

the road took us in sharp curves along a very steep slope down into a third, also running westward. A river bed wound at the bottom, crossed by a strong bridge built of stone. After creeping round another spur of the mountains in the W the road crossed another cleft with a river bed, over which a bridge was built. S of it the ascent begins to a considerable spur of mountain and it was only after riding round this that the final descent began, very prolonged without being particularly steep. On the way we passed the village of Hochow-Shan with a dozen houses, and at a distance of 1 1/2 miles to the E we saw another, slightly larger village. The rock was often denuded on the mountains and the ground began to be stony and a mixture of stone and gravel. Some time later we reached a dry stony river bed, about 10 fathoms wide, Nan ping ho (a tributary of the Tao ho) as the Chinese called it. It has a narrow passage between the mountains. We followed its bed for about 2 miles in a SW direction, when we left it and the road went up the high-lying left bank. Here stood the village of Nan ping with 30 houses and a couple of shops. Its fields extended in a SW direction and ploughing was in full swing. Horses appeared to be used more than oxen. I was told that about a dozen landowners had no draught-animals and were obliged to hire them. The cultivated belt, about 2/3 of a mile in width, was cut short about 2 miles from the village by the mountains which ran into each other and left a cleft between them with a dry river bed which we followed. This led us out to the broad bed of the Tao ho. At the point where the road debouched into its valley, we passed the village of Vandja with 5 houses. For about 2/3 of a mile we rode against the course of the river until we reached a ferry at the foot of a steep hill.

There was a steep descent to the ferry which was worked by a rope stretched across the river, the width of which was 200—250 fathoms here. On the opposite bank there was a flat belt, well tilled and about 1/3 of a mile broad. A road flanked by trees led us to the village of Tang wang at the foot of the mountain. The village looked rather like a small town, as it was enclosed by a wall. The population is reckoned to be over 400 tja. Wheat, barley, beans, tchinkho, tchumiza, millet and some peas, opium and fruit are grown. The average crop is 5 fold. There are no burans, but strong SW winds. Snow between the 11th and 3rd Chinese months, but it is rare and does not lie. Rain in the 4th—5th months. — According to my map the distance covered to-day was 12—13 miles, but should be considered about 16 miles, as the map does not allow for the numerous bends of the road.

We left this morning in beautiful weather, quite springlike. Immediately to the SW of the village we climbed a very steep and tiring ascent to the summit of the mountain chain that closed the valley of the Tao ho in the S. Ignoring the innumerable curves of the road, we climbed for 3 miles without a break. With the exception of a couple of short intervals the road was very steep, the rise during the first couple of miles being about 600 metres. It runs almost all the time along a ledge, a couple of arshins in width, and after rain, when the ground is as slippery as clay, it must be as impossible to walk on as the glass mountain of the fairytale. On the mountain a view is unfolded like the one from the Tien-shan-tzu mountain, but much larger. It is also more beautiful, for the valley of the Tao ho, well tilled and populated and with fruit-trees scattered over it, lies at the very foot of the

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Sonanpa
village.