

houses stand close together, which indicates that the population, though reduced, is still proportionately quite large for the area. The fields are well cared for and the houses look neat and prosperous. The whole oasis is rather reminiscent of the most densely populated parts of Kashgaria, though the population and method of building are different. Here in Western China for the first time you come across the custom that obtains in Manchuria of surrounding single houses with regular fortifications — a massive wall, several fathoms in height, often with four corner turrets. As in the neighbourhood along »peilu», the ox is preferred here as a draught animal. The carts are clumsy and heavy, and when harnessed, they lean forward very much. The wheels are large, mostly made of warped timber and often askew. The horses and cattle are not of a good breed and are half starved. Donkeys are more common than horses. The population consists entirely of Chinese from Kouli. Most of the villages are named after the places from which the inhabitants came originally.

The present town is supposed to have been built in the 20th year of the reign of the Emperor Tja tching, i.e., about 160 years ago, and it is said that the Chinese population immigrated at that time. On the opposite bank of the river the ruins of a massive fortress wall are visible. You can see that it enclosed an area of about  $\frac{2}{3}$  of a mile. At one place the solid clay wall is still 8 fathoms high and originally it was even higher. This town or fortress is said to have been built by the Emperor Khantchou's famous general Pan Tchou (about 1900 years ago). When he retired with his troops, this Chinese border fortress fell into the hands of an enemy people (called Tchangtu by the present Chinese inhabitants). In the 20th year of the reign of the Emperor Jun khö the town was retaken by his Dzian Dziun Pei tchen. There is a memorial stone in honour of this same Pei tchen in an old miao next to the N wall of Barkul. The ancient characters could only be partially read by my men. They mention a spring in the form of the moon surrounded by mountains. The people of Barkul say that the stone removed itself there from Tun-huang and that it had sunk so deep into the earth that it was impossible to dig down to its foot.

Among the sights of Tun-huang the inhabitants point out a spring which has the shape of the moon, lying among some sandhills. As my time was fully occupied and I was told that there was no stone with an inscription or any other memorial near the spring, I did not visit it. A horse of supernatural strength is supposed to dwell in its waters and appear at times to the elect. There is a similar legend at Barkul. The lake there has also been selected as the abode of a miraculous stallion possessing gifts not bestowed upon other horses. One night, when the herdsman was asleep, it covered a mare in one of the herds belonging to the Government on the shore. The foal that was born possessed supernatural qualities. It could travel thousands of li in a few hours. It came into the hands of a monk and carried him in one night to Sian. The mandarin there heard of the miraculous gifts of the creature and forced the monk to part with it for several thousand taels. He sent the horse to Peiping as a gift for the Bogdykhan, but on the way it fell ill and died. The connection between Tun-huang and Barkul and the similarity of their legends is curious and may, perhaps,

into the ariqs during the period of high water that the river can be ridden across even then. The ground is intersected by many roads, often sunk deep. — Drawn by the author.