

almost without noticing its wall that encloses an area of not more than 100 sq. fathoms. Sincheng is shut in on three sides by the suburb. The E wall alone, facing the valley of the river with a slight projecting annexe, is free. The winding bazaar street leads you, after innumerable twists and turns, nearly to the W gate of the »old town», »Laocheng». Laocheng is the Chinese fortress. Externally it is like all the other fortified towns in the province, only cleaner and in better condition than many of them. Its area, scarcely 1/3 of a mile square, is sparsely populated. The inhabitants are exclusively Chinese. Beyond a clean barracks with offices for the Hsietai, the neglected yamen of the district mandarin and a couple of other Government buildings and temples, there are probably not more than a hundred houses.

A third of a mile to the W on the other side of the river valley lies the old Mohammedan town, the residence of the Prince. It is enclosed by a dilapidated old wall with innumerable small square projections. Near the palace it is as much as 9 fathoms high, in other places only 3—4 fathoms. In former times it offered strong protection, no doubt, against an unarmed or badly armed host. The interior looks poor and desolate. The Prince's residence is tucked away in the SE corner. All the rest of the rectangular space is occupied by miserable little hovels crowded on top of each other. A crooked lane leads from the N gate, another rather larger one from the other gate of the town facing E, and both lose themselves in the mass of houses, goodness only knows how and where. Immediately to the W of the town, which the Chinese call Huicheng, stands a mosque surrounded by a large mazar. This is the mausoleum of the princes, comparatively richly decorated with pavilions of wooden lattice-work. One of them was built by Shao Makhmut, the present ruler of Hami, in the same style as Hezret Appag's mosque at Kashgar, though less pretentious. Both inside and outside it is faced with glazed tiles of different colours, blue and green. The last Mohammedan prince of Kumul in the direct line rests here with his wives and children under the large cupola. The present prince has risen by the caprices of fate from a poor shepherd boy to a princely throne and wealth that should by rights not be his. He was brought up by the last ruler of the district, married his daughter and succeeded by means of bribes and intrigues in Peiping in being recognised as the heir to the small principality.

In the W and N this group of three towns is bounded, at a distance of about 2/3 of a mile, by a barren waste, covered with gravel. In the S and E there is a cultivated plain with small villages, single houses, groves and single trees.

The villages in the Hami district are as follows:

*To the S on the river Gol Uljen:*

(Grass river)

Shanga	.....	4 flourmills	30 houses
E of Shanga:			
Qarangy	.....	15 »	
Shumshuk	.....	2 mills	10 »

*To the S on the road to Ansi:*

Ajar	.....	70 houses
E of Ajar:		
Qara Su	.....	20 »
Debesjin	.....	20 »