

fectly level and almost ideal in texture. By way of the higher old road, above the bluffs, the distance is a mile or more greater, and the track runs through heavy sand in some places, and up and down in crossing valleys in others. Along both of the ancient roads, as well as along the modern road, the country is absolute desert, with neither water, wood, nor forage from Chindelik to Sachgan Sai. It is scarcely probable that the old routes involving an extra day's journey would ever have been followed, if the shorter modern route had been practicable.

When I questioned Tokhta Akhun, our accurate and much-traveled Loplik guide, he told what he knew of the old roads: —

“Yes, I know about the road at the foot of the bluffs. When I was a boy, there was a little old man, a hundred years old, I think, and all bent up with age. He said that long ago when the lake was bigger than now, the Loplifs used to bring fish in canoes to Lachin, where canoes cannot now come. They loaded the fish on donkeys, and carried them to Tung Hwang to sell. Here at Chindelik, the old man said, the road made a big bend to the south which it does not now make. This road at the foot of the bluffs is the one. Why did they go that long way? I don't know. Perhaps the modern road was muddy. A few years ago [during the recent period of high water, it will be remembered], when I came this way, there was a place halfway from Chindelik to Sachgan Sai where there was bad mud for two or three hundred yards, and we had to help the donkeys.”

“How about the other road, the one on top of the bluffs?”
I asked.