

draughty room I piled up the window with a packing-case and various garments. This is the last halt with wood on this side of the glacier. Three men with bandaged and frost-bitten faces, and a few carcasses of horses reminded us of the seriousness of our undertaking. A heavy mist had spread over the mountains and shrouded their upper parts. There are usually about a dozen severe burans here in the spring and about two in the autumn.

The road is used most in February—April and August—October. During the winter the cold is so intense that very few people select this road. In the summer the current is so swift over the large stones in the bed of the river that it is very difficult to cross. Horsemen can get across, but not pedestrians, and it is too risky to take pack-horses over the roaring water. Traffic practically ceases at that time. The watchman of the sarai sells fodder to passing caravans at exorbitant prices as a subsidiary source of income.

This day's journey was not more than about five paotai, but on the map it is much shorter, as I have deducted quite an hour for bends in the road, rises and falls.

A miracle occurred this morning — my men were up at 5 a.m. and the caravan got off by 6.30. The distance from Kailik to Tamga-tash is supposed to be 12 paotai, an appreciable distance, when you have to make a road-map, especially if the road curves a good deal. Now, after making the journey and calculating the distance, I cannot make it more than 16—17 miles or in other words 6 paotai. It is indescribably difficult to calculate distances on the basis of the statements of the population. According to my experience a great distance should always be reduced considerably, but a short one should often be doubled or trebled. I explain it by the fatigue that enters into the equation, so that a long distance appears even longer than it is in reality. The figures are also greatly exaggerated, if the distance to be travelled is over rough or very hilly country. I read somewhere that the Chinese, when calculating a paotai, make it longer or shorter according to the nature of the ground, and whether it is level, rises or falls, i.e., they convert the effort, too, into distance. I have been able to check on many occasions that they are not always of the same length.

*March 31st.
Tamga-tash.*

For about two-thirds of the day's journey the river flowed in a SE direction, i.e., the road took us NW, while during the remaining third it went N, at times even NE. The character of the river valley had changed. Instead of the two steep slopes that led during the previous days from the foot of the mountain to the river, flowing mostly in a deep and narrow bed, there was now a broad and stony bed, in which the river at times divided into several arms, and from the foot of the mountains there were slopes extending for a considerable distance only in places. The banks of the river are covered with grass, toghraq bushes and a very low coniferous plant »atchi», the ash of which is mixed with tobacco and used by the population. There is very little smoking here, but almost every Sart has a wad of tobacco mixed with this ash either under his lip or tongue.

No trees were visible except the grove near Kailik and another at the mouth of the Tughe-belche gorge. There were fewer clefts in the mountains than during the previous days. The arm of the river leading from them seemed to be on the same level as the river