

to the sarai at the foot of the pass, where fodder could probably be obtained and whence I intended to send to Hami for another 8 horses with ropes in order to try to save the heavy arbahs. The men replied, however, that in any case they were determined to get one arbah down. During these two days these two drivers were wonderful. The whole time they were in deep snow that often came up to their waists, yet they never lost courage, although all the 8 tired and hungry horses refused to go on. Whenever you said anything to them, they replied with a smile. When I left them, they had driven, at the suggestion of our incapable guide, the jai, into a narrow ravine-like hollow next to a bridge, where they stuck in the snow. They had a stiff job before them in getting the heavy cart up.

For about 2 miles the road goes in a SSE direction over slightly uneven ground with mountains on the right and left. The former were the higher. The drop in the ground was very slight and often non-existent. Then we entered a gorge leading in a S direction, at the bottom of which a stream roared. The descent became considerable. In the upper part of the gorge there were a few isolated low conifers here and there. The road wound from one slope to another across the stony bottom of the gorge about 50 fathoms wide. The mountains were tinged with black and dark colours, were slate-like and not very high. There were some side-gorges only during the latter part of the road. In its upper part the gorge is called Khuan tsei gö, as the name carved on a block of stone indicates. The lower part which attained a width of 130 fathoms in some places is called Nansanku. A little grass protrudes between the stones. We had to cross the stream or river 5 or 6 times. At this time of year the ice makes this difficult, especially for vehicles. The greatest depth is about 0.3 metres. Some deciduous trees grow by the lower part of the river bed. A few miles north of the Nansanku sarai there is a block of stone bearing two inscriptions in Chinese, one in letters of 3 m, the other rather smaller. They seemed to be of recent origin. Nansanku lies at the mouth of the gorge, 19—20 miles from the pass. The distance may possibly have been miscalculated owing to frequent stops, détours for taking measurements etc. In two places in the gorge we passed the remains of small-sized walls of stone. At the sarai we could only buy reed-like hay. After feeding his horse the jai had to make his way to a Sart village 40 li off to try to get fodder. It will not arrive until to-day, when the horses have set off to fetch another load. I had given up hope of seeing the arbah to-day, when suddenly the jingling of its bells was re-echoed from the mountains. Soaked to the skin and terribly cold the two Chinese turned up, smiling and polite as ever. I gave them a good dose of quinine and 2 lan each, which latter must certainly have seemed the better kind of medicine to them. The cook and Djan, who had also had to wade across the river, were wet and cold. It is lamentable that they have no change of clothing, but must sit and shiver while they dry their clothes and boots before a fire. Djan, in particular, who has never done any other work than that of a shop assistant, has found the hardships of the journey almost unbearable. He sat soaking his cut hands in a basin of hot water and with a cloth round his head he looked more than ever like an old woman. The cook is all right and in general the Sarts seem to have much more stamina than the average Chinese.

In the Sun-shui-tang sarai I killed time by talking with a couple of young officers and some soldiers. We spoke of reforms, especially the military reforms that were now being