

gested by HUDSON, because the profit to be derived from it had become obvious to even the more barbaric peoples along the routes.

A. THE ROADS.

In considering the course of the main roads along which the silk trade flourished I restrict myself to those parts which fall inside the eastern Tarim Basin and its nearest surroundings. They have been tentatively marked on the map Fig. 4. Lateral roads also existed but they have been left out of the discussion here as they are of more local interest.

Ch'ang-an, the Han capital of China, may be regarded as the true starting point of the Silk Road, and its western terminus was probably Antioch in Syria. This means a distance of nearly 7000 km.

At Tun-huang the road divided into two branches, and later on a third was added (Chavannes 1905, pp. 528 ff). Baron von RICHTHOFEN, the famous German geographer, has coined the name Silk Road for these ancient caravan routes, and this name has since been widely used by Westerners, though hardly by the Chinese themselves.

From Tun-huang the southern route ran inside or along the Astin-tagh as far as Miran, and thence followed the southern rim of the vast Taklamakan desert to Khotan, Yarkend and across the Pamirs.

The northern or new road was opened in the period 1—5 A. D. and ran north-westwards from Tun-huang (or the old Yü-men-kuan outside Tun-huang) to Turfan, whence it may have followed the present trunk road via Urumchi to the Ili valley. It is said to have rejoined the Road of the Centre at Kucha. The course of this road between Yü-men-kuan and Turfan is absolutely unknown, and I have marked it on the map Fig. 4 only after much hesitation.

The present trunk road from Turfan to Qara-shahr and Korla cannot have been of any use for the through traffic with silk until after A. D. 127, the year when Yen-ch'i (Qara-shahr) submitted to Chinese power. But by this Tun-huang—Turfan road silk reached the Wu-sun in the Ili valley and around the Issiq-köl, and may have been forwarded westwards by the Wu-sun.

After the capture of Hami in A. D. 73 the present cart roads Anhsi—Hami and Tun-huang—Hami—Turfan were opened by the Chinese for a short period, but this part was very insecure as long as the Huns exercised any power south of the T'ien-shan mountains.

The Road of the Centre, which is probably of the same age as the southern one became by far the most important line of communication for the overland trade between China and the West from the end of the second century B. C. until the change in the course of the lower Tarim made it untrafficable sometime during the second