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THE LAND OF THE TEBBUS

JOSEPH F. ROCK

KANSU, the north-westernmost province of China, appears bleak and desolate, especially when approached from the east. The soil is composed of fine, powdered grey loess. The arid aspect of the land, due to a sparing rainfall, the absence of trees, the dreary mud hovels, usually with flat roofs, which serve as dwellings; all these present a rather sordid picture. No one would dream that such a poor dreary province should harbour in its south-western region a paradise second to none perhaps in the whole of China. A great limestone range, known as the Min Shan, separates this oasis from the rest of Kansu.

As if to fortify this most romantic of all oases of the Chinese hinterland, the Tao river acts as a deep moat surrounding the crenelated castle battlements represented by the Min Shan, behind which lies Tebbu Land. The Min Shan, extending from east to west, is composed of fantastic limestone crags cut into huge turrets and pinnacles. A deep cleft in its central part forms the famous Shi Men, or rock gate, a landmark visible far and wide. Its northern slopes are cut into numerous deep valleys, densely forested with spruces, firs, and rhododendrons, which debouch into the Tao river. The ridges and spurs separating these valleys are often themselves sharply crenelated and resemble huge sleeping dragons who guard Tebbu Land.

There are really three approaches to this land through long valleys which have their sources in the Min Shan. The easiest approach is through the valley of Kadja to a pass called Kwangke by the Choni people and Konke by the Tebbus. One must not however suppose that once this pass is reached Tebbu Land lies before one's gaze. There remain to be negotiated vast gorges and rock gates where an army could be held at bay by a few. The Tao river, the natural moat of Tebbu Land, has its source in the vast grasslands west of another mighty limestone range called Luichawrak, which fantastic mountain mass it has cut in half. The Tao river encircles nearly the entire northern slopes of the Min Shan, and is at once the divider of beauty from desolation and of lawlessness from order. These wild Tebbus that inhabit the most romantic spot of all China will perhaps remain an ethnological riddle; they call themselves Tewu, and are divided into two or perhaps three clans known as the Upper or Shan Tebbu, the Lower or Ha Tebbu, and the most refractory of all, the Tara Tebbu. They are akin to the Tibetan race, but from my studies of the many tribes inhabiting western China I have come to believe that the Tebbus, the Hsifan or Chrime tribe, the Chiarung, Nyarung, and the Nahi, or Moso, are of one stock, namely, the great Chiang race who numbered over 250,000 families, and whose kingdom once was in the Koko Nor. Early Chinese records report that their territory lay south of a line from the Lop Nor to the great wall. Another branch of the Chiang mentioned in the Chinese histories are the Ti, and it is very likely that the Tewu belonged originally to the Ti branch, spoken of as the Ti Chiang. The Chinese characters employed to write their tribal name are Tieh Pu, meaning "iron cloth," but these serve as phonetics only, having been selected to imitate the Choni name for them, which is Tebbu. There are ten thousand of these warlike people belonging to

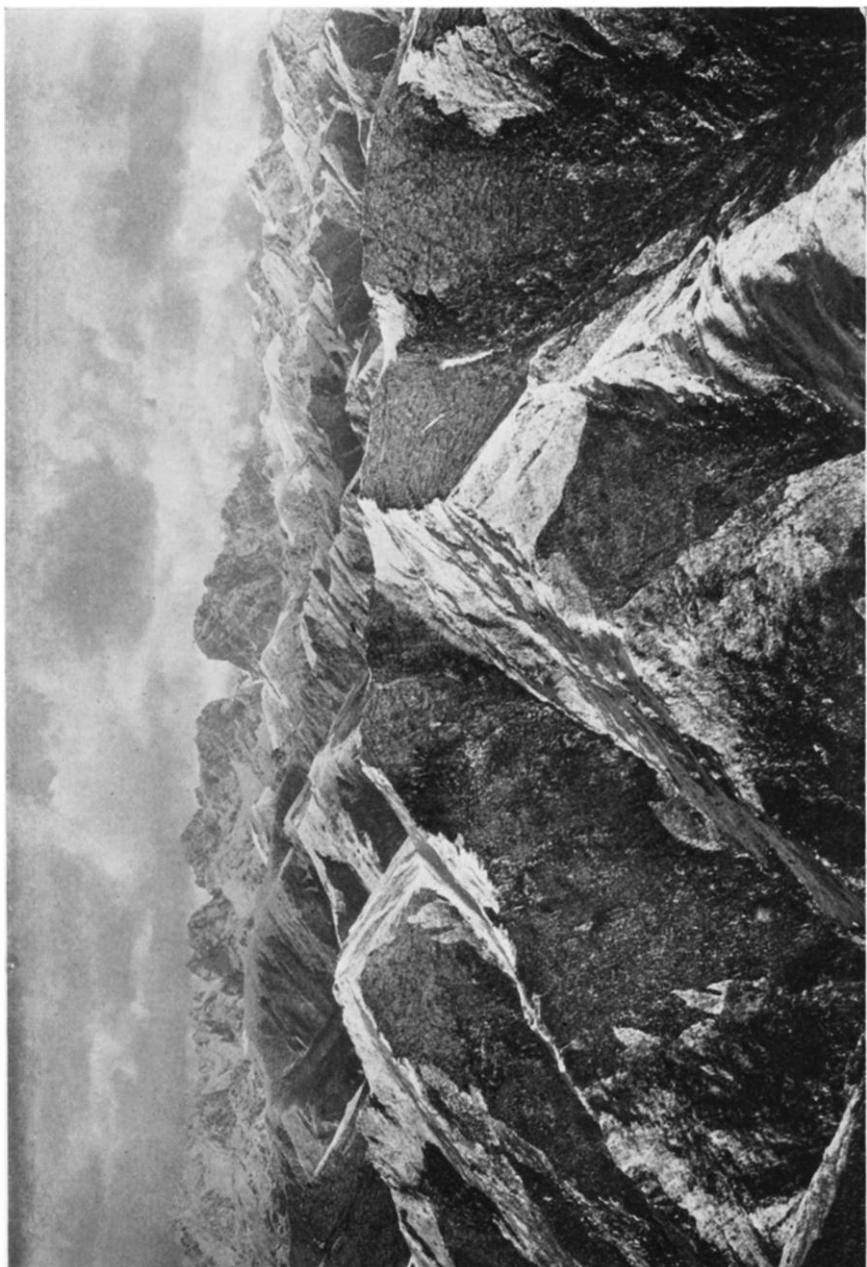


Looking up the Tsalu Ku towards the Shi Men



Approach to the Shi Men or rock gate of the Min Shan

Looking south across the main range of the Min Shan: Shu Men in centre background



the Tebbu tribe who were under the rule of the Choni Prince, who had his seat in the hamlet of Choni, on the Tao river. The earliest historic Chinese records preserved in the Shu King, the so-called bamboo books, because the records were engraved on bamboo staves, a bundle of so many staves making a page, tell us of the accomplishments of the great Yü of the Hsia Dynasty, in the classic called Yü Kung, "The Tributes of Yü."

It is this emperor who mentions the wild tribes of the West, calling them the San Miao or the three Miao tribes who inhabited the headwaters of the Tao river. This emperor must be considered as the first Chinese explorer. In the above classic we are told of his visiting the Hsiking Shan, which is none other than the Luichawrak of the Tibetans. He regulated the headwaters of the streams, and tells of his approach to the Tsishi Shan, which is the ancient Chinese name of the Amnyi Machen. Interpreters of this classic in the Shu King believe however, and I concur in their opinion, that the Hsiao Tsishi Shan, or small Tsishi Shan, must have been meant, for he states they floated down the Yellow River from the base of that mountain. It would be impossible to float down the Yellow River from near the Amnyi Machen on account of the terrific currents, gorges, defiles, and endless rapids which must have existed even in Yü's time, who ruled 2204-2196 B.C. The small Tsishi Shan is near the present city of Hochow (Kansu), whence the Yellow River is navigable.

That he did visit the Hsiking Shan is an indisputable fact. Even to-day the political borders of actual China are far to the east of the Hsiking Shan, and Yü must have been the first to explore that wild region which in his day was still farther west from the borders which were then China. On my journeys to and from Radja on the Yellow River I looked in vain for the Hsiking Shan, for present-day maps give that mountain to the north of the Htsechu river, where we found grasslands only. The Hsiking Shan is to the south of the Htsechu, and forms the divide between that river and the headwaters of the Tao. An old Chinese work on the rivers of Tibet and China gives a description of the Hsiking Shan and of the headwaters of the Tao river, and gives also the Tibetan name for it transcribed in Chinese phonetics. Chinese sounds are not well adapted to transcribe names in foreign languages, but the Tibetan name for that mountain, which is Luichawrak, is easily recognizable in its Chinese garb, which is Lochapula. This and the description given identifies the Hsiking Shan, which, until our surveys, was located on modern maps about 80 miles too far north. The large stream shown on these maps as entering the Htsechu near its northern knee does not exist, and in fact the Htsechu has only small tributaries, none as large as given on the maps.

Emperor Yü also visited the northern slopes of the Min Shan in what is now Kansu, but there is no record of his crossing it into what is now Tebbu Land. The Min Shan is not far from the Luichawrak range, and although grasslands intervene between these two ranges, they belong to one system, being of the same formation. And yet the Tebbus cannot always have been the sole possessors of this wonderful oasis, for ancient records tell us that between the years of 557 and 581 of our era there was built a city called Tiehchow in what is to-day upper Tebbu Land, which was then ruled over by a Chinese viceroy. The city was later abandoned but re-established during the Tang

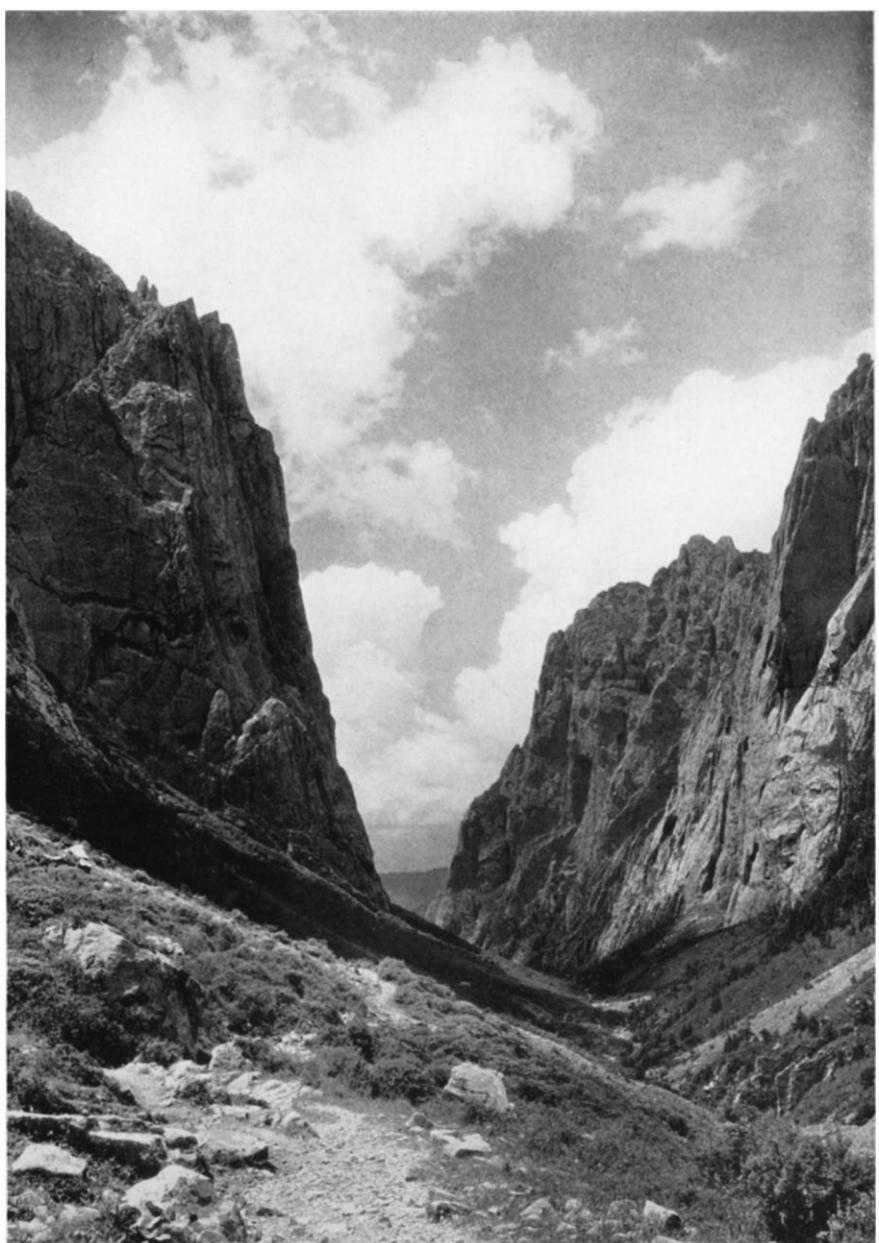
Dynasty between A.D. 627 and 650. Remnants of its ancient walls and moats exist to this day, and would undoubtedly be of great interest to archaeologists, were excavating feasible, but the great stumbling-block of such an undertaking would be the Tebbus, and especially the hostile Tebbus of that region. To-day Tebbu Land is practically closed to foreigners and Chinese alike, and he risks his life indeed who enters that forbidding natural fortress which the Tebbus claim for their own.

It was while waiting for auspicious times to explore the Amnyi Machen that I undertook the exploration of Tebbu Land, which necessitated five separate journeys during which we circumambulated the entire Tebbu country twice, and explored all its valleys and mountains. The Min Shan proper is one long limestone range and is the divide between the Yangtze and the Yellow River. Chinese geography is rather vague in defining the Min Shan; various other ranges to the south of it and not in Kansu, but in the province of Szechwan, are also called Min Shan, and are considered a part of the Kansu range. This is erroneous, for nothing can be more distinct than the Kansu Min Shan, which to the north is encircled by the Tao river, and to the south by the Peishui Kiang, a branch of the great Kialing, which branch has two sources, one in the grasslands of Szechwan at Datso Lhamo, and one in the great Min Shan. United they flow through Tebbu Land, which in fact is one long valley hemmed in by the Min Shan to the north and a barrier range to the south which separates it from the grasslands of Szechwan.

The actual southern border of Tebbu Land, and at the same time the Kansu-Szechwan border in Choni-Tebbu territory, is the Yangpu Shan or Dakhe La of the Tebbus. In former days Tebbu Land extended however to the junction of the Hei and Pei Ho, three days' journey south of the present boundary. The north-westernmost town in Szechwan is Sungpan, situated on the Min river, two days south of its source, which has its rise on a mountain called the Konke La, and which Chinese geographers also include in the Min Shan, but which is far to the south of the Kansu range of that name. South of the Dakhe La rises another river called the Hei Ho, or Black River, which, some days' journey farther south, joins the Pei Ho, which is another branch of the Peishui Kiang. The former joins the latter as the Wenhien Ho 40 li west of the town of Pikow, in south Kansu. All present maps of this region are incorrect, as they give the junction of these two rivers to the east of Pikow. Some distance south this river joins the Kialing, in Szechwan. From Hochow, some 90 li from Chungking, where the Kialing joins the Yangtze, the river is navigable by steamers.

The Tebbu country, which formed the largest part of the Choni prince's domain, was ruled by him more or less successfully. The Tebbus remained independent and ignored the prince as far as possible, even attacking his emissaries and twice myself and an escort which was sent by the Choni prince for our protection.

The ancient principate of Choni is no more, both physically and politically speaking, for the former Choni prince, whose ancestors ruled that country for nearly six hundred years, was shorn of his rank and all his titles by Feng Yuhsiang and was appointed commissioner of the barbarians. This was in the winter of 1927; in April 1928 the Muhammadans rebelled and rose against



Looking south through the limestone gorge of the Min Shan, leading to Drakana

View from the summit of the Kwangke pass (12,550 feet)

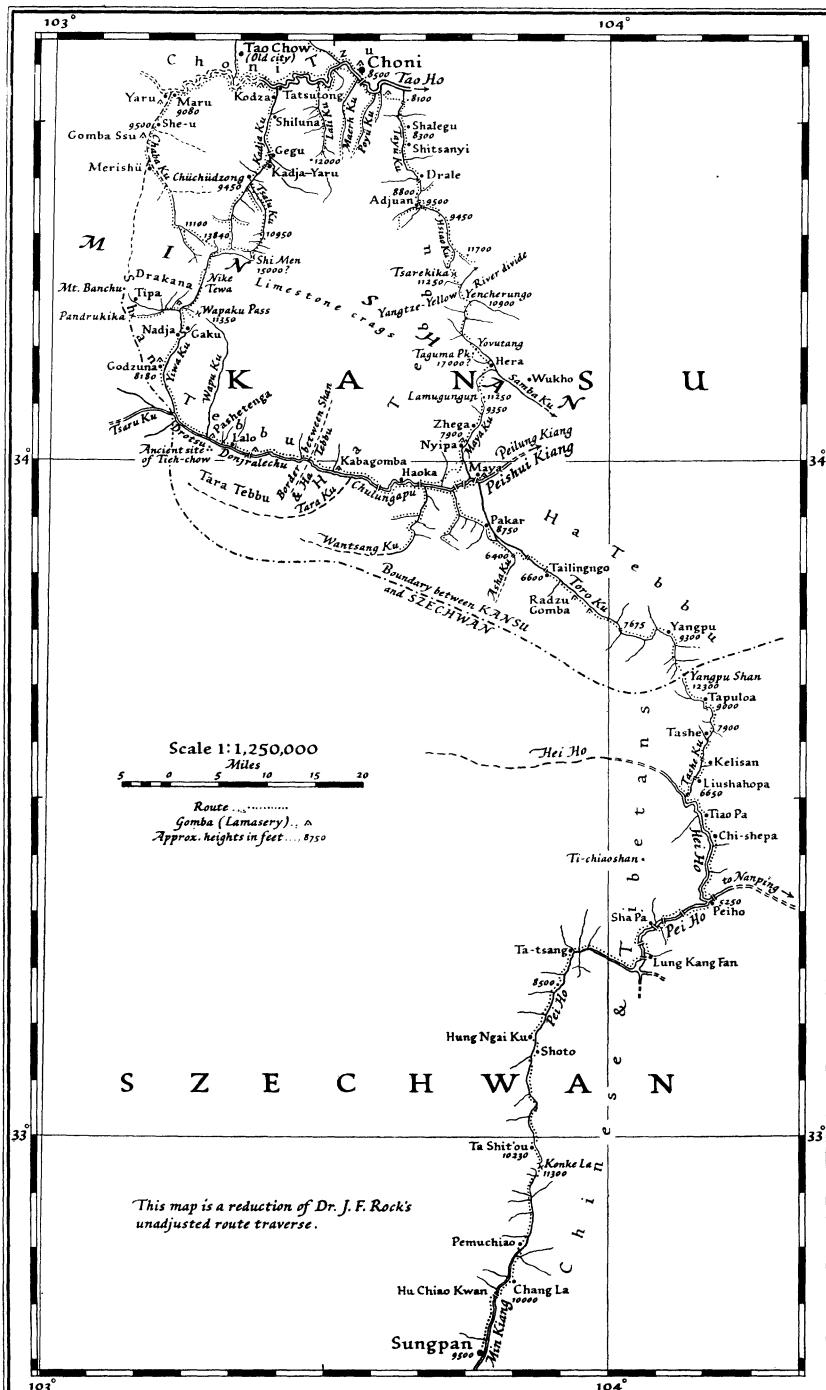


the Red régime of Feng Yuhsiang, slaughtering the Chinese, of whom they killed two hundred thousand. They came to Choni, looted and murdered, killed the lamas of the peaceful Choni lamasery, and burnt both the lamasery and Choni village to the ground, leaving behind them death and destruction. The Choni prince fled into Tebbu Land, from where he wrote me a long letter telling me of the terrible destruction and calamity the Muhammadans had inflicted on him and on his people. The Tebbus themselves remained unmolested, for no one dared attack Tebbu Land.

The Choni prince ruled over 12,750 families, or a total of approximately 63,750. With the exception of the Tebbu, the Tibetan population under Choni rule was nearly wiped out during the last Muhammadan rebellion. It may be of interest as a matter of record to enumerate the different tribes over whom the Choni prince used to rule in the good old days. They comprised the Shang Yi in the north of Choni, the Hso Kwa (probably the Drokwa of the Tibetans) in the west, the Tala and Tiehpa in the south, and the Heifantze or black barbarians to the south-east near the town of Kaichow or Wutu. Those living in the Tao valley were called the Choni Tzu or Choni clan, probably a mixture of Kansu Chinese and Tibetans. In the south live also the Tzu Pa Tzu, and in the east the La Pu Shi. Another smaller tribe lived near the hamlet of Showa, near a lake to the north-west of Lienhwa Shan; they were called the Chang Ye. The Tebbus form however the largest tribe and comprise nearly ten thousand members, being restricted to the southern slopes of the Min Shan.

The Choni prince's domain, owing to the absence of proper methods of measuring distances in li, miles, or square miles, was reckoned fourteen days' journey from north to south, and ten to twelve days from east to west. To take a census of the wild Tebbus would be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, owing to the prevailing lawlessness and hostility of the tribe, and the wild mountainous region they inhabit, which is only accessible for a few months of the year. There are no roads, and the trails are next to impassable, as, for instance, the trail leading from Peiju to the boundary of the lower Tebbu country. The trails are purposely kept in a very bad state of repair by the Tebbus to prevent their neighbours from making raids on them—that is to say, one Tebbu village against the other—and the traveller will often find barricades across such trails as do exist between villages, as a possible safeguard against attack.

The easiest approach to the upper Tebbu country is by way of Kadja valley, which debouches into the Tao river valley 45 li, or 15 miles, from Choni. This is the western approach to Tebbu Land. There is one other approach by way of Chaba Ku, a valley about 20 miles beyond Kadja Ku, but the journey is lengthened by about three days. Kadja Ku is the only valley which extends to the top of the Min Shan without a break, excepting the long valley of Chaba Ku. The quickest route to the lower Tebbu country is by way of Tayü Ku, a valley which extends to the village of Adjuan, distant 90 li, or 30 miles, from Choni. From Adjuan a valley called Hsiao Ku leads south-east to a difficult pass called Tsarekika, but here one is only on the top of the main Min Shan, and there remain still two other passes to negotiate before reaching Tebbu Land, the journey taking five days from Choni.



Sketch-map showing Dr. Rock's explorations around the borders of Kansu and Szechwan

Another approach is from Minchow, in southern Kansu, by way of the valley of the Peishui Kiang, a branch of the Kialing. In the west the Tebbu country may be reached from the grasslands east of the knee of the Yellow River, inhabited by lawless nomads; one of the approaches being by way of the valleys Tsaru Ku and Tsoru Ku, notorious for their inhabitants, whose only occupation, besides attending to their flocks of sheep, is robbing and murdering. The safest approach remains by way of Kadja Ku from the Tao river, and it was through this valley that we made our first journey to Tebbu Land.

Our object in exploring Tebbu Land was threefold: botanical, ornithological, and geographical. Only very few people had visited parts of the Tebbu country before my first visit. One was a missionary, who paid a short visit to Drakana; another was General George Pereira, who entered southern or lower Tebbu Land from Szechwan, but did not cross the Min Shan in the Choni prince's territory; he followed the Peishui Kiang to Shuipi, the last village in lower Tebbu Land, and thence crossed the Tala Shan in Chinese territory to Minchow and thence by the Tao river route to Choni. Mr. C. Emery, an American, crossed the Min Shan over the Tsarekika pass in the east on his way to Sungpan. No one had ever made the entire circuit and crossed all the passes which lead in and out of Tebbu Land except ourselves. We paid several visits at different seasons and in addition explored the backbone of the Min Shan as well as its southern and northern valleys.

The first Tebbus who came under my observation were arraigned in the courtyard of the Choni prince Yamen. There were six of them, all chained together by their necks. They were from lower Tebbu Land, tall, gaunt-looking dark men like Hungarian gypsies. When I inquired if they were robbers, their guard said "Oh no." On further inquiry I learned that I was indirectly responsible for their plight. Some months previously I had given to the Choni prince seeds of vegetables and melons which the Department of Agriculture of Washington had sent me. The melon seeds he had sent to the lower Tebbu country to be planted, as the climate is much milder, and these poor wretches were to take care of them, and when ripe were to bring them to Choni. Having never seen a melon they allowed them almost to rot on the vine ere they sent them to the Choni prince. This enraged the feudal lord, and forthwith he had them brought to Choni in chains to have them punished for their seeming negligence. It may be here remarked that he could do this with the more peaceable Lower Tebbu, but never with the indifferent haughty Upper Tebbu.

The Start for Tebbu Land

On 8 June 1925, after exasperating delays with the caravan and endless talk of the muleteers about the weight of the loads, we finally left Choni with a caravan of mules supplemented by six donkeys—a local product, as it was difficult to persuade Kansu muleteers to go so far off the beaten track. We followed the beautiful valleys of the Tao river with its magnificent groves of ancient poplars with huge spreading crowns and trunks several feet in diameter, past little Tibetan hamlets until we reached the mouth of the valley of Kadja, where we were ferried across the Tao river to the hamlet of Tatsutong. Here,

at the banks of the Kadja stream, at the foot of a steep spur densely forested with pine trees (*Pinus tabulaeformis*), we pitched our camp. The meadows in the Kadja valley adjoining the beautiful forest of birches, wild pear, and apple trees were full of gorgeous flowers, of which the most handsome were lovely wine-coloured primulas and cushions of purple *Pedicularis*, violets, and others too numerous to mention. The undershrub in the deciduous forest which merged into the pine forest confined to the steep ridges, comprised roses, several species of barberry, honeysuckles, wild peonies, wild cherries, all in the gorgeous bloom of spring. In a large grove of tall spruces a Tebbu caravan had pitched camp, which simply meant that they had made a large log fire around which they sat.

A glorious morning found us striking camp. We followed upstream through beautiful groves and forests of spruces, across large meadows alive with wild pheasants, which were however more numerous in the fields of wheat and barley near the villages. We met Tebbus in their poor sheepskin garments, and lamas riding yak, wearing their peculiar white summer headgear resembling a saucapan. About 10 miles farther up the valley narrowed into a beautiful defile, the stream roaring through its narrow bed, surging among the boulders crowned with a beautiful species of Juniper (*Juniperus distans*). After passing several villages, such as Shiluna and Warruna, nestled peacefully against the forested valley slopes, we came to the last hamlet in Kadja valley, called Kadja Yaru. Beyond this little village is wilderness.

We pitched camp somewhat beyond on a beautiful meadow through which the Kadja river flowed. The meadow, bordered by wonderful forest, was one sea of flowers; here cream-coloured and deep purple primulas, large-flowered Incarvilleas, red wild poppies (*Meconopsis*), and purple-flowered rhododendrons vied with each other. What a contrast when, nearly two years later, I again camped at this spot, but in midwinter: the stream frozen, and in order to pitch tents we had to shovel snow which lay 2 feet on the ground. No bird was then about, and everything slept the deep sleep of winter, for the temperature was then 10 degrees below zero Fahr. But this was spring, and filled with the spirit of adventure I could hardly wait to reach the crest of the Min Shan with the wealth of alpine flowers which, as I knew, must await me there. Leaving Chüchüdzong, our camping place, my men and I, the Choni guides, and Tibetan soldiers which the Choni prince had kindly provided, marched ahead, leaving the muleteers to their weary job of tying on the loads. To our left, immediately beyond our camping place, we forded a lateral stream which issued from a narrow rocky valley called Tsalu Ku. My guides informed me that by following this stream up the valley one could reach the very foot of the famous Shi Men, or rock gate, the most conspicuous landmark of the Min Shan range, and visible from any promontory north of the Tao river. The grandest view I ever had of the whole Min Shan was from the cliffs over 11,000 feet in height behind Angkur Gomba, a monastery in the Choni prince's territory, two days' journey north of Choni.

The Great Rock Gate

At the mouth of Tsalu Ku we met a lama riding horseback who had come from the Kwangke pass, and to make certain of the trail I hailed him and

motioned him to stop. As he spied the rest of my armed force he fled post haste back up the valley, whence he had come, as fast as his horse could carry him. One of my escorts galloped after him to persuade him that all was well and that we were peaceful people. He then returned, but kept at a safe distance, and when I laughed at him he realized his mistake, for he had thought us brigands. He directed us on our way, but as the trail is not well defined and crosses the stream again and again, we hailed a Tebbu boy whom we met farther up the valley driving two yak, and persuaded him to guide us up the valley. After travelling 7 miles we reached a small hamlet, all forsaken save for a single woman leaning over the village fence and chatting with a Tebbu boy, who might have been making love to her. Beside her was tied a huge Tibetan mastiff who tore at his chain and raced about the shaky post. When we arrived the dog became still more furious, and if the woman had not quickly taken hold of him, he would certainly have buried his fangs into one of us. The Tibetan mastiff is indeed a formidable breed and a most dangerous adversary. Our Tebbu boy who had guided us this far refused to go any farther, and when I tried to cajole him and took hold of his sleeve he shed his garment like a snake its skin and vanished naked into the forest, while I held in my hand a single cloak.

We finally persuaded the other Tebbu boy to join us, but he too was frightened, though later, after a little coercion and the promise of good pay, he came back with us. But he was exceedingly suspicious, continually looking back at my men and surveying carefully their cartridge belts and shotguns. Fear overwhelmed him, and he stopped and said he had no time to continue farther as he had to milk his yak. This brought forth a roar of laughter, for no male Tibetan would stoop to such degrading work, which is always left for the women to perform. Finally, to allay his fear, our escort gave him a rifle to carry, which instantly restored his courage, while a dollar pressed into his hand allayed all suspicion.

We reached a lovely meadow immediately in front of a fine Shi Men or rock gate, but not the main one, which was still some 4 miles on. It was the preliminary gate to the main backbone of the Min Shan range. From my tent, set in a sea of flowers, I beheld a defile cut by a tiny stream which at times can be a fierce torrent, with walls 1000 or 2000 feet in height, the grassy slopes and cliffs forested with fir, spruces, and rhododendron. The valley of Tsalu Ku itself was a mass of golden yellow flowers (*Potentilla fruticosa*), and near our camp at 11,000 feet elevation red, blue, and yellow poppies (*Mecanopsis*), with lovely primulas and edelweiss, grew in plenty. Our Tebbu guide, who had now lost all fear, stayed with us all night and guided us next day to the main rock gate. The trail leads into a defile with overhanging walls of limestone rock, the strata being vertical in places. It was cold and chilly in this weird winding canyon only about 30 feet wide, but nearly 2000 feet deep. From the gorge one emerges into an open valley which leads southwest directly to the great Shi Men in the very backbone of the Min Shan, at the foot of which, below a tiny lake, we pitched our camp. On each side of the rock gate extend huge rock buttresses, forming massive walls, the home of hundreds of snow pigeons (*Columba leuconota gradaria*). Along the stream, which has its source to the right of the rock gate below a pass, were lovely alpine meadows,

boggy, but covered by handsome tall senecios. Our camp, on a meadow surrounded by fir and spruce forest and gorgeous rhododendrons, was 11,750 feet above sea-level.

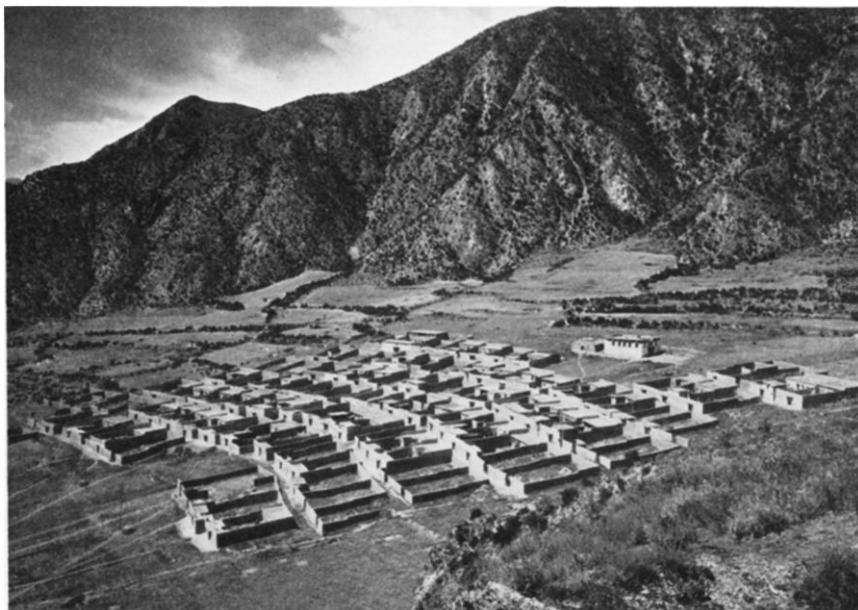
We decided to climb into the big gate, which we estimated to be 300 yards wide at the base, and 600 at the top; the thickness of the rock we guessed at 1200 feet. We climbed 1500 feet above our camp into the chasm over a perilous rock slide. Enormous boulders lay about, beside which we looked like pygmies. There is no outlet into Tebbu Land through this rock gate, for one is baulked by a steep crescent-shaped talus slope and scree, which it is impossible to scale, for one step into the loose mass brings down an avalanche of rock. The walls and crest crowning this amphitheatre of loose rock were alive with blue sheep and serow, which at our approach tried to escape and thereby brought down a murderous bombardment of sharp limestone rocks, but we escaped unharmed. From our camp we also made excursions to the highest pass to the east of Kwangke La to an elevation of 13,150 feet. Above the firs and spruces we met with crooked twisted junipers on the rocky slopes, while above were alpine meadows merging into loose scree. The flora at such heights could not but delight a plant lover. There were gorgeous satiny-blue poppies with large flowers arranged in spikes, asters, primulas, red and lilac poppies, yellow saxifrages, crucifers of various colours, forget-me-nots, and, above all, a very curious *Saussurea* resembling a drum-major's shako of woolly white; larkspurs, aconites, and gentians were represented by several species, while yellow-flowered *Potentillas* formed large cushions among the boulders. The scenery was grand and weird. Among these gorgeous flowers lived large snow chickens (*Tetragallus tibetanus przewalskii*), but their protective colouring prevented us from bagging more than two.

From near the mouth of Tsalu Ku, Kadja valley narrows considerably, the slopes being densely forested, while the banks of the stream were a mass of lovely lavender- to purple-flowered rhododendrons, forming a narrow hedge. Beyond the hillsides had a most curious aspect. The grassy slopes were covered with a miniature forest of tall, unbranched erect *Caragana* (*Caragana jubata*), a leguminous plant with pink pea-like flowers; the plant had the habit of a columnar cactus. The small strips of meadows which we here and there encountered resembled brilliantly coloured carpets. We had now entered the domain of Tibet's golden poppy (*Meconopsis integrifolio*), one of the most gorgeous alpine flowers, and as we ascended the steep valley to the pass we met some Tebbu maidens who wore as girdles wreaths of golden poppies. At 12,000 feet firs and junipers formed groves and rhododendrons regular forests on the steep slopes. The babbling brook was silent in this region of frost, and near the pass the stream bed was a thick sheet of ice; huge icicles some 20 feet in length hung suspended from the cliffs, which here are black and fluted, full of holes and caves. Twenty-one months later I nearly lost my life here in a huge snowdrift into which my horse and I rolled from a precipice after having lost the trail.

Kwangke pass, 12,550 feet, is a swampy alpine meadow surrounded on its northern side by vast limestone crags and pinnacles, but sloping to the south into a short valley parallel to the backbone of the Min Shan. Huge massive limestone mountains rear their bare crowns some 15,000 feet into the sky,



Main chanting hall of the lamasery of Lassun Gomba in Drakana, upper Tebbu Land



The new lamasery at Wantsang, lower Tebbu Land

Looking east over the Tebhu villages of Drakana from the Pandukika pass (11,300 feet)



while in a south-westerly direction extends an immense rock wall of fluted limestone, part of the rocky gate which leads into upper Tebbu Land. The tiny brook at our feet is one of the sources of a branch of the Kialing which joins the Yangtze at Chungking. To the west of the Kwangke pass the range is pierced by another pass which leads into a long valley called Chaba Ku, which debouches into the Tao river near a lamasery called Yaru Gomba, some 40 miles west of Choni. The people of this valley, especially those living in the lower part of it, are very hostile and are the sworn enemies of Prince Yang. It was at the village of Merishü in this valley that a Tebbu tried to bar my way with a drawn sword, but when I realized his intentions I galloped into him, and to save himself from being trampled under foot, he jumped aside.

The trail down Kwangke leads over a boggy slope to the beginning of the Peishui Kiang, a branch of the Kialing, over which I stepped. The brook is joined by a clear crystal spring, below which it enters a defile, with walls rising several thousand feet on both sides into the sky, while enormous talus slopes extend to the rhododendron-fringed stream-bed. Massive cumulus clouds towered over Tebbu Land, while black storm-clouds had gathered over Kwangke pass; but fortune favoured us, and the billowy clouds enhanced the grandeur of the scene. A vast sea of sharp ridges became visible, densely forested with firs and spruces, and overhung by mighty crags and pinnacles sharp as daggers' points. Here the Tebbu mountain-god Nike has his abode, for this hallowed ground is called Nike Tewa, or Nike's realm. He sits unwearied and unmoved in the shape of a lion turned to stone on the very crest of the eastern battlements, a sentinel looking north and guarding Tebbu Land. Here, at the foot of this mighty throne, devout lamas have erected an altar on which they burn as offering fresh juniper boughs, sending the fragrant smoke heavenward to appease Nike. Below Nike Tewa the walls of the cliffs are like the leaves of a standing book, a series of thin slabs of rock 1000 feet in height as if folded by a giant's hand. Between these rocky leaves red-barked birches clad in the velvet foliage of spring have found a foothold with dark-green spruces, while primulas abound on mossy boulders in the stream-bed. Clematis, iris, anemone, larkspur, and Tibetan lady slippers cover the verdant strips of meadow beneath Nike's throne.

The trail was clean and gravelly along the roaring waters of the stream. The air was filled with the fragrance of spring and the warblings of birds. As I gazed beyond I saw a sharp limestone spur covered with verdure bar our way; but the stream had cut its way through this obstacle as if the walls of the cliff had been butter. Here the Tebbus had built a trail above the torrent on logs placed horizontally in chiselled grooves in the walls of the defile. This is the key to Tebbu Land.

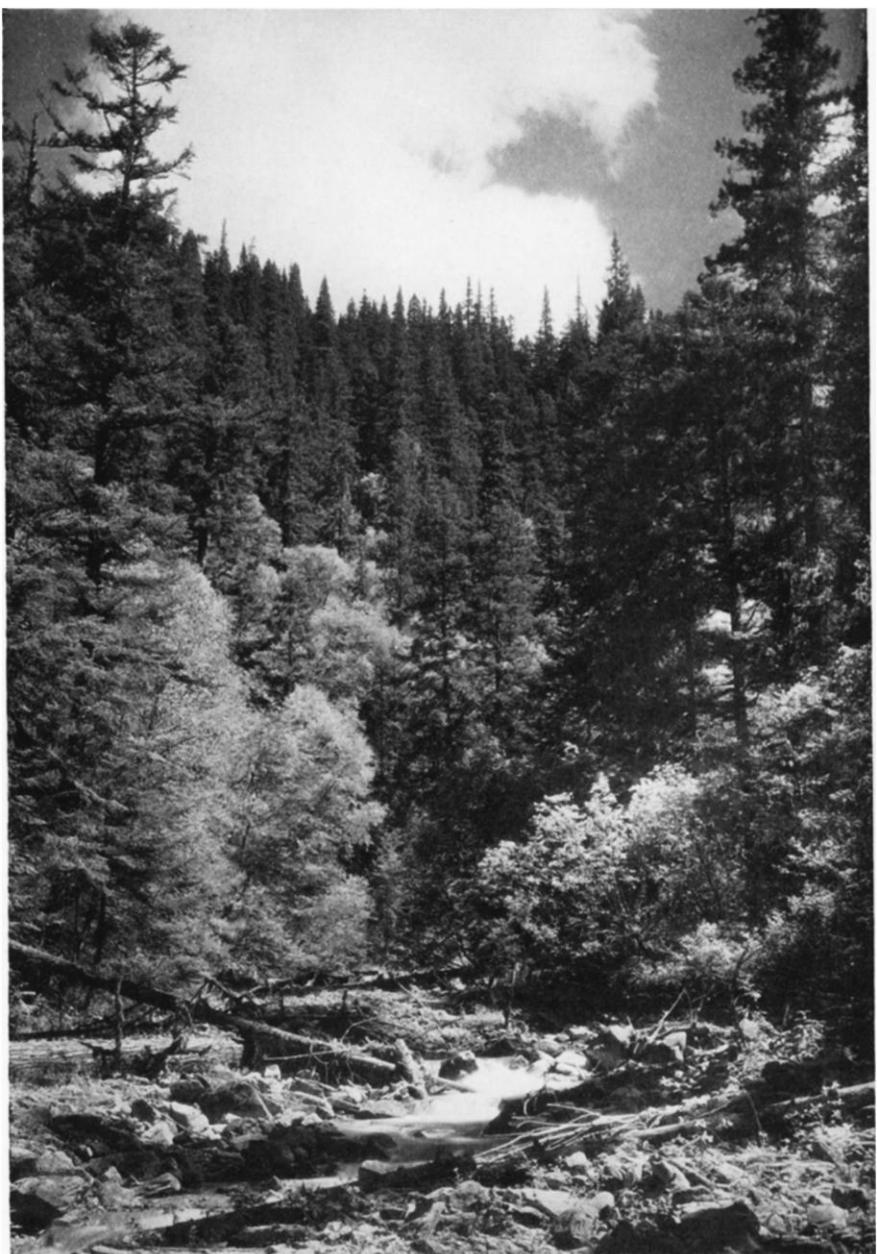
Every step revealed new beauty and new grandeur until we emerged from this narrow canyon into an amphitheatre surrounded by enormous limestone mountains crowned with crags and pinnacles. At their feet lay the Tebbu hamlet of Tongwa and above it, its very roofs touching the cliffs, the tiny lamasery of Lassun Gomba. Forests of sombre fir and spruce made a fitting frame. We had set foot in Dragumna in upper Tebbu Land. The Tibetan name for this amphitheatre has been well chosen, for Dragumna means stone box; the Choni people call it Drakana.

We crossed the stream and ascended to a large meadow terrace, and pitched our camp at 10,000 feet. A more glorious spot it would be difficult to find. A glance at the village of Tongwa showed me that the houses of the Drakana Tebus were built nearly one on top of the other, three walls of one house serving as walls for three others. Drakana is indeed a mighty fortress built by nature, secure from invasion; for should an enemy come from the west in force he would find few outlets save the narrow rocky defiles of Yiwa Ku and Drakana streams. Our camp was soon visited by Tebbu men, while women, on their way to the forests behind our camp to gather humus for their yak pens, stopped near our camp to behold the marvels of it. Lamas from Lassun Gomba joined them, and by giving out little presents we quickly made friends.

With the greatest difficulty I took their photos, for although they were curious they were nevertheless wary and suspicious. They had not the slightest idea of what I was doing. The women kept on spinning flax, a wad of flax wound around a piece of wood which they had stuck down their back into their one and only garment. They wore sheepskin clothing, the wool next to the body, and from their hair down to the end of the skirt hung ornaments of the most ordinary kind, such as blue glass beads alternating with empty cartridges strung on yak-hair thread, yards of which they dragged behind them. The little girls had a tiny queue in front, and fastened to it were a few copper coins and one or two Kauri shells. They were delighted with silver and tinfoil paper, such as the Kodak people use to wrap films in. The girls almost fought about the paper, dividing it into tiny bits among themselves. I laid my watch on the grass while all the men and boys lay flat on their stomachs radiating from the watch like the spokes of a wheel, imitating the ticking of the watch and marvelling to see the hand go round. My thermometer they took for a pipe, but they were most interested in our guns. The Upper Tebus, secluded and surrounded by natural fortresses, have kept from intermarrying with Kansu Chinese and represent one of the most primitive and pure tribes in this region. They are very unlike the nomads, who are a mixture of Tibetan and Mongol. The Tebus are indeed aborigines in the truest sense of the word.

The tiny lamasery, a mere conglomeration of pigsties, houses one hundred and twenty akus or monks who lead a lazy life at the expense of the villagers of Drakana, of whom they are part. There are five villages in Drakana situated in the order named from east to west: Tongwa, Nieri, Tare, Tipa, and Taonto, the latter being the last hamlet in the Choni prince's territory, situated below Mount Banchu. This mountain peak is the actual border between Drakana and Szechwan, but beyond Mount Banchu is really no man's land. At the foot of Tongwa the Drakana stream is joined by a small stream from Mount Banchu, and continuing as the Yiwa stream enters a narrow rocky defile called Yiwa Ku.

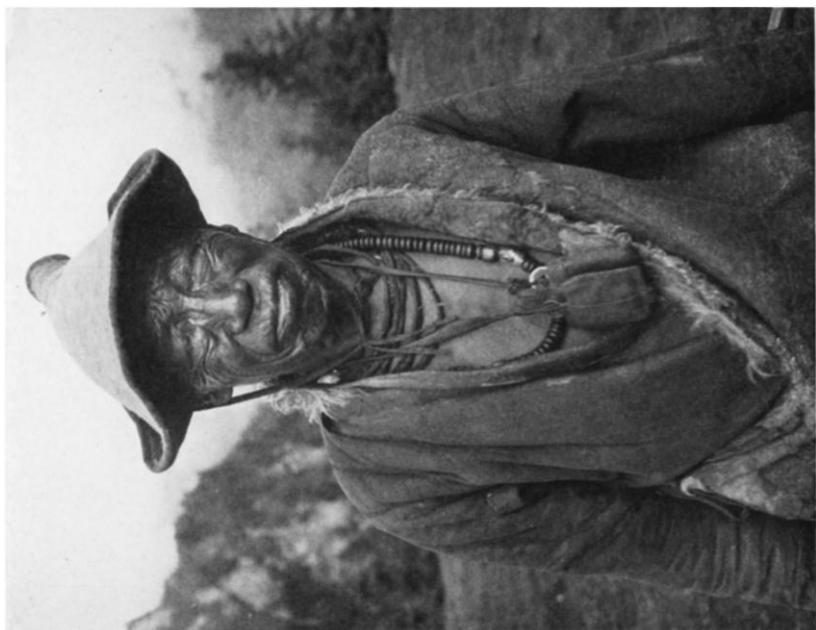
Here I met a devout Tebbu pilgrim who had come from lower Tebbu Land on his way to the famous lamasery of Taerhsze or Kumbum on the Koko Nor border, far to the north near Hsining. Instead of going like an ordinary pilgrim, staff in hand, he had decided to measure the entire distance with his body, indeed quite an undertaking when one considers that it takes a regular caravan sixteen days, necessitating the crossing of high passes. He wore a leather apron over his single sheepskin garment, and on his hands he wore



Upper part of the Wantsang Ku, lower Tebbu Land (8700 feet), showing forest of "picea purpurea," maple, birch, and willow



Tebbo boy from Drakana, with sword, amulet, and pronged rifle



An old Tebbo from Drakana, upper Tebbo Land

wooden shoes, the soles being of wood 2 inches thick, the top of leather, into which he slipped his hands. Around his head he wore a leather strap with a small leather pad in the middle of his forehead. He prostrated himself completely, kneeling first and then sliding his wooden-shod hands on the ground, lying perfectly flat, both arms and lower limbs stretched out full length, while his forehead touched the ground. He then stepped forward where his hands had made a mark in the gravel and repeated the performance. At that rate it would take him many months to reach Kumbum. I gave him a piece of silver and motioned him to come nearer to where I stood in the sunlight to take his picture, but rather than walk the few feet and thereby break his vow, he measured the distance to me with his body, after which he continued his weary journey uphill through the rocky gorges.

Our first evening in Drakana was lovely. Clouds had gathered among the mighty crags which stood out like islands in an ocean; the birds were singing, not a breeze was stirring, quiet reigned in the sombre forest with its carpet of green moss. The air was laden with the fragrant odour of the spruces and balsam firs, which measured their heights against the towering cliffs behind.

Journey to lower Tebbu Land

Besides my personal entourage of Yünnan Na-hi I had with me quite a party composed of three lama officials, each of whom had to go to a monastery in lower Tebbu Land to sit on the lama throne and rule for three years, as many of the lamaseries in wild Tebbu Land are rather lawless and unruly. From Drakana we passed with a number of yak and a few donkeys down Yiwa Ku through another rock gate, a mere miniature in comparison to Drakana. Through this narrow valley, which one might better term a ravine, are scattered many Tebbu hamlets and quite a few lamaseries such as Bokho Gomba near the village of Godzuna. The people of this village are a bad lot indeed, and would not hesitate to kill any one for gain. It is the people of this region who go and hide in the mountains and on the passes to hold up innocent travellers, first killing their victims and then robbing them. It was here that my caravan was waylaid on our journey to Sungpan in March 1927. They jumped from behind the bushes and assaulted my muleteers, my men, and the Choni escort, with clubs crowned at their ends with a cogwheel-like metal cap. My escort opened fire, three Tebbus fell, while another Tebbu attacking my hunter received the contents of a riot shell from a number twelve repeating shotgun at close range in the lower extremities of his body. A fifth received a severe blow with an axe wielded by one of my muleteers sideways across his face. The only man of my party really injured was my cook; leaving their dead and wounded, the rest of the Tebbus fled into the forest, swearing vengeance.

Beyond the village of Gadza the limestone gives way to mica slate, shale, and schist. In the distance a high range is visible, beyond which lies Tara Ku, inhabited by the notorious Tara Tebbu. Here Tebbu Land consists really only of the valley of the Peishui Kiang, which to the confluence with the Tara stream flows in a narrow rocky gorge; the few hamlets being situated in lateral valleys or at their junctions with the main gorge, every bit of available land being terraced. The meadow called Djekuka, where the main arm of the

Peishui Kiang joins the branch coming from Drakana and Mount Kwang Ke, is the border between the lawless tribes of extreme north-western Szechwan and Choni territory, and always an exceedingly dangerous spot to pass. We waited therefore until our caravan and Tebbu escort had caught up with us, and thus with rifles ready for any fray we ventured cautiously on to the meadow. I looked carefully with my field-glasses, spying all the bushes on the other side for robbers. Quite a number were hiding in the bushes with rifles in their laps, but as they had found out that we had spied them, they unconcernedly came out and walked slowly up the river issuing from Tsaru Ku in no man's land. We were apparently too large a party for them. The stretch from Djekuka to the monastery of Pashetenga is called Drotsu Ku and is much broader than the gorge above Djekuka. Here are villages in plenty, but all are apparently at feud with each other, for as we arrived at Pashetenga, situated high above the river on a large grassy terrace, Tebbus had assembled and were exchanging rifle shots with their neighbours from Konre across the stream. Here spruces had given way to pine trees which formed lovely forests on the southern valley spurs, while the northern slopes were mostly loess and conglomerate and were covered with a xerophytic vegetation. Pashetenga is really composed of two monasteries called Nongama and Nongon respectively. As they represented merely a conglomeration of dirty huts I decided to pitch camp on the grassy terrace in spite of warfare.

On my last journey through Tebbu Land, *en route* to Sungpan, we were forced to stop in the lamasery, as we feared night attacks from the defeated Tebbus of Godzuna. The room I then stayed in was filled with nondescript villains, whose eyes spoke evil, and whose behaviour was worse than that of wild beasts. They were all potential robbers and murderers, and would stop short at nothing, for every one had killed his man. I wanted peace and quiet after an exciting day, but was forced to put up with this villainous-looking mob. Fortunately the people of Godzuna were at feud with the villains of Pashetenga, and so they did not follow us as they had threatened.

Below Pashetenga, on the northern banks of the Peishui Kiang, in the centre of the broad valley floor, I saw a large square of raised ground surrounded by what seemed to have been a moat; a similar plot exists a little farther south opposite the village of Rana. I learned that these plots were the ancient sites of the walled city of Tiehchow which came into being during the northern Chou Dynasty between 557 and 581 of our era. The city was abandoned during the Sui Dynasty but re-established during the reign of Emperor Tai Tsung of the Tang Dynasty about A.D. 627, who appointed Li Shi-tsi as Viceroy of Tiehchow; at least so read the annals of the Minchow provincial records. These ancient sites of a once famous city, ruled over by a viceroy as long as thirteen hundred years ago, should be of interest to archaeologists.

Here the valley of the Peishui Kiang is very fertile, the climate being considerably milder than at Drakana, which lies nearly 3000 feet higher; but we are still in upper Tebbu Land. The Peishui Kiang describes a large curve round the southern slopes of the Min Shan with its lateral buttresses and deep valleys debouching into the broad valley, carved by the swift currents of the river through the shale, schist, and loess of which this region is composed. Only here and there lateral limestone spurs extend across the valley. It is at

such places that the otherwise placid Peishui Kiang assumes the guise of a mountain torrent.

Villages and lamaseries abound, but the latter belong to the Black or Bon Sect, with the exception of the lamaseries of Pashetenga which are Yellow. We had now passed the most dangerous places in upper Tebbu Land, but there remained still the region of Tara Ku in lower Tebbu Land as well as the brigand-infested passes of Tsarekika in the eastern Min Shan. We had heard that the Tara people were on the warpath and that seventy had issued from their valley stronghold and had fought the people of Ngongon, a little hamlet in upper Tebbu Land, a number of Tebbus being killed on both sides. They are indeed a wild lot and certainly the equal of the Ngoloks. Their method is to make fierce attacks, rob and plunder, and then carry off the women, who must for ever remain with them as slaves. Unsuspecting travellers, if their people cannot ransom them, fare no better, and remain the slaves of the Tara Tebbus.

Several cantilever bridges span the beautiful river-bed lined with ancient poplars, usually opposite villages at the mouths of densely forested lateral valleys. On a terrace in a sweeping curve of the valley is the largest monastery of the Black Sect, Shi Shi Gomba, which I decided to visit, while my Yellow lama escort remained on the river bank, not being on good terms with the Bon Sorcerers. The place had recently been renovated, as the monks were busy stuffing prayer drums with miles and miles of paper closely printed with the prayer, not of Om Mani Padme Hum, but of Machi Shalando, the special prayer of the Black Sorcerers. The formula was more smeared than printed on the paper, and completely illegible, but apparently quite as efficacious when set in motion. Instead of turning the drums from right to left they turn them left to right, the Bon Lamas doing everything opposite to the Yellow Sect. One is bewildered by the various creeds, devil worship, and sorcery, but nowhere on the Tibetan border have I met with such primitive deities as confronted us at the Tebbu village of Gongo. They were of local manufacture and resembled totem poles. At the foot of a cantilever bridge over the Peishui Kiang which led to the village of Gongo, there stood in a pile of rock an immense scarecrow made of sticks and straw, with outstretched arms holding a spear. The previous year rinderpest had broken out among the yak of several Tebbu villages, and to prevent the spread of it the people of Gongo appointed this scarecrow as quarantine officer to scare off the disease. The posts at the farther end of the bridge were also carved, and facing the entrance to the village the Tebbus had erected several posts carved in the shape of supernatural beings, to ward off all evil which might enter by this bridge. These deities have no place in the lama church, and are apparently indigenous and peculiar to the Tebbu tribes. Beyond Gongo grew a magnificent species of juniper (*juniperus chinensis*), stately trees some 80 feet in height with lovely crowns. These trees were known to the people by the name of Tanhsiangmu, or sandalwood, owing to the delicious fragrance of the wood. In this fairy grove we pitched our tents.

At Peiju a great limestone buttress of the Min Shan, of immense thickness, extends into the valley, narrowing it to a wild defile through which the Peishui Kiang races into a deep canyon forested with pines and oaks. Here the trail,

which up to Peiju was fairly decent, became miserable and dangerous. A few planks stuck into the side of the cliff, supported by a few rotten sticks, carelessly placed on rocks in the stream bed below, formed a trail not wider than a foot, and this around sharp curves. Dirt placed on top of the shaky wooden trail had disappeared in places, leaving gaps and holes between the half-rotten planks which revealed the roaring waters of the torrent a couple of hundred feet below. The going was indeed exasperating, the trail zigzagging up a hill-side of shale and debris reduced to a hand's width, the edges slanting into an abyss in which roared the imprisoned river. To pass with laden yak over such trails is nerve-racking. It took the caravan fifteen hours to reach Wantsang Gomba, 20 miles or so from Peiju.

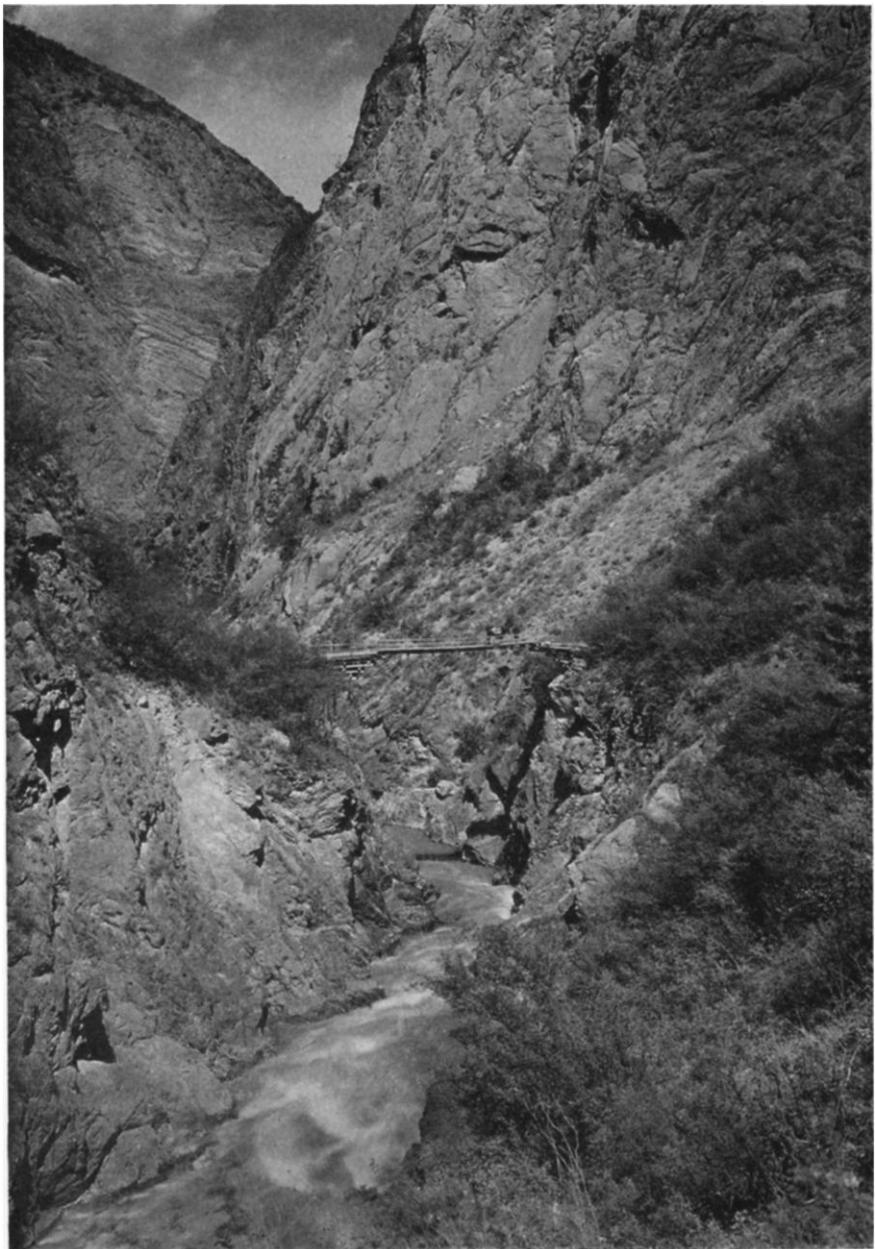
In this gorge we met a lonely Tebbu, and being always on the alert, for we were approaching Tara Ku, with its murderous Tara Tebbu who might be on the warpath, we asked him if the air was clear. He reported a large band of Tara warriors on a little meadow near the stream a short distance ahead. We held a council of war, and in order to ascertain who they were, the lamas of my party decided to go ahead to reconnoitre, while we all waited with the caravan in the forest. It was an anxious time. To our great relief we found that they were indeed Tara Tebbu, but in the act of arranging a truce with the Tebbu of Ngongon, hence they had given up fighting and robbing for the time being. The Tara Tebbu were dressed in brilliant red with red turbans, the fashionable headdress of the Lower Tebbu. They were sitting in two lots, their rifles stacked, but at our approach they rushed up the hillside to take a look at us. The lamas suggested that we should wait on the grassy bluff above until all our animals and loads had passed, for the Tara Tebbu, they said, could not be trusted.

Once through the gorge we passed the tiny hamlet of Nishika, the first village in lower Tebbu Land. The Peishui Kiang flows now in a deep narrow canyon which becomes more and more arid as we proceed downstream, until at a sharp turn it enters another arid limestone defile filled with enormous rocks, the river one mass of white foam and spray as it dashes from boulder to boulder. It is a dreary region indeed compared to the beauty of Drakana. It is like living in a prison: no outlook except the narrow strip of blue sky overhead, the rest sheer walls of rock covered with scrub. In this rocky canyon is situated the Yellow Sect lamasery, Wantsang Gomba, which was to be our headquarters for some time while we explored the gorges and canyons and especially the many lateral valleys filled with forest such as one would not dream to find in this otherwise arid region.

Lower Tebbu Land and Wantsang Lamasery

Practically the entire lower Tebbu country is under the jurisdiction of the lamas of Wantsang, and unless they give permission the people of the neighbouring villages will sell nothing to a stranger. We carried letters from the Choni prince written in Tibetan which instructed the lamas to procure for us all we needed: guides, mules or yak, victuals, etc.

Old Wantsang monastery, buried in this arid canyon, was indeed a forlorn and lonely place. I was shown to a house, the property of a Living Buddha, who was absent in Kumbum, in the Koko Nor. In all there were not more



Maya Chalon gorge: cantilever bridge across the Peishui Kiang

Entrance to the limestone gorge of Yoyutang



than thirty lazy monks who twiddled away their time by chanting prayers, trimming butter lamps, and filling copper bowls with water for the gods. My house was like a chamber of horrors, for on the shelves in the corridor outside my room were arranged devilish masks with protruding red tongues 2 feet long; three-edged daggers; skull drums and other religious paraphernalia were tied to door-posts; while the moth-eaten dried heads of old Tibetan grizzly bears, showing their tusks, graced the centre of the hall: an abode worthy of the demons whose effigies lurked in every corner of the house. Still the lamasery is a quiet retreat. The entrance serves as a shelter for sheep and goats, as the accumulated manure testified; while our donkeys found shelter under the large prayer drums on both sides of the gate. A few old apple trees grew in the courtyard near the ancient chanting halls. Quiet reigned; it might have been the city of the dead.

The sky was black and a strong wind rushed madly through the hot canyon. The few poplar trees in front of the monastery were shaken fiercely by the gusts of the oncoming storm; the thunder rolled and echoed in the deep canyon. The narrow lanes in the monastery and the square in front of the chanting hall were forsaken. In the vestibule, with its wheel of life and a picture of the Tibetan mystic mountain in the centre of the Earth around which the sun revolves, sat two lonely roosters perched on a bar, like the lamas here without female companions. The place smelled of rancid butter, and other vile odours permeated the atmosphere, but neither gods nor lamas cared. An old liogryph incense burner, taller than a man, spat fire, the wind causing the lion to roar as it fanned the fire within its bowels. Above it all one could hear the thunder of the imprisoned river in the canyon and the jingling of the temple bells fastened to the eaves of the roofs.

And yet this monastery had seen much strife and bloodshed. Three years ago the lamas of Wantsang monastery settled a feud of long standing. It culminated in a fray in which Tibetan swords were freely used. Five lamas were butchered, while twelve of the opposing force were driven into a house which the furious lamas set on fire, cremating alive the twelve of their fraternity, while their Living Buddha fled to Labrang. Such is the brotherly love these wild monks practise instead of following the Law and the Middle Way. The ruins of the building still bear witness to the cruel deed. After the lamas of Wantsang had agreed to separate, one half left to start a separate monastery now known as the new Wantsang Gomba. Thus came into being a new lamasery 12 miles south of the old one on the north bank of the river. The monks of the Tebbu monasteries are recruited from the wild Tebbus themselves, who apparently do not benefit by becoming monks, and instead of following Buddha's teaching, have only donned dirty red rags, which apparently make a lama in this part of the world.

From Wantsang Gomba we explored the rich valley of Wantsang (Ku), Tsaoshi Ku, and others, the richest and longest being Wantsang valley, filled with virgin forests of deciduous as well as evergreen types, such as spruces, firs, junipers, rhododendrons, maples, etc. The valleys to the south are richer than those of the northern slopes, which are more or less of a xerophytic character. They rise steeply from the river beds, while those debouching from the south are usually several days' journey long, and rise gradually.

A short distance beyond Tsaoshi Ku a long lateral valley debouching into the Peishui Kiang canyon, the geological formation of which has been mainly slate, shale, and schist, changes near Niba Ku, a rocky ravine from the north, again to limestone, caused by a long lateral spur extending from the Min Shan. Through this massive buttress, about 4 miles broad, the Peishui river has cut for itself an extremely narrow gorge. This defile is called Maya Chalon by the Tebus and is spanned by two swaying cantilever bridges. The trail through the Maya Chalon is execrable and extremely dangerous. As far as the first bridge the trail descends in short steep zigzags to the foot of a reddish-grey limestone cliff, and is merely composed of tiny planks stuck into the rock wall and resting on a doubtfully secure scaffolding. In places the boards rest loosely on the posts without being fastened to the cliff, leaving a rift for 20 to 30 yards. One holds one's breath crossing this shaky ribbon of a trail, with an abyss on each side, and the waters of the Peishui Kiang roaring deafeningly and madly over 100 feet below. Only one person or animal can cross at a time. Beyond the second bridge the trail is even worse: huge chutes and chasms in the limestone wall are bridged over with a zigzag trail suspended in the air, freely swaying, its only support being posts resting on the rocks below, without lateral support. To lead a horse across such a shaky contraption needs steady nerves.

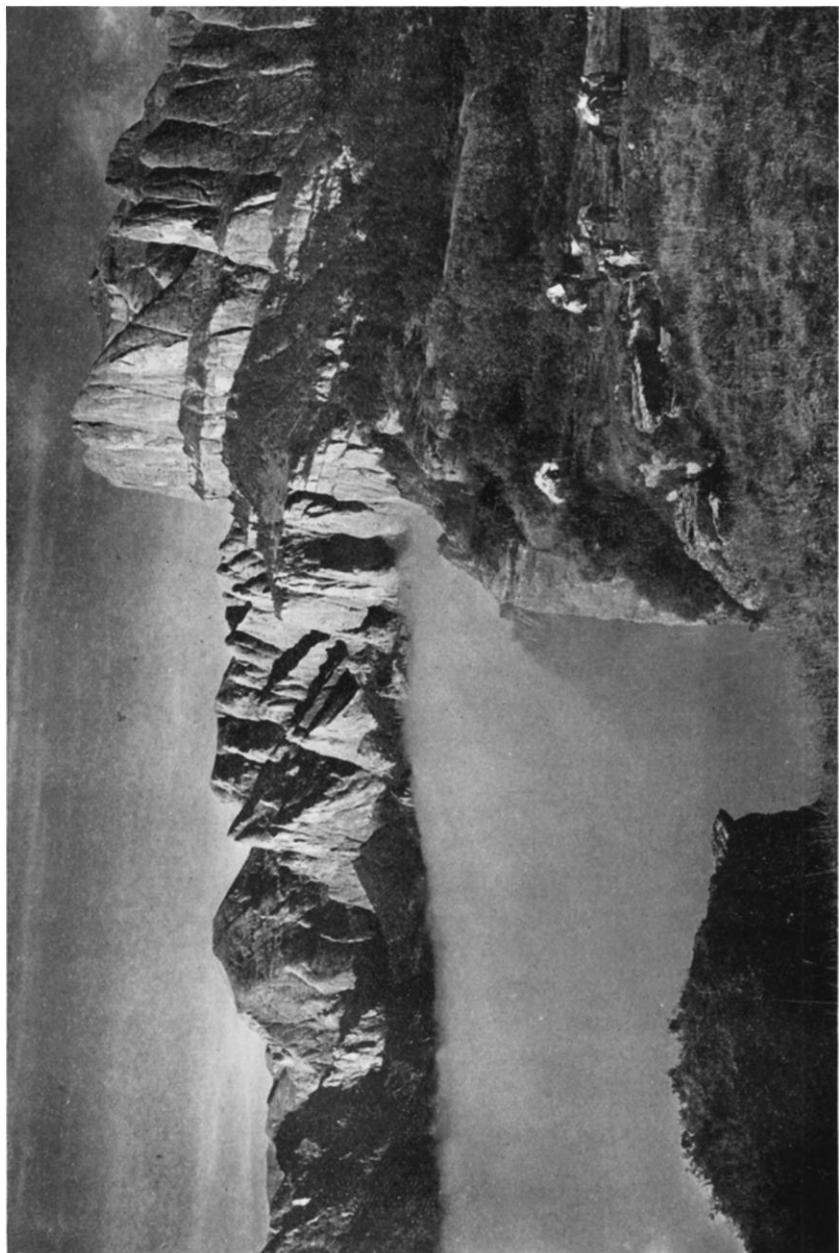
Beyond Maya Chalon the country is more open, but a deep gorge, called Maya Ku, leads northward, not to the Min Shan proper, but to a parallel limestone range south of the Min Shan and connected with it. East of the mouth of Maya Ku is situated the hamlet of Maya, and around a bend of the Peishui river surrounded by scrub-covered hills the rebel lamas had built their new Wantsang monastery. The whole mountain mass to the north is one maze of intricate gorges, valleys, spurs, and passes. It is this part of lower Tebu Land which rivals in beauty Drakana. The forests are immense and undisturbed since time began. The trail leads up Nyiba Ku, and crossing the spur which divides it from Maya valley, ascends that gorge to a pass called Lamugungun. From this grassy pass 11,250 feet high the trail descends into fir, birch, and rhododendron forest, the ground being carpeted with light green moss, while wild cherries and long-leaved willows form the undergrowth. The trail is muddy, the descent steep, and with the many projecting roots and tangled rhododendron branches very tiring, yet too beautiful for words to describe. We descend steeply into Laniba Ku, a long valley which merges into Samba Ku, a valley crowned by huge crenelated battlements of limestone known as Gaguma or the small Guma. The forests are dense and composed mainly in the upper part of red or rather purple spruces (*Picea purpurea*), and in the lower reaches of a mixed type of forest, but with the spruce still predominating. Samba Ku in truth is divided by a narrow forested spur into two parallel valleys whose streams unite below the Tebu hamlet of Hera. There are besides Hera two other villages situated in this great amphitheatre, Wukho and Bensa, both on the northern banks of the Samba Ku below the mighty crags.

Taguma, the highest eminence of the Min Shan, about 17,000 feet, controls the valley of Samba Ku, rising straight from the forests of the valley floor. Pure limestone, bare and rough, it forms the western wall of a great



Looking up the Min Kiang between Shawan and Tiehki, north of Mowchow

Tsarekka (11,250 feet), the eastern pass over the Min Shan, above the cloud-filled Chatseti valley



rock gate or Shi Men called Yovudraku, which permits ingress to the main pass and mountain top of the Min Shan, here called Tsarekika. The latter is however not reached until one has negotiated many winding chasms. The sombre forests where eternal twilight dwells merge into lovely alpine meadows, here called Yovutang, rich in flowers. One is soon however engulfed in forest which extends to the very walls of the overowering cliffs. The trail enters the giant gateway Yovudraku, meandering along the stream-bed through narrow stretches of larch, fir, and birch. The ascent is steep, the trail climbing the valley walls and clinging to the very cliffs. Up and up we climb; the stream-bed is piled high with enormous limestone boulders the size of a small house, one piled upon the other, the waters roaring invisibly beneath. The scenery is so wild that it becomes terrifying, and one casts anxious glances up the walls thousands of feet in height, especially when one comes to places where the trail is smashed and littered with huge blocks of rock which hinder progress. One stops and listens as a huge avalanche of rock, dislodged by wandering serow or blue sheep, descends a narrow crevice in the wall; at first it sounds like distant thunder, when with a crash it strikes the trees, tearing their barks to shreds. The trail hugs the very base of the 3000-4000-foot high overhanging cliffs carved by time and the elements into coxcomb-like spikes, themselves hundreds of feet high.

In the centre of the rock gate a huge pyramidal mountain mass divides the canyon, guarding the two clear streams which here flow at almost a perfect level. The bed is broad and glaring white, but bordered by rich forest of fir, spruce, birch, and maple. Although the stream-bed is at an elevation of 10,000 feet the walls rise straight for thousands of feet more into the sky. To the north-east debouches the canyon called Doyaya, up which the trail leads to the second pass called Yencherungo, and the actual divide between the Yellow River and the Yangtze. To the left of Doyaya is seen the weird canyon of Dollo, so narrow and filled with debris that it is difficult to penetrate, and yet it is the passage way of Tebbu brigands who have their stronghold higher up on a small meadow. It is indeed a most inaccessible region which one can visit only with the approval of the Choni prince, for without proper guides and escorts it would be impossible to reach this place.

The Lower Tebbu seem to be a peaceable people, and very different in character from the Upper Tebbu, whose language also differs. It is the latter who make this region unsafe. They lurk among the crags of the high passes, and after murdering and robbing their victims, even their own lamas should they chance to pass, flee across the border into Szechwan territory, which they know is no man's land and a refuge for the outlaw. In the upper end of Doyaya the rock changes; instead of the limestone crags, carved into pinnacles and turrets, we find massive walls of a fine reddish-grey conglomerate, at first superimposed on limestone, with here and there a slab of overhanging smooth rock having the appearance of thick dough squeezed out of the crevices. These walls of conglomerate have rounded tops and stand like skyscrapers, but are more susceptible to erosion and disintegration than the hard old limestone. There is no end of rock gates as one passes from one canyon to the other.

At Yencherungo, which is a large meadow at the head of Doyaya canyon, surrounded by crags of limestone forming a huge amphitheatre, we waited for

our caravan, for this whole region is infested by Tebbu brigands. The trail ascends over the alpine pass into another gorge filled with forests and thence into a lateral valley called Chatseti, where we camped at the very foot of the trail which leads to the final pass and summit of the eastern Min Shan, Tsarekika. Opposite our camp, on the top of the high valley wall, were peculiar red chimney-like rock columns which my Tebbus called Tsareshma and of which they were very afraid; they told me in whispers that these rocks embodied an evil spirit, which devours human beings. From Chatseti the trail ascends steeply in zigzags over the grassy slopes. Heavy clouds hovered over our valley and hid the huge cliffs which shut in Chatseti. My Tebbu escort yelled; some ahead, some behind, they called to each other for encouragement or to let lurking robbers know that we were many. I myself emptied my revolver as an additional warning to waiting brigands. It was on this pass that one of my party was once shot and wounded by Tebbu outlaws. It is the happy hunting ground of the Upper Tebbu robbers.

Somewhat below the pass we were enveloped by fog and mist. The trail led to the foot of the conglomerate crags, which stood up like giant exclamation marks; we could barely make them out, while above the blue sky could be seen through the mist. The crags themselves were luminous from the rays of the morning sun, though still shrouded in vaporous mist. One of our Tebbu boys left the regular trail and ascended directly among the crags between which he disappeared. The summit was lined with double rows of conglomerate pillars between which the trail led to the pass. There the Tebbus loaded their rifles, and with ours ready for any emergency we ascended to the top. We all gave a sigh of relief when we found that the air was clear. At our feet lay Chatseti covered as with a white blanket, out of which rose a stupendous bluff and pinnacles of red conglomerate illumined by the morning sun. Through the mist, on the edge of the alpine meadow on which we stood, we could see the rocky gates through which we had just cautiously made our way with anxious hearts, and nerves keyed to a high pitch, for it is not pleasant to find oneself engaged in a pitched battle with wild Tebbu brigands, such as we had encountered at this very place over a year ago.

From Tsarekika the trail leads into a narrow rocky chasm, so narrow that the saddle frames had to be removed from our mules to let them pass, and each box had to be carried sideways through the defiles. We finally emerged by the headwaters of the Hsiao Ku stream, which in its upper reaches is hemmed in entirely by conglomerate cliffs. The region in its lower course is composed of limestone with the ever-present rock gates or Shi Men. From Adjuan to Choni is a distance of 30 miles mainly down the valley of Tayü Ku, less interesting than Kadja Ku in the western Min Shan. Instead of following Tayü Ku to its junction with the Tao river, a spur is crossed into a smaller valley called Poyü Ku, whence it is 10 li to Choni. In spite of the hostility of the Tebbus and their murderous attacks, I shall always look back on our exploration of Tebbu Land as one of the greatest pleasures and joys of my life. It is to the kindness of the Choni prince and his courteous assistance that the exploration of Tebbu Land became an accomplished fact. There still remains much to be done, for the territory is vast indeed, and it is impossible to visit every gorge and crag. The only region botanically unexplored in Tebbu

Land, but traversed by us in its entirety, is the extreme south-eastern end, from the mouths of Toro Ku and Asha Ku to the summit of the Dakhe La or Yangpu Shan, 12,300 feet, the extreme south-eastern border of Choni and Szechwan. Toro Ku is a canyon best approached by following Tsaoshi Ku to its end where, on a spur or saddle, is the Tebbu hamlet of Pakar. The Toro Ku stream has its source on the north-western slopes of the Dakhe La, a few miles below which is situated, at an elevation of 9500 feet, the last hamlet in lower Tebbu Land: it is called Tayü gongmar by the Tebbus, and Yangpu in the Choni language. This region we traversed with the greatest difficulties in March 1927, owing to deep snow.

At the last gateway out of Tebbu Land, which we had literally to force open by cutting a path through snowdrifts, the Tebbu mountain spirits demanded from us their due sacrifice in the shape of three mules who succumbed under their loads in the deep snow on Mount Dakhe. Here we said farewell to Choni and the Land of the Tebbus.

Note on the river names

In Chinese as well as in Tibetan territory streams are usually known by several names, which are applied to certain stretches of their course, instead of one name throughout the entire length. The largest stream traversing Tebbu Land is known in Choni as the Peishui Kiang or White Water river. This stream has its source in the grasslands of Szechwan near a lamasery called Datsö Lhamo. The stream is there called Tsaru, as it flows in a valley called Tsaru Ku. Another, but shorter, branch of it comes from below Kwang Ke, a pass on the southern slopes of the Min Shan, and flows through Drakana in upper Tebbu Land into a gorge called Yiwa Ku; it is therefore known as the Yiwa stream. The confluence of the Yiwa and the Tsaru is called Djekuka, and from thence to Pashetenga the stream is known as Drotsu. From Pashetenga it becomes the Donjralechu, and in lower Tebbu Land the Chulungapu. Beyond Shui-pi, the last hamlet in the east in Tebbu Land, it becomes the Peilung Kiang or White Dragon river, until it reaches the Chinese town of Hsiku. From there to Kaichow, or Wutu, it becomes the Hsiku Ho, and below Wutu the Wutu or Kaichow Ho, and near Pikow in the extreme south of Kansu it is called the Heshui Ho or Black Water river. In northern Szechwan the river loses its identity as it joins the Kialing, one of the larger rivers of Szechwan, entering the Yangtze at Chungking. There the river is navigable by steamers as far as Hochow, a distance of 90 li from Chungking.

Note on the map.—The sketch-map has been compiled from an extensive series of route-traverses by the author, which he has very kindly deposited with the Society, with much similar material relating to other journeys. These traverses show many new names and much detail, and add much to our knowledge of very badly mapped regions. They have however no astronomical or trig. control. A few such known positions have been utilized in placing an approximate graticule. We were unable to undertake the long task of compiling and adjusting the traverses accurately on a larger scale, and it is doubtful if material is yet available. When it becomes available, and time permits, we may hope to produce a much better map. Meanwhile the originals will be preserved by the Society if the author permits.—ED. G.J.