



*A 70-year old Tangut from  
Khi tha shan.*

The road soon took us from this tilled valley up one of the hills still in the same ESE direction that we had taken from Hatsuo su. The very uneven country was now quite desolate. There were mountains further south and some chains of hills and valleys led more or less from them approximately in a NE direction, cutting across the road obliquely. The ground was grassy. The valleys, not deep in comparison with the level of the ground, were often marshy. This monotonous, desolate country continued for 7—10 miles. There were 3 or 4 houses in a valley and we caught sight of a couple of small herds, guarded by armed Tanguts, but otherwise there was not a living thing in sight. A cold east wind made the journey still more unpleasant. We pulled on our furs, but could not keep warm. This was the part of the journey that had such a bad name, but I saw no bandits nor their victims, caravans — all was desolate and quiet, only the wind howled and raised clouds of dust at times. After riding for many miles, our course became more southerly. We drew near to the mountains in the S and cut across them in a direction due S. They consisted of löss throughout, with grassy slopes. At the point where we crossed them, they formed a pass between mound-like hills. The ascent and descent were fairly steep, but not very long. On the southern side of the pass we entered a valley between hills of löss. At its beginning there were two Tangut tents, black in colour and each with a small enclosure for the cattle. One had a flat roof, the other was tent-shaped, though both were almost equally low. The village of Vankur, our goal for the day, lay a mile or two further on.

We stopped at a sarai kept by a Tangut. The room set aside for me was quite luxurious: lined inside with boards painted from floor to ceiling, a floor built of boards, doors with a kind of lock made of a peg and so on. Altogether, I found the Tangut villages better built