



*A Tangut mounted on a donkey.*

that a horseman could only just pass, but no heavily laden animals, still less a tjao. As his arguments did not achieve the desired result, he sent word that, if I was determined to take this road, he would not send a single man to accompany me. I replied that that was his own business — he would, of course, do as his duty demanded, and that I had already obtained a guide. Realising that I refused to place myself under his guardianship, he altered his tactics and informed me that he would not only provide a guide, but would place a «jai» and soldiers at my disposal, but that he disclaimed any responsibility.

These lengthy negotiations had forced me to spend a day in Sin-cheng, which was anything but pleasant. It rained the whole day and in the evening the rain turned to snow. When we were ready to start next morning, the snow was several cm deep and continued to fall. As I was afraid that in such conditions I might in reality not be able to get my luggage across the slippery ledge at the place referred to and be forced to lose time, I decided to take the Minchow road. This runs at first in an ESE direction at the bottom of the valley, in which the town lies. We passed a couple of small villages and at a point where the valley forked, we followed the southern branch that very soon led us across a small pass with a gentle ascent and descent. On its S side we set our course due E along a narrow valley surrounded by grassy hills. During this time we passed another 2 or 3 small villages. About 2 miles from the pass the road turned S once more and took us over another small pass. On the other side of it we continued to the ESE through a valley of scarcely 100—200 fathoms in width. We rode past several insignificant villages. A stream started a little