

This identification necessarily leads us to recognize in the territory of Shê-mi the valleys of Kāfiristān, which border on Chitrāl to the west and south, and I have already above had occasion to show how well this location agrees with the description of Shê-mi given by Sung Yün, who passed through it on his way from Badakhshān to Udyāna.²⁶ The further details concerning Chieh or Chieh-shih given by the T'ang Annals' notice also accord well. 'The climate is always warm; one finds there rice, wheat, millet, and beans; sheep and horses are reared.' This description is remarkably appropriate to the open and fertile part of the main valley which contains the group of large villages collectively known as Chitrāl, and which must at all times have formed the political centre of the whole territory now called Chitrāl or Kāshkār. Here, at an elevation of about 5,000 feet, both climate and produce closely resemble those of the Kashmīr valley.²⁷ The notice places Chieh at 12,000 li from the Chinese capital, and mentions in addition the custom there prevailing of abandoning dying people in the mountains. It also records an embassy sent to the Imperial Court in A.D. 619, with presents of precious girdles and cups in glass and rock crystal.

Shê-mi identified with Kāfiristān.

It only remains to point out that the identification of Chieh-shih, which is established thus by topographical arguments, finds support also on the philological side; for, as I have shown elsewhere, the Chinese forms of the name can easily be accounted for as attempts to transcribe the local name Kāshkār, or an earlier form of it.²⁸ The application of this term to the territory of Chitrāl is well attested by Muhammadan sources from a relatively early date, and it is still in current use throughout these regions alongside the name Chitrāl, which perhaps was properly applicable to the capital only.²⁹ *Chieh-shih*, as an attempt to represent Kāshkār by Chinese characters, has its exact parallels in the varying forms *Chieh-ch'a* (Fa-hsien), *Ch'i-sha* (Chih-mêng), *Chia-shih* (T'ang Annals), *Ch'ia-sha* (Hsi-yü-chi), by which Chinese authors of successive periods have endeavoured to give a phonetic rendering of the old name of Kāshgar, the Turkestān town and oasis.³⁰

Chieh-shih, an attempt to render Kāshkār.

It is more than mere chance which has preserved this glimpse of old Chitrāl history precisely for that period. M. Chavannes has made it clear, in his masterly analysis of the Central-Asian records furnished by the T'ang Annals,³¹ that the first half of the eighth century is a time of exceptional interest in the history of the great Central-Asian basins which extend east and west of the Pāmīrs. Chinese policy was then carrying on a protracted and vigorous struggle in the Tārīm Basin and the adjoining regions against two great powers for the control of the vast Central-Asian territories it had inherited from the Western Turks. Imperial power in those regions had to defend itself at the same time against Arab aggression from the west, and against the constant inroads which the Tibetans, then a nation of considerable offensive strength, were directing both into the basin of the Tārīm and into far-away Kan-su. In the course of this protracted struggle, which by the light of the Chinese historical records we can follow in its varying phases with tolerable accuracy, the endeavour of the Tibetans to join hands with the Arabs on the Oxus, and eventually to secure a fresh line of advance into Chinese Turkestān across the Pāmīrs, clearly defines itself. Formidable as the barriers raised by nature against aggression across the Hindukush and the Pāmīrs must seem to us, yet in reality the difficulties there encountered are far less than those which any large body of men would have to face in the endeavour to reach the Tārīm Basin from the inhabited parts of Tibet, across the high and forbiddingly desolate plateaus and ranges of the Kun-lun.

Importance of Chitrāl for Chinese dominion.

²⁶ See above, p. 9; also *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 14 sq.

²⁷ Cf. Biddulph, *Hindoo Koosh*, p. 60. Mughul Bēg, whose surveys are utilized by Raverty, says in his account of Kāshkār: 'Barley, wheat, and rice are produced in abundance'; see Raverty, *Notes on Afghānistān*, p. 153.

²⁸ Cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 15; Biddulph, *Hindoo Koosh*, pp. 58 sq.

²⁹ Raverty, *Notes on Afghānistān*, pp. 152 sqq., 161.

³⁰ Cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 48, where the references and Chinese characters for these forms have been recorded.

³¹ See his *Turcs occid.*, pp. 290-99.