

“I never heard of it,” was the answer; “but I know that one summer a half-witted man of our village [Abdal] tried to go across the gravel to Tung Hwang, and died of thirst. A Chinese amban and his servant, with a camel, came the same way from Tung Hwang one fall. The amban reached Charklik, but the servant died of thirst on reaching the salt spring at Dunglik. The Chinese know all old things. Perhaps the amban had read of this road. And I remember that my grandfather used to say that when he was a boy, a man named Osman Bai and his servants tried the same way across the gravel in summer, but got lost. The party scattered everywhere in search of water. One reached Lachin, and another Kurgan Sai, but Osman Bai and two or three others died.”

Apparently, the present route has been in use only one or two hundred years. Previously, the lake was so high that the salt plain which the road now traverses was muddy, or perhaps under water. Every one was obliged to follow the circuitous dry route along the twelve-foot strand. Still earlier, this too was impracticable, seemingly because the water actually reached the strand, and little inlets cut across the course of the later road. Travelers necessarily used the still longer and harder route over the gravel and sand above the bluffs. Unfortunately, we have no means of dating the road, but probably it was used in mediæval times after the abandonment of the Lulan route.

The inferred history of Lop-Nor during the last two thousand years may now be summed up. We have first a comparatively large lake. It is said to have had a length of seventy-five miles each way, and this was in spite of the