

hamlets, containing altogether some fifteen hundred souls.¹ Enduring decay probably commenced with the wars of Chinghiz, for many an instance in eastern history shows the permanent effect of such devastations. And here wave after wave of war passed over a little country, isolated on three sides by wild mountains and barbarous tribes, destroying the apparatus of culture which represented the accumulated labour of generations, and with it the support of civilisation and the springs of recovery. Century after century only saw progress in decay. Even to our own time the process of depopulation and deterioration has continued. About 1760 two of the Khwajas of Kashgar, escaping from the dominant Chinese, took refuge in Badakhshan, and were treacherously slain by Sultan Shah who then ruled that country.² The holy men are said in their dying moments to have invoked curses on Badakhshan and prayed that it might be three times depopulated. And, in fact, since then it has been at least three times ravaged; first, a few years after the outrage by Ahmed Shah Durani of Kabul, when the treacherous Sultan Shah was put to death; in the beginning of this century by Kokan Beg of Kunduz; and again in 1829 by his successor Murad Beg, who swept away the bulk of the remaining inhabitants, and set them down to die in the marshy plains of Kunduz.

In the time of Goës the country was probably in a middle state, not fallen so low as now, but far below what it had been in days before the Tartar invasion. Akbar had at this time withdrawn all attempt at holding territory north of the Indian Caucasus, and the Uzbeks, who in the end of the fifteenth century had expelled the house of Timur and settled in Bokhara, seem to have been in partial occupation.

Of routes over the Bolor Tagh and high table-land of Pamer between Badakhshan and Kashgar, the only notices accessible are those of the Chinese pilgrims of the early centuries,³ the

¹ *Ditto*, p. 254.

² *Russians in Central Asia*, p. 186, *seqq.*; *Wood*, p. 250; *Ritter*, vol. vii; *Burnes*, iii, 192.

³ Of these extracts are given in *Ritter*, vii, 493, *seqq.* I have no access at present to Hiwen Thsang.