

had a short consultation and decided to try and reach Tope dawan (the pass) over the mountain, which is on the right road. After wandering for quite an hour in a veritable labyrinth of smaller hills that form the southern spur of the fairly large mountain ridge of Tope, we at last caught sight of a caravan that had come over the pass in the opposite direction. We steered towards it and presently met some merchants with about 30 pack-horses on their way south from Qulja. They were not merely browned by the sun, but practically black, the colour of their faces reminding one of a pair of much worn and polished tan boots and their expression being very grave and tired. The horses were in good condition, but their coats were much thicker than those of our horses. In another half-hour we reached the summit of the Tope dawan pass. The snow had ceased, the wind had dropped and the sun was shining in a clear sky. Some horsemen were encamped at the top of the pass and were munching some bread, while their horses were getting their wind after the ascent. The view was wonderful. To the S and N a confusion of ridges, small summits and hills under a dazzling cover of snow. In the E and W a beautiful slope, disappearing on the horizon in the E and bounded in the N by a majestic chain of mountains which we hoped to reach on the morrow. The pass itself is fairly accessible. From the SW the road goes zigzagging NE following almost in detail the course of a rain-water channel. The road is steep, but vehicles with good horses should be able to get to the top.

Once it has reached the foot of the pass the road goes almost due N and leads practically straight to a little village, Qizil Bulaq, with 10 houses, situated at the foot of the mountain. There is a sarai and a certain quantity of fodder at reasonable prices. Some of the caravans buy the fodder for their journey here. The annual sowings of the whole village amount to about 100 tcheraks, of which 60—70 per cent is barley and 30—40 per cent wheat. Wheat yields a 3—4 fold crop, barley up to 7—10 fold. There are about 15 burans in the spring, 5 in the autumn. There are roads from the village, besides the one we came by, to the group of villages on the upper reach of the river Avat and to another group on either side of the river Muzart, N of the Aqsu-Kucha road. Both are said to be mountain roads, impassable for arbahs. The distance from Qizil Bulaq is about 10 miles. From the group of villages on the river Muzart there is an arbah road to the Aqsu-Kucha highway, but not from the former group of villages.

The caravan, which had been following my tracks and had also gone astray, arrived late at night. And yet the guides had travelled this road for years. It was long past bedtime before the pälaw was ready at last and we got some food after 15 or 16 hours' work and exposure.

Replenishing our supplies of fodder delayed our start and we only got under way shortly before 8. Splendid weather. A clear sky, a hot sun and the wind, for a change, at our backs, to which none of us raised any objection. Five minutes' ride took us out of the little village in which we had spent the night. The road went north and the further we went, the greater was the rise. The ground is sandy, strewn with gravel and stones, and there is a small group of hills just S of the valley of the Muzart. We got

March 29th.
Yangi Mähällä
village.