

less idlers. One or two of the soldiers, clad in blue cotton fabrics, were loitering about my camp to satisfy their curiosity. Neither Persian, Turki, nor Wakhi could draw any conversation from them. According to the Munshi's statement scarcely any of the men, who have now passed close upon eight years in the district, have even an elementary knowledge of the language spoken around them. Considering that the same observation holds good of the few officials, and that the military force at their disposal is really insignificant, the order maintained by the Chinese administration appeared truly admirable. The success may largely be due to the wise arrangement by which all local affairs are left in the hands of local chiefs and headmen. Taxation in these frontier districts is very light, and as the Chinese are anything but exacting masters the people seemed perfectly contented. Facts like these make one appreciate the power which an ancient culture and the political wisdom resulting from many centuries' experience give to the Chinese administration even in these days of apparent political dissolution.

The Amban had just returned from leave in Kashgar in a somewhat ailing condition, and as it seemed doubtful whether he would be able to make the return call demanded by etiquette during the short time available, I had by the Munshi's advice to forego my intended visit, however much I should have liked to profit by the first opportunity to see something of the representatives of the Imperial power. All the local dignitaries, with Karim Beg, the chief of Sarikol, at their head, came, however, to pay their respects, and with M. Sher Muhammad's assistance the little Durbar in my 'Kirgha' or Yürt proved quite a success. The Begs told much that helped me to understand the former condition of Sarikol and the curiously mixed aspect of its population. Among the better-class people it seems difficult to trace any whose families are indigenous to the soil. Some are descended from Wakhi immigrants; a few from Chitrali and Kanjuti refugees; more