

northern branches of the Silk Road, but the Road of the South was hardly reached by these busy nomad hordes of the North. When also this southern road was made untrafficable to peaceful merchant caravans, the interruption was caused by the hostile and bellicose Tibetans, who advanced from their lofty mountain regions in the south. In 670 A. D. they made their first mighty expansion northwards, conquering the whole of the Tarim Basin. Driven back once they returned in 766, when also Kansu was conquered. They erected strongholds near to, or on, the Road of the South (e. g. Miran, Mazar-tagh), and the east-westerly traffic on the old trade routes was cut off. When the Tibetan power was definitely broken by the Uigurs soon after the middle of the ninth century, trade developed anew; and even among the scanty finds from Vash-shahri this turn of events is reflected in the occurrence of glazed wares, which must have been imported from Honan in Central China. Here travelled MARCO POLO in the thirteenth century, and it was in use along its whole extent from Kashgar to Tun-huang long after the time when the famous Venetian put his marvellous itinerary on record. It is really only one minor part of this road that has come into disuse in our own days: the stretch between Miran and Tun-huang. Though even this part is used by camel caravans in rare instances nowadays; that it does not see any heavy traffic is mostly due to the political conditions.

If the progress of modern civilization ever continues along the same lines as hitherto, and the Turkistan roads should be turned into motor highways, this Road of the South will hardly be considered, as there is too much drift sand along it. And the drift sand is the most troublesome obstacle to motor traffic. It thus seems as if this road had served its purpose as a channel for great transit trade. It will probably remain what it now is, a local road of very relative importance.