

THE
ROOF OF THE WORLD

BEING

THE NARRATIVE OF A
JOURNEY OVER THE HIGH PLATEAU OF TIBET
TO THE RUSSIAN FRONTIER AND THE
OXUS SOURCES ON PAMIR

BY

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL T. E. GORDON, C.S.I.

HONORARY AIDE-DE-CAMP TO THE VICEROY OF INDIA
LATELY ATTACHED TO THE SPECIAL MISSION TO KASHGHAR

ILLUSTRATED WITH SIXTY-SIX DRAWINGS DONE ON THE SPOT
AND MAP

REPRINTED BY
CH'ENG WEN PUBLISHING COMPANY
TAIPEI 1971

THE
ROOF OF THE WORLD

BEING

THE NARRATIVE OF A
JOURNEY OVER THE HIGH PLATEAU OF TIBET
TO THE RUSSIAN FRONTIER AND THE
OXUS SOURCES ON PAMIR

BY

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL T. E. GORDON, C.S.I.

HONORARY AIDE-DE-CAMP TO THE VICEROY OF INDIA
LATELY ATTACHED TO THE SPECIAL MISSION TO KASHGAR

ILLUSTRATED WITH SIXTY-SIX DRAWINGS DONE ON THE SPOT
AND MAP

EDINBURGH
EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS

MDCCCLXXVI

[All Rights reserved.]

PREFACE.

I HAVE avoided in this narrative going into detail concerning those countries which have already been fully described by modern European travellers, and accordingly little is said about the well-known route from Leh to Yarkand, and thence to Kashghar. I offer my sketches so far, more to illustrate the works and writings of Thompson, Shaw, Hayward, Henderson, and Bellew, than my short account of it and its scenes. Where we left the old trodden paths, as in the Tian Shan and Pamir highlands, I have attempted a more minute account of what we saw and heard in those new fields of exploration and research.

My book, however, makes no pretension to be in any way a record of scientific exploration: it merely relates what fell under "every-day" observation, with the addition of occasional information gathered here and there as we travelled. The idea of my writing it was suggested by my sketches forming such a complete series "from the Indus to the Oxus" as to merit publication simply on the ground of representing to a very great extent life and scenery *never before pictured*. In considering the form of descriptive text to accompany the sketches, I decided on that of a narrative as better calculated to give interest to the work.

The whole of the Illustrations (with the exception of the four coloured plates) are facsimile copies of my sketches made

on the spot, being reproductions under the litho-photographic process, executed by Messrs. GEORGE WATERSTON and SON of Hanover Street, Edinburgh. I trust that the authenticity of these sketches, made from nature in localities most of which are entirely new to us in illustration, will compensate in some degree for occasional roughness and want of pictorial effect. The four coloured plates are faithful copies of my original water-colour drawings.

I desire to thank my travelling companions, Captains Biddulph and Trotter, for kind assistance in the subject matter of this book. Captain Biddulph, besides furnishing that which I have acknowledged in the text, helped me in the account of the form of Buddhism now obtaining in Tibet, to which Captain Molloy, British Joint Commissioner at Leh, also obligingly contributed. The Map and all the notes of elevation above sea-level are by Captain Trotter, and in my account of our journey to Chadir Kul on the Tian Shan plateau I have borrowed from his letter published in the proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of 15th June 1874.

Fergan, the latest Russian territorial acquisition in Central Asia, extends the frontier of that Power down towards the scene of our Pamir exploration; and, influenced as the adjoining small States must necessarily be by their strong neighbour, the opportunity will doubtlessly soon be given for a complete examination of the interesting regions near the head waters of the Oxus which remain yet unexplored

T. E. GORDON.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

Arrival at Leh, on the Indus—Preparations for the onward Journey—Hemis Monastery—Masquerade and Burlesque by the Llamas—Budhist Priesthood—Polo—Dancing Men and Women—Cordial Co-operation of Kashmir Authorities—Departure from Leh—Baggage and Riding Yaks—European Governors of Ladak—Characteristics of the Tartars—Shyok and Nubra Valleys—Pack-horses on Karakoram Journey—Dras and Kurgil Ponies—Yaks and “Zos”—Potato Cultivation in Shyok Valley *Pages 1-14*

CHAPTER II.

Susser Pass—Shyok Stream—Winter and Summer Routes—Kumdar and Remu Glaciers—Mountain Hares—Tartar Porters—Mortality among Traders' Pack-horses—Wolves and Ravens—Karakoram Pass—Suket Pass—Karakash Valley—Yarkand Officials and Frontier—Captain Biddulph's Party joins—Chang-Chemno and Khoten Routes—Pangong Lake navigated—Load-carrying Sheep 15-28

CHAPTER III.

Halt at Shahidulla—Yakub Khan, Kashghar Envoy—Special Couriers—Annual Yarkand Caravans—Party proceeds to Sanju—Kirghiz and Yaks—Sanju Pass—Bullock Carriage—Mirza Bahaudin—Abu-Bakr's Fort—Kilian Kirghiz—Mission and Envoy reach Sanju—Kargalik—Yarkand—Visit to the Governor: to the City—Dress and Appearance of the People—Streets and Bazaars—Market Day—Hunting-Eagles—Beggars—Population—Mission Quarters—Soldiers—Carts. 29-45

CHAPTER IV.

Departure for Kashghar—Post Houses—Commandant of Yangi-Hissar Fort
—Guns carried by all Officials—Yangi-Hissar—Kashghar—Reception
by the Atalik—City—Cotton Manufactures—Export Trade—Silk—
Wool—Chinese and Tungani—Domestic Slaves—Skating—Mechanics
and Artisans Pages 46-56

CHAPTER V.

Departure for the Tian Shan—Artush Valley and Stream—Russian Merchants
—Toyan Valley and Stream—Forts of the Chakmak Defile—Caravan
Route—Old Volcano—*Ovis Poli* and Black Ibex—Russian Kazaks
and Kara Kirghiz—Herds of Ponies—Manner of Hunting *Ovis Poli*—
Kirghiz Soldiers and Sportsmen—Chadir Kul Lake—Watershed—
Tian Shan Range—Severe Cold—Captain Trotter's Work—Strict
Church Discipline—Excavated Rooms at Artush 57-67

CHAPTER VI.

Captain Biddulph's Departure for Maralbashi—His Account of Journey and
Country—Forest—Wild Camels—Gazelle—Hawking Pheasants and
Hares—Maralbashi Town and Fort—Dolan People—Soldier's Story
—Tigers—Trained Hunting-Eagles—Ancient City—Stages to Aksu
—Return to Kashghar—Presents of Game—*Ovis Poli*—Black Ibex—
Gazelle—Frozen Drawing Studies—Maral—Wild Boar Hunting—
Mr. Forsyth's Visit to Artush—Dr. Stoliczka and Captain Trotter's
Explorations—Turkish Protectorate of Kashghar—Yangi Shahr 68-88

CHAPTER VII.

The Army—Artillery—Jemadar Dadkhwah—Infantry—Taifurchis—
Chinese Corps at Drill—Army System—Kashgharis—Food Supply—
Transport—Annual Visit of Governors to the Capital—Khoten
Revenue—Jade—China Tea Trade—Political System—Severity of
the Laws—Sheep and Cattle Stealing—The Amir's Personal Govern-
ment—Mission leaves Kashghar—Arrives at Yangi Hissar—Yakub,
the Polish Deserter 89-102

CHAPTER VIII.

Departure for Sirikol—Chinese Fort—Kirghiz—Severe Winter Weather—
 “Strike” of Kashghari Attendants—Kirghiz Yuzbashi—Kaskasu
 Pass—Chihil Gumbaz—Torut Pass—Tangi Tar—Chichiklik Pass—
 Reach Sirikol Valley—Tashkurgan—Extent of Valley—Capture of
 Sirikol—Deportation and Return of Inhabitants—Origin of the
 People—Old Tashkurgan—Cultivation—Animals, Domestic and Wild
 —Climate—Source and Names of River—Taghdungbash Pamir and
 Kirghiz—Road to Kunjut—Slave’s Story—Atalik’s Fort—Tagharma
 and Kizil Art Plains—Great and Little Karakul Lakes—Meaning of
 “Sirikol” *Pages* 103-120

CHAPTER IX.

Roof of the World—Previous Knowledge of Pamir Topography—Departure
 for Wakhan—Neza Tash—Rich Grass—Aktash Valley—Little
 Pamir: its Lake and Stream—Watershed—Sarhadd Stream—
 Extent of Little Pamir—Reach Sarhadd—Met by the “Mirzada”—
 Ibex-Hounds—Reach Kila Panja on the Oxus—Welcomed by the
 Mir: visit him in his Fort—Present State of Peace and Security—
 Tribute paid to Kabul—Population—Condition of the People—Ani-
 mals—Crops—Through Trade—State Debt paid off 121-137

CHAPTER X.

Wakhan—Friendly Relations with Kunjut—People of Kunjut—Shighnan
 friendly with Wakhan—My Messenger to Shighnan—Short Account
 of Country—Murghab (Great Karakul) River—Ruby Mines—Shiah
 Sect—Kafir Forts—Mir Wali supposed Murderer of Mr. Hayward—
 Yassin—Alif Beg of Sirikol—Slavery 138-149

CHAPTER XI.

Severe Weather—Supplies—Snow on Great Pamir—Signs of Spring—De-
 parture for Great Pamir—Captain Biddulph goes to the Little Pamir
 —Ali Murdan Shah’s Signet Ring—Kirghiz of Great Pamir—Road
 —Wood’s Victoria Lake—Great Pamir Watershed—Deep Snow—
 Pamir Paths—Captain Biddulph rejoins—Alichor and Siriz Pamirs—
 Rang Kul—Tashkurgan on Siriz Pamir—Wild Animals—Gigantic

CONTENTS.

Pair of *Ovis Poli* Horns—Rarefaction of the Air—Local Name of Lake Victoria—General Description of the Pamir Plateau—Meaning of "Pamir"—Hot Springs—"Eolor"—Aktash—Short Supplies—Difficult Defile—Return to Sirikol *Pages* 150-165

CHAPTER XII.

Return towards Yarkand—Sudden Change from Winter to Summer—Yarkand—Crops—Summer Dress of People—Leave Yarkand for Leh—Kogiar Route—Snow-Melting Floods—Yangi-Dawán Pass—Return of Winter—Karakoram Pass—Death of Dr. Stoliczka—Letter and Presents to Mir Futteh Ali Shah of Wakhan—His Death, and Succession of Ali Murdan Shah 166-172

LIST OF FULL PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS.

	TO FACE PAGE
1. LOWER KUMDAN GLACIER, ON THE BED OF THE SHYOK STREAM (<i>to face page 17</i>)	<i>Frontispiece.</i>
2. HEMIS BUDDHIST MONASTERY, LADAK	2
3. END OF THE UPPER KUMDAN GLACIER, ON THE SHYOK STREAM	18
4. THE REMU GLACIER, UPPER SHYOK—looking N.W.—before the snow-storm	19
5. THE REMU GLACIER, UPPER SHYOK—looking W.—Outline of the high range and peaks obscured by a snow-storm	20
6. THE KARAKORAM PEAK, from the Southern side of the Pass of that name—Elevation of the spot from which the view taken, about 17,500 feet	22
7. VIEW FROM THE SUMMIT OF THE KARAKORAM PASS, looking N.E.; elevation 18,550 feet. A rough stone pillar erected in honour of the "Genii of the Mountain," similar to what is seen on most Himmalayan passes, shows on the left of the foreground	23
8. RIDING YAKS, mounted for the ascent of the Sanju Pass	32
9. STREET SCENE, YARKAND	42
10. TAIFURCHIS OF THE YARKAND GOVERNOR'S GUARD, "FIELD PRACTICE" WITH THE TAIFU	44
11. VIEW IN THE TOYAN VALLEY, NEAR CHUNG TEREK, TIAN SHAN—looking South	60

	TO FACE PAGE
12. PANORAMIC VIEW OF THE CHADIR KUL LAKE ON THE TIAN SHAN PLATEAU, Russian frontier; wild sheep in the foreground	65
13. THE TRAINED HUNTING GOLDEN EAGLE OF EASTERN TURKISTAN	78
14. CHINESE TAIFURCHIS, KASHGHAR ARMY	93
15. ROAD SCENE, KASHGHAR	96
16. THE YANGI SHAHR, KASHGHAR, Fort Residence of the Amir, from the roof of the Embassy Quarters—the Kizil Art Mountains in the distance, and Kirghiz Felt Tent in the court-yard of the "Elchi-Khana" in the foreground	99
17. THE MUZTAGH (TAGHARMA PEAK, 25,500 feet), from Tashkurgan, Sirikol—looking North; part of the old Fort of Varshidi on the left; and Kirghiz, Akoi, and Yaks in the foreground	119
18. THE AKTASH VALLEY—looking North-West	125
19. THE LITTLE PAMIR—looking West from near Onkul, about 20 miles east of Gazkul (the Little Pamir Lake); wild sheep in the foreground	127
20. KILA PANJA ON THE OXUS—looking East; showing the Forts and the approaches to the Great and Little Pamirs	131
21. FAMILY PARTY, INHABITANTS OF PATUR, WAKHAN	135
22. VICTORIA LAKE, GREAT PAMIR—looking West	155
23. THE AKTASH VALLEY—looking South-East—showing the Aktash rock from which the valley takes its name; ice breaking up on the Aksu in the foreground	157
24. LARGE OVIS POLI HORNS, from the Great Pamir	160
25. MAP	172

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS IN TEXT.

	PAGE
BAGGAGE YAK	1
MASQUERADING MONKS, LAMAS AT HEMIS	5
POLO PLAY IN TIBET	8
TIBETAN BALLET-DANCERS AND VOCALISTS	9
RIDING YAK	12
UPPER PART OF LOWER KUMDAN GLACIER	18
KARAKORAM BRANGSA	23
LOAD-CARRYING SHEEP OF TIBET	27
KIRGHIZ YOUTH	31
KIRGHIZ YOUNG WOMAN	34
KIRGHIZ OLD WOMAN (GRANDMOTHER)	35
YARKANDI OFFICIAL	37
YARKANDI WOMAN, IN OUT-DOOR WINTER DRESS	38
YARKANDI WOMAN " "	40
A WOMAN OF SANJU	45
KHUL MUHAMMAD, COMMANDANT AT YANGI HISSAR	47
BAI BABA, A KHOKANDI OFFICER AT YANGI HISSAR	48
KASSIM AKHUN, ALIAS CHAWLIANG KHWAITANG	53
USHER OF THE WHITE ROD AT YANGI HISSAR	56
BLACK IBEX OF THE TIAN SHAN MOUNTAINS	57
KIRGHIZ SOLDIERS AND PONIES, TIAN SHAN	67
THE DJERAN (GAZELLE) OF EASTERN TURKISTAN	71
HEAD OF THE MARAL (STAG) OF EASTERN TURKISTAN	85

	PAGE
HUNTING EAGLE SEIZING A FOX	88
JIGIT SOLDIER, KASHGHAR ARMY	90
JIGIT SOLDIER, KASHGHAR ARMY	91
KALMAK ARCHER, KASHGHAR ARMY	94
KALMAK ARCHER, KASHGHAR ARMY	95
KIRGHIZ IN WINTER DRESS	104
SIRIKOL VALLEY—LOOKING SOUTH	110
KIRGHIZ AK-OI (WHITE HOUSE)	120
LITTLE PAMIR LAKE, EASTERN END	121
LITTLE PAMIR LAKE, WESTERN END	127
SIRIKOLI ATTENDANT OF ALIF BEG'S	137
KAFIR FORT NEAR HISSAR-WAKHAN	138
WAKHI FALCONER WITH YOUNG HAWK	149
YOL MAZAR (ROADSIDE SHRINE) ON THE GREAT PAMIR BRANCH OF THE OXUS	150
GREAT PAMIR (VICTORIA) LAKE—EASTERN END	155
DOUBLE-HUMPED CAMEL OF EASTERN TURKISTAN	165
DOUBLE-HUMPED CAMEL OF EASTERN TURKISTAN	166
LADIES' SUMMER FASHIONS, YARKAND	168
LADEN YAKS ON THE MARCH	172