

canals from which these receive irrigation are fed partly by springs and partly direct from the outfall of the river. It was of interest to note how small was the volume of water carried by these canals as compared with that subsequently measured in the canals from the Muz-art river, which irrigates the principal portion of the oasis. Near the canal of the Öch-kara tract a hearty welcome awaited me on the part of Sāhib 'Alī Khān and the sturdy Pathān traders under him. Escorted by them through lively village lanes we reached the pleasant suburban garden, near the eastern bank of the river and not far from the town, that had been secured from the Qāzī of Kuchā as my camping-place and temporary base at the head-quarters of the district.

After this summary account of the region crossed on our journey from Korla to Kuchā it still remains for us to consider the itinerary describing the route between the two places as it ran in T'ang times.¹ M. Chavannes's extract from the *T'angshu*, Chap. XLIII. b, renders it as follows: 'After leaving *Yen-ch'i* (i. e. Kara-shahr) 焉耆, by going to the west, one passes at the end of 50 *li* the defile of the Iron Gates, *T'ieh-mên kuan* 鐵門關. 20 *li* farther on one arrives at the town of the military post of *Yü-shu* 于術. 200 *li* farther on one arrives at the military post of *Yü-lin* 榆林. 50 *li* farther one arrives at the military post of *Lung-ch'üan* 龍泉. 60 *li* farther one arrives at the military post of *Tung-i-p'i* 東夷僻. 70 *li* farther one arrives at the military post of *Hsi-i-p'i* 西夷僻. 60 *li* farther one arrives at the military post of *Ch'ih-an* 赤岸. 120 *li* farther one arrives at the seat of the protectorate of *An-hsi* 安西 (Kuchā).'

T'angshu
itinerary
from Kara-
shahr to
Kuchā.

In addition to the terminal point of the route, which, as we shall see, can be safely placed in close vicinity to the present town of Kuchā, we can definitely locate also the starting-point and the two initial stages. I have shown in *Serindia* that the 'defile of the Iron Gates', *T'ieh-mên kuan*, mentioned also in the Chin Annals, undoubtedly corresponds to the river defile above Korla through which the Konche-daryā has cut its way from the Baghrash lake into the plains of the Tārīm basin.² The distance of 50 *li* indicated by the itinerary agrees closely enough with that from Baghdād-shahri, the site of the ancient capital of Yen-ch'i or Kara-shahr (Map No. 25. A. 1), to the point where the road leading towards Korla enters the eastern end of the defile. The 'town of the military post of *Yü-shu*' can on general topographical grounds be safely located near the eastern extremity of the Korla oasis which the high road reaches after passing through the defile for a distance of about seven miles.

Stations
from Kara-
shahr to
Korla.

Beyond this point we have at present no help for the identification of the successive stages beyond that which the relative distances stated in the itinerary can give. With regard to these it should at once be pointed out that their aggregate length, 560 *li*, distinctly suggests that the ancient highway followed a line shorter than that of the present cart-road between Korla and Kuchā. On this our measurements by cyclometer amounted to a total of 175 miles between the towns of Korla and Kuchā. Reference to the map (No. 17. B, D. 1) will show that from the oasis of Bugur to Kuchā the road now follows what is practically a straight line along the foot of the outermost hills of the T'ien-shan. It is by nature the easiest line for traffic, and the succession of ruined towers and stations met along it from Lai-su onwards, as described below, leaves no doubt that the same line was followed by the ancient highway.

Western
portion of
route.

The position is different as regards the eastern and longer portion of the road—that between Korla and Bugur. Here the present road makes a not inconsiderable detour to the north, as Map No. 21. A-D. 1 shows, being obliged, in order to keep within reach of water and supplies, to follow the chain of existing small oases all of which lie quite close to where the streams irrigating them debouch from the foot-hills. If we may assume that these streams in ancient times carried their water for some distance farther south into what is now scrub-covered desert—and the areas of old and now

Shorter
route W. of
Korla.

¹ Cf. Chavannes, *Turcs Occid.*, pp. 7 sq.

² See *Serindia*, iii. p. 1228.