

roads along eastern T'ien-shan. The Chinese had consequently to choose a more southerly route, and thus the Road of the Centre came into existence.

To facilitate the desert crossing arrangements with advanced depôts NE of the Lou-lan station were made, and travellers, at least those of any importance, were met with supplies before reaching the first settlement at Lop-nor. The native Lou-lan people had to perform this task and they had also to serve as guides. They apparently misused their position and waylaid Chinese caravans together with the Huns and were thus a great obstacle to trade and traffic. Such events are described in Chinese records, and they forced the Chinese to deal drastically with the indigenous Lou-lan population.

As far as is known, the ruined watch-tower called L. J. formed the last station on the Lou-lan side of the salt-crust. At present there is still fresh water as far east as this point, and it is more than likely that the station L. J. was erected at the very last place where drinking water was obtainable in the days of the opening of the Silk Road. It served as a landmark for the travellers, it was the first (or last) place with supplies, and here was probably some arrangement for crossing the river.

At the fortifications L. F. and L. E. which are next met with on the straight road to Lou-lan station there must also have been river-branches, and the structures were certainly erected there for strategical reasons: to create an obstacle for enemies approaching along the main road, but also to facilitate the river-crossing for peaceful travellers and to furnish them with accommodation and supplies.

The position of T'u-ken near the northernmost source of fresh water is of importance in this connection as it protects the flank of the Silk Road from attacks from the north.

In time of peace the "through traffic" may have passed via L. J. to the north of the delta without touching the Lou-lan station and the fortifications in a line to the north-east of it. In this case T'u-ken would be one of the main stations between Yü-men-kuan and Ying-p'an.

From Lou-lan the road must have followed the bed of the lower Tarim (the present Qum-darya) passing Ying-p'an and then along the line of watch-towers to Korla. From there on, the ancient and modern highways cover each other practically the whole way to Kashgar.

When travelling by car between Korla and Bugur in 1934 I noticed ruined watch-towers in only three places along the road, and heard of a fourth, but there may of course exist more.

The first one stands on the western outskirts of the Korla oasis immediately to the south of the road. The second one lies a little to the east of the first one and to the north of the road. It is marked on STEIN's map as a ruined post. The third