

## THE HSIN-KUNG

The Hsin-kung or New Palace vies with the Potala for the honour of being the largest and most magnificent lama temple in Jehol. Its full name is Hsü-mi-fu-shou-miao (The Temple of Mountainous Good Fortune and Honourable Old Age). FRANKE says rightly that it is »the most splendid of all Jehol's temples, and one of the most beautiful monuments of antiquity in the kingdom of China.» The Chinese name is a literal translation of the Tibetan. *Fu-shou*, like the Tibetan *tashi*, means 'luck' and 'long life', and *hsü-mi* is the same word as Sumeru, the Sanskrit name of the legendary mountain to the north of India, whose Tibetan name is *lhunpo*.

The gateways of the Hsin-kung faced in the same directions as those of the Potala. Here, too, the entrance was through a park of scattered pines and firs; only the ground sloped less steeply than that of its neighbour.

Before the southern gate we came first to a square stone building which arched above a gigantic tortoise of white marble. With extraordinary power and skill the sculptor had depicted the head and shell of the symbolic animal, its highly stylized shape and proportion being quite graceful. On its back the tortoise supported a vertical stone tablet, the short sides of which were carved with dragons and cloud symbols in high relief, while the front and back were engraved with the Emperor CH' IEN LUNG's records of the founding of the temple. It was composed by the emperor himself and was another link in the political chain with which he bound the followers of lamaism to his Dragon Throne. At each of the cardinal points of the building was a rounded archway, through which blew the four winds of heaven, making it pleasantly cool in the tortoise-house during the hottest summer days.

We went up fifty steps to a rectangular stone building, remarkable for its harmonious architecture, which was faintly reminiscent of an Italian renaissance palace. Like the Potala, the holy temple was surrounded by a mere shell of stone and brick. The windows were decorated with artistic lintels and projecting friezes of green faience that contrasted effectively with the light-red tones of the vast walls. As in the Potala, this huge, palace-like stone building surrounded a square courtyard, most of which was taken up by a splendidly decorated pavilion. The unbuilt-on portion in the courtyard was narrower than in the Potala, for here all four sides were complete with galleries. One had to be careful when walking over the yielding floors. The woodwork was frail; ruin and decay were imminent; and it cannot be long before these inner galleries suffer the same fate as those in the Potala, and collapse. We went from one room to another, finding in each innumerable small niches intended for Buddhas. But the niches were empty, for the Buddhas had been stolen and scattered like chaff before the wind. In the temples at Jehol only such images remain as are too heavy to drag away.