

the territory situated to the south of Lop-nör and the terminal Tārīm the new official designation of *Shan-shan* took root.²⁶

Importance
of route
north of
Lop-nör.

On the other hand, the transfer of the capital southwards which M. Chavannes and after him Dr. Herrmann have suggested involves a difficulty with regard to the political change in connexion with which it is supposed to have taken place. There can be no doubt that the deeds recorded in 77 B.C. were planned to strengthen the Chinese hold over the Lop region. Now all geographical and historical considerations point to the fact that the part of this district which was of chief strategic importance to the Chinese during Han times was the tract north of the Lop-nör marshes and along the foot of the Kuruk-tāgh, through which the most direct route between Tun-huang and the northern oases of the Tārīm Basin passed. Had the seat of the Lou-lan chief stood here before 77 B.C., it would obviously have been an advantage for Chinese policy to let it remain there; for it would have been far easier to provide the support and control which the new king needed on that great military and trade road than away to the south of Lop-nör where the military colony of I-hsün was actually established. And the whole story of China's relations with Central Asia shows that economy of effort has, here as elsewhere, always been a characteristic feature of its strategy and statecraft.

Shan-shan
identified
with Lou-lan
by *Ch'ien
Han shu.*

Nor does it seem to me safe to brush aside lightly the explicit statement of the *Ch'ien Han shu* which asserts that 'the original name of the kingdom of Shan-shan was Lou-lan'. We have seen above that all Chinese records, from Later Han down to T'ang times, uniformly persist in correctly showing Shan-shan in the position of Lop, and in placing its chief settlement to the south of Lop-nör. We have also seen that this position of the 'capital' of the territory was dictated by physical conditions which have continued to the present time in spite of all changes. In view of this consistency of later historical evidence during prolonged periods, the testimony of the Former Han Annals, which fully conforms with it, has an additional claim to credence. Moreover, the reliance which it deserves in this case is considerably strengthened by the fact that the events related of 77 B.C., with the change of Lou-lan into Shan-shan, are separated by only about a century and a half from the time when the extant text of the *Ch'ien Han shu* was composed by Pan Ku († A.D. 92).²⁷

Summary of
ancient Lop
topography.

It will here be convenient briefly to summarize the main results of geographical and antiquarian interest which our examination of the earliest Chinese records concerning the Lop region has yielded. In the first place, it is certain that the name *Lou-lan*, subsequently changed into *Shan-shan*, corresponded to the mediaeval and modern *Lop* in its widest sense, and was applied to a territory which comprised the whole of the depression between Kuruk-tāgh and Āltin-tāgh, with the terminal courses of the Tārīm, Charchan, and Konche Rivers and the Lop-nör marshes fed by them. The population of the territory depended mainly on pastoral pursuits. The chief agricultural settlements were confined to the present Charkhlik tract, where streams coming from the snowy range south assured permanent chances of irrigation. In it was situated, certainly from 77 B.C. onwards, but probably earlier also, the political centre of the territory, the capital Yü-ni

²⁶ It would not be difficult to quote numerous instances in which Chinese nomenclature, old or modern, has utilized the local name of an earlier period for the express purpose of distinguishing the part of a territory, though there was no doubt that the original application of the term had been different. Thus when the present Keriya District (*hsien*) was separated in the eighties of the last century from the Khotan Prefecture (*chou*), it received the official designation of *Yü-*

t'ien 于寘, though it is perfectly well known to all educated Chinese in Eastern Turkestan that this is the ancient designation of Khotan, now officially called *Ho-t'ien* 和闐.

²⁷ This argument would, of course, carry even more weight if it is assumed with Dr. Herrmann that the 'Notes on the Western Regions' embody in the main an official compilation dating from *circ.* 30 B.C.; cf. *Seidenstrassen*, pp. 35 sq.