

were thrown crashing to the ground. But the runaways were soon captured by a couple of riders.

We crossed a rise in the rather uneven ground. On the right, to the north, a rugged black rocky ridge could be seen. The soil here bore a rich growth of low *Artemisia* from whose stand isolated blades of grass peeped forth in places.

Presently we met two poor Chinese farmers, leading a camel that bore their bundles. Once more we traversed rising ground. A widening perspective to the west and the south-west met the eye. The low hills fell back to either side. Quite near the road to the right was an erosion-bed that had cut off the side of a hill. »There will be water there,» said MENTU. A little farther on we crossed a dry channel, called Chaghan-khada. It was a couple of meters in depth and about ten meters across. The growth of grass in this place was exuberant.

Twenty minutes later we traversed a river-bed in which water flowed towards the south, to the Huang-ho or as the Mongols call it, Khatun-gol. This little water-course is called Khonin-chaghan-cölo-gol (The White Stone River of the Sheep). On the left bank were visible some walls of sun-dried brick, a couple of huts of the same material and a yurt. Just above these dwellings LARSON had pitched camp.

#### CHINESE TAX-STATION AND FARMS

There is a tax-station here at the frontier between Mu-mingghan (or Mingghan-jasak) and Jun-gung *hoshio*. A tax is exacted on every camel passing either from the east or the west. The inhabitants comprised five Chinese, all revenue agents. A few Mongol nomads lived in the vicinity.

From here there is no special route down to the Yellow River, one can proceed as one likes.

There is very little snowfall here in the winter, though it had snowed that year more heavily than usual. The worst heat-period was considered to be already past. Most of the caravans travelled in the winter. Farther to the west some robber bands had been in evidence; but now the countryside was quiet again. Wolves are uncommon in this part of the country, but one finds them farther to the north. Some antelopes there were, but no argali-sheep and no wild asses.

According to SIU, the Chinese farmers that came to this district had to pay close on twenty dollars a *ching*<sup>1</sup> (= 160 *mou*) to the *tu-t'ung* in Sui-yüan and one dollar to the Mongol district chief. But the irrigation here was poor. Everything was so dry that year that there was almost a state of famine. At the Yellow River between Pao-t'ou and Wu-yüan things were otherwise, for there the fields could be well watered. The grass there is so luxuriant that grazing horses and cattle

<sup>1</sup> 1 *ching* = 6 hectares or 14.8 acres.