

very rarified, and breathing becomes difficult.» In the spring there are heavy snow falls often obliging caravans to return. The sootuk often kills the horses. »From the Kurra Koorum to the Akhtab mountains a journey of three days, there is no water on the road, . . . the road traverses a pass through the Akhtab mountains, through which there are two roads, the Kullian and the Kookrai . . . It takes some six or seven days to get through the Kullian, after which four days' march brings you to Kurgulluk . . .»¹

From this short report one could hardly suspect the existence of another great mountain system north of the one in which the Kara-korum Pass is situated. Ahmed Shah's Ekdan route is obviously the Kumdan one which he found blocked up by snow, *i. e.* glacier ice, by which a lake was formed above the glacier. So it remained from 1818 to 1840.

He crossed the very glacier, as seems from his description of the ice, and the passage took him half a day. Thus the road must have been rather difficult unless the Chong Kumdan is also included. In 1840 the road seems to have been cleared. He especially says that »this is the route almost always now followed by the caravans», from which it appears as if the road was passable from 1840 until the winter 1852—1853. But as Ahmed Shah had to cross the glacier snout, this must have, during the last years of the said period, advanced to the opposite mountain wall and again closed the valley.

His description would also suit the state of things which I found in 1902, exactly 50 years later.² The snout then did not reach the mountain foot, but the great blocks of ice fallen by melting from the snout totally filled up the intermediate space. But to judge from his description, and as he found large rocks (great blocks) and stones on the top of the snow (on the glacier), it seems more likely, that the road in 1852—53 really had to cross the very end of the glacier, which took half a day to accomplish. The fact that the road was made open in 1840 does not prove that the action of the glacier was diminished, only that the accumulated lake was then heavy enough to break away the snout. As soon as the passage had been cleared the glacier began to advance again, until it finally, in 1852—1853 had blocked the road.

In an article by Lieut. H. G. RAVERTY *Notes on Kokán, Kashgár, Yárkand, and other places in Central Asia*,³ we find the following mention of the Kara-korum road:

There are two routes from Kashmir to Yárkand and Kokán. The most direct one is by way of Iskárdoh and along the banks of the Shighun river, and over the Mus-ták

¹ Kilian, Koksai and Karghalik.

² *Cp.* Vol. II, p. 193 *et seq.*

³ *Journal Asiatic Society of Bengal.* Vol. XXVI, 1857, p. 265.