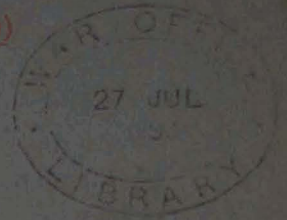


This report is transmitted for the per-
sonal information of *the Director*
of Military Intelligence
by direction of His Excellency the Com-
mander-in-Chief in India, and is to be
considered **Confidential**.
(Need not appear to annual returns).

*Not to be used or quoted in any but
confidential communications.*

C-13 (a)
S. A.

No. 6



2113

REPORTS

ON THE ROAD BETWEEN

CHILAS AND LULUSAR LAKE

VIA THE

BABUSAR PASS.

BY

LIEUTENANT J. A. DOUGLAS,

2ND BENGAL LANCERS,

AND

CAPTAIN C. H. POWELL,

1-1ST GURKHA RIFLES.



SIMLA :

PRINTED AT THE GOVERNMENT CENTRAL PRINTING OFFICE.

1893.

REPORTS

ON THE ROAD BETWEEN

CHILAS AND LULUSAR LAKE

VIA THE

BABUSAR PASS.

BY

LIEUTENANT J. A. DOUGLAS,

2ND BENGAL LANCERS,

AND

CAPTAIN C. H. POWELL,

1-1ST GURKHA RIFLES.



SIMLA :

PRINTED AT THE GOVERNMENT CENTRAL PRINTING OFFICE.

1893.

Intelligence Branch Diary No. 95 of 1893.
Chitral, Gilgit, and Pamirs.

Confidential.

REPORTS
ON THE ROAD BETWEEN
CHILAS AND LULUSAR LAKE
VIÀ THE
BABUSAR PASS.

These reports confirm former ones—by Captain Beley up to the Babusar from Khagan and by natives beyond—regarding the Babusar route. These officers have traversed the Burzil route, and are consequently able to compare the merits of the two routes. The advantages of the Khagan route are :—

- (1) A much shorter line.
- (2) It is within our territory up to Babusar.
- (3) It has only one high pass against two on the Bandipur-Bunji (Burzil) route.
- (4) Grass appears to be generally abundant ; also timber for shelter or making over-head cover for protection for winter traffic.
- (5) The pass is easy and open ; it was crossed easily on the 2nd June, and appears to compare favourably with the Burzil.

The main disadvantage is that it is flanked by the independent tribes of Allai and Kohistan.

As the use of this route might cause great economy to Government in provisioning Gilgit, I would suggest Captain Yielding reporting upon it during the open season from a Commissariat and Transport point of view.

SIMLA ;

The 21st June 1893.

E. R. E.

I.

Report on the road from Basal (1½ miles south of the Lulusar Lake) to Chilas by the Babusar pass, by Lieutenant F. A. Douglas, 2nd Bengal Lancers, dated Camp Basal, 4th June 1893.

The distance from Basal to the top of the pass is about 12 miles. The regular road from Basal runs along the right bank of the stream to the south end of the lake, where it crosses by a ford. This ford is quite shallow at present, but I am told that it is sometimes difficult later on. After crossing, the track

runs along the hillside on the east of the lake. It is rough in places, but the ground is easy ; there is very little rock, and a small amount of work would make it a good mule-road. The northern end of the lake is about $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Basal. Thence the track runs along the left bank of the Gittidas stream. There is a good deal of snow in patches on this side of the valley at present, but the track appeared to be quite practicable ; it is a very easy line, with no rock, and would require little making. Above the mouth of the Loi Halol Nala the north side of the valley is equally easy, and is clear of snow till within a mile of the top of the pass. There is a footpath along this side, and it would probably be the best line for a new road. The present road fords the stream about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the top of the pass, and ascends by a fairly steep gradient. This was all under snow when we crossed on the 2nd June, but a good deal was fresh snow fallen within the last ten days, and will probably clear off the lower part in a few days. There is snow on the top of the pass and for about a mile on the north side, but some of this is fresh, and it should be almost clear by the middle of the month. The descent on the north side is quite gradual and easy, the road going first north-east for $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile, and then turning north and running down the left bank of the stream. Descent in first mile from top of pass 900 feet. The upper part of the valley is very open, and the road chiefly over grassy slopes with no steep gradient.

The distance from the top of the pass to Thak is $13\frac{1}{2}$ miles. There is a very fair road the whole way. It is rough in places, but very little work would make it quite practicable for mules.

At $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from top of pass the Tatawai Nala is crossed ; there is a track up this, and a pass at the top into Loi Halol. At $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles the village of Upper Babusar, and at $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles Lower Babusar.

These villages contain only seven houses between them, and could not be depended on for any supplies. Below Babusar the road is through pine forest along the left bank of the stream. It crosses to the right bank at $8\frac{1}{2}$ miles (from top of pass), recrossing about a mile lower down. At both places there are good bridges made out of a single large plank. They would take mules. Two miles lower down the road again crosses for $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile. Bridges as before.

Thak is a large village containing 80 to 100 houses. The distance from Thak to Chilas is about 13 miles. For the first two miles the road is along the right bank of the stream and practicable for mules. Here the Niat valley joins, and the road crosses the Niat stream by a good bridge, and goes down the right bank, passing through the village of Basha at $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, opposite Singal at 4 miles, and through Dasar at 6 miles. This is the lowest village in the valley. Below the junction of the Niat stream the road is bad in many places and impracticable for mules. There was a mud flood down the valley last year which carried away the road in many places. The Thak stream is unfordable at present. It is bridged about 10 miles from Thak, where the new road up the Indus valley crosses it. There is a good road from there to Chilas.

As regards camping grounds, there is no wood in the Gittidas valley above the Lulusar lake, but a few juniper bushes in places. At the northern end of the lake there are dead stumps of birch on the hill side. On the north side of the pass wood is plentiful everywhere right down the valley, and a small party could encamp almost anywhere. Grass is plentiful between Basal and Babusar village,

and there is a good deal at Thak. My aneroid readings are as follows ; they are only approximate :—

Basal	...	...	...	...	10,400'
North end of lake	...	...	...	...	11,000'
Stream 2½ miles below top of pass, south side				...	12,100'
Top of pass	...	...	...	...	13,400'
1 mile from top of pass, north side				...	12,500'
2¾ miles " " "				...	10,900'
Lower Babusar village		...	...	...	9,200'
Thak village	...	...	...	...	6,500'
Basha "	...	...	...	...	5,500'
Dasar "	...	...	...	...	4,500'
Bridge at mouth of <i>nala</i> , about	...	...	...	...	3,500'
Chilas fort	...	...	...	...	4,100'

II.

Demi-official letter from Captain C. H. Powell, 1-1st Gurkha Rifles, commanding at Chilas, to Major A. R. Martin, Assistant Adjutant General, Punjab Frontier Force, dated Camp Lulusar lake, Khagan Valley, 5th June 1893.

It has occurred to me that you may be interested to have a few details regarding the route from Chilas over the Babusar pass to the Lulusar lake.

The route is an important one inasmuch as I fancy it is the intention of Government to run a road up the Khagan valley and over to Chilas should a favourable report be received as to the practicability of constructing a mule road. However, you will doubtless know more of this than I do.

Douglas is making sketches of the route. I am commanding at Chilas ; and accompanied him with an escort.

The route from Chilas runs up the Khanogah (or Thak) valley. We struck the valley proceeding from Chilas just above the Bunji-Chilas path (the one which is being constructed by our Engineer Officers). The track descends by an easy gradient to the stream (unfordable in summer), which it crosses a little further up by a huge tree thrown across. The right bank is adhered to the whole way to the village of Thak. Two smaller villages are passed before reaching this place, *viz.*, Dasar and Singal. The fruit grown in these villages is considerable : mulberries, apples, apricots, walnuts, and grapes. The vines at Thak are very numerous, and appear to grow luxuriantly. In some cases the villagers have trained them, but mostly they straggle wildly over trees. There is a very fair amount of cultivation round about Thak, grass exactly what one meets with in England. The village is most picturesquely situated on the summit of a fine precipice, a position impregnable from below, but could be turned from behind (north side). The houses are of wood, rudely built, mostly with flat roofs, and compact, not straggling. There are some 100 houses, supposed to contain 200 fighting men. We were very civilly received. The headmen assembled to make their *salaam*. They brought wood, milk, and walnuts without any demur, and also offered us *arak* made from grapes, a vile concoction ! There was no latent feeling of discontent apparent. We made Thak our first halting place, an easy march of some 13 miles. The path presented no difficulties, and only in some four or five places is it impracticable for mules. But these spots could be made passable in a few days by a pioneer regiment with pick, shovel,

and crowbar; perhaps a blast here and there. I noticed the dung of mules or donkeys, which goes to prove that animals are brought up here by the natives. I was most favourably impressed with the condition of the path.

Our next day's march was from Thak to the foot of the Babusar pass (north side). A bridge is necessary at Thak owing to the impracticability of carrying a path up the right bank owing to the precipices. The path from Thak ascends the left bank for $1\frac{1}{3}$ miles; then crosses by a very fair bridge, quite practicable for mules; crosses again to left bank a mile further on. About six miles from Thak the river is crossed again. None of these bridges need cost much. The river is not wide. Good sites can be found. Wood (*deodar*, *chir*, *chilgoza*) is in abundance. I would recommend the simple cantilever type.

Babusar village is next come to — on the left bank. There is an upper and lower village, with plenty of cultivation round each. I would recommend the upper village as a halting place; in fact higher up still, where there is excellent grazing for mules, and it is closer to the pass, which is always desirable. So far there are no engineering difficulties to be experienced in improving the path. The gradient is excellent throughout. The march is quite a short one for laden coolies or mules. I am inclined to think that laden mules could be brought here from Chilas in one day *with the road improved*.

Our 3rd day's march was over the Babusar pass to Lulusar lake. The summit is 13,500' by aneroid. The ascent absurdly easy. Most of the winter snow has melted, but we had a fair quantity of fresh, having had a week's bad weather previous to crossing. In fact it snowed for some time on the eve of our ascent. The nature of the mountain is grass, interspersed with stones. The path would, I should say, be carried along the west side of the *nala* being more exposed to the sun; consequently winter snows would melt much sooner. There is no rock cutting anywhere to be encountered, nothing but soft grass land, and this right away to the summit. The top is really a ridge and fairly flat. On the south side one looks down on the head of the Khagan valley, which immediately below the pass is fairly broad, and containing splendid pasture lands, through which flows a gentle stream.

The descent from the summit of the pass is along a mountain side covered with grazing and occasional stones, but nothing of a rocky nature. The path would descend gradually to the stream in one long line without any zigzags. Then continue along right bank of Khagan stream till junction of Botogah Nala (Loihalol it is apparently called on this side). Here it would be necessary to cross to left bank, along which the road would be carried as far as Lulusar lake. This is as far as we have come. We are halting here to-day, and to-morrow return *via* the Botogah pass to Chilas to report on that route. There is a report that it is a still easier route! That remains to be seen.

I am delightfully surprised at the extreme practicability of this route to Chilas. What it is down the Khagan valley I am unable to say, but I fancy Government is chiefly concerned with the route north of the Babusar to Chilas, the Khagan valley being well known.

In my humble opinion Government should lose no time in constructing this road as soon as possible, and would go so far as to suggest another pioneer regiment being sent up to expedite the work. It is merely a matter of improving the

present path, which I take it pioneers are capable of doing. There is no necessity of letting the work out to contractors at the enormous rate of Rs. 3,500 a mile, as on the Kashmir-Gilgit road ?

The advantages to be gained in having a second route to Gilgit are numerous. The provisioning of Chilas should be carried out by the Babusar route.

We have now 300 troops in Chilas besides followers ; the provisioning is a most difficult question ; some 300 Balti coolies are employed in carrying grain from Bunji along the new Indus path, which grain comes originally from Kashmir, a tremendous roundabout way.

These Balti coolies suffer horribly on this route during the summer months. The heat is intense, and marches long. It is most pitiable to see the poor wretches, who are frequently to be seen crying. But it is a necessary evil, the only way of provisioning Chilas till this Babusar route is opened, and I will be bold enough to say that this could be effected during the present summer if action is taken immediately, and Government enters into the necessity of it. Where there is a will there is a way, and in this case the " way " is one of the easiest.

I look upon it as a strategical line of route, the completion of which should be carried out with the least possible delay, and moreover one which has so many advantages from a financial point of view. The provisioning of Chilas must be cheaper by this route than round by Bunji.

To go more into detail :—

The Bandipur-Gilgit road has two snow passes—Tragbal and Burzil, both of which have long snow trudges some two miles in length, an immense disadvantage when transport is considered. The Babusar can scarcely be called a pass in Alpine phraseology. It is really a ridge, but one having an elevation of 13,500'. But it has this advantage over the Tragbal and Burzil passes, (1) it has no long snow trudges at a high elevation on ascent to the top and down again immediately the other side ; (2) it is open for mule traffic much sooner in the year.

Again there is no difficulty about fodder for mules. The head of the Khagan is one mass of grazing land. The same on the north side of Babusar. Plenty also at Thak. At Chilas there is at present a difficulty ; but on my return I intend to do what I can to remedy this by planting fields of " rishka " (lucerne grass). There is really some grass to be got at Chilas, though not in very large quantities.

There is another point I feel very keen on—carrying a line of telegraph by the Babusar route to Chilas, Bunji, and Gilgit. I have travelled from Bandipur to Bunji, and have not the slightest hesitation in saying that the Kashmir line should be discontinued, and brought up *via* Abbottabad, Khagan, Babusar, and Chilas, and thence on to Gilgit.

The winter snows are less likely to break the line on this route than on the Bandipur-Bunji line. When I crossed the Tragbal in May last, I found the telegraph wire broken in two places.

Yet another point—the Royal Mail. I believe this would be a much sounder route, and a more expeditious one than *via* Kashmir. I have no

doubt the Deputy Commissioner at Abbottabad could make the necessary arrangements on the Khagan side; and I feel sure there would be no difficulty in arranging with the Thak people, who would take the portion from Chilas to Lulusar lake. Several letters have already been sent from Chilas by these men, who have gone as far as Khagan; in fact to the Deputy Commissioner. The Thak men raised not the slightest demur, and from the hospitable manner in which we were received at Thak, I am convinced of their good feeling. We had ten coolies from this village; they gave no trouble whatever, and were most willing.

I am very keen on the opening up of a road by the Babusar. I don't think I have exaggerated the easiness of the route in any way. There would be some four or five cantilever bridges to construct; wood plentiful. There are no side *naals* to be bridged; yes, there is one just below Thak. Real stiff rock work there is none. I should say very little blasting would be necessary along the whole route.

We return by the Botogah to-morrow, reaching Chilas on the fourth day.

I am sending this down to the Officer Commanding Pioneers (23rd I think it is). I hear they have a Field Post Office. I was in hopes of meeting the regiment but hear they are some marches off.

