

*June 30th.* The journey across the flat plain to-day was extremely monotonous. The course was NNE at first. Weather glorious. Drops of yesterday's rain sparkled in the sun on the fields. *Ta yu kou village.* At Yung Nan yu I said goodbye to my companions of the last two days, 3 Mongols and an unmarried Mongol woman, returning like myself from Yutai Shan. One of the men, a lama of 30 years of age, T'ang Lobsang from Chenchuen (Chouhua sui) in Ordos (Otok wang), was unusually loquacious and amused me very much. We parted the best of friends. Even the woman appeared in very scanty negligé, when I bade them farewell at 5 a.m., and said a few words with outstretched hands.

We passed Hochow chuan-tzu with 60 houses and Huthuan Chuang with the same number after 10 and 20 li. The trees come to an end after the latter village and the plain takes on the appearance of a steppe. After crossing a river 20—30 feet wide and 0.25 m deep, we came to Shanyin hsien (28 li), a wretched little district town with a population of not much more than 200 tja. In the S and SW large masses of sand, on which some thin grass was growing, were piled up against the ruined wall. Here nothing had been done in regard to opium smoking, but it would scarcely be necessary. The land is too barren, no opium is grown and the poverty-stricken population only possesses a small number of smokers.

The ground in front of us was in the shape of large and small mounds. At a distance it might be mistaken for a cemetery which takes on the appearance, the nearer you approach it, of one of those ruined villages that are so often seen in the interior of Northern China. A small village lies among the mounds of earth and fully a dozen furnaces, in which salt is burnt. The earth is collected in large, rectangular hollows and is then saturated with water. This is led through a pipe at the bottom of the hollow into another open hole. From this the dark-brown and very saliferous water is raised to one of the furnaces, where it is boiled in a pan until the salt separates and is fished up in baskets. Some of the salt is quite white and of good quality, but the greater part is darker in colour. — Two similar salt works, one of the same size, the other rather larger, are said to exist in the immediate neighbourhood. The work is only done between the 4th and 5th and the 7th and 8th months. In winter the people have no occupation. With true Chinese indolence they live on what they earn in the summer months. A furnace of 2—3 cauldrons produces 60—80 djin of salt daily at 19 cash on the spot. Coal from the mountains in the W is used as fuel. The profit, excluding labour is said to be 5—6 cash per djin. A tax of 1,980 cash is levied from each workman. — The fields, that were poor at the beginning of the day, ceased altogether immediately beyond Shanyin hsien.

After 41 li we reached the broad bed of the Sangkan ho. Here its course was ENE—WSW with a bed not much lower than the rest of the ground, over 500 yards wide with a watercourse of almost 100 yards in width, the water coming up to the saddle. The bottom was firm and the current in a narrow channel fairly swift. At high water, traffic is suspended for 3—5 days. Some distance from the road there is a curious old hexagonal column, about the height of a man, with a ledge halfway up. Both above and below the ledge it is ornamented with images in bas relief.

After 48 li Liu Chaling; after 58 li Tai yu with 150 houses. Our course was now N