

and in a sense distinctly unfavourable to Chinese exports along this ancient route, Su-chou still remains a flourishing town with considerable commercial activity, many of the needs of south-western Mongolia being supplied from this place and from Kan-chou.

It does not come within the scope of my task to attempt to trace the history of Su-chou, for which the dynastic Annals and other Chinese records must supply materials in abundance.⁷ That ancient remains on the surface to illustrate it are wanting can in no way cause surprise, considering the climatic conditions, the character of the ground, and its long-continued occupation. The city of Su-chou, rebuilt after complete destruction during the great Tungan rebellion, would have no proof to offer of the antiquity of its site, were it not for the fine spring of *Chiu-ch'üan* 酒泉, the 'Fountain of Wine', less than a mile from the north-east corner of the city walls, which gave it its ancient designation. The temple precincts and garden which adjoin this famous spring provided me with delightful quarters on each of my visits to Su-chou. Spring of
Chiu-ch'üan.

The weeks of hard travel I spent during August, 1907, among the high ranges of the Nan-shan to the south of the tracts between Su-chou and Kan-chou were devoted purely to geographical work. For the results of our surveys I must refer to Maps Nos. 88, 89, 91-4 and to my Personal Narrative.⁸ But the observations there made were not without historical interest in some respects. Once the narrow gorges lay behind us in which the streams draining the north-eastern slopes of the Richthofen Range have cut their way down to the submontane plateaus, our progress led across a succession of magnificently wide upland valleys, as open as any of the Pāmirs, but incomparably richer in vegetation. I refer to the great valleys which divide the high snow-crowned crests of the Great
valleys be-
tween Nan-
shan ranges.

Yule-Cordier, *Cathay*, i. p. 291; also that of Goës, *ibid.*, iv. p. 242.

The former gives interesting and accurate details about the wild rhubarb which grows in abundance in the mountains south of Su-chou and which, as Marco Polo's reference in connexion with *Succuir* shows, must have been an important article of trade there during the Middle Ages, if not earlier also; cf. Yule, *Marco Polo*, i. p. 217; also *Desert Cathay*, ii. p. 305.

[I may conveniently point out here how closely the observations that I made in the valleys on either side of the Richthofen Range south of Su-chou bear out the description heard by Ramusio from the mouth of his Persian trader: 'Then he told us that the rhubarb grows over all that province, but much the best is got in a certain neighbouring range of lofty and rocky mountains, where there are many springs, with woods of sundry kinds of trees growing to a great height, and soil of a red colour, which, owing to the frequent rains and the springs which run in all directions, is almost always in a sloppy state.'

The reference to the soil of red colour seems to me to point clearly to the boggy valleys near the head-waters of the Ma-so Ho and Hung-shui-pa Ho, the latter of which directly derives its name from these slopes of bright red clay; see *Desert Cathay*, ii. pp. 308 sqq. Ramusio was specially interested in Hāji Muḥammad's data about the rhubarb because 'in the thirty-eighth chapter of Messer Marco Polo's first book he treats of the rhubarb which is produced in the province of *Succuir* and is thence exported into these parts and all over the world'. We are told that Hāji Muḥammad 'had himself been to Succuir, coming afterwards . . . to Venice with a large

quantity of the aforesaid rhubarb'; cf. Yule-Cordier, *Cathay*, i. p. 290. I did not find any conifers on the route by which I reached the Hung-shui-pa Ho; but fine forests of pine and fir abound in the valleys of the Richthofen Range further to the south-east.]

⁷ As regards foreign references to Su-chou it must suffice to point out that the earliest I can trace is contained in one of my Turkish 'Runic' documents from the Mīrān fort, which mentions the 'town of Sugchu'; cf. Thomsen, *Manuscripts in Turkish 'Runic' script*, *J.R.A.S.*, 1912, p. 186; also above, p. 473. For the earlier pronunciation of the name Su-chou 肅州 as *Sukchou*, cf. Yule-Cordier, *Cathay*, iii. p. 126, where Rashīd-ud-dīn's mention of *Sukchū* is discussed.

The same form of the name accounts also for Marco Polo's *Succiu*; see Yule, *Marco Polo*, i. p. 277. [Regarding the plant poisonous to cattle which Marco Polo mentions in the mountains of Su-chou, cf. *Desert Cathay*, ii. p. 303; it is locally known as *tsui-ma-ts'ao*, 'the grass making horses drunk'.]

For the references to Su-chou made by Gardēzī, Shāh Rukh's embassy, Hāji Muḥammad, Goës, see Yule-Cordier, *Cathay*, i. pp. 240, 275, 291; iv. pp. 241 sq.

[I may note here in passing that the division of the city into two parts, which Goës' narrative mentions, one for the Chinese, the other for Muhammadans from western regions, is still observed in the present Su-chou.]

⁸ See *Desert Cathay*, ii. pp. 297-333. Map III showing portions of the Western and Central Nan-shan, on 1:1,000,000 scale, published with my paper in the *Geogr. Journal*, March, 1911, and reproduced in *Desert Cathay*, illustrates the main features of the whole mountain area within a convenient compass.