

In regard to reforms, schools were opened here and at Taochow about two years ago. At Minchow there are 20 pupils. The teaching staff, two men educated in Lanchow (one insufficiently), is said to be rather incompetent. — I was told that the opium plantations had been registered. Trade in opium can only be carried on in a limited number of shops, each of which pays 300 tchoks a month. The rural population has reduced its plantations of its own accord for fear of taxes being raised. There are said to be large deposits of coal at a distance of 25 li from Minchow. There is gold 2 days' journey to the SW. — The climate is said to be very healthy. There is dry cold in the winter, easy to bear. Storms only occur during two months in spring and the summer is very temperate, without any mosquitoes.

April 7th. Rain began to fall towards evening yesterday and continued into the night. A good deal of snow had fallen higher up in the hills, which helped to make the landscape stand out in clearer relief and look more beautiful when we started this morning. It was still cloudy, cold and dull, however. About 2 miles E of the town we came to the Tao ho after crossing a small tributary, the Tjedja, flowing from the S quite close to the E suburb. The Tao ho is 25—30 fathoms wide here and flows between fairly steep mountain sides. $\frac{1}{3}$ of a mile further on the river is crossed by a ferry worked by a rope. After keeping the river imprisoned for about 2 miles, the mountains retreat and leave room for fields of $1-1\frac{1}{2}$ miles in width on either bank. The village of Tsapui with 100 houses in 3 groups lay on the road with several watermills on the Nanaho, a river flowing from the E and running through the village. From here a road goes over Kuotoli, Jeshanku, Pumali, Shinsiho and Kuanglung pu to Ning yuan. Several villages were visible on the opposite bank. The watermills in the neighbourhood of Minchow and Taochow have very narrow waterwheels, but placed vertically as in Europe, not horizontally as in Central Asia. The arbah wheels, too, though badly made, remind one of European wheels in form. The spokes are not set in the same plane as the rims, but sloping slightly inwards. The few arbahs we met were drawn by oxen. Small brass balls were threaded on to the points of their horns and some were also decorated with red tufts that descended on to their foreheads.

About a mile from Tsapui we reached the mountains on the right which had again approached the river. For $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles we passed more or less along their foot, the river being at times close to the road, at others rather further off. We passed several small villages and one larger one, Michuan, of 80 houses. Shortly before reaching the latter, we crossed a river bed coming from the E, dry at present. The road had followed the course of the Tao ho and had changed from an E to a N and NNW direction, but now turned and led us up a gorge to the NNE, at the bottom of which a stream-like tributary of the Tao ho wound its way. It was bounded on either side by grassy hills with gentle slopes. In the hollows in the ground we could see very stony clay and there were many small stones on the road and, in places, on the scattered small fields. In the more open parts of the valley of the Tao ho there were also a great many small stones. The ground rose slightly. We passed a couple of very small villages at the bottom of the gorge. Occasionally we saw a single tree or a small clump of trees.

After covering about $18\frac{1}{2}$ miles we came to the village of Laotien, our goal for the day.