

XIV. BY BOAT DOWN THE LUAN-HO

To reach the river Luan we had first to cover eighteen li to the south and S. S. E. to the village Chuang-t'ou-ying-tze, whose elders came out to bid us god-speed. Just after three o'clock on July 7th we put out into the stream in our hired boat.¹

The boat was a jerry-built plank affair, 12.76 meters in length and 2.39 meters across. It was provided with a canopy of bast mats and sacking, sloping down towards the sides. Both prow and stern were pointed, and had, curiously enough, lower gunwales than the long-sides of the vessel, or in other words just the opposite of what we are accustomed to in a boat. The crew consisted of a weather-bitten captain, who managed the steering-oar in the stern, and two youths in the forepart of the boat who manipulated an oar each.

Behind them, sheltered by the canopy, I had an empty crate as a writing-desk and my rolled-up sleeping-bag as a seat. Here I sat during the whole voyage, making a map of the river. MONTELL and SÖDERBOM made themselves comfortable amidships, and behind them sat or reclined the ten soldiers who served us as escort. The stern was commandeered by LÜ WU with his kitchen-chests, and here he made a mud fire-place for his cooking. When the escort was increased to twenty men, the majority of the soldiers had to be taken on board another boat.

The Luan-ho was magnificent, its broad waters gliding along between the banks at a speed of one second/meter. Our two oarsmen kept the boat in the main stream.

¹ Just as the great Manchu emperors built their summer palace and had their imperial hunting grounds near the middle Luan-ho, so also the greatest emperor of the immediately preceding dynasty of non-Chinese origin had also arranged similar conveniences nearer the source of the same river. For it was beside the upper reaches of the Luan-ho, on the Mongolian plateau, to the north-west of the present town Dolon-nor, that KHUBLAI KHAN's summer-residence Shang-tu (Chandu) was situated. This town was visited by MARCO POLO, who gave a description of its marble palace. As in Jehol, there were also great temples there.

Another, and probably more modern, name for KHUBLAI's summer-town was Luan-ching, »The Capital on the Luan River»; on the other hand, the upper reaches of the river are called Shang-tu after the town. The Mongols of our day call the ruins of the town Jo-naiman sume-in khoto, »City of One Hundred and Eight Temples». F. B.