

village of Darkōt.⁷ Well could I understand the reluctance shown to further advance by Kao Hsien-chih's cautious 'braves', as from the top of the pass I looked down through temporary rifts in the brooding vapour into the seeming abyss of the valley.⁸ The effect was still further heightened by the wall of soaring ice-clad mountains which showed across the head of the Yasīn Valley south-eastwards as the clouds lifted, and by the contrast which the depths before me presented to the broad and snowy expanse of the glacier *firn* sloping gently away on the north (Fig. 20). Taking into account the close agreement between the Chinese record and the topography of the Darkōt, we need not hesitate to recognize in *T'an-chü* an endeavour to give a phonetic rendering of some earlier form of the name *Darkōt*, as accurate as the imperfections of the Chinese transcriptional system would permit.

Kao Hsien-chih's stratagem.

The stratagem by which Kao Hsien-chih met and overcame the reluctance of his troops which threatened failure when success seemed assured, wears a truly Chinese appearance. The forethought shown in preparing this ruse is a proof alike of Kao Hsien-chih's judgement of men and of the extreme care with which every step of his great enterprise must have been planned. But such a ruse, to prove effective, must have remained unsuspected. I cannot suppress the surmise that in planning it full advantage was taken of the peculiar configuration of the Darkōt which provides, as seen, a double route of access to the pass. If the party of men sent ahead to play the rôle of the 'barbarians of Little P'o-lü' offering their submission, were dispatched by the Barōghil and Rukang route while the troops marched by the Shawitakh-Showar-shur route, all chance of discovery while on the move would be safely guarded against. A remarkable topographical sense has always been a peculiar feature of the Chinese, so that doubtless Kao Hsien-chih took full account of the alternative routes. Nor could it have been particularly difficult for him to find suitable actors, in view of the generous admixture of local mercenaries which the Chinese forces in Central Asia have at all times comprised.⁹

Advance in Yasīn Valley.

The remaining stages of Kao Hsien-chih's advance can be traced with equal ease. The three marches which brought him from the southern foot of the pass to 'the town of A-nu-yüeh', obviously correspond to the distance exceeding twenty-seven miles reckoned between the first camping-ground below the Darkōt to the large village of Yasīn. The latter, by its position and the abundance of cultivable ground near by, must always have been the political centre of the Yasīn Valley. Hence it is reasonable to assume that we have in *A-nu-yüeh* a fairly accurate reproduction of the name *Arniya* or *Arniah* by which the Dards of the Gilgit Valley know Yasīn.¹⁰

Bridge across Gilgit River.

The best confirmation of this identification is furnished by the statement of the Chinese record that the bridge across the River *So-i* was situated sixty li from A-nu-yüeh. Since the T'ang Annals' notice of Little P'o-lü names the River *So-i* as the one on which Yeh-to, the capital of the kingdom, stood, the Gilgit River must be meant. Now a reference to the map shows that, in a descent of the valley from Yasīn, the Gilgit River is reached at a distance of about twelve miles, which is consistent with the sixty li of the Chinese account. It is evident also that, since the only practicable route towards Gilgit proper and the Indus Valley leads along the right or southern bank of the Gilgit River, the Tibetan reinforcements hurrying up from that direction could not reach Yasīn without first crossing the river. This explains the importance attaching to the bridge and the prompt steps taken by the Chinese leader to have it broken. As the Gilgit River is quite unfordable in the summer the destruction of the bridge sufficed to assure safe possession of Yasīn.

⁷ Cf. Mr. Littledale's account in the *Geographical Journal*, N. S. xiv (1892), pp. 24, 5.

⁸ Cf. *Desert Cathay*, i. p. 58.

⁹ The T'ang Annals mention specifically in the account

of Shih-ni or Shighnān, on the Oxus, that its chief in A. D. 747 followed the Imperial troops in their attack on Little P'o-lü and was killed in the fighting; see Chavannes, *Turcs occid.*, p. 163.

¹⁰ Biddulph, *Hind Koosh*, p. 62.