

[between Lulan and Sa-Chow] are many evil demons and hot winds: those who encounter them all die without exception. There are no flying birds above, no roaming beasts below. Everywhere as one gazes, as far as the eye can reach in search of the onward way, it would be impossible to know the route but for the dead men's decaying bones which show the direction." In the course of a few centuries, a great change apparently took place, causing the abandonment of one of the chief trade routes of antiquity in favor of one much longer, but better supplied with water. Hedin found what appear to be the cairns marking this ancient road, and also another set branching from the main route about halfway from Sa-Chow to Lulan and leading off to the northwest, probably to Turfan. When I crossed the line which the old main road must have followed, I picked up a flat ring of iron about two inches in diameter, apparently part of a bridle. In the region where the road was located, Hedin's camels had to go eleven days without water, and mine seven. Even if the Tarim River followed its old course to Lulan, the traveler who attempted to follow the ancient road from Sa-Chow either to Lulan or Turfan would be obliged to make a waterless march of over a hundred miles. It seems highly improbable that one of the main trade routes of antiquity from China to the west ever followed such a course, especially when a better was available farther to the north or south. It would be most surprising if a man of Lulan made a business of letting out horses and oxen to perish on such a road. If, however, the climate of antiquity was such that the number of springs was larger, and that the existing salt springs were