

the walls of the actual fortress that face south and east. A modest bazaar street runs from the eastern gate to the eastern gate of the fortress. The shops are without exception insignificant, and yet life pulsates here in full measure as in most of the other towns in Central Asia. If you take a walk along the street about noon on a sunny day, you find it simply swarming with people. The monotonous Chinese crowd, dressed in blue, is enlivened here and there by some Mongols from the mountains in the S, with their dark, weather-beaten complexions, bits of sheepskin, lined with red, slung over their heads, so that the crowns are bare, short fur coats with borders of red and green cloth, bunched up to form a huge sack at the back, and ungainly top-boots like those of the Sargan summun Kalmuks. Cross-streets from the bazaar street traverse the outer part of the town from N to S. Excepting the southern part, where a broad, empty space runs along the wall and serves as a grazing ground for camels, the whole area is densely covered with small, modest clay houses. A couple of temples, a ruined memorial gate and a few shady trees rise above the dull grey mass of houses. Near the south wall there are many large warehouses for the grain supply of the district. The town wall is neglected and dilapidated. The area of the actual fortress is divided into 4 parts by two streets that cross each other in the middle of the town. With its memorial gates, temples with bells tinkling in the wind, cramped official buildings and centuries-old gnarled trees, the little town possesses a charming air of antiquity. The streets are lifeless, nothing is visible but a couple of debilitated old opium smokers and a crowd of loitering street-boys. In the temples there are old mural paintings depicting the 8 chief gods, the day of judgment and other allegorical subjects. The roofs of the temples, the fretwork pavilions on the gates and corner towers and a tower in the middle of the town lend a touch of the picturesque to the spot.

A Shenguan is resident in the town. The garrison of rather over 200 men consists of a kind of town militia, armed with rifles fired by means of a wick that passes through the cock. It is commanded by a »Tsandian«, a kind of general. During a recent disturbance it showed its unreliability and even failed to protect the myrmidons of the Shenguan, several of whom were killed. The cause of the disturbance is said to have been the refusal of the Shenguan to allow the population to decide, whether it was to pay its taxes in grain or money. Now all was quiet again. The Shenguan had one of the oldest inhabitants whipped to death and some of the leaders of the revolt were sent to Suchow for trial; others preferred to seek safety in some distant place.

The oasis extends 80 li to the N, 10 li to the S, 30 li to the W and 40 li to the E. There seems to be plenty of water thanks to the presence of two large rivers, yet there are complaints of a shortage of water in the remoter parts of the oasis. In the W and S the inhabitants have to contend with drifting sand that has encroached upon a number of fields in the course of time. This is supposed to be the reason why part of the population has left, so that in that part of the oasis there are numbers of ruins of deserted houses. According to the statement of the mandarin the population had decreased from 2,400 families to slightly over 1,800. The whole area consists of uneven ground with fields lying next to each other at different levels and intersected by ariqs, some high, some low, and with water of varying depths. The houses and fields are protected by many shady trees. The