

that we should cross the pass in a day and would be able to buy hay in the evening. I had been able to supplement our stock of hay by sending a pack-horse back to Sun-shui-tang and buying a load at a hideous price. We had fodder and food for the men for only one day and the snow was said to be deep for another 20 (according to another version 40) li. If we failed to reach the next station to-morrow, things would be bad. The view from the pass is grand — northward across the chain of mountains on the opposite side of the valley and westward far across the grassy valley. Ku-shui was clearly visible and did not seem very remote, and far beyond it there was an open view. I could not make out Barkul, however. Mountains, no longer very high, rise to the S and SW of the temple. From their peaks Hami can be seen, I am told. The wooded belt, consisting of spruce and larch, ends some distance below the pass. The pass is closed from November or December to April or May. But for the snow it would be passable, though exhausting on account of the long climb. The road is good and not too steep, thanks to its zigzagging.

The temple was built 25 years ago (in the 18th year of the reign of the Emperor Kuangsjy) by a Manchurian Ming who held some official post in Hami. Close to it lies a large stone slab with a long inscription from the time of the Emperor T'ang. It has been thrown down and a small shelter built over it. The superstitious people believe that if anyone touches the stone a storm breaks loose. Eight of us tried to lift the stone in order to photograph it, but could not shift it.

There is snow from September or October to April or May, 1 to 1 1/2 metres deep. Easterly burans occur in winter, 4—5 times a month; in summer twice a month from the SW.

The jai whom I sent out early yesterday morning to examine the condition of the road, reported that there was deep snow for only a very short distance. We therefore started clearing a road with fresh courage. The snow, however, proved to be as deep and compact as the day before. It was long past midday and still there was no sign of a diminution in the layer of snow. A couple of dozen soldiers who were riding from Hami to Barkul gave us the »comforting» news that there was still so much snow in our way that it was impossible for an arbah to get through. These men were a pitiful sight, wrapped in furs and padded clothes, so that you could scarcely make out that they were human beings. A couple of officers, men of about 50, with faces emaciated by opium and wearing large black padded coats, like those worn by old women in Russia, on top of heaps of other clothing, were true types of the warriors you see in the province of Sinkiang. The horses were of the spirited but small Barkul breed, well fed as they always are in the Chinese cavalry, where the horses are fattened but seldom get any exercise. The men's arms consisted of Mauser carbines (mod. 71) and short (about 0.5) sabres fastened to the left side of the saddle under their legs. Three of my horses had long since been despatched to the next station with part of the luggage, while all the other things were packed into the one arbah and all the horses and mules were harnessed to the empty one. Djan and the cook had been sent off on foot, but Sy had been given orders to remain until the last arbah had been brought up. I suggested to the arbahkeshes that we should leave the arbahs and lead the horses down

*October 24th.
Nansanku
station.*