



Gamblers in a churchyard at Yarkand. The woman is holding the iron bar, to which her husband is chained.

The right of collecting the bazaar tax on some goods in all the towns of Kashgaria has been sold to four men, who have to pay a certain sum for this annually to the Taotai in Kashgar. The imposition of the bazaar tax on certain goods or their exemption from it seems, however, to depend to a great extent on the discretion of the local mandarins. In Yarkand, for instance, in the time of the present mandarin's predecessor not only all foodstuffs, but horses, cattle and even hens were liable to taxation. The manner of collecting the taxes also seems to give plenty of scope for extortion on the part of the mandarins and minor officials. In measuring the grain tax too large a measure is employed, which even has a special technical designation and is equal to $7/5$ of the correct measure in Yarkand. It is all the dearer for the population, when the grain tax is collected in silver under all kinds of pretexts, as the price of grain is fixed arbitrarily by the mandarin. As an illustration of the scale on which such abuse of power is exercised, I can mention that the local mandarin, who is generally respected for his kindness and humanity, adopts the principle of fixing the price of grain at double the price paid in the bazaar. His predecessor never allowed it to pass cheaper than at treble the price. The procedure is very simple. For half the amount of the taxes collected the mandarin buys up the grain in the bazaar that has to be provided in the local Government stores for feeding the Chinese troops and assisting the population in case of famine; the rest of the money is not subject to any control. It is scarcely necessary to add that this only refers in very broad lines to a minor instance of the extortions of which the often most ingenious mandarins are guilty.

As a Chinese official post can only be attained by sacrificing large sums of money and its occupant only retains it for three years, when large amounts have again to be expended for a new post, the chief cause of such corruption as exists everywhere, at any rate in this part of the Celestial Empire, is not far to seek. As salaries are disproportionately low and are non-existent for some posts, we find another mainspring for this system of extortion.