

is described as 'the princess of Chü-mo 且末', the territory which corresponds to the present Charchan, some ten marches to the east on the route to Lop-nōr.¹¹

Now this definite mention of Chü-mo or Charchan as a territory with which the ruler of the ancient oasis represented by the Niya Site stood in close relation, necessarily forces the question as to the identity of his own 'kingdom' upon our attention. Since it is clearly proved by these little tablets that the ancient oasis possessed its own ruling family, I do not hesitate to identify the site as the chief place of the territory of Ching-chüeh 精絕 which the Chinese historical records from Han to T'ang times place to the west of Chü-mo.¹² In the Former Han Annals 'the kingdom of Ching-chüeh' is described as situated to the west of Chü-mo at a distance of two thousand li.¹³ Its western neighbour was the kingdom of Yü-mi 扞彌 at a distance of 460 li. Since the latter territory must certainly be identified with the Chīra-Keriya tract,¹⁴ we are thus led to place Ching-chüeh on the Niya River in spite of the greatly exaggerated distance indicated between Chü-mo and Ching-chüeh.¹⁵ The capital of the kingdom is named 'the city of Ching-chüeh'. But the limited size of the 'kingdom' is sufficiently proved by the estimates of its population, '480 families, comprising 3,360 persons, with 500 trained troops.'

Identifica-
tion of Niya
Site with
Ching-
chüeh.

No details are given about Ching-chüeh by the Later Han Annals, which merely mention it along with Shan-shan and Chü-mo on the route from Yü-mên to Khotan.¹⁶ Ching-chüeh figures similarly in the list of territories which the *Wei lio*, composed between A. D. 239-65, enumerates along the 'southern route' leading westwards from Lop-nōr to Khotan.¹⁷ But here we have in addition the distinct statement that Ching-chüeh along with Chü-mo and Hsiao-wan, another small territory which lay to the south of Chü-mo and evidently corresponds to the hill settlements between Kapa and Achchan, was dependent upon Shan-shan or Lou-lan, the territory adjoining Lop-nōr. The statement has its special interest for the identification of Ching-chüeh with the territory of which the Niya Site may be assumed to have been the chief place. On the one hand, it dates from the period immediately preceding the time when we assume the site to have been abandoned. On the other, it helps to explain why among the Chinese documents excavated in 1901 there was the cover, N. xv. 345,¹⁸ of an edict emanating from the 'king of Shan-shan', and why the records of N. xxiv discussed below include two covers bearing the seal-impression of the commander of Shan-shan.¹⁹

Ching-
chüeh in
Chinese
historical
records.

Ching-chüeh figures still in the T'ang Annals as the name of a 'little kingdom' to the east of

Ching-chüeh
in T'ang
Annals.

¹¹ Cf. Chavannes, *T'oung-pao*, vi. (1905), p. 536; *Voyage de Song Yun*, p. 13, note 1; *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 435; below, chap. viii, sec. i.

¹² The priority of having correctly surmised this location of Ching-chüeh belongs to M. Grenard. The references made to the point in the text of his publication on the *Mission Dutreuil de Rhins*, ii. pp. 14, 61; iii. pp. 147 sqq., are based partly on a delusive resemblance between the name *Kin-kiue*, as he spells Ching-chüeh, and the variant *Kenk* كك, in which the name *Ketek* كك, applied by popular tradition to widely distant old sites in the Tārīm Basin, presents itself in Muhammadan legends. But he was right in looking for *Kin-kiue* (Ching-chüeh) to the north of Imām Ja'far Sādiq, where he and M. Dutreuil de Rhins had heard of, but not actually visited, an 'old town', i. e. the ruins of the Niya Site, first explored by me ten years later. Also Herrmann, *Seidenstrassen*, i. pp. 92, 98 sq., was right in accepting this location.

¹³ See Wylie in *J. Anthropol. Inst.*, x. p. 26; Chavannes,

in *T'oung-pao*, vi. (1905), p. 536, note 3.

¹⁴ See *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 467. The question is not materially effected by the calculations on varying distance estimates of the Han and T'ang Annals which lead Dr. Herrmann (*Seidenstrassen*, i. p. 96 sqq.) to postulate for the capital of Yü-mi a position to the north-east of Farhād Bēg-Yailiki, even without archaeological evidence, and to deduce from this conjectural location a more westerly course of the Keriya River.

¹⁵ This instance of a very serious error in the road records handed down in the Former Han Annals ought to be an emphatic warning against too great reliance on such Chinese measurements when investigating difficult points of ancient Central-Asian geography.

¹⁶ Cf. Chavannes, *T'oung-pao*, 1907, p. 170.

¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 1905, p. 537.

¹⁸ See *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 361, 371.

¹⁹ See below, chap. vi, sec. iii.