

SECTION IV.—THE POSITION OF THE 'YANG BARRIER'

Identifica-
tion of Nan-
hu with
'Yang
barrier'.

After this survey of the old remains actually traced at Nan-hu it remains for us to consider whether the ancient frontier station west of Tun-huang, which under the name of *Yang kuan* 陽關, the 'Yang barrier', repeatedly figures in the Han Annals side by side with the more famous 'barrier of the Jade Gate' (*Yü-mên kuan*), is really to be located at this site. I found the claim to this proud identification put forward in a modern stone inscription which some learned Tun-huang Mandarin of antiquarian tastes had set up by the side of a small shrine, between the south face of the ruined shrine and the artificial lake feeding the Nan-hu canals. Topographical and antiquarian observations, gathered in the course of my explorations on the Tun-huang Limes, made this location of the 'Yang barrier' appear to me distinctly probable at the time, and the examination of all Chinese records at present accessible to me in translation has since confirmed me in this belief. The references to the Yang barrier contained in the Former Han Annals are so closely bound up with those made there to the 'Jade Gate' that their evidence can be properly utilized only if we take into full account the results which my explorations along the westernmost Limes, by combined archaeological observations and documentary finds, have established as to the true position of the Yü-mên barrier. The discussion of these results must necessarily be left for a subsequent chapter.¹ It will, therefore, be more convenient here to start, in our inquiry as to the position of the Yang barrier, from what later Chinese records can tell us.

Yang
barrier at
Shou-ch'ang
hsien or
Lung-lo.

These records are scanty enough; but there is fortunately among them one precise and distinctly helpful. According to a passage of the *Old T'ang Annals* quoted by M. Chavannes,^{1a} the Yang barrier was situated 6 li to the west of the sub-prefecture of Shou-ch'ang 壽昌, whereas the Yü-mên barrier was 118 li to the north-west of the same place. We learn from the passage also that the Shou-ch'ang sub-prefecture was the one known as *Lung-lo* 龍勒 under the Han which lay roughly south-west of Tun-huang.² That Shou-ch'ang is represented by the present oasis of Nan-hu is made quite certain by a passage of the *Tun-huang Lu*, a short geographical treatise on the Tun-huang region composed towards the close of the T'ang period, which Dr. L. Giles has translated from a manuscript found among the great collection of Chinese texts I secured at the 'Thousand Buddhas' of Tun-huang, and to which I shall have repeated occasion to refer hereafter.³ In this passage we find the river of Tun-huang, here called *Kan-ch'üan* ('sweet spring'), the present Tang Ho, spoken of as entering the Tun-huang district through the territory of Shou-ch'ang hsien in the south-west, and a glance at the map shows that by this *hsien*, or district town, must be meant the present Nan-hu. There is no other tract near the course of the Tang Ho which during historical times could have supported a settled population such as the establishment of a *hsien* presupposes.

Nan-hu
ruins mark
Shou-ch'ang
hsien.

The location of Shou-ch'ang at Nan-hu is fully confirmed by Dr. Giles from other Chinese records:⁴ 'Shou-ch'ang hsien, called after the Shou-ch'ang, a lake south of the town, was founded in [A.D.] 521 on the site of the ancient Lung-lo, but a few years later was incorporated in Ming-sha hsien [a designation of the Tun-huang district under the Later Chou dynasty, A.D. 557-81]. In 619 it was again established, and after a chequered existence definitely disappeared before the close of the T'ang dynasty.' The reference here to the lake south of the town is of particular interest, as it proves that Shou-ch'ang hsien must have occupied the same position as the ruined town of Nan-hu.

¹ See below, chap. xix. sec. i, ii.

^{1a} See Chavannes, *Dix inscriptions chinoises de l'Asie Centrale*, p. 67, note 2; also M. Chavannes' extract from the *T'ang shu*, chap. XLIII. b, in Appendix A.

² Cf. Giles, *Tun Huang Lu*, *J.R.A.S.*, 1914, p. 715.

³ Cf. Giles, *loc. cit.*, p. 712; for notes on the character and origin of this short but valuable text, *ibid.*, pp. 703 sqq.; also below, chap. xix. sec. vii; chap. xxvi. sec. i.

⁴ See Giles, *loc. cit.*, p. 712.