

Sir Aurel Stein remarks (*Ancient Khotan*, I., p. 436): "Marco Polo's description, too, 'of the Province of Charchan' would agree with the assumption that the route west of Charchan was not altogether devoid of settlements even as late as the thirteenth century. . . . [His] account of the route agrees accurately with the conditions now met with between Niya and Charchan. Yet in the passage immediately following, the Venetian tells us how 'when an army passes through the land, the people escape with their wives, children, and cattle a distance of two or three days' journey into the sandy waste; and, knowing the spots where water is to be had, they are able to live there, and to keep their cattle alive, while it is impossible to discover them.' It seems to me clear that Marco Polo alludes here to the several river courses which, after flowing north of the Niya-Charchan route, lose themselves in the desert. The jungle belt of their terminal areas, no doubt, offered then, as it would offer now, safe places of refuge to any small settlements established along the route southwards."

XXXIX., p. 197.

OF THE CITY OF LOP.

Stein remarks, *Ruins of Desert Cathay*, I., p. 343: "Broad geographical facts left no doubt for any one acquainted with local conditions that Marco Polo's Lop, 'a large town at the edge of the Desert' where 'travellers repose before entering on the Desert' *en route* for Sha chou and China proper, must have occupied the position of the present Charklik. Nor could I see any reason for placing elsewhere the capital of that 'ancient kingdom of Na-fo-po, the same as the territory of Lou-lan,' which Hiuan Tsang reached after ten marches to the north-east of Chü-mo or Charchan, and which was the pilgrim's last stage before his return to Chinese soil."

In his third journey (1913-1916), Stein left Charchan on New Year's Eve, 1914, and arrived at Charkhlik on January 8, saying: "It was from this modest little oasis, the only settlement of any importance in the Lop region, representing Marco Polo's 'City of Lop,' that I had to raise the whole of the supplies, labour, and extra camels needed by the several parties for the explorations I had carefully planned during the next three months in the desert between Lop-nor and Tunhuang."

"The name of LOB appears under the form *Lo pou* in the *Yuan-shi*, s.a. 1282 and 1286. In 1286, it is mentioned as a