

In Chinese historical records there prevails a certain confusion as to the old names of Miran. STEIN and GILES place Yü-ni at Miran. According to the Former Han annals Yü-ni was the capital of Shan-shan (i. e. Lou-lan). I-hsün, which LI TAO-YÜAN gives as the capital, is identified with Charkhliq. From a T'ang itinerary which PELLLOT has made available in translation it is evident that I-hsün in T'ang time was equal to Miran. Yü-ni had already before this been identified with Charkhliq by GRENARD. The records are thus far from precise as to the places Yü-ni and I-hsün. And the identifications of e. g. STEIN and HERRMANN stand in contradiction to each other. As Charkhliq and Miran are situated only 80 km. from each other the confusion is understandable.

Present day Miran is just a small village situated some kilometres to the west of the ruins, on the left side of the brook Jaghan-sai, which once watered the Kohna-shahr as can be seen from old canals.

In our days Charkhliq is by far the most prominent of the two places and may really be called a town, especially as it is the administrative centre of the modern Lop region. Its superiority in size is of quite modern date. According to local opinion the water-supply available in the Charkhliq river is about the same as that in the Miran stream, though certain ground conditions are more favourable at Charkhliq than at Miran. In my opinion the resources of Charkhliq are by far superior to those of Miran. As conditions have hardly changed during the last 2,000 years it seems plausible to assign greater importance to Charkhliq than to Miran also in the days of Lou-lan, and thus make Charkhliq the site of the capital.

One might tentatively reconcile the different views as to the situation of Yü-ni and I-hsün by supposing that they both fall inside the Charkhliq oasis. As Yü-ni is called 'The old eastern town' by LI TAO-YÜAN, it may have been the eastern part of the oasis, and I-hsün the western part. It seems maybe far-fetched to have two names for one and the same oasis but one of them may render a name in another language. There are many examples of this in modern Sinkiang. The present provincial capital, for instance, has no less than four designations: Urumchi, Ti-hua, Hung-miao-tze and Sinkiang-ch'eng, three of which are Chinese.

When WEI-T'U-CH'I, a son of a Lou-lan king, after a long residence in China returned to his native country of Lou-lan to ascend the throne, he is said to have requested the Emperor to plant a military colony in the city of I-hsün, where the land was rich and fertile, to collect the grains and to heighten the prestige of the king. In reality it seems more plausible that the Chinese themselves dispatched this military force to keep an eye on the new ruler of Lou-lan. However, the king would certainly have had these soldiers much closer at hand in the oasis in which he himself resided that 80 km. away from it. This circumstance points to the proximity of Yü-ni and I-hsün.

GILES is also on the same path of thought but he explains that the capital was removed from Miran (Yü-ni) to Charkhliq (I-hsün) when the new king returned.