

so manifestly overdone that it failed to make an impression. Even the other men, who like my Kashmiri cook equally dreaded the long desert tramp, burst out laughing—and my worthy old follower soon recovered his senses.

After about four miles we approached the northern extremity of a large sheet of water forming part of the Chainut-köl, which Mullah and Tokhta Akhun declared to be the terminal lake regularly fed by the floods of the Yangi-su branch of the dying Tarim. Here they showed us hidden among high reeds a pool where the water was drinkable for animals and covered with a thin sheet of ice. So the spare rations were quickly deposited in charge of Aziz, the Ladaki, and Karim Akhun, who had so far acted as the Surveyor's pony attendant, with instructions to send them on to our proposed half-way depot as soon as the donkeys should have returned to fetch them. I was glad to see that the donkeys could be given a good drink here; for this made it possible to take them and their ice loads on for another two marches.

The point was a regular camping-place for the 'Balekchis' or fishermen from Kum-chapkan and Abdal on their expeditions to the lagoons of this neighbourhood. From Hedin's book and the sketch-map of Lop-nor accompanying it I could also make sure that the route we had so far followed was the same which had brought him to Abdal after he had struck the northern edge of the Tarim delta or Kara-koshun on his journeys across the Lop desert in 1900 and 1901. I knew that, in order to reach the ruined sites first discovered by him, we should now have to strike a route to the north-north-east which would necessarily lead near those he had followed in the reverse direction. But there would be nothing to guide us, only the position of the ruins as indicated in his route-map and the compass. Neither of the Lop hunters had ever visited the ruins from this side. But for about one day's march to the north they were still familiar with the ground from former hunting trips, and on one important point they could definitely assure me. The newly formed large shallow lake, which in 1901 had caused Hedin so much trouble to get round, had since almost completely dried up again, leaving only