



*The entrance to the Sart  
town of Aqsu.*

In the large courtyard of the Taotai's yamen a motley crowd of people arrayed in carnival dress had collected, when I left the kind old mandarin. A fair Sart woman was seated at a stand made of paper and light rods and fixed on wheels, and was selling all kinds of trifles. I turned my steps in her direction in order to photograph this exquisite specimen of »the sex«, but the fellow — for it was a Sart disguised as a woman — was so impressed by the seriousness of his rôle that he dropped a veil over his beautiful features and in reply to my entreaties only pressed a fan against them in an access of maidenly modesty. At a signal given by the beating of a drum the crowd formed into a procession which moved solemnly through the streets in honour of the Chinese New Year, to the great delight of the population. A group of Sarts of all ages, not much less gaily clad, remained in the courtyard; they were to have the honour of carrying the insignia of the Taotai's rank and preceding his elegant little Chinese carriage, drawn by a mule, when he paid a round of calls a little later. I met him in one of the streets and could really not say which of the processions looked more like a carnival.

The district mandarin, an elderly man of charming and not at all Chinese appearance, made a very pleasant impression on me. He was formerly stationed at Ili and came into contact with many Europeans there, especially Russians.

I was disappointed not to find the military mandarin, Tchentoï Tan, in, when I called. It would have been interesting to make the acquaintance of the man who commanded the troops in the Aqsu district, the most important district in Chinese Turkestan from a military point of view.

My temporary Chinese interpreter placed me in an awkward position by failing to turn up on the day on which I had informed the mandarin of the Sart town that I would call on him. This call was all the more imperative, as on the day of my arrival he had sent me the traditional mandarin's presents, a sheep, some maize, hay and wood,

*March 7th.  
Beshtugemen  
village.*