

village is visible in the midst of these sandheaps. With the exception of a Chinese temple built with some care, the village is composed of wretched mud hovels that seem doubly miserable in these depressing surroundings. The population consists of a few hundred searchers for jade (nephrite) stone. About a hundred are employers, mostly Chinese, the rest are workmen recruited almost exclusively from among the Sarts. The search is conducted by digging a pit in the sand. At a depth of 1 1/2—2 fathoms a layer of boulders is encountered, below which jade stones are found at various depths. The pits are seldom more than 3 or 4 fathoms deep. The finds are very irregular. Few men have been able to earn a fortune, but many have lost all they possessed and from being employers have become labourers or collectors of fuel in the form of asses' dung. I was told that there was a former mandarin among the searchers, who had lived here since the work was begun about 15 years ago and had lost all he possessed. Unfortunately I had no opportunity of meeting this interesting representative of the higher classes in this remote corner of the globe. He had gone to Lop to ask an inspecting mandarin, who was passing, for his fare to Peiping. My informant was unable to say how often he had executed the same manoeuvre and yet remained in this gloomy place, where opium and the hope of securing a fortune keeps these deplorable gamblers.

From Kumat we proceeded due east through the sandy desert to Hangui. The road at first led along a small river, Qarasu, that flows about one-third of a mile south of Kumat from W to E for about a mile, when it makes a sharp turn to the north and is lost among the sandheaps. Immediately afterwards we came to a larger river, Hangui üstang, which supplies the Hangui district with water from the Yurung-Qash. We passed a couple of modest langars. On the other side of the Hangui üstang trees are visible and the fields of the Khotan oasis; on the left of our road lies the immense Takla Makan sea of sand, forming a rise here and there with soft outlines. In 1 hour 40 min. we reached the fields of the village of Hangui and 20 min. later the bazaar street. Badsuddin Khan guided us to the comfortable house of his friend the Beg, where the son of the host gave us a hearty welcome. An excellent fire, hot tea, grapes and fresh bread were served at once and we settled ourselves contentedly on bright carpets and thick blankets, to await the mullahs and their »täskirs». The Friday service delayed them, but after waiting for rather a long time I was pleased to see two venerable mullahs come in. As usual they made out that there were no »täskirs» to be had, but the arguments of Badsuddin Khan's nephew must have been convincing, for after a time the elder mullah sent one »täskir».

It was almost dark by the time we returned to the hospitable hut of the Yuzbashi in Tamaghil, where dinner had long been awaiting us. We started on the return journey to Khotan in the dusk of the evening after four pleasant days. — Hangui is a village of 260 houses with about 10 head of cattle each. The land is fertile and well cultivated.

*December 8th.*

*Khotan.*

It is no easy task to calculate the population, tilled area, stock of cattle and other statistical and economic data, as the Chinese authorities keep secret all statistical information, on which one could base an estimate. However, it may be taken as a basis