

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
March 5, 1932

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed February 27, 1932

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

MIRAGE IN JAPAN

The common "desert" mirage of dry countries, which simulates a pool of water, is known in China as "tiching" ("earth mirror") or "shuiying" ("water-image"), while the Japanese have called it for many centuries "nigemidu" ("fleeing water") or "kagenuma" ("false swamp"). A recent article in a Japanese scientific journal deals at length with the history of this and other forms of mirage in Japan. Desert mirage was once common in the plain of Musasino west of Tokyo, and a poem by Tosiiori written more than a thousand years ago refers to its occurrence there. In modern times this plain has been irrigated and brought under cultivation, and mirage is no longer seen there.

A case of lateral mirage is described in a book of travels by Tatibana Nankei, published in 1795. This writer tells of a narrow valley in Hida province where passers see the faces of persons coming toward them deformed on account of the heating of the air adjacent to a cliff.

Lastly, fata morgana is known in Japan as "sinki-ro" (a name also sometimes applied by the Japanese to mirage in general), and it has, besides, various names suggested by its appearance and folklore; including some that mean "castle of the fox," "wood of the fox," "the castle of pleasant spectacle," etc. The "sinki-ro" of Toyama Bay is especially celebrated, having been described in many books and sketched by many artists.

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

SCIENCE SERVICE
21st and Constitution Ave.
Washington, D.C.