

to reach; the zone of piedmont gravel; the gently sloping plain of the basin floor covered in part with dry brown reeds and pale green camel-thorn also dry, and in part a mere waste of naked clay or hard, white salt; the aggregation of huge, sombre sand dunes five or six hundred feet high, rising like a range of mountains, dark gray and deep purple, far beyond the shimmering white expanse of ice and salt which forms the playa of Böjanti; the villages set in dark patches of irrigated land; and the ruined towns and dead vegetation giving evidence of a former more abundant water supply.

Apart from the questions of size and altitude, it is chiefly the dearth of vegetation which differentiates the Turfan basin from that of Lop. In the larger basin, in spite of vast deserts and areas of dying vegetation, the villages are usually located in the midst of vigorous reeds, tamarisks, and poplars, supported by the great floods of early summer. One's mental picture of a village includes hundreds of trees for every house. In Turfan, on the other hand, wild trees are unknown, having long been cut off, if they ever existed, and even cultivated trees are scarce. One thinks of a Turfan village as a group of gray mud houses, and only secondarily does one call to mind the precious trees — brown and bare when I saw them — which rise behind the protection of high mud walls. A glance at the horizon shows the reason for the difference — the mountains rarely rise to the limit of perpetual snow. Hence the time of highest water comes in the early spring, and there is no unfailing surplus in summer.

In the Lop basin, the summer floods from the snowy