremely bold pinnacles and precipitous rock walls bore a striking resemblance to ruined castles and towers.

I found that the Kirghiz knew the line of these peaks by the name of Kaka-jade, and regarded them with superstitious awe. The stories they told me of dragons supposed to dwell among them and to issue forth at times in the shape of clouds raining hail and fire, correspond curiously to the legends, heard by the early Chinese pilgrims, of the Nagas dwelling on the heights of the Pamirs and above the Hindukush passes. But I was still more interested when information reached me, elicited with some difficulty through my keen-witted camel-man, Hassan Akhun, about the existence of a stone image to be found high up on the southern slope of that range.

We crossed the range over the Saghiz-kan Pass, some 9000 feet high, and felt glad to have our baggage on hardy Kirghiz ponies fit for such stony tracks. Leaving camp at Shait-kak south of the pass, where water was available in a natural rock cistern, I proceeded on May 13th in search of the image, guided by Mangush Beg. It was a delightful excursion, though of trying length and over ground which none but Kirghiz ponies could have covered in a day. Passing over high plateaus close below those towering peaks, I realized their strange fascination, and understood why old legends had placed in them the enchanted strongholds of wicked kings, full of wonderful treasures.

At last, after a seventeen miles' ride, we reached the Kirghiz grazing-ground of Chal-koide, right under the frowning crags of the eastern end of 'Kaka-jade's town,' or the 'town of the T'ang prince,' as the Chinese at Uch-