

Embassies
from
Khotan,
942-97 I.A.D.

In 942 a fresh envoy, the commander Liu Tsai-shêng, arrived from Khotan with presents, among them jade pieces to the weight of a thousand pounds. Other embassies are recorded for the years 947 and 948¹¹. Li Shêng-t'ien was still reigning when three later tribute-bearing missions arrived from Khotan in the years 961, 965 and 966¹². In the case of the first we read of presents offered by Mo-ni, the spiritual councillor of the king, apart from the royal tribute. It is interesting to note, with regard to the assertion of the ecclesiastical element in these missions, that the embassy of 965, which brought specially rich presents in jade, horses, camels, &c., was accompanied by two Buddhist monks from Yü-t'ien. The Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Tao-yüan also availed himself of this opportunity for regaining his native land after travels in the 'Western Countries'. In 966 it was a son of Li Shêng-t'ien, called Tê-tsung, who presented the tribute of Yü-t'ien.

In 969 the king Nan-tsung-ch'ang is named as the sender of a mission conducted by Chih-mo-shan, and accompanied by one of the Buddhist monks who had previously visited the imperial court. A magnificent piece of jade weighing not less than 237 pounds was to be offered to the emperor on condition of his sending some one to fetch it. In 971 it was again a Buddhist priest (Chi-hsiang) who brought a letter from the king of Khotan, offering to send in tribute a dancing elephant which he had captured in a war against the kingdom of Kāshgar¹³.

Struggle of
Khotan
against
Muhamma-
dan con-
quest.

The mention of this war is the only indication we receive from Chinese sources of the great struggle which finally resulted in the conquest of Khotan by the Turkish rulers of Kāshgar and its conversion to Islām. But though the Sung Annals are silent on the events which closed the epoch of Buddhist Khotan and fundamentally changed the cultural history of the territory, they help us indirectly to determine their chronological limits. The next notice furnished by the *Pien i tien's* extracts relates to an embassy from Yü-t'ien in the year 1009; and of this we read that it had been sent 'by the king or *hei-han* of that territory', and that the ambassador bringing the tribute was a *hui-hu*, i. e., probably a Muhammadan Turk, called Lo-ssü-wen¹⁴. The title *Hei-han* used here is a transcription of the Turkish title *Khākān* (*Khān*) and, in conjunction with the nationality of the envoy, leaves no doubt as to the change which must have taken place since 971 in the race and religion of the rulers of Khotan¹⁵.

Muhamma-
dan con-
quest of
Khotan.

The conquest of Khotan for Islām plays a very prominent part in the legendary traditions still current throughout Eastern Turkestan. But unfortunately the strictly historical information to be gathered from Muhammadan sources about this important event is extremely scanty. Judging from the critical researches which M. Grenard has devoted to the elucidation of the history of the early Turkish dynasty of Kāshgar¹⁶, the accounts of Muhammadan historians appear to furnish only one definite fact, viz. that Khotan in 1006 was held by Yūsuf Qadr Khān, a brother or cousin of Abū'l-Ḥasan Naṣr İlik Qarā Khān, the then ruling head of the Turkish dynasty of Kāshgar and Balāsāghūn. Of the manner in which the latter extended its power to Khotan we are told nothing; but the mention of Yūsuf Qadr Khān is of value, for it proves that the legendary account to be found of this conquest in the *Tadhkirah* of Satok Boghra Khān, the first Muhammadan ruler of the family and the hero of popular tradition throughout Turkestan, does not altogether lack elements of historical truth.

¹¹ *Ville de Khotan*, p. 82.

¹² *Ville de Khotan*, pp. 83 sqq. and p. 102 which shows Li Shêng-t'ien as the sender.

¹³ *Ville de Khotan*, p. 86.

¹⁴ See *Ville de Khotan*, pp. 86 sq.

¹⁵ The significance of the notice has been already pointed out by M. Grenard, *Mission D. de Rhins*, ii, p. 50; *J. asiat.*, 1900, xv, p. 64.

¹⁶ See his valuable paper *La légende de Satok Boghra Khan*, in *J. asiat.*, 1900, xv, pp. 1-79.