

A number of villagers insisted that this calamity of a change of course and the birth of a new river was due to canals being cut to irrigate the grazing-grounds north of the Chong Köl, and the villagers wished to revenge themselves on the big "bais" who had done so. This explanation, however, can carry no weight. The situation seems to be that there has been an accumulation of water in the area south-west of Kurla which is now (November 1928) quite impassable except by boat. The channel of the Yarkand River has, in course of time, become choked. There is thus a barrier of sand which has diverted the drainage of the Chong Köl farther east. This immense flow of water, meeting the Konche Darya, has taken along with it most of the water of that river. The result of this is that the Konche Darya below its junction with the Chong Köl water only receives some surplus water, just as the Yarkand Darya does. The surplus water occurs in October and is due to the irrigation water being turned off the land at the end of the season in the areas north and west of Chong Köl. What is remarkable, however, is that the Chong Köl water should have gone beyond the Konche Darya. It would seem more natural to combine with the latter river, and make a larger channel of the already existing one. The end of the Yangi or Qum Darya is said to be a large swamp west and north-west of the Loulan area, so that the ancient site is now only accessible from the east and south, *i.e.* from the Lop Nor direction.

This account may seem fantastic to those accustomed to rivers flowing in regular beds, with perhaps a rare and local divergence of a few yards. As a matter of fact, there is nothing unnatural about what has occurred. The rivers that drain into the area between the Tien Shan and the Kunlun pour themselves into a vast plain of sand, broken only by dunes or ridges themselves the result of fluvial action, or by equally unstable undulations produced by the wind. There is really nothing to control the course of a river once it has entered on this welter of sand. The channel that it carves for itself cannot, from its nature, have any permanence. Indeed, it is rather a source of wonder that there are not more changes in the beds of the rivers which discharge their vast volume of water into the fickle sands of the Taklamakan desert.

THE DUKE OF SPOLETO'S EXPEDITION TO THE KARAKORAM

Communicated by Major Kenneth Mason, Survey of India

NEWS has been received from Kashmir of the return of the Duke of Spoleto's Italian expedition from the Karakoram. The party was organized as follows: H.R.H. the Duke of Spoleto (leader), Commander Mario Cugia (second in command), Signor U. Balestreri (in charge of climbing and caravan), Colonel Gino Allegri (doctor), G. Chiardola (topographer), Professors V. Ponti, A. Desio, L. Di Caporiacco. There were also a cinematographer, a wireless operator, and two experienced Courmayeur guides, Evaristo Croux and Leone Bron. The expedition arrived in India in February and March, and left Srinagar in three parties on March 27 and 30 and April 3.

By the middle of May this strong party was concentrated at Ordokas, at an altitude of 13,900 feet, 17 miles up the Baltoro glacier from its snout. The Duke of Spoleto here established his base camp on the site of the depot formed in 1909 by his uncle, the Duke of the Abruzzi. After a brief period of bad weather a preliminary reconnaissance was made to the summit of the Muztagh pass, crossed with so much difficulty from the north by Sir Francis Younghusband in September 1887 on his famous journey from Peking to India. This reconnaissance proved the Muztagh pass to be practicable, and a party of three climbers and a geologist was formed for the survey of the Middle Shaksgam. Success attended this journey. The Muztagh pass, 19,030 feet, was crossed and the Sarpo Laggo glacier and valley descended to the junction with the Shaksgam river. From here the main valley of the Shaksgam was followed up, past the snouts of the Gasherbrum and Urdok glaciers, discovered in 1889 by Sir Francis Younghusband. The valley beyond the Urdok glacier was now traversed for some 20 miles, to the west bank of the Kyagar glacier, discovered and surveyed by Major Kenneth Mason, of the Survey of India, in 1926. His cairns, placed for the stereographic survey of the Shaksgam on the high ridge east of the Kyagar glacier, were identified. Owing to shortage of supplies no attempt was made to force a crossing of this glacier, which completely blocked the main valley, as in 1926; and the party returned down the Shaksgam.

Meanwhile another party ascended the main Baltoro glacier to Concordia, the junction of the Godwin Austen glacier descending from K₂, with the main trunk from between Gasherbrum and the Golden Throne of Sir Martin Conway's 1892 expedition. The Duke with two climbers reached a height of about 22,000 feet, from which point they could recognize Conway's "probable saddle," showing that there is a possible way over the watershed here to the Urdok glacier and Shaksgam valley.

At the end of July the expedition left the Baltoro glacier. A geological party explored the Trahonge glacier with the object of trying to make another pass to the Sarpo Laggo glacier, but this object was not attained. They also explored and made a topographical sketch of the Punmah glacier, which was first explored by Godwin Austen in 1861.

Besides the main objectives of the expedition, namely the crossing of the Muztagh pass, the exploration of the Middle Shaksgam, and the examination of the head of the Baltoro glacier, much valuable scientific work has been accomplished. A complete stereographic survey has been made of the Baltoro glacier, and topographical sketches have been made of the middle Shaksgam valley and of the Punmah glacier. Magnetic observations were made at Ordokas, Concordia, Paju, Askole and Dassu. Gravity pendulums were swung at Ordokas and Askole. The naturalist made valuable collections of insects in the Biaho valley, on the Baltoro glacier, and in the Sarpo Laggo, while the surgeon, whose specific duties seem to have been light owing to the general good health of the party, carried out important anthropological work in Baltistan.

The expedition returned to Srinagar by the Deosai route, and was to sail from Bombay early in October.