

that this lake, situated within the political border of India, is known to the Wakhīs also by the Turkī designation of Ak-kul, the 'White Lake'. It could clearly be observed that the lake, which is considerably larger than appears from the map, owes its origin to the fact that a big glacier near its eastern end once pushed its moraines from the south right across the valley.

Glaciers
below
Shuiyenj.

About eight miles from the pass, the valley contracts below the last grazing grounds of Shuiyenj. Beyond this the track led past the snout of a large glacier on the south, which has piled its ice against the rocky slopes opposite. The river thus blocked had cut its way in a big tunnel below it (Fig. 53); this advance of the glacier beyond the river bed was said to have taken place only two years before. Less than two miles farther down, the river bed, broad as it was here, was completely blocked by a much larger glacier descending from the south, which had to be traversed for a distance of about a mile and a half. What with the care needed in its crossing and the difficult progress beyond, over boulder-strewn slopes on the right bank, it was long after nightfall before we reached the small jungle-covered space known as Sokhta-robāt, which forms a usual camping-place opposite the approach to the Khora-bohrt pass.⁴

Khora-
bohrt and
Irshad
passes.

Had it been possible for me to cross by this pass into the Lupsuk valley northward, which drains into the Āb-i-Panja some distance below Bōzai-gumbaz, we could thence have reached Hunza territory over the Irshad pass, leading like the Chillinji pass to the head of the Chapursan valley. We might thus have been spared a very trying piece of mountaineering, and probably a day's march as well. For both passes, about 15,000 and 16,000 feet respectively in height, are clear of glacier ice and practicable during the summer and early autumn for laden animals, and even longer for men on foot.⁵ But without the Amir's permission this passage, leading through a forlorn alpine corner of easternmost Afghān territory, was closed to a servant of the Indian Government. As it was, I had occasion to feel very grateful when, on proceeding on September 1st down the Karambār river, I found a contingent of hardy Wakhī porters awaiting us at the point where the snout of the big Chillinji glacier debouches into the river gorge (Fig. 52). Without their timely arrival from the small settlement of Wakhī refugees lower down, as had been arranged through the Gilgit Agency, farther progress would have been impossible. After ascending for about four miles along the north edge of the glacier (Fig. 51) over old moraines thickly covered with Juniper and other dwarf tree growth, we camped that night at an elevation of about 12,500 feet.

Ascent of
Chillinji
pass.

The ascent made on September 2 to the Chillinji pass proved a difficult piece of mountaineering. The snowy weather that had prevailed all through August had rendered the very steep snow slopes to be climbed to the north-east of the glacier exceptionally trying. There were risks of avalanches to be faced in the confined gully up which lay the final ascent of some two thousand feet (Fig. 57), and the chance of some mishap was increased by the fact that the pass had not been traversed by any one for a considerable number of years. Only one old man among the Wakhīs sent with us had ever been across. It took eight hours of laborious climbing, mostly through deep snow, before our party, numbering forty men in all, safely reached the col. Barometrical observations indicated for it an elevation of 17,520 feet. The view that the pass offered over the big glaciers filling the head of the Chapursan valley and along the ice-crowned range forming the watershed on the north towards the Āb-i-Panja sources and the Tāgh-dumbāsh Pāmīr, was grand and extensive. But the icy gale sweeping the exposed col made even a short rest difficult

⁴ Its name as given to me by the Wakhīs sounded Khora-vursht.

⁵ It is of interest to note that the existence of the route leading up the Karambār valley and across the Khora-bohrt pass to the Pāmīrs was duly reported by Mughul Bēg about

1789-90; cf. Raverty, *Notes on Afghānistān*, pp. 189 sq. That very observant traveller notes: 'The climate of this dara'h (Ana-Sar) is exceedingly severe, and uncongenial to the health of travellers. By it you can proceed towards Yār-kand and Kāshghar.'