

them have been preserved, namely Lob and Katak; but of the rest no name or trace remains; all are buried under the sand.¹² The name *Lop* was all that survived during the centuries which followed until cultivation was once more resumed at the site of Charkhlik. We have already seen that the name had both a wider and a more confined local application, and it is, perhaps, not mere chance that the small fishermen's village, some thirty-six miles to the north of Charkhlik, which is now specifically known as *Lop* (Map No. 57. B. 2), is among all the settlements of the Lopliks or 'Lop people' the one nearest to the 'town of Lop', as Marco Polo knew it.

Use of
Khotan-
Sha-chou
route after
T'ang times.

I can find no distinct and certain reference to the Charkhlik oasis in such historical records as we possess of the Tārīm Basin during the five centuries which intervened between the close of T'ang control of that region and Marco Polo's passage about A.D. 1273-4. But that the great southern route from Khotan to Sha-chou, which passed through it, must have been in use during this long period, at least intermittently, is proved by the numerous embassies from Khotan to the Chinese Imperial Court of which the Annals from the accession of the Posterior Chin to the close of the Sung Dynasty (A.D. 936-1126) have preserved us some records.¹³ An account of the route followed is, however, only given in the case of the return mission which the Emperor Kao-tsu dispatched to Khotan in A.D. 938.¹⁴ From this we see that the mission after leaving Sha-chou must have travelled westwards, not by the route through the desert, but by the alternative one which skirts the high northern slopes of the Āltin-tāgh between Nan-hu and Bāsh-kurghān, and, after descending towards the Lop-nōr depression, joins the former route near Mīrān.¹⁵ We shall discuss this route presently. The territory crossed west of Sha-chou is described as held by the tribe of the Chung-yün. The mission on its progress is said to have arrived at the 'town of Ta-t'un', and physical conditions make it difficult to look for a 'town' elsewhere than at the foot of the mountains. But whether Charkhlik or some oasis further west is meant cannot be determined.^{15a}

Sha-chou-
Khotan
route in
T'ang
Annals.

Safe ground is again reached for tracing the earlier history of Charkhlik in a record of the T'ang period. The itinerary given by the T'ang Annals for the route from Sha-chou to Khotan, of which M. Chavannes has published extracts,¹⁶ informs us that '300 li to the south of the lake *Pu-ch'ang* 蒲昌 (Lop-nōr) is the garrison of *Shih-ch'êng* 石城 or the "Stone Town"; this is the kingdom of *Lou-lan* 樓蘭 of the Han epoch; it is also called *Shan-shan* 善善; 200 li further west one reaches *Hsin-ch'êng* or the "New Town".¹⁷ *Hsin-ch'êng*, as we have already shown from the evidence furnished by the subsequent itinerary to Chū-mo or Charchan, must be identified with *Vāsh-shahri*.¹⁸ It appears to me equally certain that the 'Stone Town' is to be located at Charkhlik.¹⁹ I am led to this identification not only by the distance of 200 li counted eastwards from the 'New Town' or *Vāsh-shahri*, but also by the reckoning of 300 li south of Lop-nōr; three daily marches aggregating over 64 miles are reckoned now from Charkhlik to Abdal on the Tārīm, near which the westernmost part of the Lop-nōr marshes may be said to begin.

Location of
T'ang
Annals'
'Stone
Town'.

Special importance must be attached to the definite statement that the place was also called

¹² Cf. Elias and Ross, *Tārīkh-i-Rashīdī*, p. 295. The name *Katak*, which Mirzā Haidar repeatedly couples with Lob (see also *ibid.*, pp. 10, 52, 64, 406), and which has been discussed by Mr. Elias, *ibid.*, pp. 11 sq., note, is in all probability connected with the term *kōtek-shahri*. This is still generally applied in a vague fashion to any ruins or 'old towns' (*kōne-shahr*), existing or imagined to exist in the desert, throughout the eastern portion of the Tārīm Basin; cf. below, chap. XII, sec. i. There seems good reason to assume that the term is derived from the word *kōtek*, applied to the dead trees which are so abundant along dry river-courses and elsewhere in the desert.

¹³ Cf. Rémusat, *Ville de Khotan*, pp. 73-100.

¹⁴ Cf. regarding this mission also *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 178.

¹⁵ See Maps Nos. 61, 64, 65, 68, 71, 75, 79.

^{15a} For *Ta-t'un* cf. also above, p. 299, note 36.

¹⁶ See above, p. 298, note 32; 306, note 4; App. A.

¹⁷ Cf. Chavannes, *Voyage de Song Yun*, p. 13, note.

¹⁸ See above, p. 306.

¹⁹ The identity of the 'Stone Town' with Charkhlik has been correctly recognized already by Dr. Herrmann; cf. *Seidenstrassen*, p. 100. See also *Desert Cathay*, i. p. 345.