

Gaolyan, wheat, peas and some opium are grown. There is water in abundance. The area to the W of the town is watered by 4 small rivers, in the E by 6, in the S by 10 and in the N by 5. Some of these, however, are quite insignificant. The abundance of water and the ruins everywhere indicate that there are great possibilities of cultivation here. You gain the same impression, more or less, during the whole of this journey of six days. — No new settlements appear to have been established in recent years. — The amount of tax levied in the district amounts to 5890 tan (1 tan = 400 djin).

A road leads from Tsimusa across the mountains to Turfan.

September 5th.

Kucheng  
(Guchen).

After two fruitless days at Tsimusa we went on to-day. The day was cloudy with a slight wind — excellent weather for riding after slight rain during the night. — Our direction lay ESE. At the end of the bazaar the road led over a small river, on the other side of which there was a group of ruins. The character of the landscape was the same for quite 16 hours. The road was several fathoms wide, sandy and dusty, and ran between tilled fields, bushes and trees, though sparser than during the last few days. We crossed two or three small water-channels. The bridges were thoroughly rotten. Here and there we passed a solitary house or saw a ruin among the green. On the way we passed the villages of Erh-Kung, Chi-chi-wa-tzu and T'ou-Kung. When the cultivated land came to an end, an open plain began, covered with tall, coarse grass called »tchi» (*Lasiagrostis splendens*). On the right we saw a couple of groups of trees and in the WNW at a distance of several miles another wooded strip of land approached the road. We passed Tatjyenza, a group of 4 houses subsisting on sales to passers-by. There was no cultivation, but water was available from springs and wells. Another district begins at Tatjyenza. 1 2/3 miles from there there is a sarai, Joutsansa, with 2 houses.

The wooded strip we had noticed at a distance begins about 4 miles from there. The road touches its southernmost point close to a house of the village of Hsiao tung. The river of the same name, about 1 fathom wide, flows northward past it. Immediately beyond it the ground is marshy. — The road turns in a NE direction here, at times almost due N. On the right the ground goes in slight, long undulations. The coarse grass had become more luxuriant and in the N and NNE woods were visible far off, while in other places the plain melted into the distance. Twilight began to spread.

We were now very close to a huge cloud of dust that had for a long time seemed to be moving in an opposite direction to ours, and could distinguish a great number of camels in it. They approached in 3 columns, led by Chinese on foot. The loads of the leading animals were decorated with little flags bearing the name of the owner of the load and its destination. In the half-light the flags either dipped and disappeared or rose again like buoys tumbling about among the waves at sea. The first columns of 15 animals each were followed by others, these by others still and so on. This was a transport of arms on 500 camels, leaving Kucheng in the quiet night en route from Peiping to Ili. About 100 camels carried cases of rifles, the rest cartridges. The cases were marked Tientsin, Birmingham. Here and there an officer or armourer was seated high on a camel's back, nodding in time to the animal's movements. The silence and order were admirable.