

Chichiklik plain cannot be less than 14,000 feet above the sea. Whatever the exact equivalent of Hsüan-tsang's measurement of a hundred *ch'ing* may be, it is clear that the reference is to an open level space; and as such spaces are rare indeed along the route leading from Sarikol through the mountains north-eastward, we can understand why this feature of Chichiklik, a plain about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles in diameter, should have found special mention in the pilgrim's narrative.

Whether the remains of a large Sarai such as Hsüan-tsang's narrative seems to imply can still be traced at Chichiklik, I must leave for investigation by some future visitor to the spot. But the substantial truth of the description he gives of the forbidding nature of this high plateau, and of the hardships there suffered by travellers, is strikingly brought home to us by what we read of the experiences of a pious traveller, who followed his track across Chichiklik nearly a thousand years later.

Route of
Goëz
through
Sarikol.

Benedict Goëz, the lay Jesuit, whom missionary zeal sent, in 1603, from the court of Akbar in search of fabled Cathay, travelled like Hsüan-tsang from India to the Upper Oxus by way of Kābul and Badakhshān. The record of the journey, compiled after Goëz' death from his notebook, is very scanty, and leaves us in doubt as to the route by which he crossed the Pāmīrs. But we can clearly trace his steps to Tāsh-kurghān, when we read how, after a twenty days' journey through desolate high mountains, he and the large 'Kāfila' of merchants to which he had attached himself, 'reached the province of Sarcil (Sarikol), where they found a number of hamlets near together. They halted there two days to rest the horses, and then in two days more they reached the foot of the mountain called Ciecialith (Chichiklik). It was covered deep with snow, and during the ascent many were frozen to death, and our brother himself barely escaped, for they were altogether six days in the snow here. At last they reached Tanghetar (Tangitar), a place belonging to the kingdom of Cascar (Kāshgar). . . . In fifteen days more they reached the town of Yakonich (Yaka-arik). . . . After five days more our Benedict reached the capital which is called Hiarchan (Yarkand)' ²².

The several stages of the itinerary here given have long ago been correctly identified by Sir Henry Yule; and laconic as Goëz' record is, it amply shows that the dread of the Chichiklik plateau as reflected in Hsüan-tsang's story was by no means unfounded.

SECTION IV.—FROM SARĪKOL TO KĀSHGAR

Route fol-
lowed to
Kāshgar.

On leaving Tāsh-kurghān (July 10, 1900), my steps, like those of Hsüan-tsang, were directed towards Kāshgar. But the route which I followed, between the eastern buttresses of the Pāmīrs and the great Muztāgh-Ata range, was chosen mainly for its geographical interest. Leading through elevated alpine valleys, and further down through the narrow and terribly barren gorge of the Yamān-yār river, regions which could never have supported permanent settlements of any size, it was not likely to offer scope for antiquarian observations. In chapters v-vii of my Personal Narrative I have given a detailed description of this route, which took me past Muztāgh-Ata to Lake Little Kara-kul, and then round the foot of the great glacier-crowned range northward into the Gez defile, finally debouching at Tāshmalik into the open plain of Kāshgar. Though scarcely more difficult than the usual route over the Chichiklik Pass and by Yangi-

²² See Sir H. Yule's translation of Trigault's *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas*, embodying Goëz' notes as put together by Ricci, in *Cathay*, ii. p. 562. 'Yakonich,' which Sir H. Yule

could not identify, manifestly contains the misspelt name of the large village Yaka-arik, south-west of Yarkand, passed on the route from Chichiklik.