

On the Kárakásh River above Fotash is a camping ground called Sumgal, from which Robert Schlagintweit crossed the Kuen Luen range by the Hindu-tásh Pass, estimated by him at 17,379 feet high. At the top of this Pass is a glacier much *crevassed* and extremely steep. It is a long and difficult march from its foot, to the village of Bushia, where are numerous tents and caves occupied by Kirghiz, and where supplies can be obtained in large quantities. It is eight marches thence to Khotan and the road is described as bad. The road by the Hindu-tásh Pass can only be used by foot passengers.

From all accounts the ordinary trade route between Khotan and Ládakh in former years was, as at present, *viá* the Sánjú and Karakorum Passes. The road from Khotan follows that to Yárkand as far as Zanguia, whence a road goes to Sánjú village direct. Another road from Sháhídúla to Khotan lies down the Kárakásh River, and, going over an easy pass, emerges at Dúba,\* a large village said to lie about 20 miles to the south-west of Piálma (on the Khotan and Yárkand road.) The road down the Kárakásh can only be used in mid winter.

We now come to consider the extreme eastern route, *viá* the Chang-thang or "Northern plain." Of this road we have a survey by Kishen Sing Pundit, one of the most important geographical results secured by the mission.† Details will be found in Appendix, Section G., and the road itself is shown on the map accompanying this report.

A traveller from Leh to Khotan might follow the route by the Pangong Lake, along which the Pundit travelled, but he would more probably take a short cut from Lukong to the Mangtza Lake, following the ordinary Changchenmo route to Yárkand as far as the point where that road leaves the Changchenmo valley. Passing up the latter, he would make his way eastward to its head, where an easy pass is known to exist leading on to the high table land beyond. By adopting this road he would save forty miles over the more circuitous road by Noh. From Mangtza the road lies over a series of high plateaux varying from 16 to 17,000 feet in height, crossed here and there by low ridges which rise somewhat irregularly from the surface of the plain which contains numerous lakes, most of them brackish. In latitude  $35^{\circ} 7'$  north the Pundit crossed at a height of but little more than 17,000 feet the water-shed of a snowy range, which may perhaps be the true eastern continuation of the Kuen Luen. From the north of the pass the Kiria stream takes its rise; the road follows down it as far as Arash (16,000 feet), but again ascends to the Ghubolik plain, which (17,000 feet above the sea) connects the snowy range just alluded to with another somewhat lower range to the north. This last ridge is a buttress of the vast Thibetan plateau, and in descending the Polu stream from the Ghubolik, At Diwan ‡ (17,500 feet) to Polu, a distance of 28 miles (including windings), there is a fall of about 9,000 feet. Polu is a small village in the Khotan district and from it Khotan (or Ilchi) city may be reached either by the direct road (by Chihar Imám) which skirts the feet of spurs from the elevated plateau above, or the traveller may proceed down the stream to Kiria by the route followed by the Pundit.

Throughout the whole of the road from Khotan to Leh traversed by the Pundit fuel was abundant everywhere, and there was only one stage where there was not a good supply of grass. These facts would indicate the line as one well adapted for the native merchant, to whom time is of no great value. As far as I can learn however from enquiry it never has been used as a trade route on a large scale, the chief reason I believe being fear of the Chang-pas§ or Tagh-lik, wandering tribes of Tartars, nominally subject to the Chinese officials at Gartokh and Rudokh, but probably practically only so far subject to them that they would abstain from committing violent aggression on parties travelling under the protection of those authorities.

\* Dúba is shown on Klaproth's map as a large place about half way between Zává and Sánjú.

† The only previous account we have of this road is one derived from native information supplied by Mr. R. B. Shaw, and which was published in the proceedings of the R. G. S., No. III. of 1872. This account agrees remarkably well with that given by the Pundit, and every march can be followed on the large scale map I have before me as I write.

‡ Or "Sulphur Horse Pass" so called from its being used by the Polu people when bringing sulphur to Khotan. Sulphur is excavated in large quantities from the ground near the lake in the Ghubolik plain.

§ Chang-pa in Thibetan means *Nord-man* while the Turki name for the same people is *Taghlik*, i.e. *Mountaineer*.