

with plenty of good water and a large miao is all that the place has to offer to satisfy spiritual and physical needs. A post of 11 men maintains the postal communications. From Hung-liu-yuan-tzu an arbah road leads to Tun-huang. The distance of 310 li is traversed in 4 days, 90 each on the first three and 40 li on the last. During the first day there are only the ruins of a sarai with water. The second day takes you through country that is marshy round the river Sulei Ho. On the second day and on the others there are sarais with water. Between November and March there are up to 5—6 vershoks of snow. Rain is extremely rare, falling at most once or twice during the summer. Westerly burans are common in spring; they also occur in winter, but more rarely. The Chinese reckon the distance as 80 li (though the hilly ground should make it 90 li according to the arbahkeshes). I made it about 20 miles. The road is good, though tiring in places for arbahs, when it goes up stony inclines or over a plain with loose soil.

*November 8th.* For about 5 1/2 miles the road winds between mounds and hills, now and then crossing one of them. The main direction in this labyrinth is S, SE and ESE. The mountains are the same in character as yesterday, a chaos of low hills with soft outlines covered with a dark, often black, layer of gravel and small stones. Points of rock and spurs protrude near the road. When the road leaves these mountains, a large gravel plain opens up in the E. In the S the horizon is bounded by a chain of long, low eminences that run eastward from the last mountains approximately until they reach a solitary mountain visible in the SE. For a time the road traversed this gravel plain, the surface of which soon became slightly uneven, with short, irregular undulations.

At about the 8th mile lay the ruins of a sarai without water. In the distance on the right a chain of small hills was visible. We crossed a rather more uneven stretch and at the 14th mile came to a hollow in an E direction. The ground which had been practically barren during the whole journey with large salt deposits here and there, now put forth poor grass and reeds. Not far from the beginning of this comparatively narrow valley lay our goal for the day, a little group of houses at the foot of a tuntai tower built on a mound.

The deposits of salt in the neighbourhood are unusually large. In some places they might be mistaken for snow. Many kekliks chattered on the mountain sides near the tuntai tower and round the ruins of a miao. The distance, which the Chinese consider to be 70 li, cannot be more than 15—16 miles. 4 sarais, very defective, and a post of 16 men from Ansi, housed in a miniature impanj, is practically all there is in this place. Snow from the end of November to the end of February, 5—6 vershoks in depth. There is plenty of water obtainable from a spring.

*November 9th.* The night was mild, but the day dawned cloudy and grey. I could have bet that there would be snow. We started at 6 a.m., but not before I had shot 5 kekliks, with which the mountains were simply seething. The road runs in a SSE direction. The small hills round Pei-tun-tzu grow lower and lower until in about 4 miles the last small spurs of the mountains, covered with gravel, finally disappear. Before us stretched an infinite plain of gravel practically devoid of vegetation. In the SW we noticed a long dune-like fold in the ground at some distance and later the road led across several small ones in an E—W direction.