

The station lay about 2 miles S of the ruin that the Chinese call Lei-tun-hsiao-cheng and had two fairly large sarais and plenty of water from a well. The water was about 4—5 arshins below the level of the ground. The station lay close to the northern foot of the Sansiantzy mountains. On the top of the mountain a group of buildings was visible belonging to a temple called Tie Shang. The distance from the sarai to Ansi was 16—17 miles.

There is not much to be said about the road yesterday and to-day. It follows the northern slope of the Sansiantzy mountains and goes over firm ground consisting of fine gravel and sand. It can quite fairly be described as flat with a drop to the north, for the few elevations extending northward from the mountains are nothing but insignificant undulations in the ground. Yesterday we rested at Tien-shui-ching-tzu station, where there are two miniature sarais, a temple and a well with slightly salt water. The water is 4—5 arshins below the surface of the ground. In spite of its small size the Government sarai, in which I spent the night, was excellent. At the half distance lie the ruins of a sarai with a stream with plenty of water, flowing from the south. The clear water is salty. It is said to come from a marsh. The place is called Lutsougo, i.e., »grass of the marsh in the gorge».

The ruins of another sarai lie halfway between Tien-shui-ching-tzu and Kua-tien-tzu. The well next to them had dried up. Close to the sarai there was a tuntai tower of a peculiar hexagonal shape that I had not seen before. The Chinese told me that this form of tower was much older than the usual ones, though the latter are sometimes also of considerable age. However, they could give me no idea of its age. Next to the tower was a mound of earth enclosing a small square space, probably the remains of some small military post, obviously very old. At Kua-tien-tzu, too, there were two small sarais, the one belonging to the Government being, if possible, even more comfortable than the last one. A comparatively large temple stands on a small hillock. Slightly salt water is obtained from a well. The water is 6—7 arshins below the ground level. Both distances are said to be 70 li, but I estimated the former at 17 miles and the latter at 19 miles. There seems to be little traffic on this route. Yesterday a caravan of 19 camels camped close to us, en route for Tun-huang.

Kua-tien-tzu has snow in December, but it does not lie more than 3—4 days. Rain is rare and frequently does not occur at all. Burans are rare.

The ground close to the sarai is sandy and deep, but soon the road becomes firm again. Reeds and coarse grass grow on either side. The ground is bare in many places and looks like a sea that has congealed in the midst of a storm. In 5—6 miles we reached the beginning of the Tun-huang oasis, a strip of woods and houses belonging to the village of Ching-shui-hsien. The station of the same name, crumbling into ruins, lies about 2/3 of a mile further on. There is a well there and a miao. Two caravans of camels had encamped close to it. One of them, consisting of 80 camels, with Russian goods from Kashgar to Lop Nor, Tun-huang and Kanchow, was now on its way to the latter place with seed and wool from Tun-huang. A consignment of tea is to be carried from Kanchow to Kashgar. The other caravan of 54 camels belonged to a Chinese from Tun-huang and was carrying grain