

and sees in the 'wonderful names' of the Saasgrat peaks a proof that the wanderers had not lost their 'oriental imagination.' As he refers to the Eien Alp as Arabic, I may add that there is another Alp of the same name at Zermatt. Like most writers on the subject, Dr. Düby takes no notice of the thirteenth century documents quoted by Mr. Coolidge, which show us the men of the Vallis Solzæ (Saas), Zauxon (St. Niklaus), and Prato Borno (Zermatt), on the one side, making a treaty (A.D. 1291) with the men of Macugnaga and Val Anzasca on the other, or of the earlier deed by which in 1250 Peter de Castello granted to Count Godfrey Blandrati certain men in Val Anzasca, with leave to transport them into the Vispthal. Gingins la Sarraz ('Archiv für Schweizerische Geschichte,' ii. 21, note), considers the names Vinelet, Almagell, Randa, and Saas, to have come from this colonisation.

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#### ASCENT OF SIKARAM, ONE OF THE PEAKS OF THE SUFFAID KOH RANGE, AFGHANISTAN.

The following note has been received from Mr. W. Simpson, F.R.G.S., and a member of the Club :—

Suffaid Sung, Gundumuck, June 1, 1879.

'Sikaram, the supposed highest peak of the Suffaid Koh Range, has been reached. Mr. George B. Scott, of the Indian Survey Department, has the honour of being the first European to accomplish this feat. He came back to camp last night, and he has given me a few details which I think will be worthy of a place in the 'Alpine Journal.' Suffaid Koh means the 'White Mountain'—that is, the Persian; in Puchtoo it is Spiu Ghar—these words having the same meaning, *Spin* being white, and *Ghar* a mountain. This range separates the Jellalabad Valley from the Kurrum Valley, and it runs very nearly east and west. The first sight I got of the Suffaid Koh was from the hills at Daka, that was at the end of November last, and at that date there was very little snow on them to justify the title of Suffaid, or 'White.' It was not till January that the snow began to come down, and all through February and March it fell heavily, whitening at times the lower ranges far down towards the plains. We had very little rain in the Jellalabad valley during the winter, indeed we had nothing worthy of the name of a shower till the 1st of March, yet often we could see heavy clouds over the Suffaid Koh, and when they cleared off, the range was evidently whiter from the extra fall which it had received. Up to the present this mountain range has been a magnificent sight along the southern side of the Jellalabad valley. From our camp there we could see the glittering peaks extending from near Pesh Bolak on the east to away beyond Gundumuck on the west.

On the old and very uncertain maps of the past there was a peak, named 'Sikaram.' While we were at Jellalabad the officers on the Survey Department could get no information about this mountain; no one seemed to be familiar either with the peak or with its name. Some began to think that the correct name ought to be Sitaram; \* a word

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\* From Rama and Sita, the hero and heroine of the Ramayana.

which the people of this region use in reference to anything Buddhist or Hindoo. This idea acquired force from the fact that many of the geographical names yet retained belong to the pre-Mahomedan period. The 'Ram Koon'd mountain, north of Kabool, being a case in point; the Hindoo Koosh being a still more forcible illustration. The Jellalabad region is now known as Nungnahar, a corruption of Nagarahara, the old Buddhist name of the locality. Mr. Scott considers that he has set this point at rest. I think they were Ghilzais who accompanied him in the ascent, and according to these people, Sikaram comes from Sayid Karram, a holy man who lived in the time of the Prophet, and when Mahomed got one of his teeth knocked out in a battle with the Jews, Sayid Karram took out all his own teeth, and offered them to replace the loss. There is a difficulty in explaining how this holy man could have been killed on the Suffaid Koh, when there were no Mahomedans here till at least a couple of centuries afterwards. Be this as it may, Mr. Scott saw his 'ziaret' or tomb, about fifty yards from the summit of the mountain, and it is a sacred place of pilgrimage among the Mahomedans. The peak is from this called 'Sayid Karram Ke Ziaret.' It is also called 'Wai Sikarram,' as Sayid Karram was supposed to come from a place called Wai. I have also heard it called 'Bahin' or 'Bahin Sikaram,' which is no doubt only a variety of the word Wai. The ziaret is of rude stones, and has a few sticks in it, such as the Mahomedans use for small flags which they attach to ziarets. Worship at tombs is a marked feature of Mahomedanism; but the practice is perhaps in fuller force in Afghanistan than in any other part of the world. It may be only a continuation of the old Buddhist worship of relic shrines, for the mounds of old Buddhist establishments are generally used as Mahomedan burial-grounds in the present day, and it would be difficult to find one without its ziaret, that is, the tomb of some holy person, with large stones heaped up, and a bit of red or white cloth fluttering on the end of a long stick, to indicate at a distance the existence of the shrine. I think it not all improbable that this ziaret, on the top of Sikaram, is an old Buddhist shrine of some kind. Such shrines exist at the present day on the high passes of the Himalayas. On the top of the Parung Law, 19,000 feet, and on the Tunglung Pass, 18,000 feet, there are rude mounds of stones with sticks in them, and having pieces of cloth on the end, containing Buddhist formulas. These Buddhist shrines are called *manies* in Ladak. If Sikaram was an old place of pilgrimage in the Buddhist period, it is not likely that the shrine-worshipping Mahomedans would forsake the old custom of making pilgrimages to the top of it, and the finding of a Sayid whose name would fit into the older name was no doubt easily accomplished. That they altered the names of places in this way, we have more than one illustration. Peshawur was a city of repute when Buddhism flourished, and as late as the time of Akbar, the word was slightly changed merely to give it the sound of 'Frontier Town.' Nagarahara, already mentioned, was changed into Nungnahar, to express 'Nine Streams,' which are supposed to flow through the valley of Jellalabad. Such a person as Sayid Karram may have existed, but as he died 200 years before any Mahomedan came to the Suffaid Koh, the story of his grave being

there, is so far a myth, and I should be inclined still to think that the name of this peak is either Hindoo or Buddhist, perhaps slightly corrupted.

Mr. Scott says that he had to cut his way in the snow for the last 4,000 feet; but that in another month he thinks that a tent could be pitched within 5000 yards of the top. There is another peak (15,000 feet) near to it, called the *Tukht*, which is a Persian word meaning 'throne.' It derives this title from its being flat on the top. About a mile to the north of this last peak is the pass by which travellers go from Gundumuck over to the Kurrum Valley. This is called the *Ogzan Lar*, *lar* meaning 'road.' On the south side of the *Tukht*, between it and *Sikaram*, Mr. Scott saw a small lake about 300 yards in extent, and about 15,000 ft. high. It is at present frozen, but the *Ghilzais* said that in another week or so it would all melt and become deep blue in colour. It is called *Haoza Khas*, the first word meaning 'tank' or 'lake,' and the other 'clear;' hence its name is *Clear Lake*. This is one of the principal sources of the *Surkhab*. Looking down on the south side of the range lay the *Kurrum Valley* on the left, and the *Hurriob Valley* on the right. At present *General Roberts* has five camps in which his force is quartered, these are the *Kurrum*, *Hurriob*, *Peiwar*, *Kotal*, village of *Peiwar*, and *Ali Kheyl*. These Mr. Scott could see far below him like specks.

On the last day in May the head-quarter signallers at *Suffaid Sung* noticed the flash of the heliograph on one of the highest ridges of the *Suffaid Koh*. It was at least 40 miles away; on reading the message it was, 'Who are you down there?' It turned out to be a party from *General Roberts's* column, who had ascended the range away to the east of us. The party remained for some time, and several messages were transmitted.

From the small amount of snow visible on the *Suffaid Koh* in November last I presume the non-existence of glaciers. I think that glaciers existed here at a former period. At *Gundumuck* we could see vast ridges of earth and boulders lying across the plain—the southern ends of these ridges in every case pointing to a gorge in the *Suffaid Koh*, from which I take it that these ridges are glacial deposits. They are very large embankments, being in some cases two or three miles in extent. There is a very large and striking one, extending from the *Gorge of the Kudi Kheyl*. It is quite flat on the top, having a gentle downward incline northwards. This separates the district of *Gundumuck* from that of *Tootoo*, and the plain of *Ishpan* on the west. None of the gorges or valleys of the *Suffaid Koh* are without these ridges. The amount of snow seems to be sufficient to keep up the water in the streams all the year round, and this does not appear to be a country of rain; so it is the snow-melted water which is used for cultivation by means of irrigation. The whole land is covered with canals, which communicate with every field, and lead the melted snow of the *Suffaid Koh* into them. It is evident that at a former period there must have been a much greater extent of cultivation than at present. There are large plains now covered with stones, which were in past times under cultivation. The great stony plain at *Chardeh*

may be given as an illustration. The sappers, in making a new road by Girdi Kas, came upon the old aqueduct, with 'Buddhist masonry' in, and a fine tunnel through a hill, by means of which the waters of the Kabool River were led, for the purpose of irrigating the now desolate plain. Without the snows of the Suffaid Koh and the Hindoo Koosh, Afghanistan would have been all but an uninhabitable desert.

The principal trees on the Suffaid Koh are the *Cedrus deodorus*, called in Persian Alamnza; the *Pinus excelsa*, in Persian Nakhtar; *Abies Webbiana*, in Persian Sirap. The Chalgoza, or edible pine; the yew, called Obakhta in Persian; the Tsarai, or holly-leaved oak, a shrub; and the juniper. The most of these are found in the Himalayas.

The ibex and bear are to be found, and they will no doubt attract the Shikaré, if the new treaty of peace concluded with the Ameer Yakooob Khan should result in law and order, so that it will be safe for travellers to visit the country. I understand that the Government of India hope that this region, which has been hitherto sealed up, will be accessible to visitors; if this be realized, I trust that the splendid mountain ranges of the Suffaid Koh and Hindoo Koosh will in time be now visited by some of the more aspiring members of the Alpine Club.

While describing the range on the south side of Jellalabad Valley, I ought to mention a very magnificent mountain on the north. It is known as the Ram Koond, and it is situated on a line almost direct north from the town of Jellalabad. It is said to be over 14,000 feet high; but standing as it does alone, it seemed higher and grander than any individual peak in the Suffaid Koh range. Looked at from our camping-ground at Jellalabad, it has a long ridge on the east, the sky line of which slopes down to the valley of the Kunar River; this ridge is very steep, almost precipitous on the south, so that but little snow is retained on it. From Gundumuck, which is about 4,600 feet above the sea, we could get a better view of the Ram Koond peak, and its highest point came in sight towards the north. The word 'koond' is Hindoo, and means 'fountain,' hence the name of this mountain means the 'Fountain of Rain,' from a small lake near its summit. This lake is also known as the 'Umrit Koond,' or the 'Fountain of Immortality.' According to the Mahommedans, the Ark of Noah rested on the summit of this mountain, after the Flood. They say that some of the Ark can yet be seen there. On an excursion I made up the Kunar Valley, I expressed to Sirdar Ahmad Khan of Shewa a desire to go up the Ram Koond and see what remains of this relic. He said that the time of the year was not good, the spring was the best; he meant by this about the beginning of May, and he added that the Ark could only be seen on Fridays, which is the Mahommedan Sunday. On the south of the Ram Koond there is a valley given in some maps as the *Dur Noor*, or 'Gate of Light'; but it turns out to be the *Durra Nooh*, or the 'Valley of Noah.' I understood that Sirdar Ahmad Khan gave this as the rendering of the words as they are accepted by those living on the spot, and according to the tradition, it was down this valley that Noah with his family, and all the animals from the Ark, came marching to the plains.

At the west end of the Jellalabad valley is a lower range called the Siah Koh, *siah* meaning 'black.' It is a bare mass of rock, with the most scant vegetation. One or two mornings, after a heavy fall of snow, a little of it lay for an hour or two on one of the higher summits. This range extends from Darunta, where the Kabool River enters the Jellalabad Valley, and only ends at the Jugdulluck Pass, where, from Gundumuck, we could see it dip down and disappear.

The Siah Koh Range separates the Jellalabad and Lughman Valleys, beyond which the lower spurs of the Hindoo Koosh begin. Mr. Scott, when on the summit of Sikaram, could see one of the remarkable peaks of this great range in the far distance, standing up like a needle, and it will indicate how meagre is our knowledge of this important region, when it is stated that the name of this peak is entirely unknown. The map of all this part of the world has up to the present been very sketchy and uncertain. Since the war began, the Survey Department has been most active, and as far as the different columns have penetrated, accurate maps to a large scale have been made.

One of the least known corners of this space has been Kaffirstan, or 'Infidel-land,' it might be translated. For a long time back it has been supposed that the people of that region were the descendants of the Greeks left by Alexander. Lately the language of these races has been studied from some of those who have ventured to Peshawur, and its Sanscrit affinities has now made it clear that the people are of Hindoo race, and that their impenetrable mountains have prevented their conversion to Mahomedanism, and hence they are called Kaffirs. One of these people came into our camp towards the end of March last, and Mr. Jenkyns, of the Political Department, used him as a means of getting knowledge, and got some information; but it turned out that although he had been born and brought up a Kaffir, that the Mahomedans had managed to convert him a few years ago. Mr. Jenkyns did all he could to make this man Koosh, or well-pleased with his visit; and he went back to his own country, promising to return again, and bring back some Kaffirs in a pure and undefiled condition. As yet I believe he has not turned up. I managed to get a sketch of this man, and he had rather a fine type of face, with no trace of Turanian mixture in it.

Since that, Major Tanner of the Survey Department, has made a bold venture to penetrate into this unknown land. There is a tribe on the slopes of the Ram Koond, called the Chuginis. Their language is allied to that of the Kaffirs, and they are known to have been Kaffirs not many generations back, but being on the border country of the Mahomedans they became converted. Major Tanner managed to get one of the Chugini chiefs to come into Jellalabad, and made arrangements to go with him, disguised, to his district, from which he was to be passed through. The Kaffirs and Mahomedans being religious enemies, they are at all times in relationship of war to the knife; and by some it has been supposed, that the only difficulty would be in passing the frontier of this infidel-land. Major Tanner left a few weeks ago, and as yet only one letter has come back from him; from this it would appear that he is all but a prisoner with his Chugini friends. He was

somewhere about 7,000 feet up on the outlying sides of the Ram Koond, and could get nothing but chupatties to eat. He asked for some more Loonghis, or head-dresses, and knives, to give as presents, to be sent to him. He was still in good hopes of getting passed on. The line he hopes to work through will be in the direction of the Kunar River, towards Chitral, and should he be successful, he expects to come out of this unknown region towards Cashmere. As the whole of this country is mountainous, and is formed of the southern slopes of the unexplored Hindoo Koosh, I am sure that all readers of this will wish Major Tanner success and a safe return, from his raid into Kaffirstan.

June 2—Fort Battyc.—I enclose a sketch made to-day from this place, as it gives a good view of Sikaram and the Tukht Peak. The drainage of this part of the Suffaid Koh comes down to the Murki Kheyl Gorge. The Murki Kheyl is the tribe living at this place, and they give the name to the stream, which is the one flowing past the camp of General Sir Samuel Browne's Division, at Suffaid Sung, Gundumuck.

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NOTE ON THE TOPOGRAPHY OF THE GROUPS OF THE  
MEIJE AND OF THE GRANDE RUINE. WITH A MAP.  
BY HENRY DUHAMEL.\*

In the 'Annuaire du Club Alpin Français' for 1875 I pointed out (pp. 319, 320, 327) some errors in that part of the French Ordnance Map, which comprises the district of the Meije. Inspired by the wish of completing these rough preliminary observations, I have been led to undertake a more detailed examination of the topography of the central portion of the Dauphiné Alps, known as the Pelvoux district; and I now lay before those interested in Dauphiné the results of my inquiry, as far as it has yet proceeded, believing that, though incomplete, it is best to place them at once in the hands of my colleagues of the Alpine Club. I hope by this means, while continuing to pursue my researches, to advance the prospects of a perfectly accurate map of the Dauphiné Alps, and to make it, not so much the work of one person, as the product of the united labours of the various Alpine clubs.

First of all, I must state that the triangulation of the French engineers is of unimpeachable accuracy. Many apparent mistakes on their maps will be found, on reference to the minutes of the War Office in Paris, to be either errors in engraving or in the observations of the would-be corrector. In 1878, in the course of 160 observations,† made with instruments of precision, my results did not differ in any marked degree from those of the engineers; whilst with barometers I rarely obtained results similar to theirs, especially anywhere near the crest of a ridge, where the atmosphere is always more or less disturbed. I have no wish to pass a severe judgment here on baro-

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\* Mr. Coolidge has kindly translated the following article.

† It may be of interest to note that during August 1878, in the course of my explorations, the average deviation of the magnetic compass was 14° 4.