

the edge of a perpendicular drop of a few dozen feet. A few more paces and we should have fallen down the precipice in the dark. We climbed down the bank with difficulty and followed the tracks of wheels along the Agrö su that flows southward. Its banks are sparsely populated by Taranchis. The grass is reed-like, with here and there a patch of bushes or a couple of low trees. There were a few very small fields. The huts were of clay with flat roofs and more windows than the Sarts have. In one room I saw five windows in two rows, the lower being just above the level of the ground. The windows were small and protected by vertical bars made of pegs sunk into the mud walls. Only women were visible, the men being away at work. The women look brisk and frank. They do not hide like the Sart women. My guide, who seemed to be entirely ignorant of the way from this valley to the main Urumchi route, attempted to run away during a halt. He had simply advised us to follow the same road that he was taking so that he could obtain a tip and then disappear.

Having found another guide, we left the Agrö su after following it for several hours. We set a NE course and crossed the mountains of loose earth that enclosed the valley. They were yellow, grey and brick-red in colour. Beyond the mountains we crossed a small river that flows to the NW and is called Bay Tokay. Just beyond it yesterday's gravel plain began again; a broad tip of it cuts in between the projecting parts of the mountains. At 11 a.m. we at last reached the post station Pati Tsakhar at the mouth of the gorge that the main route to Urumchi follows. Two sarais, one Government and the other Dungan, and a mapoza station were all there was at this place. The grass was reed-like. Fodder can only be obtained here occasionally and at high prices. A messenger, whom I had despatched to ascertain the whereabouts of the large arbah, brought me the news that, owing to the severe buran, it had returned to Toqsun. A pretty kettle of fish, for my instruments, clean clothes, toilet things, a couple of lan in cash, documents for obtaining the money I had transferred to Urumchi, everything was in the arbah.

Burans occur almost daily here except in October and November. Yesterday and to-day the buran was unusually severe. Snow is very rare, falling once in several years and melting as soon as the buran has ceased.

July 22nd. Yesterday's storm had not abated, but rather increased during the night. The thin door
Davantchin of my room kept rattling frantically and waking me. The dust that was blown through
village. every crevice settled more and more thickly on everything, including myself. When we left at 7 a.m., it seemed as if all the winds of Asia had conspired to prevent our crossing the pass. The horses were loth to move against the wind and their advance was very slow. We sat hunched in the saddle to reduce the resistance to the wind as much as possible. The gale was really so severe that with a heavy waggon it would have been wiser to wait until it was over — but what was one to do, when burans were of almost daily occurrence here! The road led up the same gravel slope, while the mountains on either side rapidly approached each other. On the left we had Hugu Nanjsan, on the right and in front the mountains are called Brankhö (Bejan). The direction was NW. In an hour the road turned into a gorge halfway to the right and went on along its bottom. The mountains on either