

their camp the Kirghiz showed me a place, where, according to tradition, a Kalmuk town once stood. To judge by the description it is only the strange shapes of some rocks, visible through glasses, that have given rise to this legend. They also told me that in the Qara Teke mountains, at a place called Tscal Kode, 1 or 2 days' journey from Uch Turfan, there were two stones, about 1 metre in height, with the indistinct outline of a head (nose and eyebrows). Apparently they meant that the stones were not carved, but had been shaped by nature. They are a place of pilgrimage among the Kirghiz, who come there to pray, to sacrifice sheep etc. One of the stones stands in such an inaccessible spot that it cannot be approached, but the other can be reached. The higher stone is called «kazata» (the father), the lower one that looks as though it were holding a child in its arms, «kua-gyzana» (the mother). The road is difficult and leads over a high mountain. According to the legend they are two holy men who, fleeing from the Chinese, prayed God to turn them into stone. At present the snow prevents one from getting there.

The journey to-day was chiefly along the Käkyr valley which, while sloping distinctly to the NE, gradually grows narrower between the two slightly converging mountain chains. They approach each other by degrees until the distance between them has been reduced to about 2/3 of a mile, whereupon they again begin to separate, leaving space next to the banks of the river bed for lower hills, and finally, where the valley debouches into the large valley of Uch Turfan, make a sharp turn to the W and E and melt into the mountains that form the southern wall of that valley. The road winds mostly along the foot of the western chain of mountains, but transects the valley and the bed of the river several times and approaches its opposite bank. The valley is called Kuk kat and later Atshakutan and the chains of mountains also change their name in accordance with the valley. There are no signs of water anywhere and the river does not, apparently, obstruct traffic on this caravan route even after heavy rain. The soil is strongly mixed with gravel and stones. Kirghiz yurts were visible in a couple of places and we passed several grazing herds of sheep. The grass seems to grow in very sparsely scattered hummocks, but according to my guide there is plenty in summer. Water can be found for about 3 months after the end of the rainy season; in the winter it is replaced by snow. Fuel is obtainable in some places. The supply of hay, at any rate in winter, can only satisfy animals with very modest requirements; in summer, however, it must be better.

About half-an-hour before reaching the Uch Turfan valley we passed a Chinese picket post on the right, with its crenellated wall. Officially it should have a garrison of 10 men, but probably a better use is found for the allotted funds, for only one Kirghiz is kept there. Here the road turns and before the mouth of the valley a mighty mountain range with snowcapped summits appears on the other side of the Uch Turfan valley. The view is wonderful at the point where our road runs into the Uch Turfan valley: a wide plain disappearing on the horizon in the SW and NE and framed between the snowcapped chain of mountains just mentioned in the N and the Qara Teke mountains in the S. From each of the mountain chains the plain slopes steeply towards the centre, where the river probably flows among tilled fields surrounded by rows of trees planted in different directions. Approximately north of us lies the most eastern summit of a small chain of steep hills,