

and ox-carts to Lung-wang-miao, which is consecrated to the divinity of the river Su-lo-ho. The river-bed is some 30 m wide and 2 m deep. The river ran between bare, flat banks and was divided into two arms, partly frozen over, and now carrying scarcely 1 cub. m of water per second. There is no bridge. We left the lorries, but crossed in the small car ourselves. We drove along a wretched road, between irrigation canals with raised banks, to the crenelated wall surrounding Anhsi. At the west gate we were stopped by soldiers, who had to report our arrival before we could be admitted.

ANHSI

At the mayor's yamen we were courteously received, and had five rooms reserved for us. While the mayor was talking to YEW and me, our friend BÖKENKAMP arrived. He had ridden from Hami to Anhsi in the record time of five days.

Anhsi is a miserable little oasis. The whole population was estimated at 900 families, 300 of them being in the town itself. Anhsi had also a garrison of 450 soldiers, Tungans, under the orders of MA PU-FANG at Hsi-ning. Tun-huang, which has a garrison of fifty men, is considered larger and more prosperous than Anhsi. The garrison lives on the peasants, who receive no compensation and so grow poorer and more wretched in proportion to the number of soldiers they have to feed.

Another source gives the oasis 6,000 inhabitants and the town 4,000. But it is impossible to obtain any idea of the size of the population in a country where there is no census. A tax-collector whom we met farther east assured us that the whole Anhsi district was inhabited by 940 families, while 960 families lived at Yü-men and 2,500 at Tun-huang. There were 100 families at Chia-yü-kuan. These little oasis-towns generally have one or two schools.

At Anhsi we were quite deluged with news and rumours. The Europeans in the town had heard that we had been made prisoners by Big Horse and taken to Kashgar. Several hundred motor-lorries full of soldiers were said to be on their way from Sian and Suchow to reconquer Sinkiang. Our adventures were evidently not over. On our way eastward we should meet this army, whose leaders might have need of our experience and compel us to turn back and serve as guides.

If we had passed Hsing-hsing-hsia a little earlier we might have fared badly. Eight robbers had been lying in ambush there. They had a spy at Hami, who had reported that 70 camels, laden with carpets and other goods and gold-dust from Khotan, would leave Hami for Anhsi on a certain day. When the caravan reached the narrow valley at Hsing-hsing-hsia, the robber-band had attacked it, killing some of the merchants and capturing the camels and their valuable load. The survivors had fled to Hami. Soldiers from this oasis and from Anhsi had been sent out in pursuit. They had found four robbers and taken them to Anhsi,