

tistically executed inscriptions, probably still more elegantly worded, the offerings of passing mandarins and merchants.

The administration of the place is in the hands of a mandarin subordinated to the Tsouguan at Suchow. He is also the western gatekeeper of the Empire and has to keep a record of everyone who passes his gateway. Settlers, large numbers of whom travel westward every year, have to pay 1 tchen per head for such registration or for obtaining a permit. A party of 500 Honans recently manifested their objection to this unjust imposition by giving the collector of this bloodmoney a sound thrashing and going on their way without paying anything. Owing to this incident the Taotai in Suchow had the tax reduced to 40 tchok.

The defence of the gates is entrusted to a juti, directly subordinated to the Djentai at Suchow. He has 8 officers and 51 men under him, representing, on paper, a in of 120 men. The detachment has the same militia organisation as at Ansi and the pay is the same. As at Ansi, training is only done during the 2nd and 8th Chinese months. No target shooting is ever done, only firing with blank cartridges. The arms consist of about a hundred rifles with wicks, 2 old copper cannon, 17 taifurs and 20 swords.

There are the following villages in the district: NW of the fortress Huang-tsao in with 34 houses, 180 sheep and 60 oxen, producing 700 tan of grain annually; NE Ti uenpa with 20 houses, 1,000 sheep, 40 oxen and 30 horses and 70 tan of grain per year; NE 40 li from the town Jeman uen with 300 houses, 4,000 sheep, 500 oxen, 400 horses and 6,000 tan of grain; E Luotchyengo with 7 houses and SE Nanyengo with 40 houses, 2,000 sheep, 400 oxen, 140 horses and 100 tan of grain per year.

Immediately to the E of Chia-yu-kuan the road took us down from the terrace-shaped hill, on which the town is built, past a few single houses with some scattered trees. We crossed 4 or 5 small rivers flowing in a NE and ENE direction at intervals of a few minutes, apparently branches of the same river that comes from the south. The water was as clear as crystal. We passed across the last river a mile or two from the fortress. Here practically all vegetation ceased. The plain was level and very stony. Creeping plants or small grassy hummocks only appeared here and there. The tuntai towers along the road were far more numerous than before outside the wall. All of them were enclosed by a low wall, at the foot of which stood 5 less brightly painted towers and a mud hut, adorned with red suns. The men in charge must have developed a passion for building clay walls, towers and huts, to waste so much of the people's time and labour in this way. The distance between them seems to have depended here, too, on the caprice of the builders, for I counted 28, 19, 24, 28 and 21 1/2 minutes between 6 different tuntai towers.

7 miles from where we crossed the last river we reached the village of Jyen jou tsäi, a succession of scattered houses and trees creeping along both sides of a dry ariq or branch of a river in a SW—NE direction. In the N and SE we could now clearly see the edge of a wood that indicated the boundary of the Suchow oasis. On the other hand both the Kheishan mountains in the N and Tsinlianshan in the S had disappeared from sight. At high water the river is said to obstruct traffic, though for not more than 2—3 days.

*December 1st
Suchow.*