

Next comes the supreme judge of the province, the Njetai. All legal matters submitted by the district mandarins are referred to him by the Taotais, who supply their notes on the cases. In addition to his purely legal duties he usually acts as adviser to the Futai and Fantai and is consulted on important questions. Their orders are communicated to the local mandarins through him (?). The control of posts and telegraphs, the local police and decisions concerning the construction and maintenance of government buildings are in his hands (?). Besides, he controls the provincial grain stores, the sale of grain, its supply to the army etc. (?). In Urumchi the Njetai at the same time occupies the office of Taotai and in this capacity it is his duty to superintend trade and all foreign subjects. All dealings with the Russian consul go through the Taotai, who has the so-called »Russo-Chinese commission« in his yamen for this purpose, consisting of Gui and his right-hand man, the dragoman Dju.

Each of these high officials has various offices in his yamen, in which numbers of minor officials and syje are employed. The Futai has 2 personal secretaries, 2 adjutants, 2 hung bis je (officials who control the red ink and write despatches to the Emperor) and at least a couple of hundred employees, who work in expectation of being appointed to some post. Almost every official you meet says that he is a candidate for some office of a higher class. As a rule they are up to their ears in debt and an appointment as a local mandarin means everything to them. It is not surprising, therefore, that they disparage each other and are ready to do their best friends a bad turn. Blackmailers and informers seem to flourish among the mandarins more than anywhere else. Everything is done in an exquisite way, under a shower of smiles, gifts and compliments. Even the informers employ language of poetic beauty and rare elegance.

The military administration is divided into several districts. The highest military commander is the Titai at Yangi-Shahr. There are Djentais resident at Suitin, Aqsu and Barkul. They do not appear to be subordinated to the Titai, but directly to the Futai. There are Sitais at Kashgar, Yarkand, Manes, Tchugutchak, Hami and Urumchi. The last of these also takes his orders directly from the Governor, the rest being subordinated to their immediate superiors.

At present there is unusual activity, at any rate for this province, at Urumchi among the highest officials. Some reforms have already been introduced and many others are proposed. The arrival and prolonged stay of the Dzian Dziun Tchang at Urumchi has increased the energy of the officials and their zeal for reform. In addition to his direct duties as Dzian Dziun of Ili, he has been placed at the head of all the troops in the province. The Futai, who is thus subordinated to him in his capacity as commander-in-chief, is independent in his capacity of governor. It is said, however, that an order from Peiping stipulates that all reforms should be planned and carried out by the two officials jointly. Such vagueness in their mutual position, which seems to be characteristic of Chinese officialdom, has, of course, led to dissension and intrigues. Instead of making representations jointly to Peiping, they do so independently of each other, and there is no need to worry about their placing each other in too favourable a light. According to their own ideas of the probable course of developments the mandarins are divided into two inimical parties.