

the territory of the nomadic Jô Ch'iang tribe, who grazed in the hills to the south-west, and then reaching the southern rim of the Tarim Basin about Charklik, led westwards to the Pamirs. A look at the map shows that the route meant is the one which skirts the high Altin-tagh range, and still serves as the usual connection between Tun-huang and Charklik during that part of the year when the shorter desert route is closed by the heat and the absence of drinkable water. In the autumn of 1907 Rai Ram Singh surveyed it on his return to Charklik.

The second route, which the Wei-liô calls the central one, started from the 'Jade Gate' westwards and, after passing a number of desert localities which I shall have occasion to discuss hereafter, turned to the north-west and arrived at 'old Lou-lan.' This bearing, and the subsequent mention of Kuchar as a point reached by going west of Lou-lan, make it clear that by the latter must be meant here the ruined site to the north of Lop-nor with its fortified Chinese station which I had excavated in December.

The third route, which is called 'the new,' was directed to the north-west and, passing some localities which are not yet identified, debouched on Turfan. With this last route lying so far away to the north I had no concern for the time. But there were strong grounds for assuming that the track we were actually following to the north-east would after a few further marches bring us on to the ancient route which in the Wei-liô figures as the route of the centre. It was equally evident, as recognized already by M. Chavannes, that the latter route was the same as 'the northern route' of the Han Annals, and that the change in its designation was merely a result of the opening of the 'new' northern route *via* Turfan which took place about the year 2 A.D.

I was fully prepared to appreciate the historical value of these early notices, though on a brief day's halt in the desert I could scarcely give them that close study which critical analysis needed. But, I confess, I felt still more grateful for the records which wove something like human interest round the bare facts of historical geography. Many a pious Buddhist pilgrim from China must have