

their forced march, pleased at having the dangerous desert behind them.

The Persians in Jandak seem themselves to feel as though they lived on a coast. According to tradition the Kevir in Nushirvan's time, that is, 1350 years ago, formed a colossal lake, into the western side of which a large river, the Kara-chai, coming from Hamadan and Saveh, debouched. There is some truth in this tradition, and to the traveller who crosses the Kevir it gives the impression of a vanished lake. On the whole the climate here, as in Central Asia and Tibet, is becoming drier, but it would seem that desiccation does not proceed regularly in all parts. At least the people in Jandak affirmed that 200 years ago a direct road ran through the Kevir from this place to Semnan. But this road is now totally wiped out; it was abandoned because a salt lake was formed to the south of Semnan, and it encountered a river from Khar in the west. It must not, on that account, be concluded that the flow of water, the humidity and the precipitation, increased in this region. The exceedingly shallow and flat lakes in the Kevir are very ephemeral phenomena, and probably pass away still more quickly and easily than the lakes of the Lop country in Eastern Turkestan. A shallow salt lake is soon filled up with solid matter, and the water is forced to seek a lower depression. In this way they move about in course of time, and now it is the turn of the old road between Jandak and Semnan to lie at least partially under water.

The Jandak natives had also some knowledge of the road which formerly led from Cheshme-kerim to this place crossing right through the desert, but they said that it had long been abandoned, partly because there was no use for it, and partly also because the desert in this region had now been impassable for years. We had, therefore, no cause to be vexed that we did not try it, though at Kuh-i-nakshir we had been tempted to make the trial. The old herdsman who there told us it was impossible had spoken the truth.

From such information about old routes one can, however, draw interesting conclusions. They may certainly