

that the incrustation of salt is several feet thick, and in some parts "of almost unknown depth." The salt surface looked like ice, and was broken up into polygonal blocks about 2 feet in diameter. The guide said the salt deposit was as thick as 10 feet in the middle, that the salt rested on a quagmire, and that if a hole were dugged the whole surrounding space would be flooded by water. When the snow melts on the surrounding hills a sheet of water spreads over the salt, but it never loses any of its solidity. The layer of salt is perfectly level except for small inequalities. It took eight hours to cross, and therefore cannot be less than 20 miles broad. On the southern side the salt crust became thinner, until at length it broke under the weight of the animals. Then the road led south-westwards to Cha-taghi, which "lay amidst deep sand, which it was very difficult to make our way through. It is curious to notice that while to the north of the Darya-i-Nemek no sand is visible, the whole of the southern side is covered with huge sandhills, which stretch from fifteen or sixteen miles inland."

Cha-taghi, as I have mentioned above, is one of those comprehensive names which present a whole landscape to our minds. It signifies "saxaul well"; saxauls always grow in sand, and the water in sand is sweet. A Cha-taghi, then, can be situated only in a sandy desert. At the place in question there was an old caravanserai, "which had been completely swallowed up in the sand with the exception of two rooms, the only means of access to which was through the roof," a clear proof of the encroachment of the sand in a region which was formerly free from sand.

To the lines of the Shah reproduced above Schindler adds in a note: "It would be quite impossible to prove that the lake did or did not disappear at the time mentioned in the tradition, but the legend, as it is, proves that at some time before the advent of Islâm, a part of inner Persia was covered by water. There were probably a number of distinct lakes, now patches of salt desert, which are spoken of in the popular legends of Persia as a vast sea extending from Kazvîn on the north to Kermân and Mekrân in the south, from Sâvah on the west to the Sîstân depression in