

Fa-hsien, who visited Yen-ch'i, or Wu-i 烏夷 as he calls it, about A.D. 400 from Shan-shan, has little more to tell us about it than that there were four thousand monks, students of the Hīnayāna, in the territory.¹⁴ Nor is the account which Hsüan-tsang has given of it as detailed as that of Kuchā and other more important districts.¹⁵ The description of the physical features seems borrowed from the Later Han Annals. But the pilgrim particularly notes the abundant irrigation, the varied products of the soil, and the genial climate. He found there about two thousand monks of the Sarvāstivādin school, attached to the Hīnayāna, in about ten monasteries, and calls the people honest.

Fa-hsien's
and Hsüan-
tsang's
accounts.

In the fairly long notice which the T'ang Annals devote to Yen-ch'i and its affairs we are specially told that the territory 'has always been subject to the Western Turks'.¹⁶ The statement is fully illustrated by a variety of events in which Yen-ch'i figured during the period preceding the establishment of Chinese supremacy,¹⁷ and is easily explained by what has been shown above about the geographical position of Kara-shahr. It is, no doubt, the strategic importance of this position which caused Yen-ch'i to be reckoned from A.D. 719 as one of the 'Four Garrisons' assuring the Chinese hold over Eastern Turkestan; for in an imperial decree issued some years earlier we are told that the kingdom was small and its population not numerous.¹⁸ Nevertheless the number of households is estimated in the T'ang Annals' notice at four thousand and the number of soldiers at two thousand, which suggests a population still greatly in excess of the present. The reference made to brisk trade in fish and salt, however, still holds good.

T'ang
Annals'
notice of
Yen-ch'i.

We may safely attribute it to the relative abundance of moisture and the consequent more rapid decay of ruins that the number of sites in the Kara-shahr district with ancient remains above the ground is small. The first that I visited was the ruined circumvallation, known as *Chong-köl* ('the big lake') or as *Ta-lao-pa* to the local Chinese, about six miles to the south-east of Ushak-tal (Map No. 51. B. 4). It is situated amidst luxuriant jungle of scrub and Toghraks only a mile beyond the limits of the present cultivation, and abandoned fields adjoin it quite closely. The circumvallation forms an oblong with its corners approximately orientated, the south-west face measuring about 270 yards and the south-east one about 308 yards. Its walls, originally built of stamped clay, are now decayed into ramparts of earth showing in places irregular layers of brushwood or reeds and still rising to 20-25 feet, with a thickness of about 15 feet at the top. They are strengthened at irregular intervals by towers of stamped clay. Moisture has affected the slopes and covered the surface of the interior with a thin crust of salt efflorescence, or *shōr*. Of structural remains there were none visible in the interior, the only notable feature being a refuse-covered mound near the north-east rampart. Superficial clearing brought to light only straw of reeds and cereals, mixed with stable refuse and wood chippings. But on the south-west rampart a well-preserved copper coin with the *nien-hao* Ch'ien-yüan (A.D. 758-60) was picked up from the surface. The conditions of the ground gave little hope of archaeological finds, and the fortified enclosure, though most probably

Ruined
circum-
vallation of
Chong-köl.

and the 'Iron Gates' of the gorge above Korla, regarding which see below, p. 1228.

The same notice of the Chin Annals contains an interesting account of the career of Prince Hui 會, the son of a chief of Yen-ch'i and his wife from the Kuei Hu 獯胡 tribe, who made himself master of Kuchā and subsequently for a time established a hegemony over the whole of the Tārīm Basin, about the end of the third century A.D.

¹⁴ Cf. Legge, *Travels of Fa-hien*, pp. 14 sq. For the name *Wu-i* (also written *Wu-ch'i* 烏耆 in other Buddhist texts), cf. Watters, *Yuan Chwang*, i. p. 46; Chavannes,

T'oung-pao, 1905, p. 564, note 2. Wu-k'ung, who stayed at Kara-shahr about A.D. 788, also calls the town *Wu-ch'i*; see *J. Asiat.*, 1895, sept.-oct., p. 364.

¹⁵ Cf. Julien, *Mémoires*, i. pp. 1 sq.; Watters, *Yuan Chwang*, i. pp. 48 sqq.

¹⁶ Cf. Chavannes, *Turcs occid.*, pp. 110 sqq.

¹⁷ Cf. Chavannes, *ibid.*, Index, s.v. *Yen-k'i*.

¹⁸ See Chavannes, *loc. cit.*, p. 113. The other of the 'Four Garrisons' were Kuchā, Kāshgar, and Khotan, all territories of far greater resources.