

and authority. In the time of the Khitáy lots of traders used to come to Lob from Turfán, and Karáshahr, and Kúchá; they used to bring flour, sugar, honey, tea, cotton cloths, old clothes, spices, knives, needles, and such like, and barter them for otter skins, camels' wool, stags' horns, swans' down, furs of sorts, sheep, horses, and cows. All this trade has ceased now, but occasionally the Lob people bring their cattle, furs, &c., to Kúchá and Kúrla and go back with corn, flour, and cotton cloth."

Such is the result of my enquiries regarding the Lob division, and I have put it very much in the form I received it. It is certainly not without interest.

*Marálbáshí.*—This division occupies a wide extent of desert plain, and lies between the territories of Lob and Káshghar. Its north limit is at Kalpin on the Acsáy river, and its south at Mihnat *Ortang* on the Yarkand river, which to its junction with the Tárím also forms its east border; its west border is a wide sandy desert which joins the Káshghar territory at Yangabad. Its population is reckoned at 5,000 houses, or, at seven per house, 35,000 souls, and they are almost exclusively of an outcast Tartar tribe called Dol or Dolan, a term which is said to signify "boor." The general character of the country is an arid sandy waste, and the poverty of the people is in keeping with that of their country. Their principal settlement and headquarters are at Marálbáshí, which is also an important military post commanding the approaches to Káshghar and Yarkand from the north-east. The Chinese had a strong fort and garrison of 3,000 men here, and the Amír maintains the post with a garrison, however, of only 300 men.

The other settlements of the Dolan are mostly along the course of the Yarkand river, and next to their capital at Marálbáshí, which only contains 400 houses, is Bárchak in importance. It is situated at the junction of the Yarkand river with the Tárím, and contains 300 houses, and is an important military post, as it commands the routes from Aksú and Kúchá to the southward. The other principal settlements are Chárbágh or Jabbak, Tumshuk (where are the extensive ruins of an ancient city with stone walls and fragments of sculpture), Chílán, and Kalpin to the north, and Aksak Marál, Taskama, Markit, Mughol Tárím, Laelak, &c., to the south.

A peculiar feature of the Dolán settlements is the nature of their dwellings, which are all underground; a point in which they resemble the Dolpá of Tibet, as described in the *Táríkhi Rashidi* of Mirzá Hydar. These dwellings of the Dolán are described by my informants as consisting of oblong pits dug in the ground, and roofed with a thatch of reeds supported upon poplar beams. The roofs rise very little above the surface of the ground, and their settlements are consequently not discernible till the traveller is actually moving over the roofs. They are miserable hovels in which the family consorts with its cattle, sheep, and asses, but prove an efficient shelter from the keen frosts of winter, and afford a grateful retreat from the scorching heats of summer.

The Dolán, owing to the sterile nature of the soil, have next to no cultivation. They own small herds of oxen and flocks of goats and sheep; but their principal wealth is in asses of which humble, and in this country most useful, drudge they possess incredible numbers. Their trade and communications are almost exclusively with Yarkand, whither they carry to market fuel, potashes, salt, butter, and a sort of curd cheese called *Súzma*, together with the skins of foxes and birds, and a coarse cordage or rope made of the fibre of the poplar tree, as also another production from the same source, called *toghrágho*; it is a sort of fungous decay of the trunk of the poplar, and is sold in the bazars as a ferment in baking. They carry back in exchange for these cotton cloth (generally dyed of a drab colour) flour, bread, and the biscuits, called *cúlcha*, beef, horseflesh, boots, shoes, caps, &c.

The Dolán are a very poor and illiterate people. Their chief occupations are tending their herds, collecting fuel and impure desert salt for the city market, and trapping foxes and birds for their skins. Their arms are the matchlock and pike, but they are looked on as a mean and despicable set. They nominally profess Islam, and call their priests *Khoja*, and worship them instead of *Khuda*. They have no jealousy with respect to their women, and it is the custom for the master of the house to place his wife at the disposal of his guest and retire to a neighbour's hovel till his departure. So common, it is said, is this custom that the wife receives her