

The Chinese now call the district of Pichan Shan-shan. Shan-shan was a kingdom in the Tarim basin that was founded in 77 B. C. It probably never stretched as far to the north-east as Pichan, however, and the revival of the name with its present application is therefore a mistake.

The member of the party who had most to do in this our hundredth camp, reckoned from Pao-t'ou, was HUMMEL. A crowd of invalids was already assembled in the courtyard on the morning of February 16th. There were cases of leprosy, consumption in its last stages, trachoma and other horrible complaints. HUMMEL helped them as far as time and circumstances permitted.

After an hour's journey on the following day we were once more travelling over a completely sterile desert. On our left hand was an isolated collection of dunes called Qum-tagh or »The Sand Hills», while on our right appeared some small oases from which water sometimes reached the road along which we were driving. We passed Lamjin with its picturesque village street; this village is situated on the bank of a little stream.

RUINS OF A VANISHED CULTURE

Towards evening, on February 18th, our carts rolled into Sengim's dusty but romantically wild valley, through which flowed a fairly full stream. The bed had been eroded down at least twenty-five meters, and had vertical banks. Sometimes the road ran along the very edge of the bank, and one sat wondering whether it would hold under the weight of the carts, or whether we should be hurled into the stream below. A little wooden bridge went over the watercourse where the road led up a side-valley to the Bezeklik caves, those old Buddhistic temple-ruins of which VON LE COQ, GRÜNWEDEL and Sir AUREL STEIN have given such masterly descriptions. Along our route through the main valley there were also some grottoes and temple-ruins. The landscape was magnificent, with red sandstone cliffs rising steeply on either side. The rushing waters in the stream-bed were used in one place to drive a little water-mill. In Sengim-aghiz we halted for the night.

On the morning of February 19th, the whole party, with the exception of NORIN and myself, rode up to Bezeklik's grottoes, and returned at midday delighted with what they had seen. They had been in a large number of cells cut into the face of the cliff and showing clear traces of the work of the archaeological expeditions. There were still many mural paintings, although most of these had been wantonly damaged by vandals.¹ All the members of the party were very impressed by the ancient remains and the magnificent scenery.

¹ The European explorer who last visited these temple ruins was the celebrated French authority on Buddhism, JOSEPH HACKIN, who studied them thoroughly in the course of the CITROËN-expedition in 1931. From his illustrations to essays in *Revue des Arts Asiatiques* 1935—36 it is clear that many of these magnificent frescoes still remained also at the time of his visit. F. B.