

journey. We gave her the cake we had just received, and she hastened to conceal it in her bosom before some other starvling got hold of it. Our profit on the deal was the old crone's blessing.

Before us lay the desert, flooded with blinding light, splendid to look upon — the silent, peaceful desert where lived neither men nor devils. On my earlier journeys I had travelled all the roads in Eastern Turkistan but this one between Korla and Aqsu. Everything here was new to me.

We met a military convoy of twenty-one carts loaded with uniforms for MA's army. It was escorted by thirteen soldiers on horseback. For some distance from Korla the telegraph poles lay on the ground; but farther on they were upright again. We were now on the genuine ancient Silk Road.

The village of Charchi was inhabited by twelve Turki families who were sowing wheat. Six cavalrymen had established themselves in its tea-house, and were laying their hands on everything there was to take.

After we had passed through the village of Eshme the road became unpleasant — sand and whirling dust. An avenue of stumpy old trees led to the next place — Chadir. The village itself, with its pretty groves, made a pleasant impression. Woods were visible at a great distance to the south.

Our camp No. 47 was pitched outside the village of Qarasach-khanem, named after a mausoleum that is situated there. There were twelve families in this place. We had driven 143 km, and were at an altitude of 1,000 m. The people in the village were friendly, and we were supplied with quantities of eggs. On asking the price we were told: »You are visitors from distant countries and must be fed free of charge.» We therefore decided upon the price ourselves.

The Tarim is hereabouts called the Chayan-darya (Scorpion River), and in the direction of Aqsu the Muzart-darya. A villager told us that he and thirty-three others had driven 12,000 sheep to Western Turkistan, to be sold there to Kirghiz and Russians. They had returned from this journey two months previously. They had been paid well; but the money had been confiscated by the authorities. They declared that there were only 200 Tungan soldiers at Kucha, and that 2,000 Turkis lived in the villages round about. The latter were mounted, but had only *qara-miltiq*, or »black rifles», good enough for hunting, but not for war.

I asked why we met no caravans or merchants, and was told that all such went by a desert route for fear of the soldiers.

It was not far to the bazaar of the village Yangi-hissar, where we bought bread, meat and nuts. Many of the shops were shut, but there were a lot of people about. Outside the village a good-sized bridge crosses a canal.

Not far from Yangi-hissar the road runs for more than one kilometer through an extensive salt-marsh, where snow-water and spring-fed streams from the mountains percolate through the level earth and keep it continually moist. Despite fairly deep ditches and many bridges this is an unpleasant bit of road, and our