

after a descent lasting 25 minutes. The road now crept along the foot of the mountains on the west bank of the river against the stream. We met a large caravan of asses with boards en route for Turfan. An ass's load consists of 8—10 boards slightly over 1 fathom in length. The road is excellent and reflects great credit on its builders. To a great extent it is made of stones held together by rushes and branches. In many places it is protected by stone caissons surrounded by piles. The construction is so careful that in Europe it would certainly be considered a well-built road. The credit for it is due to the former governor of the province of Sinkiang.

We were now in the shelter of fairly high mountains and could at last sit upright in our saddles. On the right we passed a newly established sarai, Hou-Kou. Bushes, thickets and a few trees were growing in the river bed. There was generally no grass, but plenty of low reeds. In 4 hours and 35 minutes from Pai-yang-ho the road took us across the river over an excellent bridge built of blocks of sandstone, piles and thick timber. A fine block of stone with Chinese dragons and an inscription had also been put up here. The ruins of a half-destroyed wall of a fortress were visible on a cliff close to the bridge. The Hou-Kou gorge ended here. To the N an uneven plain extended for some miles bounded in the N by a large mountain range with snow-capped peaks. A strip of wood ran in an E—W direction at a distance of a few miles, probably indicating the presence of a river or a long village. Here and there among the green we saw groups of houses with shady trees.

Barely half-an-hour from the bridge we came to the ruins of one of Yaqub Beg's characteristic forts lying on the right of the road and barring the entrance to the gorge. Here there was a Chinese Government building, customs dues are collected, a mill worked by a horse and a sarai. The road separated more and more from the river and led in a NW direction to the strip of woodland, at first along the mountain on the left. Having ridden for 8 hours and 45 minutes altogether, we stopped in the yard of a sarai in the village of Davantchin. The road we travelled to-day does not agree with the Russian 40 verst map. We were once more among tilled fields with beautiful, luscious verdure. The grass was tall and excellent.

Davantchin is a village of 300 houses (260 Dungan, 20 Chinese and 20 Taranchi). Its area covers about 40×70 li. Wheat, mustard and beans are grown. Wheat yields a 6 fold crop according to the rainfall, which is very irregular. The population is supposed to number about 1600. Approximately 50 per cent of the crop is sold annually. There is snow in the winter, though not much, and it melts immediately. Burans are very common, mostly from the W. There is usually plenty of rain. In general the weather is unreliable. It is often cold without any obvious cause. Last month a shepherd and over 1000 sheep were frozen to death one night. There is a Shang-ja resident in the town, subordinated to the Shenguan in Urumchi. A ljanza of cavalry (tsoã tchi) is stationed there. The impanj is embedded among trees on the N boundary of the village. 30 men with 20 breech-loaders and about 40 muzzle-loaders form the imposing military force of the place and are quartered in the impanj. — The temperature was very different from yesterday on this side of the mountains we had just crossed. The weather was cloudy and the air so chilly that we had to button our coats.