

daybreak from the western gate one reaches the eastern at nightfall." Its name is accounted for by a legend, according to which the wind constantly blowing had given the shape of a dragon turned westward to what was once the line of a canal skirting the ancient town. Whatever may have been in reality the particular feature in which the imagination of those early wayfarers recognized their favourite monster, the dragon, I have little doubt that the whole story of the ruined town was first suggested by those fantastically eroded clay terraces encountered along the route from Panja onwards. We know well how large a part popular imagination, stimulated by peculiar topographical features, has played in the ancient folklore both of the East and the West.

Our location of this imaginary 'Town of the Dragon' is strongly supported by the detailed reference which the text makes in connection with it to a vast salt-covered area. "This region extends for a thousand Li (or roughly two hundred miles); it is made up entirely of salt, but of salt in a hard and solid state. The travellers passing there spread pieces of felt for their animals to take their rest upon. On digging down below the surface one finds blocks of salt, big, like large cushions, heaped up regularly. Haze and floating clouds rarely allow the stars and sun to be seen; of living creatures there is little, but plenty of demons and strange beings." It is quite certain that this graphic description refers to the vast salt-encrusted old lake bed which the traveller from Abdal or Miran skirts almost all the way to beyond Achchik-kuduk.

This conclusion is confirmed by the matter-of-fact account which the commentator appends as to the position of the region containing the 'Town of the Dragon.' On the west it is said to touch Shan-shan, or the Charklik district; on the east side it extends to the 'Three Deserts of Sand,' which we know otherwise to represent the desert west of Tun-huang. "It forms the northern extremity of the lake; it is on this account that the P'u-ch'ang or Lop-nor also bears the name of Salt Lake." A glance at the map will show how closely these bearings agree with our identification of the 'Town of the Dragon.' Nor can it