



*A Tangut woman collecting droppings.*

living. Everything pointed to the fact that my all too brief time among the Tanguts would soon be a thing of the past.

Soon we found ourselves on a dusty arbah road that wound along a ravine in the soft ground. The latter grew less and less stony. We met loads all pulled by oxen, mostly short yak-oxen. Here and there a herd of sheep could be seen on a slope. The road described a curve to the S for a mile or two and then resumed its former course. Soon after it debouched into the Taochow valley, about  $\frac{2}{3}$  of a mile in width. Here everything, valley and slopes right up to the summit of the mountains, went in terraces. It formed a curious landscape of nothing but wide stairs, at times straight, at others rounded or of the most irregular shapes, bare and treeless as far as you could see. The old town-wall appeared in the SE — neglected and dilapidated. In some places it is overgrown with small bushy plants which give it the look of a venerable ruin. On the side from which we approached it, it was enclosed by a large number of houses in a suburb. A crooked street led us to an open space, like a market square, running along the town wall between two rows of houses. Quantities of white sunshades put up to protect the stands from the almost burning sun gave the square, through which a stream poured a brown streak of water, and the blueclad, monotonous crowd, an unusually pretty appearance. A couple of Tanguts in huge fur caps, were sitting, naked to the waist, warming themselves in the sunshine. The venerable old wall, with its turrets and battlements overgrown with grass and bushy plants, formed a beautiful background to the stands and small houses. The town is said to be over 1,000 years old.

Sin-cheng belongs to the district of Taochow-Sin-cheng. The local administration is in the hands of 2 Shang-ja — 1 for the town and the other for the inhabitants of the suburb. The rural population pays its taxes direct to the mandarin at Sin-cheng. — The specialities