

— The inhabitants buy rice from Aqsu, cloth from Kashgar and sell cotton. There is a shortage of water and in some places the ground contains salt.

The Chinese yamen with its life regulated down to the smallest detail makes a curious impression in this remote village. At fixed times cannon are fired to mark sunrise and sunset, the closing of the town gates in this place, where there are none, and so on. Besides Kelpin the mandarin governs several Kirghiz tribes. These are: Hitaman of 90—100 kikitkas, Satkulo of 130 kikitkas and Chura of 90. Some of them carry on a little agriculture, the rest devoting themselves solely to breeding cattle. There are two Begs for the Sarts in Kelpin and 3 for the Kirghiz. I arrived on Chinese New Year's Day. The yamen was decorated with a triumphal arch leaning against the gateway. The Begs, Sarts and Kirghiz were arrayed in their picturesque caps, shaped like sugar-loaves. In return for my visiting card I received the mandarin's, delivered, in spite of the holiday, with many oily expressions of politeness. This evening he sent me word that he would see me to-morrow before I left in order to dissuade me from taking the road over Uch Turfan, which is difficult at this season. This will delay my start, but as I cannot obtain horses without his aid, it cannot be helped.

*February 14th.* The mandarin's visit, my return visit and, above all, the dilatoriness of his people, *Camp at* when they were to let me have the promised pack-horses, delayed my departure, so *Saizam.* that I did not get away until after 10. Instead of the horses, which never appeared, I hired 3 camels that could easily carry our stores in addition to maize and hay for 4 days and 3 nights. This late start made me decide to take the other road, so that our first camp was no more than 11—12 miles from Kelpin. I made a détour of a few miles and rode NW along the dry bed of the Qizil to the gorge about 7 miles from the bazaar, from which the water of the river once flowed. I had been told at the last moment that there was an old Kalmuk ruin there, too. On the extreme point of the mountain on either side of the mouth of the gorge lie the ruins of what were probably two forts, built to defend this narrow pass. The one on the south, in particular, is comparatively well preserved. It looks like the medieval castle of a robber chieftain, its walls of unbaked bricks rising in several tiers on the ledges of the rock. Of the highest part, built on the summit of the rock, incomplete remains of the walls are left, while the wall immediately below is fairly well preserved and forms a large cube, the holes in which have been filled by the crumbling pieces of the upper part. Very little remains of the walls of the more advanced parts of the fort, and of the parts built at the foot of the cliff. The climb was very steep. There were pieces of clay vessels here and there. In some places it looked as though excavations had been made on a small scale, though it was difficult to judge. The holes in the walls, which look like windows and gates, might easily have been due to crumbling. If my caravan had not already pitched camp, I would have stayed here a day or two and done some digging. However, it was essential to get back to camp before dark to avoid any interruption of my mapping. I was only able to take a couple of photographs and make a plan of the southern fort. I only took one photograph of the northern fort, at the foot of which a Mohammedan mazar had been made.