

Kucheng lies at the crossing of the high road over Lanchow to Peiping and the caravan routes to Kuku Khoto and Uliasutai. In addition to local trade with Mongols in the neighbourhood and Kirghiz from the Altai district, Kucheng maintains close trade relations with Urumchi, Ili and Tarbagatai. The corn grown is not only sufficient for local requirements, but a good deal of wheat is sold to Kobdo, Uliasutai and Dakura. Caravans are sent there with wheat, maize, lapsha and corn brandy from Kucheng and rice from Manes. The Chinese population in the district is said to own 20,000 camels and the Dungans 2,000. Wheat is bought in Kucheng for a little over 2 lan for 100 djin and is sold in Uliasutai at 6 lan. Most of the larger businesses in Kucheng have their own shops in Urumchi, some in other places, too, and firms in other places have their agents in Kucheng. Chinese dealers in other parts of the province draw their goods partly from the comparatively large stocks in Urumchi and Kucheng. 20,000—30,000 camels are said to come from Peiping annually with goods to a value of over 2 million lan and about 400 camels are sent there with medicines mostly from Ili, cotton, raisins and dried apricots from Turfan etc. Hides are sent to Ili and Lanchow. The population in adjacent districts is said to own as many as 15,000 camels. In payment for goods obtained from Eastern China, joint caravans for all the Chinese merchants in the province are despatched to Peiping with silver 4 times a year (September, December, February and May). The size of the caravans varies from 150 to 200 camels with loads of 2400 lan each. To Chihli alone over a million is sent annually and to other provinces, such as Szechwan, Honan etc. between 2 and 3 million. Altogether about 13,000 camel-loads of goods, medicines, sheepskins, ox hides, Russian cloth etc. are despatched annually into the interior of China.

The town lies in a large, open plain. Far to the S the Tian Shan mountains raise themselves, a tip of Bogdo Olo still being visible among them. In the N the flat plain appears to be wooded — an optical illusion. The clumps of trees are, in reality scattered, without any actual connection. In the W there is a bazaar street and near the E gate you see the remains of the destruction wrought by the Dungan revolt — a fortress wall, still fairly well preserved in half its extent, and ruins of houses. The river Khabuleho flows E of the town quite close to its NE corner and an ariq with plenty of water leads into the town area. The river has its source in springs about 10 li N of the town and is the main artery of the surrounding districts. Divided into 5 branches, it waters a large area, being further supplied with water from springs S of the town. The hexagonal, slightly dilapidated town wall encloses a large, densely populated area. It is only in the SE part that there are some empty spaces. Churches, meeting houses, arches in honour of virtuous women, relieve the uniformity of the architecture to some degree, but they are all of recent date. The official buildings include the mandarin's yamen, the grain store and a small impanj not far from the S gate. The bazaar street goes eastward from the W gate, though it does not extend as far as the opposite wall.

The Chinese shops are not distinguished, as in Urumchi, by their displays, but have large, tidily kept supplies of textiles. Some spacious Chinese restaurants with a multitude of small tables and benches, and with doors and windows curtained with muslin, seem to constitute one of the streets' greatest attractions. Bakers and craftsmen exhibit ready-