

transform the old 'Baj-khana' or octroi and revenue office into a spacious residence, had not yet been quite completed. Everything in the large apartments and verandahs enclosing the inner court looked clean and well-planned. But there had been no time to cover the wooden roofing with the usual layer of stamped clay, or to put up the lattice-work which would shut out the glare from the courtyard. So the heat was great in my palatial rest-house, and the noise too from the host of Daroghas, retainers of the Beg, and townsfolk who thronged the outer court and entrance hall as a matter of right. Two harmless-looking public executioners in red caps and robes, whom the Beg had thought fit to post at the gate of 'my Ya-mên,' were no protection against the good-natured intrusion authorized by local custom.

The local Beg of Kara-kash, an officer of importance and evident wealth, proved a most attentive host. I was interested to learn that his family enjoyed a hereditary connection with the Chinese Imperial court, through the office of 'Wang' or local chief. It is, of course, a purely nominal charge, though it causes one of its members to proceed to Peking every five years, the journey to and fro with residence at court extending in all over some twenty-two months. I did not succeed in ascertaining from what period of effective local rule this charge of quasi-mediatised chiefship was derived. But my informants all agreed that the 'Gung-luk' or Wang-ship of the family had been maintained for over three centuries, and that formal enquiries in the Imperial archives had re-established its claim after the old papers relating to the charge had been lost during the troubled times of the usurper Habibullah. The account of this office recalled to my mind the frequent references in the Chinese dynastic Annals from the fifth century onwards to princes and nobles from Khotan who, coming with embassies of 'tribute,' received honourable posts in the Imperial guard and household employment, no doubt, as easily discharged by occasional visits as the 'Gung-luk' of Hafiz Beg. The annual salary drawn by the latter in virtue of his court charge was said to amount to forty horse-shoes of silver, equivalent to