

difficult it has always been for the Chinese to keep this exposed bridge-head of Hāmi while control over the territory north was not yet secured or had been lost was seen anew during the last great Muhammadan rebellion. The oasis then repeatedly changed hands between the Chinese and the Tungans coming from Bar-kul, and for years became almost wholly deserted.

Hāmi route
not opened
by Former
Han.

These circumstances resulting from the geographical position of Hāmi enable us to account for what might otherwise seem a puzzling historical observation. I mean the fact that the 'northern route' leading through Hāmi, though physically so much easier than the one leading through the Lop Desert and Lou-lan, was not opened by the Chinese until nearly two centuries later. Obviously Chinese statesmanship fully realized the difficulties of holding an advanced base so exposed as Hāmi as long as the power of the Hsiung-nu in the north remained unbroken. It was safer to fight the difficulties of nature than to face the attacks of an elusive, irrepressible foe. When later on the necessity was felt of securing more direct access to 'Posterior Chū-shih', i. e. the region of the present Guchen, ever closely linked with Turfān, it was not the route via Hāmi which was opened in A.D. 2, but the desert track starting to the north of the ancient Jade Gate and described in the *Wei lio* as the 'new northern route'.¹⁴ When discussing this above, we have seen that its line kept well away from Hāmi and trusted to the protection of waterless desert wastes.

Mixed
population
of Hāmi.

It may be due to the same factor of geographical position and to the political vicissitudes implied by it that the population of Hāmi does not appear to have ever possessed that well-defined individuality in ethnic character and local culture which records, remains, and extant characteristics of race attest for territories like Khotan, Kuchā, or Turfān, and which might be expected in a community so isolated geographically. The present population seemed to me to have been affected far more by Chinese influence in language, manners, and dress than that of any other Turkestan tract I know. At the same time, in its physical features the admixture of a purely Turkish element appeared to me to be more marked than among the Turkī-speaking peoples which form the settled agricultural communities in the oases of the Tārīm Basin.¹⁵ In these Mr. Joyce's examination of the anthropometric materials collected by me has proved that the *Homo Alpinus* type of an originally Iranian stock prevails. Mr. Joyce's results also point to a distinctly mixed character of the population of Hāmi.¹⁶

Fresh
colonies
brought to
Hāmi.

This mixture of disparate elements is easily accounted for by the history of Hāmi. For more than fifteen hundred years past the oasis has been an important halting-place on the main line of communication between China and Central Asia. The fertility of its soil must have greatly facilitated the process of re-population by fresh agricultural colonies, whether from China or Turfān and the Tārīm Basin, after each destructive inroad. The admixture of a genuinely Turkish element is explained by the close vicinity northward of an area possessed of distinct attractions to a nomadic race such as the Western Turks were, and at the same time affording in the Karlik-tāgh valleys opportunities for transition to a settled agricultural life.¹⁷ Even now Hāmi possesses its purely Chinese agricultural colony, brought here since the Tungan upheaval, side by side with the Turkī-speaking Muhammadan population left under the administration of its own hereditary chief. Descended from the family which held Hāmi when it passed from Dzungar domination under Chinese control in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, he is the only local ruler now left in

Hereditary
local chief
of Hāmi.

¹⁴ See above, pp. 418 sq., 705 sqq.

¹⁵ See Fig. 263 for a group of Hāmi cultivators from Ara-tam.

¹⁶ See Joyce, Appendix C, reproducing *Notes on the physical anthropology of Chinese Turkestan and the Pamirs*, J. R. Anthropol. Institute, xlii. pp. 462, 464; regarding the basal stock of *Homo Alpinus* type, *ibid.*, p. 468.

¹⁷ On my journey of 1914 along the north slopes of the Karlik-tāgh I had occasion actually to observe this transition among people who, whether settled as cultivators or still living as herdsmen, are manifestly of the same Turkish stock. The Kirghiz settlements of the western T'ien-shan, in the region of Kāshgar and elsewhere, seem to offer a close parallel.