

THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE AND THE MUSLIM REVOLT IN XINJIANG, 1860-1870s

by

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Abstract

In 1864 a revolt by Muslim communities of Xinjiang precluded for more than a decade Qing presence in the region. The Muslim rebels eventually made attempts at establishing new political entities throughout Xinjiang. The uprising placed the neighboring Russian empire, whose Central Asian territories shared an extensive border with Xinjiang, in a sensitive situation. This thesis aims to discuss Russian views and perceptions of the Muslim revolt and its participants. In particular the research focuses on shedding light on what were some of the strategies adopted by Russian regional authorities in Western Siberia and Turkestan general-governorships with regards to the Qing loyalist forces, Muslim rebels, and refugees. The research explores ethnic and religious policies established by colonel Kolpakovskii in the Ili region and discusses diplomatic efforts undertaken by the Russian administration in Turkestan. The research argues that the policies and measures adopted by regional Russian administrations were flexible, prone to shifts as the Muslim revolt progressed, and were influenced by a number of internal and external factors. Those include concerns regarding the allegiances of Russia's own Muslim population in the borderlands, the desire to maintain favorable commercial relations with the Qing, to act as a neutral power and ultimate broker between the Muslim rebels and the Qing loyalists, and finally to minimize British political and economic influence in Central Asia.

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Introduction

The Muslim revolt during the late Qing empire was a complex conflict which affected the provinces of Shaanxi, Gansu and almost the entirety of Xinjiang. However, it was not merely an internal conflict in the Qing empire; the neighboring Russian empire observed closely the violence in Xinjiang and eventually took active part in this conflict pursuing objectives of its own. Russia's attention to the revolt was not only due to its proximity but also because it and the Qing empire shared some commonalities. The Qing empire was a multiethnic and multi-religious political entity under the rule of a Manchu dynasty. During the 18th century the empire expanded its territories considerably by conquering the former Zunghar Khanate and the oasis cities in the Tarim basin. The new territory was called Xinjiang where the Qing government instituted military administration. One of the goals for conquering Xinjiang was to expand the security buffer around the core territories of the empire. However, as internal issues in the Qing partially spurred by its encounter with the West in the mid-19th century coupled with peculiar and estranged status of the Muslim Hui community the dissatisfaction with the Qing rule grew in these distant regions while Qing control diminished which culminated in a massive uprising. The Muslim revolt affected not only the Hui people in the Qing Empire's northwestern provinces of Shaanxi and Gansu, or the populations of Xinjiang but also exerted influence beyond on the Russian Empire and Central Asia. For Russia, which shared an extensive border with the Qing, the scale and initial success of the uprising was unexpected and troubling. The nation had suffered a humiliating defeat a decade prior to the Muslim revolt and was at the moment trying to fortify its position in Central Asia. The sudden revolt and violence across the border opened insecurities regarding Russia's position in Central Asia, the appeal of the rebels' cause on Russian subjects in the Kazakh Steppe. The Muslim revolt was a challenge not only for the

Qing but also for Russia; the challenge of Russia's ability to understand and navigate the complexities of ethnic and religious identities in Central Asia and beyond.

There have been several important studies pertaining to the Muslim revolt in particular and to various aspects of Inner Asian historiography tangentially concerning the revolt such as the Qing conquest of Xinjiang, its administration of the territory in the century preceding the revolt, Russian expansion into Central Asia, the historiography of Russia's borders with China (including the Qing dynasty) and its diplomatic activities with the British.

Peter Perdue's *China Marches West: the Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* is a seminal work on the strategies, tactics and the timeline of the Qing expansion westwards. It addresses such issues as the apparent successes of the Qing compared to previous dynasties in advancing further beyond the agricultural heartland and in dealing a decisive blow to its nomadic opponents by improving its logistical capabilities and allying or instituting patronage relationship with Mongol tribes¹. Perdue also explores the conditions which facilitated political unification of the Oirat tribes and the rise of the Zunghar Khanate in the latter half of the 17th century. That, as he posits, was due to Tibetan and Buddhist influence on the Oirats².

Unlike Perdue, James A. Millward in his *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759-1864* focuses on the essential patterns of Qing colonialism in Xinjiang with particular attention to the strategies of tying the region to mercantile networks in the Qing mainland, facilitating immigration from the interior, justifications of the Qing rule over Xinjiang to Han bureaucrats in the court as well as exploring the Qing ideology meant to legitimize its rule in this region.

¹ Peter Perdue, *China Marches West: the Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 230.

² *Ibid.*, 104.

Overall Millward uses the Xinjiang's special status to demonstrate his argument that the Qing empire was not a Sino-centric polity: instead of being centered on the Han the Qing conducted an ethnic policy meant to maintain distinctions of the "five nations" with the imperial family taking the prominent spot³. Some of the results of such an approach with regards to Xinjiang were segregation along ethnic lines, controlled access from China proper and strictly regulated trade; Han merchants, although encouraged, were subject to numerous restrictions as well. Millward also argued that the Qing administration clearly regarded the Kazakh trade in the late 18th century as trade per se rather than some other type of relationship such as tributary status; i.e. Millward refuted an earlier idea that the Qing frontier relations were presumed to be expressed as part of a tributary system. Another proposition Millward makes is that while Qing distinguished Xinjiang from China proper they thought of it as being firmly under Qing control. Chapter 6 sheds greater light on Qing ethnic policies and ensuing conflicts in the region. For one, since after the conquest East Turkestanis' status changed from foreigners to Qing subjects; that was reflected in how East Turkestanis were perceived in Qing official correspondence. The *queue* (Manchu hairstyle) although obligatory for the Han, was not required for Xinjiang Muslims and later was even regarded as a privilege for certain high-ranking Muslim officials⁴.

The years immediately preceding the 1864 Muslim revolt Xinjiang garrisons experienced chronic financial shortages because Beijing's attention was towards internal strife and wars with the West; another reason was decreasing trade between Xinjiang and China proper as a result of the Taranchi rebellions and Kokand invasions in 1830s with Han merchants deeming the region to be of great risk afterwards⁵. However, Han merchant practices forcing the

³ James A. Millward, *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759-1864* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 200-201.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 204.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 235, 238.

Turkestanis into debt coupled with corrupted administration contributed to the Muslim's growing resentment⁶.

Hodong Kim's work *Holy War in China: The Muslim Rebellion and State in Chinese Central Asia, 1864-1877* also provides valuable insights into the social and economic conditions of the years immediately preceding the revolt, however, he focuses on the revolt itself and the subsequent Muslim regimes, especially Yaqub Beg's state. Although Kim applies Russian sources and explores Yaqub Beg's relations with Russia, ultimately the perspective is centered on Muslim politics and not on Russian policies.

A notable study by Matthew Mosca - *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy: The Question of India and the Transformation of Geopolitics in Qing China* - complements those works by examining the evolution of the Qing external worldview. Mosca's argument is that the frontier policies pursued by the Qing Empire allowed it not only to create a large contiguous state subjugating a number of Inner Asian people but also to effectively maintain such a state by supporting the balance between local officials and elites on the one side and the imperial center on the other⁷. One of the ways in which the Qing dynasty was able to preserve such a balance was by delegating external relations to various officials in their respective regions. This allowed the Qing to deal with local threats without dragging resources from the center but as the officials were tasked with both locating and managing such threats they tended to ignore those unless they were of utmost importance or grave consequences⁸. Another aspect of such a patchwork of frontier relations was the intelligence and information gathering. The Qing court received reports and information tailored to regional peculiarities reinforced by disparate linguistic and cultural conventions which made

⁶ Ibid., 239.

⁷ Matthew W. Mosca, *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy: The Question of India and the Transformation of Geopolitics in Qing China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 305.

⁸ Ibid., 12-13.

it complicated for the center to see emergent parallel changes in the dynasty's external environment⁹.

After the Opium Wars the Qing government eventually came to realize that its European adversaries operated on multiple fronts at once and reports from places as distant as Tibet and Guangzhou would more often than not be concerned with the same actors; thus the Qing also needed a similarly structured and a more comprehensive approach to manage its relations with the external world¹⁰.

Nevertheless, as Mosca notes internal issues – most notably the Taiping Rebellion and Muslim rebellions – significantly diminished the dynasty's abilities to create an effective and coherent foreign policy: as a result of internal upheavals the central government had difficulties even to maintain communication with its distant regions¹¹.

Another argument voiced by Mosca is that China's reconsideration of its geographic outlook for the most part happened outside the more rigid government bureaucracy; that is it were private Han literati who made such a change and eventually their vision as to what a proper response to the Western imperialism might be was focused on harboring a more homogenous and centralized state. That, according to Mosca, could have been one of the factors that would bring by this moment the essentially Han dominated dynasty into the conflict with their ethnically diverse frontier territories¹².

Several works discuss the history of Islam and Muslim communities in China. Millward made an important contribution to the discussion of Qing ethnic policies exploring the ideology of the "five nations" - the Qianlong era attempt to incorporate the newly conquered Muslim cities of the Tarim basin into the empire and instill legitimacy for the

⁹ Ibid., 10.

¹⁰ Ibid., 308.

¹¹ Ibid., 305.

¹² Ibid., 310.

Qing rule among the Muslims - an endeavor Millward believes that largely failed and the recurring Muslim revolts serve as his evidence.

Another important work where the subject of ethnicity and specifically the Hui community and its place in the Qing era takes a prominent spot is Jonathan Lipman's *Familiar Strangers: A History of Muslims in Northwest China*. Lipman's work is an attempt to present the wider history of Chinese Muslims and thus the revolt is only one part of the narrative. Earlier histories of Muslim communities during the preceding periods such as Tang, Yuan, and Ming dynasties are just as important for Lipman as those of the Qing and the later Republican periods. Overall, Lipman's interest lies in exploring the incorporation of Chinese Muslims into the *minzu* paradigm of the modern People's Republic, that is how religious identity has come to be reinterpreted as an exclusively ethnic one. For that purpose Lipman's work does not take into account the wider events of the Muslim Revolt in Xinjiang

Lipman's thesis is that the Muslim Rebellion of 1860s-1870s was not a single revolt but rather what he calls "multifocal rebellions" - the revolt was not a single connected event but rather a number of disorganized and disconnected rebellions throughout Shaanxi and Gansu¹³. Lipman deems it difficult to ascertain the immediate causes of the outbreak as the revolt itself was an exacerbation of the already endemic instances of communal violence in multiple areas of both Shaanxi and Gansu¹⁴. Lipman's hypothesis is that if communal violence was prevalent in the decades preceding 1860s then the complete breakdown of the Qing authority in the area in the ensuing decade was correlated with the appearance of Taiping forces in the vicinity with Chinese Muslims seizing the opportunity to kill local Qing officials in the spring of 1862¹⁵. Of course, as Lipman notes, the presence of the Taiping

¹³ Jonathan N. Lipman, *Familiar Strangers: A History of Muslims in Northwest China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 118.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 122.

forces was only a “stimulating” factor; the reasons for the all-out revolt were numerous and local in nature.

Two of the more recent works by David Brophy and Eric Schluessel also explore the Muslim communities in Xinjiang and their connections with the dominant polities further east - the late Qing empire, republican and socialist periods. Brophy’s *Uyghur Nation: Reform and Revolution on the Russia-China Frontier* is not specifically focused on the Muslim rebellions of 1864-1877; the latter is only discussed tangentially. The work puts greater emphasis on the modern Uyghur history and the formation of the Uyghur nation in the first half of the 20th century as the focal point in the narrative. Brophy also attempts to present a history of Xinjiang and more broadly Turkestan not from an imperial or external view (something which he critiques) but from a local vantage point¹⁶. Eric Schluessel’s *Land of Strangers: The Civilizing Project in Qing Central Asia* explores the socio-cultural aftermath of the policies introduced in Xinjiang after its reconquest by Zuo Zongtang’s forces in the late 1870s. Schluessel claims that the measures to introduce Confucianism among the Muslim majority societies of Xinjiang led not to a more coherent and unified state but to a more tense relations between the Muslims and ‘China’. Perhaps the most important argument Schluessel makes is that the new Qing mission to assimilate the Muslims of Xinjiang on the contrary provided the intellectual foundation and resources to further manifest ethnic separation and the formation of the nation¹⁷.

Historiography on Asiatic Russia includes several important works on frontier and border relations between the Russian empire and the Qing as well as its expansion southwards and the conquest of Central Asia. A major work in Russian in this domain is Vladimir Moiseev’s *Rossiia i Kitai v Tsentral’noi Azii*. Although Moiseev discusses the

¹⁶ David Brophy, *Uyghur Nation: Reform and Revolution on the Russia-China Frontier* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 3.

¹⁷ Eric Schluessel, *Land of Strangers: The Civilizing Project in Qing Central Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), 3.

Muslim revolt and Russian reaction to it extensively relying on a wealth of primary sources, both archival and published, his work is not centered on the uprising itself but rather on the evolution of Sino-Russian border and Sino-Russian relations in Central Asia of which the Muslim revolt was but a one short period. In this respect although Moiseev's work sheds light on the role the central government in Saint Petersburg played in strategizing Russian approach to the Muslim revolt, the conduct of its negotiations and correspondence with frontier officials in Tashkent and the Qing court in Beijing. This is a vital insight as it provides us with a greater understanding of differences and commonalities of the officials in the center and on the periphery. However, despite a thorough description of the revolt and Russian position to it, Moiseev does not discuss the cross-border interactions such as accepting refugees nor provides the details on what kind of ethnic and religious policies Kolpakovskii introduced in Ili.

The main research question this thesis aims to explore is "What was the nature of Russian involvement in the Muslim revolt of 1864-1877". For this question I use the term 'involvement' in a broad sense meaning a wide range of approaches to the Muslim revolt such as direct military interference, diplomatic activity with both parties of the conflict, and a variety of policies adopted by Russian frontier officials aimed at securing the territories under their administration or meant to alleviate the plight of refugees. I believe shedding light on such multifaceted interactions between Russian administration in Central Asia on the one side and both Qing loyalists and the rebels on the other benefits our insight in expansive strategies the Russian military and administration applied in Inner Asia as well as what kind of challenges they faced and how they approached such limitations.

In order to answer this general question several more specific questions are posed: the main question chapter 1 seeks to answer is "What were the conditions and the background which led to the Muslim revolt and Russian involvement in it". Chapter 2 aims to provide an

explanation to the following questions: “What events occurred along the Russo-Qing frontier and how Russia reacted to such events” and “What range of policies and measures did Russian military officials and regional authorities contemplate in response to the revolt”. In chapter 3 the following research questions are explored: “How did Russian officials navigate ethnic and religious implications of the Muslim revolt”, “How did Russian involvement in the revolt fit in Russia's general Inner Asian strategy during the respective time period and how did it affect Russian foreign policy in Central Asia”.

The main hypothesis this research aims to demonstrate is that Russian policies in Xinjiang were not necessarily expansionist and were grounded in flexible and sound assessment of the environment and balance of power in Russia’s dealing with both the Qing authorities and local inhabitants in Xinjiang. The hypothesis presents Russian actions and political priorities in the region as shifting yet constrained by a number of factors. This view complements other studies on the Russo-Qing relations, especially the works striving to present the totality of this relationship in the latter half of the 19th century. The hypothesis this research proposes

This thesis uses an extensive number of published primary sources which are mainly represented by late 19th-century Russian historiographies written by military officers such as works by Terent’ev, which provide a glimpse into Russia’s strategic situation in Inner Asia in the latter half of the 19th century as it was perceived by the officers themselves. The works of historical nature served state propaganda purposes and for their authors self-glorification and therefore should not be taken at their face value but in combination with other primary sources and recent historiography are helpful in reconstructing Russian military’s understanding of the Muslim revolt and its implications for Russian policies in Central Asia. Travel, expedition and embassy accounts represent another category of published sources. They are crucial in providing specific details of particular events this thesis concerns.

Intelligence gathering often served as one of the main reasons for dispatching expeditions or embassies therefore the information in these sources at the time of their production was not always publicly available. One of the major sources in this category was Chokan Valikhanov's account of his secret expedition to Altishahr a few years before the Muslim revolt. As such only part of his report was initially published with the entire travel account being published only in 1904. Alexei Kuropatkin's *Kashgariia* was published as an account of the 1876 official Russian embassy to Kashgar and was meant for public consumption, however, it is likely that the reports which formed the basis of this work were not for public distribution.

A collection of fairly important primary sources comes from a few editions of the *Turkestanskii Sbornik*, a regularly published journal initiated by Konstantin von Kaufman, the first governor-general of Turkestan. The *sbornik* itself published a wide array of articles on a number of different topics during the period of its existence. For this thesis several of the articles particularly in the issue 60 (*Materialy dlia statistiki Turkestanskogo kraia II*) proved to be the most useful. The type of materials published in the *sbornik* included official part of the intelligence report by Alexandr Geins on the early period of the Muslim revolt, several articles by Nikolai Aristov on the revolt and general Kolpakovskii's activities in Kulja; nonetheless, all articles were intended for public circulation as well. I was able to access all these published materials online. The digitized editions of the *Turkestanskii sbornik* available via the Nazarbayev University library portal were particularly helpful.

Archival materials present another set of primary sources. Specifically I managed to access a limited number of materials at the Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan (TsGA RK) during my two short trips to Almaty. The TsGA RK collections possess a greater number of materials pertaining to the Muslim revolt than I managed to consult and subsequently apply in this thesis. Overall I consulted 3 documents from the *F-44 Semirecheenskoe oblastnoe pravlenie ministerstva vnutrennikh del* [Semirech'e Provincial

Governing Board of the Ministry of Internal Affairs]: *delo 38257 Zapiska Geinsa i Gutkovskogo o vosstanii dungan v Zapadnom Kitae* (34 folios), *delo 5637 O sobranii svedenii o kolichestve kitaiskikh emigrantov v Semirechenskoi oblasti* (46 folios), and *delo 5649 Zhurnaly o politicheskikh i voennykh sobytiakh po granitse Semirechenskoi oblasti za 1869-1870 gg.* (284 folios). The first *delo* is a complete report by Alexandr Geins on the emergence of the Muslim revolt and the situation on the Russo-Qing border as of 1866. The first “official” part of this report was subsequently published in numerous journals including *Voennyi sbornik* and *Turkestanskii sbornik*; however, the contents of the remaining 13 folios have not been publicly circulated to the best of my knowledge. Although a valuable source regarding the perspective Russian military officers had on the revolt, the factual information of the progression of the conflict is partially based on hearsay reports obtained by interviewing sultan Tezek, the chief of the Alban tribe, who were sympathetic to the rebel’s cause, and merchants returning to Vernyi from the Qing territory. *Dela 5637* and *5649* are consolidated files containing official correspondence of relevant officials and authorities on the respective topics of the *dela*.

The *delo 5736* contains materials regarding the situation with the Qing loyalist refugees fleeing from violence to the Russian Semirech’e region in the late 1860s with the final report providing the data for 1872. The principal officials involved in correspondence were general Gerasim Kolpakovskii, the Semirech’e military governor, military detachment chiefs along the border posts at Urdzhar, Borokhudzir, and South Tarbagatai, the special committee tasked with settling the ‘Chinese’ migrants in Vernyi and Konstantin von Kaufman, the governor-general of Turkestan. The correspondence consisted of requests for the statistical information on the number of refugees, while the reports included such information as the territories where the migrants arrived and settled, their numbers divided along socio-economic, ethnic and religious factors including intra-clan divisions. The official

reports also contained limited information regarding the migrants' subsequent intentions, specifically whether they would afterwards return to Xinjiang or become permanent Russian settlers and subjects. Most of the reports in the delo were concerned with a particular location where a certain number of refugees were settled and only the last report directly addressed to the governor-general of Turkestan presented the overall situation in the Semirech'e province.

The *delo 5649* is the largest source I was able to consult and is a journal of political and military events along the Russian border in Xinjiang. Such journals were routinely published and this particular one includes the event that happened in 1874-1875. The delo is a collection of military intelligence reports (*doneseniia, raporty*) on the movement of rebel and Qing troops, the arrival of refugees in Altishahri settlements, submission of verbal information obtained by interviewing Russian, Turkestani, and 'Chinese' merchants and orders or codes of conduct for military detachments on border policy and interactions with both the rebels and the Qing (*rasporiazheniia, instruktsiia*).

This research also contains certain weaknesses and limitations. For the most part the limitations concern the access to original sources and archival materials. Although I have managed to include certain relevant materials I was able to discover in the Central State Archive in Almaty during my two short trips there, the archive contains an order of magnitude the number of sources I used. Some of them were technically available but I could not order those *dela* due to the archive's short business hours and more crucially the pandemic disruptions. On a similar note, the Central Archive in Almaty is the storage place of the *Katseliariia po Kul'dzhinskim delam (F-21)* [Chancellery on the Kulja affairs] which was unfortunately unavailable to me during both of my trips as it was undergoing binding.

In addition to the problems with the access to archival materials I have described in the Introduction this thesis lacks certain details which could have been included or better discussed. In particular this is evident in only superficial discussion of Islam, actions and

motivations of certain groups such as Kazakh tribes taking active part in the revolt or the power struggle between the Taranchi and Dungan (Hui) communities. Such lacunae can be explained by the specific nature of the primary sources: reports, memoirs and historiographic publications by Russian officers who were not necessarily authoritative figures on the issues of Islam, or likely did not speak the language of the direct participants in the revolt. The primary sources are heavily skewed towards Russian-language sources thus presenting a biased account of the events occurring during the Muslim revolt.

On the other hand the use of such sources is productive in attempts to elucidate the Russian officers' views on the revolt as they were the very people responsible for taking certain decisions with regards the revolt and crucially were involved in shaping the views and perceptions of the frontier regions such as Turkestan or Xinjiang in the capital. This approach would also have benefitted from a greater emphasis on the production, application, and circulation of knowledge on Xinjiang and the revolt by Russian officials as well as the relation between the secret and public knowledge, academic knowledge production and intelligence.

This thesis uses qualitative research methods, specifically textual analysis and interpretation of archival materials, published primary sources, such as limited statistical information, travel accounts, memoirs, and intelligence reports, as well as relevant secondary literature.

This thesis uses the Library of Congress romanization system for Russian without diacritics. Throughout the text I refer to the parties of the Muslim revolt as Qing loyalists and rebels. The latter term is the result of my reliance on mainly Russian-language original sources. Although I acknowledge that this term may convey negative connotations and is subject to biases regarding the Taranchi and Dungan people expressed by Russian authors I have nonetheless retained this term for its sheer practicality.

This thesis contains three chapters. The first chapter discusses the historical background of the Muslim revolt such as Qing expansion westwards, military and political situation in Qing Xinjiang after its establishment and social and economic conditions which facilitated the uprising. Likewise this chapter aims to shed light on the factors which led to Russia's eventual involvement in the Muslim revolt such as Russian conquest of Central Asia, the creation of the Turkestan general-governorship and the views on Xinjiang among Russian intellectuals and military officers in the years preceding the 1864 revolt.

The second chapter introduces an immediate course of events once the revolt emerged by applying secondary literature and a range of primary sources. This chapter attempts to explore the political and social situation on the Russo-Qing border, especially the Ili region such as the influx of refugees in Semirech'e. It also discusses the actions of regional West Siberian and Turkestani authorities such as their efforts at securing the borders or settling the refugees. The chapter also elucidates the strategic perplexity the revolt presented to the Russian officials given Russia's relations with the Qing court and how the local authorities were forced to navigate between the opposing sides. The goal of the second chapter is to provide factual evidence of the complex nature of cross-border interactions on the Russo-Qing border during the revolt and to shed light on how Russian authorities viewed such interactions and what measures they employed in response to them.

The last chapter makes an attempt to place the Muslim revolt in the international context of the second half 19th century by primarily focusing on how this uprising affected the Russo-British relations in Central Asia and vice-versa how the Muslim polities established in the wake of the uprising (Yaquub Beg's state in particular) were manoeuvring the diplomatic landscape of the 'Great Game'. The chapter also provides an insight into the religious and ethnic policies that the Turkestan general-governorship and general Kolpakovskii, the military governor of Semirech'e practiced. This discussion is based on the

analysis and interpretation of two primary sources concerning Russian governance in the Ili *krai* once it had been occupied by Russian forces.

Chapter 1: Russian Central Asia and Xinjiang in the mid-19th century

This chapter aims to explore the historical background of the Muslim revolt and the evolution of Russian perceptions of Xinjiang and its people in the mid nineteenth century. In particular, the first section makes an attempt to sketch the Russian advance in Central Asia and the establishment of the Turkestan governor-generalship. The aim of this section is to explore the ways in which Russia would later find itself as a major participant in the Muslim revolt. The second section examines the structure of the Qing rule in Xinjiang, its main features and the political and economic environment of the Qing-era Xinjiang. The outline of such topics would allow us to understand the underlying social, economic, and political conditions which contributed to the 1864 revolt. The third section explores the Russian scholarship on Xinjiang before the Muslim revolt. The discussion of a number of primary sources helps examine how Russian intellectuals, military and intelligence officers viewed Xinjiang, its people and the Qing rule over the region. The discussion provides an insight into the political and economic interests these officials exhibited towards Xinjiang. In turn such an insight helps us answer the question of how Russian officers and administrators viewed the Xinjiang population, to what extent they were aware of the intricacies of the multitude of ethno-religious identities in the region, and how they approached navigating such differences. The examination of pre-revolt views is particularly important for comparing with the policies colonel Gerasim Kolpakovskii instituted later during Russia's brief rule over parts of Xinjiang.

1.1 The Russian Advance into Central Asia

The Central Asian region became Russian possessions in a quick succession of military encounters in the mid-to-late 1860s with the eventual incorporation of these territories into the Turkestan General-Governorship in 1867. The general process of Russian advance southwards was gradual and included initially the lengthy conquest and incorporation of the Kazakh Steppe. The operations against the Central Asian states - Khoqand, Khiva, and Bukhara - started in the 1850s with the annexation of Semirech'e in the east of the Kazakh Steppe and the reinforcing of the Syr-Darya line in the southern portions of the Steppe. The wars with Khoqand and Bukhara fought in the second half of the 1860s resulted in Russian acquisitions of Tashkent and Samarkand with the surrounding territories. The remaining parts of these states were made into protectorates (although Khoqand was fully annexed as the Fergana region in 1876). Khiva also became Russian protectorate in 1873. Further conquests were conducted against Turkmen tribes further south. Further operations were increasingly coupled with diplomatic contacts with the British and military posturing in the vicinity of the Afghan border. The pattern and the conduct of such military operations emphasize the expansionist policies pursued by Russian military in Central Asia. Such expansion provides a suitable comparative framework for the main argument this thesis lays forward. The argument the Russian officials pursued not necessarily expansionist goals in the Muslim Revolt, a political and ethnic conflict in the neighboring Xinjiang.

To understand the differences in the goals the Russian military officers might have pursued with regards to Khoqand, Bukhara, and Khiva on the one hand and Xinjiang on the other I deem it necessary to briefly mention what could have been the reasons for the Russian

conquest of Central Asia¹⁸. Scholars tend to explain the Russian conquests in one of the three major paradigms - 1) military and political competition with Great Britain in Inner Asia coupled with the ideas of imperial prestige, 2) the economic incentives, i.e. securing the raw materials and new markets for Russian industries, and 3) as a series of interconnected but ultimately separate events with disparaging objectives and interests at each stage¹⁹. A frequently cited immediate reason for the conquests of the 1860s was the necessity to join the two lines of fortifications along the Syr-Darya river which brought Russians into conflict with Khoqand and resulted in the Russians taking Ak-Masjid in 1853. Alexander Morrison posits the conquest of Central Asia might have been completed in the course of the 1850s if not for the outbreak of the Crimean War²⁰.

As the newly conquered territories required the introduction of a proper administration, the 1865 Steppe Commission came to a conclusion of the necessity to establish a separate general-governorship in Central Asia with the center in Tashkent and grant its governor-general sweeping powers. As a result, the 1867 Tsar's manifesto proclaimed the governor-general's authority in the areas of political, commercial, and border affairs; the governor-general also assumed control over diplomacy with the neighboring countries, with the ability to send envoys to and sign treaties with these countries. thereby instituting essentially a permanent military rule over Turkestan²¹. The establishment of the new province, its status in the empire, and its internal regulations were not without debates

¹⁸ The Soviet historiography prioritised economic justifications of the conquest; for further information see N.A. Khalfin *Prisoedinenie Srednei Azii k Rossii (60–90-e gody XIX v.)* (1965). For a more recent discussion of the motives and reasons for the Russian conquest of Central Asia see Alexander Morrison, introduction to *The Russian Conquest of Central Asia: A Study in Imperial Expansion (1814-1914)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 10-28.

¹⁹ Alexander Morrison, "Introduction: Killing the Cotton Canard and getting rid of the Great Game: rewriting the Russian conquest of Central Asia, 1814–1895," *Central Asian Survey* 33, no. 2 (2014): 135.

²⁰ Morrison, *Introduction: Killing the Cotton Canard and getting rid of the Great Game*, 135.

²¹ N.A. Khalfin, *Prisoedinenie Srednei Azii k Rossii (60–90-e gody XIX v.)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1965), 225; also Fëdor K. Girs, *Otchet Revizuiushchago, po Vysochaisheму poveleniiu, Turkestanskii krai, Tainago Sovetnika Girs* (St. Petersburg: 1884), 2-3.

amongst the representatives of the Russian military and political establishment²². The issues surrounding the final status of Turkestan for the most part stemmed from the region's sheer difference from the rest of the empire - a far-off territory separated from the Russian core by arid environments of the steppe and inhabited by large Muslim population. The question of how to approach Islam in this new possession would leave a lasting influence on the politics of Turkestan²³.

Turkestan was not an entirely unique region of the empire; in fact it shared some features with other governor-generalships. The principal distinction was whether the territory was an internal one or a frontier one - the frontier regions such as the two Siberian general-governorships (West Siberian and East Siberian) or the Turkestan general-governorship were primarily under military administration and thus were subject to the War Ministry and the emperor directly²⁴. Therefore it might be beneficial for the study of the Turkestan general-governorship to draw comparisons with the general-governorships in Siberia. East Siberian governor-general Murav'ev was able to outmaneuver foreign affairs minister Karl Nessel'rode and annex territories in the Amur in the early 1850s because of his wide-reaching powers as a governor-general, support of the War Ministry, and remoteness of the region which slowed the flow of information and left the possibility to present the annexations as *fait accompli*. Alexander II's personal support of formal acquisition of the Amur territories was also instrumental in securing the new territory²⁵. This example demonstrates that general-governors in frontier regions such as the East Siberian general-governorship were

²² Bakhtier Alimdzhanov, *Ekonomicheskaiia politika Rossiiskoi Imperii v Turkestanskom general-gubernatorstve (Vtoraia polovina XIX-nachalo XX vv.)* (St. Petersburg: St. Petersburg State University, 2016), 35.

²³ Daniel R. Brower, *Turkestan and the Fate of the Russian Empire* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 29.

²⁴ E.N. Krupenkin, "Opyt upravleniia Sibir'iu v Turkestanskom general-gubernatorstve," *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarsvennogo universiteta* 407 (2016): 94.

²⁵ Gregory Afinogenov, *Spies and Scholars: Chinese Secrets and Imperial Russia's Quest for World Power* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020), 245, 249.

granted certain extraordinary powers²⁶. This fact could have led to differences with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Remnëv further discusses how East Siberian governor-general Murav'ev's policies towards the Qing differed substantially from the Ministry's approach; however, apparently the Ministry's grievances could not affect the governor-general's jurisdiction over the diplomacy with the neighboring states, as long as the emperor supported the existing state of affairs²⁷. As the Turkestan general-governorship shares some of these characteristics such as remote location and poor communications with the central government as well as extensive powers granted to the governor-general we could posit that certain friction existed between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the governor-general's office. Administrative reforms of frontier general-governorships in the second half of the 19th century arrive at two outcomes - on the one hand there is a gradual concentration of personal power and greater control over security and internal administration coupled with existing military responsibilities of the governor-generals. On the other hand, they imply the issues of competing and vaguely defined responsibilities with various ministries, especially the Ministry of Finance, and consequently limited control over finances²⁸. Certainly, the vague distribution of powers and the resulting contradictions between the various ministries in St. Petersburg and the governor-generals in the remote areas of the empire were present in the case of Turkestan as well. David MacKenzie also discusses the apparent rivalry between the first Turkestan governor-general and the Ministry of Finance; though, MacKenzie sees such a rivalry as primarily the one between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of War

²⁶ A.V. Remnëv, *Rossiiia dal'nego vostoka. Imperskaia geografiia vlasti XIX - nachala XX vekov* (Omsk: Omskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet, 2004), 135.

²⁷ Ibid. 126.

²⁸ L. M. Dameshek, A.V. Remnëv, *Sibir' v sostave Rossiiskoi Imperii* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2007), 123.

with the Turkestan governor-generalship being a subordinate institution of the Ministry of War. Some of this criticism of von Kaufman was at least partially personal in nature²⁹.

The conquest of Central Asia also had strategic and foreign policy implications. The creation of the Turkestan governor-generalship and Konstantin von Kaufman's³⁰ policies were more concerned with reinforcing the internal stability of the newly acquired territory and further consolidation of the Russian rule in the region. Turkestan governor-generalship's status as a region bordering both Xinjiang and states in Central Asia, including Russian protectorates, coupled with poor and slow communications between Turkestan and the central government have also necessitated the provision of diplomatic power to the Turkestan General-Governorship. The strategic reasons for the conquest of Central Asia and the creation of a new military administration there were to threaten British interests in India - perhaps the only region where Russian policies in that regard could have been successful³¹.

In more practical terms the new administration was based on a number of specific principles such as those we find in the 1884 report by Fedor. K. Girs: the central administration would be responsible for both military and civilian policies while the native population would be granted local rule in certain non-political domains. However, Russian officials could restrict the principle by which local population elected such officials as judges and volost' elders³². Thus, although the War Ministry retained its jurisdiction over the governor-generalship, the 1867 statute at least in principle still intended for gradual alignment of Turkestan's status and legislation with the Empire-wide legislative norms³³.

²⁹ David MacKenzie, "Kaufman of Turkestan: An Assessment of His Administration 1867-1881," *Slavic Review* 26, no. 2 (Jun., 1967): 284.

³⁰ Konstantin von Kaufman (1818-1882) was the first governor-general of Turkestan and was responsible for both further conquests in Central Asia and shaping the colony's many features including the administration's relationship with Islam and local population.

³¹ Alexander Morrison, *Russian Rule in Samarkand 1868-1910: A Comparison with British India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 33-34.

³² Daniel R. Brower, *Turkestan and the Fate of the Russian Empire* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 36.

³³ Girs, *Otchet Revizuiushchago*, 3.

Administratively the new *krai* was divided into several *oblasts*³⁴ - initially Semirech'e and Syr-Darya, with later incorporations of Ferghana, Samarkand, and Transcaspian oblasts; each oblast was headed by a military governor; the governors were also responsible for police functions, judiciary, and civilian administration³⁵. Semirech'e and later Ferghana oblasts were the only regions of the general-governorship that were adjacent to Xinjiang.

One of the crucial aspects of understanding the role and position of the Turkestan general-governorship in the Muslim revolt lies in the general-governorship's relationship with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic activity of the general-governorship in general. In this respect, however, the existing literature is rather scanty and as was noted above, most of the scholarship on the Russian general-governorships focuses on the distinctions between the administrative approaches between internal *guberniias*, western general-governorships, and eastern general-governorships (including the Turkestan general-governorship) or the historiography of administrative reforms, particularly in Siberia³⁶, rather than the discussion of specific powers, responsibilities and their interactions with various ministries in St. Petersburg³⁷. One notable exception is Vladimir Moiseev's work on the Russo-Qing border interaction. Moiseev's work is valuable in illustrating the patterns of decision-making with regards to the occupation of Kulja in the summer of 1871. Drawing upon extensive archival sources he is able to gain an insight into the communication between the Turkestan authorities and the Foreign Ministry in this specific case. The main outcome is that the occupation of Kulja was continuously advanced by the Turkestan administration,

³⁴ A *krai* was one of the administrative units in the Russian Empire similar to a governor-generalship but usually referring to borderland and/or frontier areas. *Oblast'* also predominantly designated borderland regions but smaller in size than a *krai* or general-governorship and in some cases as a subdivision of the latter unit.

³⁵ Alimdzhanov, *Ekonomicheskaia politika Rossiiskoi Imperii v Turkestanskom general-gubernatorstve*, 38.

³⁶ See A. Remnëv's publications on the institutions of governor-generals in Siberia and Russian Far East.

³⁷ For details on the differences between internal *guberniias*, western frontier, and eastern frontier general-governorships refer to Kimitaka Matsuzato's "General-gubernatorstva v Rossiiskoi Imperii: ot etnicheskogo k prostranstvennomu podkhodu" in *Novaia imperskaia istoriia postsovetskogo prostranstva* (eds. I. Gerasimov et al.) (Kazan: Center of Nationalism and Empire Studies, 2004), 427-458 and "Intra-bureaucratic Debate on the Institution of Russian Governors-general in the Mid-nineteenth Century" in *Asiatic Russia: Imperial Power in Regional and International Contexts* (ed. Uyama Tomohiko) (Milton, UK: Routledge, 2012), 83-101.

especially by Gerasim Kolpakovskii, the military governor of Semirech'e and von Kaufman personally³⁸. The initial position of the authorities in St. Petersburg was the one of caution and non-involvement; what is, perhaps, even more striking is the fact that the occupation of Kulja had been initiated (and completed) before the government either gave its approval or received response on the matter from the Qing authorities in Beijing³⁹. This episode illustrates that the administration of the Turkestan general-governorship was both capable and willing to make certain decisions of military and diplomatic character even before the central government in St. Petersburg would step in.

Internally the Russian officials were equally concerned with the loyalties of Turkestan population and the existence of extra-regional religious links, especially with the Ottoman Empire⁴⁰. Nevertheless, as for the actual strategies of how to rule the culturally alien and potentially disloyal territory, the debate ran along the lines of either enforcing a direct military control and gradual assimilation embraced by N.A. Kryzhanovsky, the governor-general of Orenburg or a more lenient approach with what von Kaufman would later term as '*ignorirovanie*' or disregard of Islam and the focus on reforms supported by the highest echelons in St. Petersburg⁴¹. Von Kaufman's *ignorirovanie* would become the central point of Russian religious policy in Central Asia. His own report stresses the continued applicability of both Sharia law and customary law in the areas of Turkestan not subject to Russian legislation⁴². This aspect of the Russian religious policy would later allow the Turkestan administration to present itself as a neutral, religiously tolerant and mediating power during its occupation of Kulja.

³⁸ Vladimir Moiseev, *Rossiiia i Kitai v Tsentral'noi Azii (vtoraia polovina XIX v. - 1917 gg.)* (Barnaul: AzBuka, 2003), 105-106.

³⁹ Ibid. 124-127.

⁴⁰ Daniel R. Brower, "Islam and Ethnicity: Russian Colonial Policy in Turkestan," in *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917*, eds. Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 115.

⁴¹ Brower, *Turkestan and the Fate of the Russian Empire*, 28-29.

⁴² Konstantin von Kaufman, *Proekt Vsepoddanneishego otcheta general-ad'iutanta K.P. von Kaufmana* (St. Petersburg: Voennaia Tipografiia, 1885), 43.

The differing views towards the native population and the Islam do not seem to have been irreconcilable; after all the remote nature of Turkestan and security considerations taking priority over the introduction of reforms and ‘*grazhdanstvennost*’ relegated the new governor-generalship to the status of a distinct colony. Though the special status granted to Turkestan cannot be explained by such immediate reasons alone. The imperial officials, especially in Turkestan itself, framed the conquest of Turkestan as the creation of an “overseas” colony thus applying similar categories to their relationship with the natives as those employed by other imperial powers of the time⁴³.

1.2. Xinjiang under the Qing Administration

The Muslim Revolt in the 1860s was the final in a series of uprisings against Qing rule in Xinjiang. In this section I am trying to explain the reasons for such outbreaks of hostilities throughout the late 18th and 19th centuries. For that we need to examine the Qing policies in Xinjiang and their impact on the local population. The territory of Xinjiang prior to its conquest by the Qing dynasty consisted of a number of polities, namely the Zunghar Khanate in the north and the oasis cities of the Tarim Basin in the south, which by the time of their conquest by the Qing had been subjugated by the Zunghars. The post-conquest the Qing retained this basic north-south division as well, in the form of the Northern March (*Tianshan beilu*) and the Southern March (*Tianshan nanlu*) with the easternmost section of Xinjiang being respectively called Eastern March (*Donglu*)⁴⁴. However, unlike the former two the civilian affairs in the Eastern March were managed by officials from the Gansu province⁴⁵. The territory roughly corresponding to the Qing-era Northern March in the 17th and the first

⁴³ Ibid. 37.

⁴⁴ Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, 21, 23.

⁴⁵ Hodong Kim, *Holy War in China: The Muslim Rebellion and State in Chinese Central Asia, 1864-1877* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 15.

half of the 18th century was the heartland of the Zunghar Khanate, a political entity struggling for the control of Inner Asian expanse with its neighbors, particularly with the rapidly expanding Manchu state; this competition led to several large-scale Qing-Zunghar conflicts starting in the late 17th century and culminating in the total conquest of the Zunghar Khanate during Qing emperor Qianlong's reign in the mid-1750s. Not only did Qianlong's campaigns led to the destruction of the Zunghar state but also to the almost complete extermination of the Zunghars themselves both by the invading Qing forces and the ensuing deterioration of socio-economic conditions and epidemics⁴⁶. Almost simultaneously with their operations against the Zunghars, the Qing forces managed to bring under Qing control the oasis cities of the Tarim Basin which had been under Zunghar rule since 1680⁴⁷.

The Qing established a single military administration for the entirety of Xinjiang with the center in Ili where a military governor resided. On a regional level officials known as *dachen* or *amban* attended to military affairs such as control over garrison forces, troop provisioning, and other defence matters; these officials were predominantly Manchus or Mongols⁴⁸. Special officials were also responsible for the Han Green Standard troops posted to areas in Xinjiang as well as any civilian population from the interior Han-majority regions⁴⁹. Troops stationed in the Northern March were settled there permanently unlike the troops deployed in the Southern March, where they were on a rotation basis; overall the allocation of troops between the two districts was disproportionate with the Southern March, mostly corresponding to the cities of the Tarim Basin received only a fraction of the troops present in the northern Xinjiang⁵⁰.

Another distinction of the Qing rule in the Southern March was the appointment of *begs* - the representatives of the local land aristocracy - who ruled over the native Muslim

⁴⁶ Ibid. 8.

⁴⁷ Perdue, *China Marches West*, 140.

⁴⁸ Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, 33.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 33.

⁵⁰ Kim, *Holy War in China*, 16.

population in the oasis cities and were thus responsible for civilian affairs and taxation; *hakim begs*, the most senior begs, were equal to high-ranking Qing officials and were thus entitled to receive regular enumeration from the imperial treasury⁵¹. This system of indirect rule was meant to legitimize the Qing rule and also to curtail the influence of *khwajas*⁵² who by the time of the Qing conquest had been enjoying extensive influence over a range of matters in Altishahr - not only religious but also secular affairs⁵³. The administration of Altishahr by begs who were supported by the Qing resulted in corruption and the loss of the begs' legitimacy in the eyes of the local Muslim population as the begs were seen as 'prostrating to the infidels'⁵⁴. In some cases the local population had to deal with double taxation in form of illegal taxes imposed by begs⁵⁵. Consequently, as the Qing court established its patronage over the Altishahri begs, the latter were unlikely to address any grievances local inhabitants had towards the Qing. This, as Kim notes, left only the exiled khwaja clans as the opposition to the Qing rule; this opposition thus was increasingly rendered in religious terms⁵⁶. Such a state of affairs would prove to be of trouble for the Qing court in the coming decades as will be illustrated below. From the late 17th century Afaqiyya khwajas were in power in the cities of the Tarim Basin and paid annual tribute to the Zunghars⁵⁷. After the Qing defeated the Zunghars, Afaqiyya khwajas refused to recognize Qing rule and attempted to restore their power in Altishahr. Afterwards he Afaqiyya lived in Khoqand and had a base of influence there⁵⁸. The khwajas, in particular from the Afaqiyya lineage, would engage in several anti-Qing rebellions with the most notable being the 1826 Janghir khwaja rebellion and the 1857

⁵¹ Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, 32-33.

⁵² *Khwajas* were the descendants of a 15th century Central Asian Naqshbandi Sufi, Makhdum-i A'zam, who later divided into two separate and mutually hostile lineages - Ishaqiyya and Afaqiyya.

⁵³ Kim, *Holy War in China*, 12.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁵ Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, 54.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁷ James A. Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang* (Columbia University Press, 2007), 88.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.

Wali Khan incursion⁵⁹. Unlike khwajas the begs were not religious figures as they were usually

Qing policies in the region were defined by the necessity to attain fiscal sustainability and thus reduce the burden of financing Xinjiang for the core provinces. This led to certain novelty in policies and attempts at administrative experimentation. Nevertheless, the core policies throughout the existence of the military administration in Xinjiang included measures inherited from earlier dynasties such as *weisuo* - a network of military settlements where soldiers would also bring their families and *tuntian*, an even older system of agricultural communities also aimed at provisioning garrisons stationed in frontier regions⁶⁰. Such systems as well as troop deployments generally stimulated limited migration from the interior, in particular, the arrival of the Sibe people⁶¹ the Manchus and other associated tribes; however, such migration was mostly confined to northern areas of Xinjiang - the territory of the former Zunghar Khanate whose annexation by the Qing resulted in a significant depopulation of the area. Moreover, as the Qing garrisons in Xinjiang were supposed to be self-sufficient in food these tribes were settled in northern Xinjiang where fertile soils were relatively abundant⁶². Migration to the cities of *Altishahr*⁶³ in the south was negligible during the first decades of the Qing rule.

The policies of military administration and limited civilian migration nevertheless failed to secure the stability of the Qing rule in the region, nor did they bring about the highly sought by the court fiscal self-sufficiency of the new dominion. The revolts and intervention from Khoqand in the 1830s forced the Qing to shift their approach to administering Xinjiang.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 115.

⁶⁰ Joanna Waley-Cohen, "Expansion and Colonization in Early Modern Chinese History," *History Compass* 2, no. 1 (2004): 2.

⁶¹ Sibe (Xibo) were an ethnic group from northeastern parts of the Qing empire, particularly Manchuria, who were resettled to Xinjiang and lived in military colonies after the region was conquered by the Qing.

⁶² Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, 77.

⁶³ The oasis cities of the Tarim Basin were collectively known as *Altishahr* (six cities), or (especially during Ya'qub Beg's rule) as *Yettishahr* (seven cities).

Instead of retreating to the interior the major aspect of the new Qing policy was further opening of the territory for colonization⁶⁴. Besides that the Qing authorities sought other sources of revenue and made attempts at stimulating mercantile activity such as by engaging into regular trade with the neighboring Kazakhs.

The postconquest policies designed to make Xinjiang ultimately fiscally less dependent on the interior included facilitating agricultural development and migration to the northern Xinjiang first of the military personnel and later of Han migrants - both peasants and merchants - and finally the Turkic speaking peasants from the oases in the south who possessed expert knowledge of irrigated agriculture in arid environments⁶⁵. These Muslim migrants came to be known as *taranchi* and were allowed to retain their social structure and religion to the likes of the cities in the southern Xinjiang⁶⁶.

The basis of the Qing rule in Xinjiang was the regular deployment of large forces in the region, particularly in Ili in the west and Urumqi in the east. As the troop provisioning was an expensive endeavor, Qing officials sought to reduce this burden on the imperial treasury urging Xinjiang officials to find ways to make the region self-sufficient. However, at no point from the annexation of Xinjiang to the very collapse of the Qing authority in the 1860s was the Qing government able to eliminate fiscal deficits incurred by the military administration. These deficits were offset by regular shipments of silver from the interior and the overall expenses borne by the treasury steadily increased throughout the 19th century even despite attempts to promote agricultural colonization of the region, trade and commercial activity. Nonetheless, the Qing court managed to sustain the ever-increasing subsidies destined to Xinjiang during the period of relative stability in the late 18th and the

⁶⁴ Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, 35.

⁶⁵ Perdue, *China Marches West*, 345.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 351.

first half of 19th centuries⁶⁷. However, by the late 1830s changes in the international environment started to negatively affect the internal stability of the Qing dynasty. Although such stability was far from certain in Xinjiang itself given the rebellions in the 1820s and subsequent interventions by Khoqand already fracturing the Qing control over Altishahr, it was the events in the east that shook the dynasty. The Qing defeat in the First Opium War (1839-1842) violently brought the dynasty into contact with the West and signified the strategic shift from the Inner Asian frontier in Xinjiang to the events on the eastern coast as the defeats there threatened the heartland and the richest provinces of the empire. Foreign incursions, internal issues such as draughts, famines, corruption tipped the internal stability and damaged the prestige of the dynasty. Eventually this led to the outbreak of the Taiping Revolt (1850-1864) - a massive uprising in the eastern provinces of the Qing empire and the court was forced to divert all available resources to suppress the revolt⁶⁸. This development had drastic consequences for the Qing control of Xinjiang. As the fiscal transfers from the interior dwindled, local military officials had to seek other ways to support the troops in Xinjiang which were mostly realized in the form of increased tax burdens and corvée obligations on the local population. Such a policy had a dual effect - while it failed to cover the deficits incurred by the military administration, it exacerbated the already considerable public discontent among the Muslim population⁶⁹.

A sketch of ethnic and religious environment in Xinjiang is also helpful in understanding the conditions in Qing Xinjiang preceding the Muslim revolt and what impact had Qing governance had on the ethnic and religious makeup of the region. As was already noted the primary population of the Southern March, the oasis cities in Altishahr was a culturally and linguistically distinct Turki-speaking Muslim population. Even though Islam

⁶⁷ Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, 58.

⁶⁸ Kim, *Holy War in China*, 30.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 34.

seems to have been a unifying factor for the local population in the face of the Qing rule, the oasis populations apparently lacked common ethnic identity and were usually referred to as inhabitants of one's respective city or area. Some of this Muslim population, known as *Taranchis* moved or was transferred to the northern reaches of Xinjiang primarily for work in agricultural colonies (*huitun*)⁷⁰. Besides the relatively small number of rotation troops and Manchu officials the Altishahr was rather homogenous in cultural and religious terms.

The Northern March, besides the Taranchis who resettled there, was also home for the Oirats, the Olots, and other Mongol tribes who survived the dismemberment of the Zunghar Khanate as well as the Torghuts, another Mongol tribe who chose to migrate back to Xinjiang in the 1770s from Russia⁷¹. By the time of the Qing conquest these tribes, much like the Khalkha Mongols to their east, had been adhering to Tibetan Buddhism and thus had spiritual and political relations with Tibet and Mongolia. In this respect the Oirats were close to the bulk of the banner forces composed of the Manchus as well as other smaller communities such as the Sibe who were permanently resettled to Xinjiang in the second half of the 18th century mostly from the areas of the Manchu ancestral homeland in present-day north-east China⁷². Han Chinese also began to settle in Xinjiang, especially in its northern part both as part of the agricultural colonization promoted by the Qing authorities in the first half of the 19th century and in search of commercial prospects; some of them were also exiled or were enlisted in the Green Standard Army and thus tilled land in agricultural colonies as well. The appearance of the Han settlers in Xinjiang had two consequences. First the agricultural settlements led to the emergence of a patchwork of Han communities in the Ili region and brought Han peasants in closer contact with Muslims such as the Taranchi and the Dungans. Second and perhaps of greater significance was the Han mercantile activities throughout

⁷⁰ Ibid., 17.

⁷¹ Perdue, *China Marches West*, 295, 297.

⁷² Marc C. Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 408.

Xinjiang. Apparently Han merchants widely engaged in extortive money-lending and usury which contributed to the impoverishment and growing unrest of the local population, especially in the cities of Altishahr⁷³.

The last major ethno-religious group that inhabited Xinjiang were the Hui people - a Muslim community who predominantly spoke a variety of Chinese language unlike the Taranchi or the Altishahr residents. The Hui are also known as Dungans, especially in Russian sources⁷⁴. The emergence of Hui communities in China traces a long history. However, the perceptions of these communities by the Han people shifted throughout history. During the Tang and Song dynasties Muslim communities were perceived as being temporary visitors; The Han people regarded them as foreigners whose activities were restricted to trade⁷⁵. Later in the Yuan and Ming periods sinicization of Chinese Muslims ensued; while the Dungans grew accustomed to the land and gradually switched to varieties of Chinese as their native languages they nonetheless retained their otherness stemming from earlier periods⁷⁶.

Jonathan Lipman cites the centuries-long distrust towards the Hui people, their cultural alienation from the Han, and their perception as being irredeemably barbaric both in the eyes of the Qing government officials and their non-Muslim neighbors as an underlying reason for the Muslim rebellions in the latter half of the 19th century. Such a negative view of Muslims by Qing officials resulted in systemic legal discriminatory practices employed by various levels of the Qing bureaucracy⁷⁷. Such attitudes towards Muslims, poverty and corrupt bureaucracy in Gansu and Shaanxi provinces seem to have tipped the precarious regional balance of power. From this perspective the events of 1862-1873 were not a single large-scale anti-Qing rebellion but rather a series of localized conflicts or “multifocal rebellions”.

They were exacerbated by the Qing intervention and the sectarian nature of various schools

⁷³ Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, 210.

⁷⁴ Dungans are also known as the Hui people (回族), especially in modern-day PRC.

⁷⁵ Lipman, *Familiar Strangers*, 25-28.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 37, 39.

⁷⁷ Lipman, *Familiar Strangers*, 100.

(*tariqa*⁷⁸) struggling for power⁷⁹. Furthermore, the appearance of the Taiping forces in 1862 in southeastern Shaanxi hastened the collapse of regional Qing authorities and transformed communal violence in Shaanxi and Gansu into an open anti-Qing conflict⁸⁰.

By the mid 19th century Qing Xinjiang was a vast, culturally, religiously, and economically diverse region. The Qing administration faced a number of issues, with the primary one being the ever increasing financial burden of adequately supplying the garrisons stationed throughout Xinjiang. In attempts to find an effective solution to this predicament the Qing authorities were more inclined to experiment with administrative structures and economic policies in the region. As part of this solution and in response to khwaja rebellions of the early 19th century by the mid-century the Qing authorities encouraged migration from the interior to further develop the region agriculturally and facilitated mercantile activity. At the same time it is possible that these policies contributed to the growing dissatisfaction with the Qing rule in the region. Other powers such as Russia were not necessarily aware of the state of Xinjiang economy and administration. Despite arguably some proactive policies implemented by the Qing, the representation of the Qing rule in Xinjiang in outside sources often fails to discuss those.

1.3. Xinjiang in Russian Intellectual Discourse of 1850s - 1870s

The discussion of the Russian perspective on the Muslim revolt involves examining the place of Xinjiang in Russian discourse in this period. Although I use the term ‘intellectual’ referring to the nineteenth-century Russian discourse on Xinjiang it was not simply academic in nature. Quite contrary, as the main producers and recipients of materials and knowledge on Xinjiang was concentrated in the hands of the Russian military and

⁷⁸ Tariqa is a Sufi school or order also known as a ‘Path’.

⁷⁹ Lipman, *Familiar Strangers*, 133.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 122.

government administrators the discourse was political in nature; these officials were concerned with practical aspects of their knowledge of the Qing. Only a small part of the knowledge generated on the Qing in this period was purely academic in the spreading Orientalist tradition⁸¹. I deem such a discussion important for it not only gives us a glimpse into how the Russian military and intelligence viewed Xinjiang in the mid nineteenth century but also it provides us with an insight into how Russian officials might react to potential instability in Xinjiang, and what strategies were at their disposal. Therefore examining the pre-1864 Muslim revolt views of Xinjiang could help us understand whether such strategies and approaches were attempted or not and how successful they were. The discussion of the Xinjiang discourse is also important for understanding the Russo-Qing relationship both before and during the Muslim revolt.

Although the scholarly literature on Russian perception of Xinjiang is scarce there are some original sources that allow us to obtain a glimpse of such views, undoubtedly, more are still awaiting in archives. The ambiguous position and relative lack of sources on Xinjiang itself is the result of geopolitical goals and realities - Russian officials and scholars alike did not regard the region's significance on the level similar to the interest they showed to the Qing northern and northeastern frontiers, nor was Xinjiang more interesting than the territories in Central Asia. The knowledge on Xinjiang, often called Western China in Russian publications, was derived from Qing publications and maps translated by the Russian Mission in Beijing. Therefore the information which was in possession of the Russian military and policy-makers for the most part involved the early history of the region and its conquest by the Qing. However, as the translated publications did not reflect the latest developments in Xinjiang by the mid-19th century, at the time, when the as a result of the

⁸¹ Afinogenov, *Spies and Scholars*, 210.

Russian expansion in the region, both states shared common borders in Xinjiang, the strategic value of credible reports on the state of Xinjiang increased.

Thanks to the translations of Qing manuscripts and other sources of information, presumably from the Kazakhs and merchants trading with the cities in Xinjiang, the Russian military was aware of recurring anti-Qing revolts; however, the details of which remained insufficient. Information gathering required posting of Russian agents with the knowledge of geography and ethnography to assess the territory from the point of conducting potential military operations and obtaining information on major population centers and their composition. Such endeavors required European-trained personnel and yet unlike eastern territories of the Qing where European presence was long established, in Xinjiang European travelers often faced dangers. For the Russian military such a state of affairs became no longer bearable when they received reports on the 1857 anti-Qing report in Kashgar.⁸²

West Siberian governor-general Gustav Hasford in his appeal to send an agent to Kashgar to assess the aftermath of the recent 1857 revolt illustrates the significance of Xinjiang for Russia. Already in 1857 Hasford raises the question which would be emblematic of the Russian response to the subsequent Muslim revolt in the 1860s: “Should we remain neutral spectators to the events in Kashgar?”⁸³ Such a line of thinking illustrates the anxieties the frontier governor-general had regarding the role of Xinjiang in Russia’s advance into Central Asia. However, an even more crucial detail of his appeal is the connection he makes between Xinjiang and Russia’s recent acquisitions in the Amur basin. Clearly, for Hasford both Amur territories and Xinjiang are a part of the single strategic expanse and that events in one such area impact the other. Essentially Hasford’s argument presents Xinjiang as a viable military theater for Russia - it would be easier to supply than the remote Amur region and

⁸² Chokan Valikhanov, “O Sostoianii Altysbara, ili Shesti Vostochnykh Gorodov Kitaiskoi Provintsii Nan-Lu (Maloi Bukharii) v 1858-1859 Godakh”, ed. Nikolay Veselovky, *Sochineniia Chokana Chingisovicha Valikhanova, special issue of Zapiski Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo Obshchestva po Otdeleniiu Etnografii*, vol. 29, 1904, 333.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 330.

thus in an event of war with the Qing Xinjiang should be the primary entry point for Russia. In that respect, foreshadowing the later Russian course of action, Hasford advocates for occupying the Ili region and subsequently installing a local pro-Russian Muslim dynasty which in his view would become a Russian foothold for any further expansion⁸⁴. Hasford's views are thus those of further military expansion, hence the importance of Xinjiang lies first and foremost in the region's central location, presumably giving Russia access both to Central Asia and northern India, likewise allowing Russia to strike the Qing where it has greatest concentration of forces and more developed infrastructure than further to the east. The war minister's response to Hasford's note concedes to Hasford's geopolitical arguments further claiming that the most urgent task is to gather as much credible and recent information on the events in Kashgar as possible, including the strength of the uprising, the possibility of Kashgar to exist as an independent state and the inhabitants' sentiments towards the khwajas (*prezhnei magometanskoi dinastii*)⁸⁵. In the same document the war minister recommends Hasford to accept Altishahri envoys in case they would ask for the Russian support and as the result of the collapse of the Qing authority the region becomes independent⁸⁶. Further correspondence between the war minister and one of Siberian corps posits the eventual independence of Altishahr, yet it also claims the necessity of external support in a timely manner to Altishahr by one the powers - one can be rather confident this power is implied to be Russia and certainly not any of the Central Asian states.

Hasford's note is crucial in shedding light on Russian views on Xinjiang, with the especially remarkable connection between Amur and Xinjiang, but also because it can serve as a starting point in examining the evolving views on Altishahr among the highest Russian military officials - notably the officials in the late 1850s exhibited greater readiness to

⁸⁴ Ibid., 331.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 332.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 333.

interfere into the affairs of Altishahr, this readiness would subside in the mid-to-late 1860s giving way to a more cautious approach. The reasons for such a shift might be complex but the most important would be greater commercial relations with the Qing thanks to the concluded treaties between the two empires - the treaties, which the rebels would not necessarily be willing to observe⁸⁷. Another significant reason lay in the shift among Russian officials towards Islam and the Central Asian Muslim-ruled states, thus raising concerns over the potential Russian involvement into Xinjiang.

Later, in the early 1870s Veniukov in his review of Russian borders in Asia highlights several important geographical features of the Russo-Qing border and the population of the frontier region. He characterizes both the territories of the Tarim basin and the northern Xinjiang (former Zungharia) as unsuitable for extensive campaigns with large forces⁸⁸. Nonetheless, he also maintains the necessity of a single command structure on the entire border with the Qing because Russian supplies are limited in Asia and the native population neither can be fully trusted nor would their produce be sufficient to adequately supply any Russian forces along the border⁸⁹. Veniukov's distrust of the native Central Asian population goes as far as to claim that in the event of war or some other regional tension the local population would turn hostile to Russian forces. This view, a little more than 10 years after Hasford's letters to the war minister, underscores the overall tone of distrust towards the native population in Central Asia and awareness of the Russian precarious position in the region in case of a conflict with other major power - something in what people like Hasford were more confident. In general Veniukov favors the natural features for defensive purposes, especially the mountain ranges dividing Russia from both the Qing and from India rather than

⁸⁷ Di Wang, *The Unofficial Russo-Qing Trade on the Eastern Kazakh Steppe and in Northern Xinjiang in the First Half of the 19th Century*, (Nur-Sultan: Nazarbayev University, 2018), 74.

⁸⁸ Mikhail I. Veniukov, *Opyt Voennogo Obozreniia Russkikh Granits v Azii*, (Saint-Petersburg: Bezobrazov i Komp, 1873), 266.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 267.

expecting cooperation from the local inhabitants such as the Kyrghyz⁹⁰. As Veniukov's report was published in the early 1870s, when the Muslim revolt in Xinjiang was already several years in action, some of his considerations revolve around the possibility of military operation against Yaquub Beg's forces. For Veniukov if that would be the case the best course of actions would be for the Qing forces to engage with Yaquub Beg and thus "save us from the necessity to spread further". The explanation Veniukov provides involves the idea that Russia cannot return any territory for the sake of its prestige, especially among its own Central Asian population⁹¹.

Another Russian officer, Alexei Kuropatkin, noted that Russian officials had a keen interest in Xinjiang and especially how the Qing approached the administration of the domain for the Russian officials themselves sought for suitable schemes to administer their own Asian territories⁹². He also sees the importance of Xinjiang for the Qing in providing a defensive frontier to the Qing's western provinces and at the same time providing it with a market for the produce of the Qing interior⁹³. More than anything about the Qing themselves or the value of Xinjiang for the Qing, such reports provide more on what Russian officers thought about the value of Xinjiang for the Qing and for Russia. Even though all three authors are representatives of Russia's military-bureaucratic elite and thus share such commonalities as education, experience of military service, their respective positions allow us to see different themes of what Xinjiang was to emerge. In sum for Hasford Xinjiang and the turmoil in it is the chance for Russia to establish a firm foothold in the Inner Asia, possibly for even further advance, by patronizing a weak Muslim state. For Veniukov the two respective parts of Xinjiang - the former Zungharia and Altishahr - are difficult to defend

⁹⁰ Ibid., 318.

⁹¹ Ibid., 319.

⁹² Kuropatkin, Alexei N. *Kashgariia. Istoriko-Geograficheskii Ocherk Strany, Eë Voennyie Sily, Promyshlennost' i Torgovlia*, (Saint-Petersburg: Imperatorskoie Russkoie Geograficheskoe Obshchestvo, 1879), 100.

⁹³ Ibid., 109.

and costly to conquer, yet potentially hostile territories, conflict with which could destabilize Russian rule in the already conquered territories of Asia. Unlike the militant Hasford or alarmist Veniukov, Kuropatkin also tries to introduce other aspects of the region such as the place for bureaucratic innovations and the region's supposed value as a market for products from China. Yet he is not oblivious either to the geostrategic ideas of Altishahr as a buffer state or the center of a powerful Muslim state inciting instability in the neighboring states.

Another Russian officer, Lev Kostenko, in his history of Russian conquest of Central Asia notes that the Qing Ili province could not serve as an important market for Russia due to its poor economy but rather allowed for vital transit links to and from China's western provinces⁹⁴. The reasoning for Altishahr is similar in a sense that the region's transit potential far exceeds its own economic significance. In case of the Ili region in particular Kostenko posits that the territory is economically economically and thus is either destined to be reconquered by the Qing or to submit to Yaqub Beg's rule - a development hurting Russian trade prospects in the interior of the Qing empire⁹⁵.

Nonetheless, other authors present Xinjiang in a variety of ways, not necessarily commenting on the region's role as a potential military theater. The notes on local culture, people and economy are also significant in informing us on the Russian perceptions of Xinjiang. Yet, such perceptions might be inevitably skewed as all of the authors on Xinjiang still come from a military background. Hasford in his note recommended a young lieutenant Chokan Valikhanov to be sent to Kashgar as a Russian agent. Valikhanov managed to travel in Altishahr for several months and later presented a report on his travels. Yet his personal diary from an earlier trip to Kulja in 1856 is also interesting in uncovering stereotypical representations of the region based only on superficial knowledge of local conditions. For

⁹⁴ Lev F. Kostenko, *Sredniaia Aziia i Vodvorenii v Nei Russkoi Grazhdanstvennosti*, (Saint-Petersburg: Bezobrazov i Komp., 1871), 339.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 343-344.

instance he notes the ‘less fanatical character’ of the Kashgaris in Kulja compared to the Central Asians⁹⁶. Another entry equals the housing in Kulja to the overall perception of the Qing: “Every house speaks for the entire empire and emphasizes its isolation and introverted character.”⁹⁷

Accounts by Russian travellers in Xinjiang, not least those of Valikhanov in 1858, illustrate both the necessities of the military with the authors paying attention to the distribution of population, ethnic and other cultural differences, disposition of forces, the state and quality of their weaponry, transport networks and the region’s geography. Yet they also contain extensive historical and ethnographic sections, descriptions of local customs, cuisine and trade; these are hardly neutral; on the contrary, they place a veneer of exoticism on the local population and impose the already familiar Orientalist categories such as ‘fanatical Muslims’ and ‘sleeping China’ [the Qing]. Nonetheless, even descriptions of Qing forces by Valikhanov, though ethnographic in principle are also of military significance as he describes the Qing forces serving in the Xinjiang as not only poorly trained and equipped but also as having low morale and engaging in what he Valikhanov calls ‘amoral lifestyle’. According to him, the troops stationed in the cities of the Tarim basin are even more inferior to those residing in the Ili region⁹⁸. This narrative presents Xinjiang as a poor and remote region, with rampant corruption and animosity of the local population both towards the Qing and the native administration they support - begs⁹⁹. Overall Valikhanov seems to regard Altishahr as a long-term liability for the Qing.

⁹⁶ Chokan Valikhanov, *Sobranie Sochinenii v Piati Tomakh* (Alma-Ata: Kazakhskaiia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia, 1985), vol. 2, 192.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁹⁸ Valikhanov, *O Sostoianii Altyshara*, 425.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 427.

Conclusion

During the mid-nineteenth century the Russian empire was expanding rapidly in Central Asia which necessitated the creation of a new administration and raised the issue of defining and demarcating its borders with the Qing empire. The position of Xinjiang was also prominent among Russian intellectuals and officers mainly due to the desire to improve commercial relations with the Qing and have a stable and secure border. However, the status of the borderlands in Central Asia was not considered in isolation, rather it was tied to Russia's ascendant position vis-à-vis the Qing illustrated by East Siberian governor-general Murav'ev's acquisition of the Amur. By the mid of the century Russian administrators were keenly aware of the internal troubles the Qing were facing. With the Qing suffering defeats in their conflicts with Western powers the prestige of the dynasty was damaged. This opened the value of Xinjiang not only in economic terms but also in politics. The desire to increase Russian influence in the region and the emerging competition with Britain in Central Asia led to the necessity to obtain credible intelligence on Xinjiang.

The Qing empire on the other hand had been able to rule over the region in relative peace and stability for almost a century by the 1860s. However, the underlying system of government in Xinjiang instituted by Qianglong was slowly transforming; moreover, despite the dynasty's continuous efforts at making Xinjiang fiscally sustainable, it never materialized. The Qing rule was a military one, dependent on regular financial transfers from the interior. Once the Qing embroiled in wars with Britain and France and the ensuing Taiping rebellion the court could no longer adequately supply its garrisons in Xinjiang. The resulting economic hardships contributed to the growing instability and the crisis of legitimacy of the Qing rule among the Muslim communities in the Tarim basin. With such a

tense situation the local population was quick to support the revolt by the Hui (Dungan) in the neighboring provinces.

Chapter 2: Xinjiang in Revolt as a Frontier Space

Chapter two aims to give a closer look to the role Russian regional authorities played in the Muslim revolt. Therefore, the first section provides an overview of the early stage of the revolt and the emergence of distinct Muslim polities in the region. This helps not only in terms of simply describing the development of the revolt but also outlines the military and strategic environment in which the Russian regional authorities found themselves. The second and third sections examine the ways in which Russian administrations and military in Semipalatinsk and Semirech'e provinces became directly involved in the revolt and what measures they contemplated and adopted. This chapter also explores the variety of cross-border interactions between the rebels, their allies, the Qing loyalist forces, and the Russian administration. The chapter discusses cross-border violence and migration, the issue of refugees and population exodus to Semirech'e. The discussion of the border interactions during the conflict helps answer how the Russian military and authorities perceived the conflict and its major parties. Overall the overarching argument this chapter puts forward is that despite not being in hostile relations with either party of the conflict Russia almost from the very beginning finds itself entangled in it. Moreover, while officially maintaining that the Muslim revolt is an internal Qing issue, Russia not only is forced to take measures pertaining to border control but eventually to render tacit support to the Qing and thus to involve itself more directly in the conflict.

2.1 The Muslim Revolt in Xinjiang

The Muslim Revolt in Xinjiang began in the mid-1864 as a number of anti-Qing insurrections in several cities of the Tarim Basin such as Kucha, Urumchi, Yarkand, and

Kashgar. The events further north in Ili followed a similar pattern. Although a general view of the initial phases of these revolt regards them as being separate, individual uprisings conditioned by a host of local socio-economic factors overviewed in the previous chapter they were nevertheless connected to the Muslim revolt in the Gansu-Shaanxi area further east and were accelerated by the situation in the said area. The following section aims to outline key developments of the revolt in Xinjiang before proceeding to the discussion of the situation in Ili.

As the news of the revolt in Gansu and Shaanxi reached the cities of Altishahr, the situation there started developing rather quickly. The first town to rebel was Kucha sometime in early June of 1864¹⁰⁰. Although the local Dungan population played a crucial role in the beginning of the revolt, the Turkic majority in the city soon also began assisting the rebels by capturing the Qing quarter and establishing control over the city. Having seized the control of the city the rebels eventually made certain Rashidin Khwaja their leader¹⁰¹ and embarked on a number of expeditions in the west and in the east of the Kucha oasis¹⁰². Thus, the eastern expeditionary force en route to Urumqi successfully conquered Qarashahr and laid siege to Turfan and after that joined the Urumqi rebels in their siege of the Qing fort there. The Kuchean army also took Hami and Barkul further east by the mid 1865¹⁰³. The *Tuḥfat at-tavārīkh-i khānī* manuscript also mentions the quick capture of most of the towns east of Kucha by the Kuchean forces including Kurla, Qara Shahr, and Qomul¹⁰⁴.

¹⁰⁰ Sergey Moiseev, *Vzaimootnosheniia Rossii i Uigurskogo Gosudarstva Iettishar (1864-1877)* (Barnaul: Barnaul State Pedagogical University, 2003), 30.

¹⁰¹ Timur Beisembiev, "A New Source on Chinese Turkistan (1847-1866) in the Tashkent Copy of *Tuḥfat at-tavārīkh-i khānī*," in *Studies on Xinjiang Historical Sources in the 17th-20th Centuries*, eds. James Millward, Yasushi Shinmen, Jun Sugawara (Tokyo: Toyobunko, 2010), 52.

¹⁰² Kim, *Holy War in China*, 57.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* 58.

¹⁰⁴ Beisembiev, *A New Source on Chinese Turkistan*, 52.

The western expeditionary force sent from Kucha first managed to take Aqsu and Ush Turfan by the end of July in 1864¹⁰⁵. The expedition then proceeded to Kashgar later that year but was defeated by Siddiq's forces and was forced to return to Ush Turfan. In early 1865 the Kuchean forces again attempted to expand westwards and tried to take Yarkand. Yet, despite the Muslim city was under rebels' control, they could not take the Qing citadel. Moreover, after suffering a defeat from Khotan in the spring of 1865 the Kuchean forces were compelled to leave Yarkand and return to Kucha¹⁰⁶.

Alexei Kuropatkin¹⁰⁷ in his *Kashgaria* also mentions that the first city to revolt was Kucha, although he cites a different date for the initial uprising - sometime in 1862¹⁰⁸. Kuropatkin also mentions a number of military expeditions sent by Kucha to other cities around. Another, seemingly erroneous, claim made by Kuropatkin was that Kuchean forces were able to take Kashgar, and Rashiddin Khwaja was recognized by the Kashgaris as their khan¹⁰⁹. Thus the author claims that by 1864 most of the cities in the Tarim Basin were under the Kuchean control - a claim that is inconsistent with other available publications¹¹⁰. Unfortunately Kuropatkin does not include the sources on the Muslim Revolt he consulted into the printed version of his report.

Urumqi, a major city further east of Kucha with significant Qing forces stationed there, revolted a few weeks after the events in Kucha. Here the Dungans also played a major role in initiating the revolt¹¹¹. The main difference in the situation in Kucha was the fact that a considerable number of the Qing forces in the city were Dungans who allegedly were

¹⁰⁵ Kim, *Holy War in China*, 59.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁰⁷ Alexei Kuropatkin was a Russian military officer who headed the Russian mission to Yaqub Beg in May 1876; the observations made during the mission in Altishahr were published a few years later.

¹⁰⁸ Kuropatkin, *Kashgaria*, 130.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹¹¹ Kim, *Holy War in China*, 41.

already contemplating a plot as early as 1863¹¹². The news of the insurrection in Kucha compelled the Urumqi garrison to immediate actions and thus they seized control over the Muslim city. Having done that the rebels made certain Tuo Ming their leader and established communications with the rebel forces in Kucha to jointly lay siege to the Manchu fort in the vicinity of Urumqi. Other towns in eastern Xinjiang were also taken by the rebel forces from Urumqi by the mid-1865¹¹³.

The revolts in other cities of Altishahr such as Yarkand and Kashgar also began spontaneously, triggered by the rumors of imminent massacre of the Dungans by local authorities as well as by the news of the rebels succeeding in Kucha. In Yarkand the Dungans were able to retain their authority over the city due to them having a larger proportion of Yarkand population compared to other cities. The Dungans of Yarkand were also able to leverage the considerable foreign merchant presence and thus for a time could install a Kabuli Ghulam Husayn as the city's ruler at the expense of the local Turkic elite¹¹⁴.

In Kashgar, on the other hand, the circumstances happened to be more complicated. Although similarly to the other cities the insurrection was instigated by a local Dungan garrison seemingly as a response to the city commandant, Qutluq Beg, allegedly ordering to massacre the Dungans. Nonetheless, the rebels were unable to conquer the main fort in Kashgar. In an attempt to quell the mutiny the city commandant of Kashgar called in for Kirghiz chieftain Siddiq Beg to assist in suppressing the revolt. Yet, as the latter's forces approached the city, Qutluq Beg, becoming increasingly suspicious of Siddiq, barred him from entering the city. In return Siddiq sided with the Dungan forces in an attempt to take the town and its surroundings, though ultimately failing at both¹¹⁵. In order to obtain popular support in the vicinity of Kashgar, the rebel forces decided to invite to their cause someone

¹¹² Ibid., 42.

¹¹³ Ibid., 43.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 46.

¹¹⁵ Kim, *Holy War in China*, 48.

with a Khwaja lineage from neighboring Khoqand. As a result Buzurg Khwaja, a descendant of Jahangir Khan, and his retinue set out for Kashgar in the early 1865¹¹⁶. Tikhonov adds a minor detail to this episode in his analysis of a number of Turki manuscripts written in the late 19th century. One of such sources mentions Siddiq Beg justifying his reasons for appealing for help to Khoqand: “While Russia is far and before any help arrives we will be defeated. Khoqand is closer to us and their tribes are similar to us.¹¹⁷” This point is quite different from the usual religious legitimation of summoning the Khoqandis, it does not mention the significance of the Khwaja lineage.

Although it was Siddiq Beg who decided to invite Khoqandis to Kashgar, once they arrived in the city and facing growing opposition from the residents of the Muslim part of Kashgar Siddiq was forced to retreat and gathered his forces for another attempt at taking Kashgar¹¹⁸. At this point there was open hostility between Siddiq Beg and the Khoqandi retinue under Buzurg Khwaja which subsequently led to several battles between the two sides. With Siddiq Beg continuously suffering defeats at the hands of Yaqub Beg he eventually submitted to the Khoqandis¹¹⁹.

After defeating Siddiq Beg’s forces and taking Yangihissar Yaqub Beg was able to rout a numerically superior Kucheian army near Kashgar, thus solidifying his control over the westernmost areas of the Tarim Basin¹²⁰. As the circumstances in Khoqand itself were extraordinary due to the war with Russia and the change of leadership a significant number of Khoqandi soldiers and officials escaped to Kashgar where they bolstered Yaqub Beg’s forces¹²¹. Having solidified his personal rule by eliminating Buzurg Khwaja and other rivals Yaqub Beg had become the sole ruler of Kashgar and the surrounding territories in the spring

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 49.

¹¹⁷ D. Tikhonov, “Uigurskie Istoricheskie Rukopisi Kontsa XIX i Nachala XX v.,” *Uchenye Zapiski Instituta Vostokovedeniia* 9 (1954): 156.

¹¹⁸ Kim, *Holy War in China*, 84.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 85.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 86.

¹²¹ Ibid., 88.

of 1866¹²². Later that year Yarkand surrendered to Yaqub Beg's forces¹²³. Finally in the early 1867 he was able to conquer Khotan in the southwestern part of Altishahr and in the summer of 1867 he took Kucha. The downfall of the Kuchean regime was compounded by internal rivalry and instability in other cities further east¹²⁴.

In parallel, the situation to the north was also developing rapidly. Here too the rumors of imminent slaughter of the Dungans by the Qing authorities were circulating prior to the outbreak of the revolt. Much like in the cities of Altishahr the uprising in the vicinity of Ili began in 1864. The Sibe sources cited by Diakov¹²⁵ claim that the earliest confrontation between the rebels and the Qing forces under the command of the Ili *jiangjun*¹²⁶ Cangcing happened in the vicinity of Qur Qarausu¹²⁷. The Qing forces numbering approximately 11,000 people including some 3000 Han exiles made an attempt to negotiate with the rebels. As the latter were expecting reinforcements from Dungan-held towns of Urumqi and Manas the negotiations stalled. The standoff eventually ended with the defeat and flight of the Qing forces once the rebel forces from Urumqi arrived in the late July of 1864¹²⁸. Although it should be noted that Immanuel Hsü maintained that Cangcing had requested 4000 soldiers from Chuguchak and Kobdo of which only slightly more than 1000 people arrived¹²⁹. For his failure to quell the unrest in Qur Qarausu Cangcing was replaced by Mingxu as the *jiangjun* of Ili in November of 1864¹³⁰.

¹²² Ibid., 89.

¹²³ Ibid., 90.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 92.

¹²⁵ Alexei Diakov was a Russian consular official in Kulja in the early 20th century who left a Russian translation of the witness account of the Muslim revolt written by a Sibe man.

¹²⁶ *Jiangjun* (將軍/將軍) was the supreme commander of the Qing troops stationed in Xinjiang with his headquarters in Ili in the town of Huiyuancheng.

¹²⁷ Qur Qarausu was a town approximately halfway between Ili and Urumqi; it corresponds to the modern-day town of Usu.

¹²⁸ Alexei Diakov, "Vospominaniia Iliiskogo Sibintsa o dungansko-taranchinskom vosstanii v 1864-1871 godakh v Iliiskom krae," in *Dungane: istoriia i kul'tura: rossiiskie dorevoliutsionnye raboty o dunganakh*, ed. M.R. Madivan (Moscow: Nauka - Vostochnaia literatura, 2017), 85-86.

¹²⁹ Immanuel C.Y. Hsü, *The Ili Crisis: A Study of Sino-Russian Diplomacy 1871-1881* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 26.

¹³⁰ Hsü, *The Ili Crisis*, 26 and Diakov, *Vospominaniia Iliiskogo Sibintsa*, 87.

Apparently the Qing defeat at Qur Qarausu facilitated the emergence of the revolt in Kulja and other Manchu towns throughout the Ili region. Diakov notes that the revolt began in its earnest in the mid October of 1864 in Huiyuancheng¹³¹ when the Qing officials made an unsuccessful attempt to ensure the Muslim population of the town of their peaceful intentions by visiting a local mosque¹³². Aleksandr Geins also mentions jiangjun's visit to the mosque, however, he claims the event occurred in August of 1864 rather than October¹³³. Concurrently with the street fighting in Huiyuancheng the Dungan of Kulja also rebelled and the Taranchi, except for the most affluent ones, joined the rebels. Because Mingxu was still in command of significant forces in Huiyuancheng itself, the Qing were able to restore their control in the town the next day with the majority of the Dungan population retreating to Kulja¹³⁴.

As the rebels besieged Bayandai the Qing forces tried to relieve the fort twice and were defeated in both battles due to a combination of low morale, insufficient supplies and heavy snow during the second attempt to relieve Bayandai. The Qing defeats at the fort allowed the Muslim forces to procure artillery pieces which would later be used during the storming of other Manchu forts in Ili¹³⁵. The Sibe source on the Muslim revolt mentions that as the siege of Bayandai had lasted for several months by the mid January of 1865 the defenders were completely exhausted despite a considerable amount of food still stored at the fort. When the Muslim forces led by Khanja Akhun captured the town and the fort the

¹³¹ Huiyuancheng (also known as New Kulja or Manchu Kulja) was a Qing military fortress several kilometers away from Kulja. It served as a center of Qing forces in Xinjiang and was a part of the general Qing military infrastructure throughout the empire where the Manchus and the banner forces were stationed separately from the local population (for more on the special Manchu cities see Elliott, *The Manchu Way*).

¹³² Diakov, *Vospominaniia Iliiskogo Sibintsa*, 87.

¹³³ Aleksandr Geins, "O vosstanii musul'manskogo naseleniia ili dungenei v Zapadnom Kitae," *Turkestanskii Sbornik* 5 (1869), 81.

¹³⁴ Diakov, *Vospominaniia Iliiskogo Sibintsa*, 88.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 90, 93.

defenders deliberately refused to destroy the food supplies as a revenge to Mingxu for his indecisive actions and inability to save the fort¹³⁶.

The siege of Huiyuancheng was progressing slowly throughout 1865. In July a Mongol force arrived in the vicinity of the besieged fortress to help the Manchu garrison inside. Sources differ on the reasons for the arrival of the Mongol force and who was leading it. Eugene Schuyler maintains that the Mongols were initially reluctant to relieve the jiangjun's forces for the latter had not rendered assistance to the Mongol tribes against raids by the Kirghiz some time prior; yet the Mongol forces decided to help Mingxu's forces "when their great temple on the Ili was plundered... their Lama excited them to revenge."¹³⁷ Schuyler further notes that the Mongols were threatened by the Manchus to harvest the crops arounds Huiyuancheng which offended the Mongols and prompted them to leave¹³⁸. The Sibe account as transmitted by Diakov also mentions the Manchu request for the Oirats to assist in harvesting the crops. However, the reason for the Mongol forces withdrawing from Huiyuancheng was Mingxu's attempt to steal the Mongols' horses and to enforce a corvée on the Mongols at the same time. Notably, unlike Schuyler's description, the Sibe account names the leader of the Oirat force Gegen (*khutukhta*)¹³⁹. Yet in this aspect the Sibe account contradicts other sources both Russian and Qing. For instance, Lobsang Yongdan in his short biography on Bla ma dkar po provides details of Tongzhi emperor bestowing the title of *ho thug thu* on Bla ma dkar po for his victories against the Dungan rebels and their Kazakh allies in Tarbagatai including the liberation of Chuguchak¹⁴⁰ in June of 1865¹⁴¹. Similarly Russian

¹³⁶ Ibid., 96.

¹³⁷ Eugene Schuyler, *Turkistan: Notes of a Journey in Russian Turkistan, Khokand, Bukhara, and Kuldja, Vol. II*, (New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1876), 181.

¹³⁸ Schuyler, *Turkistan*, 181.

¹³⁹ Diakov, *Vospominaniia Iliiskogo Sibintsa*, 100-101.

¹⁴⁰ The town of Chuguchak was also known as Tarbagatai.

¹⁴¹ Yongdan Lobsang, "The Invention of a Tibetan Lama General: a Biographical Account of Bla ma dkar po (1835–1895)," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 49 (2019), 76.

sources also mention Chagan Kegen (khutukhta) to be active in Tarbagatai and not in the area around besieged Huiyuancheng¹⁴².

Irrespective of Bla ma dkar po's actions and their portrayal in sources, somewhere between January and March of 1866 the starving Huiyuancheng garrison was forced to surrender. Mingxu, the jiangjun of Ili committed suicide together with his family and entourage by setting an explosion of the remaining gunpowder supplies in his palace¹⁴³. The fate of Cangcing, former jiangjun, also differs; Eugene Schuyler claimed he had been murdered by the Muslims storming the citadel¹⁴⁴ while most other sources mention Cangcing was taken prisoner.¹⁴⁵

The last major town where the Dungans rose and fighting ensued was Chuguchak. Unlike other towns in Xinjiang further south Chuguchak was not affected by the insurgency due to the relatively small Dungan population. Such a difference emphasizes the crucial role played by the Dungan communities elsewhere in the early stages of the revolt. Nonetheless, by January of 1865 the situation in Chuguchak had also become tense. That month the Chuguchak Dungans invited a number of high-ranking Qing officials and some chiefs of the Mongol clans living nearby to the town's mosque supposedly for negotiations. Having thus lured in the Manchu officials the Dungans attempted to slaughter them. However, as some of the officials managed to escape the insurgents besieged the Chuguchak citadel. As the Chuguchak Dungans were few in numbers they made overtures to the nearby Kazakh clans by allowing the latter to loot the town¹⁴⁶.

With the revolt in Gansu and Shaanxi to the east isolating the Ili region - the center of the Qing administration in Xinjiang - the shortest communication link with the interior was

¹⁴² Alexandr Geins, "O vosstanii musul'manskogo naseleniia ili dungenei v Zapadnom Kitae," *Turkestanskii Sbornik* 5 (1869), 84 also "Mongol'skii vozhd'," in *Materialy dlia statistiki Turkestanskogo kraia, Vol. II*, ed. N.A. Maev (Saint Petersburg, 1873), 194-195.

¹⁴³ Diakov, *Vospominaniia Iliiskogo Sibintsa*, 109.

¹⁴⁴ Schuyler, *Turkistan*, 182.

¹⁴⁵ Diakov, *Vospominaniia Iliiskogo Sibintsa*, 109.

¹⁴⁶ Geins, *O vosstanii musul'manskogo naseleniia ili dungenei v Zapadnom Kitae*, 84.

severed. From now on and until the restoration of the Qing authority the correspondence with Beijing could be conducted via the northern route through Mongolia and Russia. The center had meager resources and sending those to the Qing officials and forces in Ili was risky, even more difficult was sending any troops this way to the Ili. Thus neither the Qing forces stationed in Ili could receive significant assistance from China proper nor could Qing loyalists escape to China; the refugees could only go either north towards Mongolia or to the west, to Russian territory. The rapid collapse and astounding military successes of the rebels alarmed Russian officials. The emergence of Yaqub Beg's regime, a relatively centralized and potentially hostile polity further south in a strategically sensitive region close to the British India also raised uneasiness among Russian military and political establishment. With both the Muslim rebels and their opponents operating close to the Russo-Qing border and even crossing it to the Russian territory and Russian subjects such as various Kazakh clans living close to the border entertaining the idea of taking part in the event on the Qing side of the border for a variety of reasons the Russian approach and policies towards the Muslim revolt and the evolution of such an approach become all the more important in broadening our understanding of the Muslim revolt itself.

2.2 Frontier Interactions in the Late 1860s – mid 1870s Ili Region

Both Russia and the Qing were two large imperial continental states that were gradually expanding throughout the 18th and 19th centuries into Inner Asia. Such expansion culminated in the creation of a hard, defined border between the two states. However, this border, especially in Central Asia reflected not only the imperial expansion but also the relative balance of power in the mid-19th century Inner Asia¹⁴⁷. By the 1860s the issue of

¹⁴⁷ Sören Urbansky, *Beyond the Steppe Frontier: A History of the Sino-Russian Border*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 30.

delimiting and demarcating the borders had become a prominent one in the Russo-Qing relations¹⁴⁸. Yet the status of the borderlands was also of great significance to the local people, the majority of whom had become subjects of either of the two empires by this point. The questions this part of the thesis aims to answer are what developments were occurring in the frontier areas along the Russo-Qing border during the Muslim revolt and what policies and actions Russia applied in response to such cross-border developments.

The regions adjacent to the Russo-Qing border as of the 1850s and 1860s were the territories corresponding to the modern-day East Kazakhstan and Almaty regions of today's Republic of Kazakhstan and the entirety of the Ili prefecture of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the modern-day People's Republic of China. At the time of the Muslim revolt these territories were part of the Northern Circuit¹⁴⁹ on the Qing side and constituted parts of Semipalatinsk oblast of the West Siberian governor-generalship as well as Semirech'e oblast of the Turkestan governor-generalship (since 1867) on the Russian side. The political borders between Russia and the Qing as they were during the early phase of the Dungan revolt were based on the 1860 Peking Treaty and the 1864 Chuguchak Protocol. Article 2 of the Peking Treaty established the general line along which the borders would be adopted - those included the major mountain ranges, rivers, and Qing karun lines¹⁵⁰. However, the basis for these agreements lay in the indisputable fact that Russian influence had been strengthening for a couple decades prior to the revolt and frictions between the Qing and Russia began after the latter formally consolidated its control over the Kazakhs of the Great Juz by 1848 and constructed forts Kopal (1847) and Vernyi (1854) in the Ili region - a

¹⁴⁸ Jin Noda, *The Kazakh Khanates between the Russian and Qing Empires: Central Eurasian International Relations during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 302, 303.

¹⁴⁹ Northern Circuit (天山北路) was the administrative designation of the part of the Qing-ruled Xinjiang north of the Tian Shan mountains.

¹⁵⁰ *Sbornik Dogovorov Rossii s Kitaem. 1689-1881 gg.*, Saint Petersburg: Tipografiia Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 1889), 161.

territory that Qing officials considered to be under the Qing control¹⁵¹. The de facto Russian control of the Semirech'e as well as obtaining the subjecthood over the Great Juz Kazakhs were some of the major factors for the Qing to grant the Russians trade concessions in the 1851 Kulja Treaty. The treaty implicitly legitimized the Russian control over Semirech'e and prepared ground for the subsequent negotiations on the status of Semirech'e and the Russo-Qing border along the Kazakh Steppe in general as per already mentioned 1860 Peking Treaty¹⁵².

Although even when political borders are described as 'hard' they are nonetheless constructed and imagined¹⁵³. Topographic features on the other hand are often beyond human control and thus serve as important border marks on their own. Topography of a given region also profoundly impacts the type and scope of actions communities and governments can take in both political and socio-economic aspects. In fact Russian sources of the second half of the 19th century on several occasions claim that the existing borders between Russia and the Qing were inconvenient for the Russian side, mostly for military considerations. The prominent topographic features in question include several mountain ranges and passes between them. On the north the border runs along the Altai Mountains southwards to the Kurshim (Kurchum) mountain range and the source of the Kurshim river - a tributary of the Irtysh river. The Irtysh basin and the lake Zaysan divide the Altai Mountains and the Tarbagatai Range further south¹⁵⁴.

By the 1860s there were a number of routes crossing the mountain ranges and thus the Russo-Qing border. On the Russian side Semipalatinsk served as the main communications center and several major routes connected the town with Vernyi in the south, Khobdo through the Bukhtarma basin in the northeast, as well as to the Russian Zaysan fort. Other routes in

¹⁵¹ Noda, *The Kazakh Khanates Between the Russian and the Qing Empires*, 293-294.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 300.

¹⁵³ Niccolò Pianciola, "Illegal Markets and the Formation of a Central Asian Borderland: The Turkestan–Xinjiang opium trade (1881–1917)," *Modern Asian Studies* 54, no.6 (2020): 6.

¹⁵⁴ Veniukov, *Opyt Voennogo Obozreniia Russkikh Granits v Azii*, 236-237.

the northern part of the border included the Ust-Kamenogorsk - Sergiopol' - Chuguchak, while in the south the main Kulja was the main transportation center with routes connecting it to Vernyi across the border as well as Chuguchak to the north, Urumqi to the southeast and the cities of Altishahr in the south¹⁵⁵.

The central piece of the description of the borderlands is the people inhabiting the frontier. In this respect we also have extensive accounts by Russian officers. The main ethnic and religious groups inhabiting the Russian side of the border were the Kazakhs, and the Kirghizes; with regards to the former pre-1917 Russian sources almost always referred to them as the *Kirgiz* or *Kirgiz-Kaisak* while the latter as the *Kara-Kirgiz*. They were mostly nomadic and divided into numerous tribes and clans. Both groups were Muslim. The main clans inhabiting the frontier area along the Russo-Qing border were Baijigit, Quzay, Naiman, Alban¹⁵⁶, and Kerey¹⁵⁷. On the Qing side the majority of the population north of Kulja were the nomadic Oirats, the majority of whom belonged to the following tribes: Olot, Torghut, Dörbet, and Chahar¹⁵⁸. Although some of the Oirats had lived in the region since the conquest of the Zunghar Khanate, in particular Olot and Dörbet, others such as Torghuts returned to Xinjiang in the late 18th century from the Lower Volga reaches in Russia¹⁵⁹; while other tribes specifically the Chahars were resettled in the region as part of the Qing pacification policies after the conquest of the Zunghar Khanate¹⁶⁰. A number of Kazakh clans lived on the Qing side of the border as well having migrated there in the second half of the 18th century after the defeat of the Zunghar¹⁶¹. As such we can see that some of the Kazakh clans had clansmen living on either side across the borders. Given the fact that the Russo-

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 251-252.

¹⁵⁶ in some cases referred to in Russian sources as *Atban*.

¹⁵⁷ TsGAR RK, F-44, 38257, f. 22.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ James A. Millward, "Qing Inner Asian Empire and the Return of the Torghuts," in *New Qing Imperial History: The Making of Inner Asian Empire at Qing Chengde*, ed. James A. Millward et al. (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 91.

¹⁶⁰ Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, 77.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 45.

Qing border negotiations concluded and defined the upcoming demarcation process, by the beginning of the revolt the agreed borders were hardly enforceable. In the vicinity of Kulja and to its south sedentary communities of the Turkic speaking Taranchi were predominant. In the cities, most significantly Kulja and Chuguchak the majority of the population were also the Taranchi with sizable numbers of the Dungan people. As was established in the previous sections both the Ili Taranchis and the Dungans were Sunni Muslims and members of a number of Sufi orders. Other ethnic and religious communities were the Han Chinese, most of whom were sedentary farmers or merchants, and the Manchus - the backbone of the local bureaucracy and Qing military presence in Xinjiang. The Han Chinese were resettled in Xinjiang in several capacities: initially as part of the Green Standard troops stationed throughout Xinjiang, exiles and poor peasants from northwestern provinces and were engaged in agriculture;¹⁶² other Han Chinese (along with Dungans) arrived in the region for commercial activities in increasing numbers throughout the late 18th - 19th centuries¹⁶³. The Manchus lived in specially constructed Manchu cities - fortified settlements in close proximity to the already established towns. Another community inhabiting the Ili region were the Sibe and the Solons - the people related to the Manchus and resettled from Manchuria after the conquest of the Zunghar Khanate to permanently garrison the region as part of the Banner system. Unlike the Manchus, the Sibe and Solons along with the Oirat were nomadic and thus were stationed outside of the fortified cities but on the pasturelands around them¹⁶⁴.

These communities had divergent interests amplified by their differences in power, predominant lifestyle and occupations, as well as religious beliefs. We have already established in the previous chapter how the Qing rule in Xinjiang was enforced by the military authorities headed by the *jiangjun* of Ili and dependent on financial transfers from

¹⁶² Perdue, *China Marches West*, 343-344.

¹⁶³ Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, 116-117, 148.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.

the interior and therefore fiscally unsustainable in the long term. As soon as the Dungan and Taranchi revolt occurred the local Kazakh and Kirghiz clans began to actively participate in the course of the revolt. Yet even these larger communities were far from uniform - Kazakh clans taking part in the events in Ili did not act as a single cohesive group. Instead, the predominance of individual clan interests highlights the divergent roles taken by individual clans. The majority of the clans living in the vicinity of the Russo-Qing border supported their Muslim co-religionists with for instance the Quzay and Baijigit Kazakhs even going as far as looting Chuguchak at the instigation of local Dungans¹⁶⁵. As Geins further reports this action urged the Tarbagatai Oirats to unite under the leadership of Chagan Gegen, a Buddhist lama and a person greatly revered by the Oirats, and to openly support the Qing forces trapped in the town citadel. The Oirats organized retaliatory raids on the Baijigit Kazakhs throughout 1865 and in the late October of the same year, supposedly with a Manchu official's approval (Geins claims it was the Tarbagatai *Hebei Amban*), crossed the border with Russia and defeated the Baijigit clan while taking back with them 100 000 sheep, 6000 cattle and more than a thousand horses¹⁶⁶. It is likely that this exact event is reported by an anonymous source only titled as "*The Mongol Chieftain*". The source claims the Oirat forces under Chagan Gegen (in this source Tsagan Gigen) were the only local force capable to resist the Muslim rebels in Xinjiang¹⁶⁷. From this source we know that the person's name was Gunga Jaltsan and he had been born somewhere in eastern Tibet in 1835 as five years later he was taken to Tarbagatai and two years later to Gansu where he studied religious canons. At 20 he returned to the Tarbagatai area and dedicated himself to spreading Buddhism including among the Kazakhs (Kirgiz) who were living close by¹⁶⁸.

¹⁶⁵ Alexandr Geins, "O vosstanii musul'manskogo naseleniia ili dungenei v Zapadnom Kitae," *Voennoe Obozrenie* 8 (1866), 205.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., 205.

¹⁶⁷ "Mongol'skii Vozhd'," *Materialy dlia statistiki Turkestarskogo Kraia* Vol.2 (1873),193-194.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 194.

Similarly Nikolai Aristov notes that as soon as the revolt in Kulja and Chuguchak ensued, the Kazakh clans of Alban, Baijigit, Quzay, Suan, and some others from as far the Shu river basin made attempts to cross the border while it was not protected by Russian forces¹⁶⁹. Some apparently expressed genuine support to the rebels' cause while others were more concerned with material gains. As was mentioned elsewhere, often the communities and clans separated by the border were related if not the same which made it difficult for the Russian forces to effectively prevent communications between members of the same community. Likewise the relatively easily crossed border between Kulja and Vernyi with little to no natural obstructions for movement once the Qing authority collapsed became a major point of movement - Aristov notes that the local authorities were practically powerless before extensive '*baranta*' and Kazakh migrations to the Qing side of the border.¹⁷⁰

Notably the same author also reports that not long after the Dungan and the Taranchis revolted in Ili, several Kazakh clans managed to destroy and loot a Buddhist monastery close to the Sumbe (Sumbo) river - a tributary of Tekes¹⁷¹. Yet there are cases of Kazakhs cooperating with the Oirats and allying with the Qing, in particular that is the case of Kerey Kazakhs led by certain Aji Sultan who migrated further north to the slopes of the Altai Mountains¹⁷².

In general it is important to note that one of the strategies both the Qing loyalists and the allies of the rebels employed was to illegally cross the Russo-Qing border and move to the vicinity of Russian military detachments. In some cases this strategy was also accompanied with formal requests of becoming Russian subjects. We can find several examples of such actions in the journal of political events for the year 1869. As was noted

¹⁶⁹ Nikolai Aristov, "Otnosheniia nashi k dunganam, Kashgaru i Kul'dzhe," *Materialy dlia statistiki Turkestanskogo Kraia* Vol.2 (1873), 171.(170-181)

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 177.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 171-172.

¹⁷² Jin Noda, "The Kazakhs in the Muslim Rebellions of 1864-1865," *Central Asian Studies Review* 5 No 1 (2006), 28.

above, one of the main Kazakh clans that were active participants of the events in Xinjiang was the Baijigit clan. The Baijigits and the Chagan-Kegen's Oirats were engaged in several skirmishes throughout the 1865-1867; having been defeated, the Baijigits escaped to the Russian territory yet later returned to the Qing side of the border. However, in 1869 they again arrived in the Russian territory and applied for Russian subjecthood¹⁷³.

Another similar example was that of the Solon refugees. Once on the Russian territory the leader of the escaped Solons on numerous occasions requested the Russians to send a detachment to fight Sultan Abil-Ogly's Taranchi forces and in exchange for Russian military aid the Solons promised to become Russian subjects. Suffice it to say, the requests were denied on the ground of Russia's non-involvement in Xinjiang affairs¹⁷⁴.

Other sources illuminate the overall refugee situation prompted by the revolt in Xinjiang. The report of the Semirech'e Military Governor Kolpakovskii claims that the total number of refugees to the region in the period of 1864 to 1871 was approximately 14 000 people. Of those more than 8000 people were nomads predominantly Oirats while more than 5000 people were Sibe and Solons; Manchus and Han Chinese were only a small percentage of the refugees. An 1869 report regarding those Manchu and Han refugees mentions that the majority of them would return to Chuguchak as soon as the city would be restored; otherwise they would attempt to return to China interior via Kyakhta¹⁷⁵. By 1871 more than 2000 people chose to return back to Xinjiang. On the contrary more than 9000 people chose to become Russian subjects with a little more than 1000 people settling as sedentary farmers while the rest retained their nomadic lifestyle¹⁷⁶. To help with the resettlement the local authorities in Semirech'e established a Committee in Vernyi which was tasked with providing financial assistance to the settlers and gathering statistical information on them. As

¹⁷³ TsGA RK, F-44, 5649, f. 14.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., f. 7.

¹⁷⁵ TsGA RK, F-44, 5637, f. 27-29.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., f. 44-45.

such we have access to detailed records of the amount of financial assistance allocated to each refugee family. In total in 1869 the Committee allocated 3020 rubles with some families receiving 65 rubles while others only 25 rubles¹⁷⁷¹⁷⁸.

The files of the Committee also denote the number of settlers willing to convert to Orthodox Christianity. Similarly, an early 1869 report by South Tarbagatai detachment clarifies that although only a small portion of migrants were willing to adopt Orthodox faith among those who chose to become Russian subjects; yet many of the refugees were willing to become Russian subjects only after they had received lump sums from the Russian authorities¹⁷⁹. It is yet unclear from the Committee materials how significant the adoption of Orthodox Christianity was with regards to obtaining both the financial assistance and the status of Russian subjects. Although a later publication by Nikolai Ostroumov¹⁸⁰ sheds light on the motives and general pattern of conversion to Orthodox Christianity by Qing refugees. Overall during the period of 1868-1872 721 refugees converted to Orthodox Christianity with 588 people in 1868 and less than 100 people a year for the following years. The majority of the adopters were the Oirats, Sibe and Solons, while the converted Manchus and Han Chinese were less than 25 people¹⁸¹. The small number of Christianity adopters among the latter two groups can be attributed to their overall small numbers escaping to the Russian territory; although qualitative comparisons are difficult due to differing time periods in available publications and sources regarding the Qing refugees in Russia. As for the motivations for the conversion, Ostroumov notes particular expectations on the refugees' part, i.e. "the settlers, whatever tribe or faith they were, thought it was indispensable to recognize not only the

¹⁷⁷ Deqing, a certain Manchu official, received 550 rubles.

¹⁷⁸ TsGA RK, F-44, 5637, f. 17.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., f. 20.

¹⁸⁰ Nikolai Ostroumov was a Russian Orientalist, proselytizer, and a long-time editor of the *Turkistan Wilayatining Gazeti*, an official newspaper published by the Turkestan general-governorship.

¹⁸¹ Nikolai Ostroumov, *Kitaiskie emigranty v Semirechenskoi oblasti Turkestanskogo kraia i rasprostranenie sredi nikh pravoslavnogo khristianstva*, (Kazan: Tipografiia Imperatorskogo Universiteta, 1879), 51.

highest government authority but also to follow the dominant religion of the country”¹⁸². However, the necessity of financial assistance and expected requirements to qualify for one were the main driving force behind the conversions. The refugees supposed the conversion was necessary to obtain material assistance and the right to stay on the Russian territory. Once the refugees understood the conversions were voluntary and, although encouraged but not enforced, did not constitute a necessary precondition for assistance from Semirech’e authorities, the number of overall conversions dropped significantly¹⁸³.

The Russian authorities continued to observe the movement of people not only attempting to cross to the Russian territory but also in the areas of Xinjiang controlled by both the Dungans and Yaqub Beg’s forces. These reports in particular deal with a somewhat later period - the mid-1870s. These reports had features of intelligence gathering missions and were primarily solicited from merchants circulating between the Russian-occupied Kulja and the territories further south and east under Muslim rule. Unlike the earlier movement of peoples in the late 1860s the migrations of the mid- to late 1870s were spurred by the approach and military victories of the Qing forces. One of such reports dated June 1874 provides information regarding the arrival of approximately 15 000 Dungans and 5000 Taranchis from the town of Qumul in the easternmost part of Xinjiang. The refugees were reportedly resettled in Urumqi, Manas, and Turfan and supplied with bread by Yaqub Beg’s orders¹⁸⁴.

The rest of the document concerns the areas to the north of Kulja, in particular the situation in Chuguchak and its surroundings. Notably the reports show that the territories north of Kulja were essentially under Qing control even though occasional Dungan attacks on Qing border pickets and local settlements. The chief of the South Tarbagatai detachment

¹⁸² Ibid., 52.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 53.

¹⁸⁴ TsGA RK, F-44, 38254, f. 5-6.

mentions in his report from June 1874 that according to Jong [?], the jiangjun of Chuguchak, the Dungans were making raids on Han peasants and inhabitants of Chuguchak and other nearby settlements “because of Dungan’s hatred towards the Chinese but crucially also due to a two-year long harvest failures and famine in this region.¹⁸⁵” The same report states that even though communications between Chuguchak and settlements to its south were severed by the Dungan forces, the proximity of Russian forces in Kulja prevented any direct attacks on Chuguchak itself. Thus based on the information above we can claim that even limited Russian intervention significantly shifted the balance of power between the Qing loyalist forces and the rebels in northern Xinjiang.

2.3 Russo-Qing Interaction and the Muslim Revolt

The previous section demonstrated the imbroglio that was the Russo-Qing border once the Dungan revolt flared up. The Russian strategy throughout the duration of the revolt remained ambivalent. The approach undertaken by Russian authorities in the early period of the revolt was underpinned by confusion due to rapid successes of the rebels¹⁸⁶. The Russians simply did not know which course of action was the most beneficial in this situation. If the rebels manage to establish long-lasting states of their own in Ili and Altishahr, Russia would be surrounded both on its south and east by Muslim countries not even mentioning its own considerable Muslim population in the Steppe, which was mostly sympathetic to the rebels’ cause. On the other hand embracing the Muslim rebellion openly would almost certainly run the risk of damaging Russia’s relations with the Qing.

The revolt in Xinjiang triggered a major geo-strategic dilemma for Russia and it had to face it one way or the other. Suffice it to say that despite the tense nature of the 19th

¹⁸⁵ TsGA RK, F-44, 38254, f. 10.

¹⁸⁶ Alexander Morrison, *The Russian Conquest of Central Asia*, 204.

century Russo-Qing relations marked by Russia's expansion at the expense of the Qing Empire, Russian officials both in Saint-Petersburg and along the borderlands of Xinjiang posited that by maintaining favorable relations with the Qing Russia could benefit more than by propping up Muslim regimes in Xinjiang. Needless to say, it is precisely with such thoughts in mind Russian officials and adventurers on numerous occasions stressed the necessity to support the Qing in their fight, if not by direct military means so as not to incur the hostility of the rebels, then at least in some other dimension.

This early Russian reluctance of engaging in relations with the Muslim rebels in any official capacity is evident in the practice of ignoring letters sent by the rebels to Russian border officials such as the particular occasion mentioned by Nikolai Aristov: "...Both this and the following two more letters [from the Dungans who besieged Chuguchak] ... were left unanswered as of course our government could not establish relations with the mutineers who laid siege to a fortress...¹⁸⁷" Aristov's argument is representative of the general perception prevalent among Russian military at the time of the situation in Xinjiang in the mid-to-late 1860s. In the same report we can see considerations with regards to rendering assistance to the other side - the Qing: "...Involving ourselves into the innumerable troubles with Chinese support against the fierce people of western China would be extremely reckless for us and therefore ... pleas to help from Chinese [officials] were rejected. At the same time due to the Kirghiz living in our border regions expressing the intentions to lend assistance to the insurgents the government prohibited the insurgents the access to our territory and instituted measures preventing all relations between the insurgents and the Kirghiz...¹⁸⁸" These passages reflect the conundrum Russian policy makers encountered in Xinjiang. Aristov argued that the initial Russian neutrality in the conflict was the reflection of its willingness to honor the treaties concluded with the Qing, though he posited that such a stance was

¹⁸⁷ Aristov, *Otnosheniia Nashi k Dunganam, Kashgaru i Kuldzhe*, 1873: 173.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 171.

ultimately detrimental to Russia's interests in the long term. Geins also cites the non-enforceability of the Chuguchak Protocol by the Qing and lack of knowledge on the new legal status of the Quzay and Baijigit Kazakhs as Russian subjects by West Siberian authorities as an impediment to effective Russian actions at managing the border¹⁸⁹.

The question is thus what exactly was the nature of Russo-Qing interactions in Xinjiang during the revolt. Although the previous section has already touched on this subject there are more examples of Russian responses to the events in Xinjiang illustrating both Russian priorities and shedding light on its relations with the Qing in the period concerned. Russian sources of the time still regard the complicated relationship between Russia and the Qing as well as a degree of mutual mistrust as a 'lesser evil' compared to the prospects of an expansive Muslim state in Xinjiang. Yaqub Beg's successes in the south certainly did little to alleviate Russian apprehensions of the rebels. Yet open actions were also only of limited viability.

While Russian authorities rendered no direct military support to the Qing, they still cooperated with the latter. As the revolt severed communications between Beijing and Ili, Russian military was engaged in delivering correspondence to the jiangjun in Huiyuancheng and to the *hebei amban*¹⁹⁰ in Chuguchak¹⁹¹. It was also crucial in safeguarding and escorting the silver sent by Beijing via Khobdo to support the Ili administration¹⁹². In 1865 West Siberian administration on orders from the War Ministry began training small contingents of Qing soldiers¹⁹³. All such gestures from the Russian side instilled mistrust into the Dungan forces as to where Russia's loyalties truly were. These apprehensions were deliberately

¹⁸⁹ TsGA RK, F-44, 38257, f. 22.

¹⁹⁰ Hebei amban (Ch.: cānzàn dàchén 參贊大臣/参赞大臣) was a high-ranking Qing official responsible for administering a particular region in Qing Xinjiang and acted under the auspices of the *Yili jiangjun* (the supreme military commander of Qing forces in Xinjiang). The term is sometimes translated as 'imperial councillor' or 'imperial resident'; see Jin Noda, *The Kazakh Khanates between the Russian and Qing Empires*.

¹⁹¹ TsGA RK, F-44, 38257, f. 28, 29.

¹⁹² Ibid., f. 29.

¹⁹³ Moiseev, *Rossia i Kitai v Tsentral'noi Azii*, 79.

exacerbated by Manchu officials who routinely prolonged visits by Russian officers to Qing citadels citing that their presence made Dungan attacks on the citadels of Kulja and Huiyuancheng unlikely; moreover, said officials were known to spread rumors of imminent Russian invasion to help suppress the revolt¹⁹⁴. In some instances the delivery of correspondence to the Qing officials was prevented by Dungan forces. In the August of 1865 the Dungan force numbering some 3000 men refused to give passage to certain Ryapusov and his some 20-men-strong detachment to Chuguchak threatening to open fire on the Russian escort¹⁹⁵.

This left the Russians with reinforcing border detachments and accepting refugees on its territory. In the initial period of the revolt existing Russian detachments were prohibited from crossing the border and pursuing any rebels or Qing loyalist forces on the Qing territory. General Kolpakovski informed Mingxu, the jiangjun of Ili, on his inability to interfere in another state's affairs¹⁹⁶. Of course the non-involvement was dictated not only by strictly political considerations but also by practical ones - with the conclusion of Peking and Chuguchak treaties the Qing conceded to Russia some of the territory in the Zaisan basin - the territory Russia had difficulty to guard. Although precise numbers of military personnel stationed along the Xinjiang border is unknown to me. There are references suggesting the number of troops was not sufficient to adequately patrol the border in the early period of the revolt. Babkov, the military governor of Semipalatinsk province in 1867-1868, claimed in his memoirs that the border was not patrolled in winter time at all due to lack of warm clothes, fodder and fuel¹⁹⁷. Despite the limited scope of actions Russian border detachments had, they were gradually reinforced - by 1868 there were three permanent detachments situated at Bakhty, Borokhudzir, and Tekes consisting of one company, one cossack platoon and two

¹⁹⁴ TsGA RK, F-44, 38257, f. 28.

¹⁹⁵ TsGA RK, F-44, 38257, f. 29,30.

¹⁹⁶ Moiseev, *Rossiiia i Kitai v Tsentral'noi Azii*, 77.

¹⁹⁷ Ivan Babkov, *Vospominaniia o moei sluzhbe v Zapadnoi Sibiri, 1859-1875*, (Saint Petersburg: Tipografiia V.F. Kirshbauma, 1912), 351.

artillery pieces each. During summers there were two additional attachments, each 100 people strong¹⁹⁸; however, we have a fairly clear picture of the Russian forces engaged in the occupation of Kulja in the May-June of 1871. As of June 8, 1871 when Major General Kolpakovski assumed the leadership of the forces marching to Kulja, there were approximately 2000 soldiers (1785 men in the Borokhudzir detachment and some 300 men in flanking detachment) along with 13 artillery pieces¹⁹⁹.

In some aspects we can say that Russian forces became more proactive in the region once Kulja and parts of the Ili province were occupied in 1871. The instruction to the South Tarbagatai detachment dated early July 1874 specifically allows Russian troops to cross the border and pursue the “predators” - the Dungans, Taranchis, or Kazakhs - if Qing authorities took no action against those. If the detachment chief deemed the actions taken by the Qing authorities detrimental to Russian interest, such as assisting the “predators”, he was permitted to use weapons against any such party²⁰⁰. Any fugitive Russian subjects, which primarily meant the Kazakhs, were to be returned into Russian territory by force, if necessary. Yet, the instruction clearly prohibited any offensive actions and any assistance to Qing efforts at quelling the revolt²⁰¹.

This instruction set illustrates the apparent weakness of the Qing government in the Ili area so that the Russian forces were permitted to cross the border under numerous circumstances - a significant distinction from troop behavior of the mid-to-late 1860s. It also stresses the necessity to return any Russian subject who escaped beyond the border to the Qing or rebel-held territory - Russian detachments prior to that were not authorized to return Russian subjects but only to stop them from crossing the border. The document also uses

¹⁹⁸ D. Fëdorov, *Opyt voenno-statisticheskogo opisaniia Iliiskogo kraia*, (Tashkent: Tipografia Shtaba Turkestanского Voennogo Okruga, 1903), 50.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 51.

²⁰⁰ TsGA RK, F-44, 38254, f. 53.

²⁰¹ Ibid., f. 54.

stronger wording with regards to the rebels and their sympathizers on either side of the border - “*khishchnik*” (predator).

The evolution of the Russian position from neutrality and observation to active involvement culminating in the ten-year-long occupation of Kulja was shaped by several factors which included among others the creation of the Turkestan governor-generalship and thus transfer of military control over Semirech'e from Omsk to Tashkent. It was a more cautious approach of the West Siberian governor-generalship and especially that of the Foreign Ministry that defined Russia's initial policy towards the revolt in Xinjiang. Concurrent with the revolt in Xinjiang, the forces of the Turkestan military district were engaged in campaigns in Central Asia and thus apparently could not or would not mount a campaign to Ili. Yet as the wars with Khoqand and Bukhara concluded the views of such military men as Kolpakovski turned to Ili²⁰². They were proponents of a military solution all along and by 1871 the southern frontier was firmly in Russian control and there was no imminent danger of an alliance between the Muslim polities of Xinjiang and Khoqand. On the other hand the instability in the Ili region and the potential threat of Yaqub Beg gaining control over it made direct intervention all the more justified²⁰³. Kolpakovski's superior, governor-general von Kaufman, was also convinced of the necessity to occupy Kulja as early as 1870. Yet the central government - both the Foreign and War Ministries - at first rejected such a proposition. Only in the spring of 1871 did the central government decide to conduct a joint operation in Kulja with Qing forces²⁰⁴.

²⁰²A. I. Makshev, *Istoricheskii obzor Turkestana i postupatel'nogo dvizheniia v nego russkikh*, (Saint Petersburg: Voennaia Tipografiia, 1890), 280-281.

²⁰³Moiseev, *Rossii i Kitai v Tsentral'noi Azii*, 101.

²⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 105, 106, 112.

Conclusion

The Muslim revolt flared up in China's westernmost provinces likely from a communal brawl and rapidly spread westwards to Xinjiang - a beleaguered and financially distressed Qing military colony. Once in Xinjiang the rumours of Dungan massacres by the Qing forces and the rhetoric of holy war channeled local discontent into a massive and chaotic rebellion in which a multitude of actors engaged in the struggle to pursue the disparate interests each ethno-religious group and some prominent personalities harbored. Such diverse ethno-religious groups included the Dungans (Hui people), the Altishahri Turkic-speaking communities, the Taranchi, the Manchu officials, the Sibe and Solon banner forces, and the nomadic Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, and Oirats. As for the individuals, the figures of Yaqub Beg, a Khoqandi adventurer, and Bla ma dkar po, an Oirat Tibetan monk, also known as *Chagan Gegen*, upon whom Tongzhi emperor bestowed the title of *ho thug thu* for his military successes against the rebel Dungan forces, feature most prominently.

The revolt and subsequent collapse of the Qing authority in Xinjiang led to divergent socio-political circumstances in the Tian Shan Nan Lu and Tian Shan Bei Lu. While in the south the revolt eventually coalesced into a Muslim regime unified by Yaqub Beg's personal rule, the north was embroiled in complex crossborder situation with Dungan and Taranchi elites competing for political influence and nomadic Kazakhs and Oirats engaging in communal violence against each other while thousands of refugees were fleeing massacres and looting in Ili and settling in Russian territory - some temporarily and some permanently. The Russian authorities could exert little control over cross border movement of people; yet they made concerted efforts at settling the refugees in Semipalatinsk and Semirech'e provinces and distributing financial assistance to them.

However, desiring to prevent the expansion of Yaqub Beg's state to the north of the Tarim Basin and to institute better border control, Saint Petersburg, initially in consultation with the Qing court, made a decision to temporarily occupy Kulja and its vicinity so as to return the province to the Qing at some later date. The change in strategy occurred not insignificantly due to the involvement of the British in the affairs of Xinjiang, i.e. their attempts to establish working diplomatic relations with Yaqub Beg.

Chapter 3: Diplomats to Kashgar, Administrators to Kulja

This chapter aims to explore the international situation in Central Asia in the late 1860s-1870s in particular the international repercussions of the Muslim revolt and the manner they affected Russian foreign policy in Central Asia. Specifically Russian diplomatic and intelligence activities concerning both the British India and Yaqub Beg's state in Altishahr. By analyzing the sources pertaining to diplomatic exchanges between the Muslim polities (especially Yaqub Beg's state) the chapter seeks to illustrate that the Muslim revolt was more than an internal crisis in the Qing empire. As the rebels became successful in abolishing Qing control in Xinjiang, the nascent states they established, sought legitimacy to their rule in the form of international recognition²⁰⁵. The importance of this factor in the study of the Russian involvement in the uprising lies in demonstrating the necessity for Russian administration in Central Asia to abolish the neutral approach towards the conflict and instead to actively engage with the Muslim polities. Such an engagement was not only military but also involved establishing diplomatic relations with and even brief recognition of such Muslim polities.

Another issue this chapter addresses is the discussion of Russian ethnic and religious policies in the occupied Ili region (*Kul'dzhinskii Krai*) in 1871-1881. Those policies, developed and enforced by the Semirech'e regional administration headed by general Gerasim Kolpakovskii, provide a glimpse into how Russian officials navigated the complexities of ethnic and religious interactions between the different communities in the Ili region. Religious and ethnic policies instituted by the Russian administration in Kulja illustrate that the Russian officials treated various communities in the *Ili krai* differently despite presenting the Russian rule as an equalizing force which brought the conflict to an end. A source dealing with Kolpakovskii organizing a Russian celebration in the town where

²⁰⁵ The newly established states in the initial period of the Muslim revolt in 1864 were a number of small states each concentrating around a city. The major ones were Kucha, Khotan, Yaqand, and Kashgar. Once Yaqub Beg arrived in Kashgar and became a ruler there he launched military action against other cities. (see Kim, 2004).

no Russians lived is presented as a microcosm of such ethno-religious interactions and the role the Russian administration in Kulja played in it. The analysis of the source illustrates the priorities and objectives Kolpakovskii's administration pursued, tying it to the larger question of the role Russia played in the Muslim revolt and how Russian officers and officials perceived the conflict itself and their place in it. The priorities for Kolpakovskii's administration in Ili were to present Russia as a mediating, neutral power which could presumably better than the Qing manage the various ethno-religious communities of the Ili region and prevent the resurgence of a conflict between the Muslims and the Buddhists.

Finally the last subchapter aims to continue the topic of the portrayal and the perception of the Muslim revolt as well as its aftermath. In this case I propose that the promotion of Dungan and Taranchi settlements in Semirech'e as thriving Muslim communities in Russia even decades after the Muslim revolt and the occupation of Kulja still pursued the goal of presenting the Russian rule as superior to the Qing and amenable to Muslims. I argue that despite the distrust of Islam elsewhere the Russian authorities in the border regions of Semirech'e viewed the presence of Muslim migrants positively.

3.1 Kashgar and Russian Diplomacy

The Muslim revolt, the collapse of the Qing authority, and the emergence of Muslim polities in Xinjiang did not happen in isolation from the events beyond the Qing empire. On the contrary, such events brought attention of foreign powers into the region which would become a center in a convoluted diplomatic network throughout the 1870s. The political situation in the 1860-1870s Central Asia was characterized by a quick Russian expansion southwards by defeating the Bukhara Emirate and khanates of Khoqand and Khiva and incorporating them either directly as parts of the newly established Turkestan general-

governorship or indirectly as Russian protectorates. At the same time Britain had solidified its rule in India and was growing ever more apprehensive about the Russian expansion²⁰⁶. Yet the third major empire present in Inner Asia, the Qing, on the contrary was forced to recede from Xinjiang. Thus became an area of competition and increased diplomatic activity for both Russia and Britain. Although there were numerous reasons for Russia's southward advance, one was related to the notion of military pride and colonial possessions of its own²⁰⁷. Another motive for expansion into Central Asia was the Russian determination to prevent Britain from exerting economic and political influence over Central Asia and assume a strategically forward position with respect to the British India. The latter consideration was a vital one in increasing Russia's diplomatic leverage²⁰⁸.

The 1870s were the high point of the Russo-British rivalry known as the 'Great Game'. The two sides grew weary of each other and their competition exacerbated after the Crimean War, the Sepoy Mutiny, and the quick-paced Russian conquest of Central Asia²⁰⁹. Qing withdrawal from Xinjiang in the mid 1860s suddenly opened another area for competition. As in other border areas Russia's initial position was "wait and see" as the Russian military was in the midst of its Central Asian campaigns and could not foresee the extent of the rebels' successes against the Qing. Unwilling to break its treaties (which were favoring the Russian side after all) with the latter the Russians hesitated recognizing any of the newly emerged Muslim polities throughout Xinjiang.

Both the Russians and the British, recognized that the Muslim revolt and the chaotic Qing withdrawal from Xinjiang impacted not only the relative balance of political power but also affected trade networks and crucially for Europeans, albeit to a certain extent, opened the region for exploration. Qing Xinjiang was one of the few territories in the world which were

²⁰⁶ Karl E. Meyer, Shareen Blair Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Central Asia*, (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 151-152.

²⁰⁷ Morrison, *The Russian Conquest of Central Asia*, 24-25.

²⁰⁸ Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia* (London: John Murray, 1990), 580-581.

²⁰⁹ Meyer, Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows*, 151, 156-157.

still poorly explored by Europeans since Manchu authorities routinely denied access to most foreign travellers to the region and inhospitable terrain made any journey there an onerous affair²¹⁰. The revolt and war made the borders easier to cross not only for Qing refugees or nomadic communities but also for Russian explorers, adventurers, and agents. In a sense for the brief period of its independent existence Xinjiang, and especially its southern part, Altishahr, became rapidly involved in international diplomacy on a scale greater than any in the past 100 years. Trade on the other hand was negatively affected. As a result of the conflict with the Qing transit access to China's interior provinces through Xinjiang was blocked while Xinjiang itself with its relatively small population was not as lucrative a market as those in China proper²¹¹. Moreover, Xinjiang produced no little to no tea or other high value produce which could be exported further. And in fact after the revolt Altishahri merchants became dependent on Russian markets for obtaining such commodities²¹².

Of the numerous entities established in Xinjiang in the wake of the revolt the Yaqub Beg regime has arguably been the most successful one. Yet this regime is precisely illustrative of the confusion and chaos in the region in the immediate post-Qing period. Yaqub Beg was a minor official whom Alim Quli, the amir of Khoqand, sent as a part of Buzurg's²¹³ retinue aimed at bringing the cities of the Tarim Basin under Khoqandi influence²¹⁴. This event highlights the attempts by even smaller local powers to capitalize on the Qing retreat from the region. Yet Yaqub Beg's case also illustrates the role of individuals. As Khoqand was fighting a war with the Russians Alim Qul died in Tashkent in 1865²¹⁵. After that a large number of Khoqandi soldiers fled to Kashgar where Yaqub Beg persuaded

²¹⁰ Hopkirk, *The Great Game*, 591.

²¹¹ Kostenko, *Sredniaia Aziia i vodvorenii v nei russkoi grazhdanstvennosti*, 339.

²¹² "Neskol'ko slov o nastoiashchem polozhenii torgovli v Kashgare," *Turkestansii Sbornik* 75 (1874): 125.

²¹³ Buzurg was one of Jahanghir Khwaja's sons. Jahanghir Khwaja belonged to the Afaqiyya and was the leader of the 1826 Khwaja revolt and was able to temporarily control Kashgar. As Jahanghir's son Buzurg was seen as a natural claimant to the leadership over Kashgar.

²¹⁴ Kim, *Holy War in China*, 83.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 87.

them to join him. The political instability and defeats in their war with Russia prevented any further attempts by Khoqandi rulers to influence the events in Kashgar. With a loyal force Yaqub Beg was able to swiftly defeat his enemies and consolidate his power before proceeding to conquer the rest of Altishahr²¹⁶.

As the political situation in western Xinjiang somewhat stabilized by 1870 and Yaqub Beg emerged as the strongest Muslim ruler in Xinjiang, neither Russian officials in Tashkent, nor British administration in India could ignore his state any longer. The British were arguably less concerned with Yaqub Beg than were the Russians and frankly Yaqub Beg was also more concerned with the Russians than the British. The first two Englishmen who managed to reach Kashgar and even meet Yaqub Beg were lone adventurers - Robert Shaw and George Howard. Both men independent of each other visited Kashgar in 1868-1869. As the British policy towards Russia in Asia was in flux given the recent Russian expansion the two men were rewarded by the British administration in India for their unauthorized travels and after this event the British administration decided to dispatch an official embassy to *Badaulet*, as Yaqub Beg was known for his military successes²¹⁷. In Tashkent the news of recent British activities did not go unnoticed and was received with distaste. Mikhail Terent'ev²¹⁸ posited that the British aim was to render political support to Yaqub Beg and explore the possibility of an agreement with Russia which would have made Altishahr a neutral territory outside of either state's sphere of influence²¹⁹. The British did indeed entertain the idea of Yaqub Beg's Altishahr becoming a part of the ring of friendly states around India and saw trade as the most effective means of achieving this objective²²⁰.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 88-89.

²¹⁷ Hopkirk, *The Great Game*, 617, 621.

²¹⁸ Mikhail Terent'ev was a Russian officer and military historian who for a long time served in various capacities in the Turkestan military district.

²¹⁹ Mikhail Terent'ev, *Rossiiia i Angliia v Srednei Azii*, (Tipografiia Merkul'eva, 1875), 137-138.

²²⁰ Hopkirk, *The Great Game*, 674-675.

Commerce was seen as a relatively easy and low-risk way to extend political influence and also to counter Russian mercantile penetration of Altishahr.

This news of a British mission to Yaqub Beg's court apparently was not received well by the Russian side. For instance Terent'ev argued the probability of a British invasion of Russia was higher due to the former having extensive supply and communication lines in India²²¹. Other contemporary officials also expressed their concern of Russia's military standing in Central Asia and its ability to perform military actions against Britain in Central Asia. Notably, Mikhail Gruliov, a lieutenant-general who served in Turkestan military district and was an editor of a number of publications in Turkestan general-governorship, expressed the prevailing sentiment of the time: "Up until this moment Turkestan has not even been a colony... it cannot be called anything else but a base of operations."²²² This sentiment illustrates not simply concern but a certain degree of anxiety that the Russian colonial project in Turkestan is not only militarily vulnerable but also far less successful and profitable than the British India. Yet, despite such evaluations of Russia's military capabilities in Central Asia, the very same military officers were not shy of calling for an open show of force on Russia's southern frontiers to threaten the Raj in case of war with Britain²²³. The 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish war presented a suitable moment to test this approach²²⁴.

It is known that Russian officials exhibited certain uneasiness and apprehension regarding the emergence of a strong Muslim-ruled state in Xinjiang since the early days of the Muslim revolt²²⁵. However, as the possibility of such a state turned into reality Russian officials in the Turkestan general-governorship changed their approach and opted to establish diplomatic contacts with Yaqub Beg. A man like Yaqub Beg, who had experience fighting

²²¹ Ibid., 144.

²²² Mikhail Gruliov, *Sopernichestvo Rossii i Anglii v Srednei Azii*, (Saint Petersburg, 1909), 24.

²²³ Ibid., 24.

²²⁴ Seymour Becker, *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865-1924*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), 76.

²²⁵ TsGAR RK, F-44, 38257, f. 31-32.

Russians in the 1850s as a commandant of a Khoqandi outpost, was not the most pleasing to Turkestan officials figure to rule Altishahr, a region adjacent to Russia's newly annexed territories in Ferghana²²⁶. Although this description might regard Yaqub Beg as an issue to the Russian policy in Central Asia, Yaqub Beg himself was obviously aware of Russian military power precisely because of his previous experience. With initially poor and obsolete data on the strength of Yaqub Beg's state and the probability of restoration of the Qing authority in Xinjiang official Russian policy was that of cautious approach²²⁷. In principle Russia avoided recognizing Yaqub Beg's rule in Kashgar until the Qing court recognized the inability to restore its rule in the region; thus Kashgari envoys and letters remained unanswered. On the other hand Russian subjects in Altishahr were exposed to various restrictions and unequal treatment²²⁸. Although Russian sources do not provide a coherent answer to Yaqub Beg's actions we can posit that trade restrictions could have served as a means to bring the Russians to a negotiating position. Yaqub Beg's primary objective was to secure non-aggression guarantees from the Russian side as well as the official recognition of his rule by foreign powers, especially Russia, something which Russia itself was hesitant to provide²²⁹. Russian officials on the other hand were eager to restore the access to Kashgaria's markets Russian merchants enjoyed under the terms of the 1860 Peking Treaty.

Despite their unwillingness to recognize Yaqub Beg the Russians entered in semi-official negotiations with him roughly at the same time as did the British. In 1868 Yaqub Beg sent to Vernyi his nephew Shadi Mirza with a letter for governor-general von Kaufman; however, as the letter did not follow established etiquette and Kaufman himself was on a trip to Saint Petersburg general Kolpakovski denied Shadi Mirza passage to Tashkent. Shadi

²²⁶ Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, *The Ili Crisis: A Study of Sino-Russian Diplomacy, 1871-1881*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 29.

²²⁷ Ibid., 29.

²²⁸ Mikhail Terent'ev, *Rossiiia i Angliia v Srednei Azii*, (Tipografiia Merkul'eva, 1875), 136-137.

²²⁹ Hopkirk, *The Great Game*, 613.

Mirza was subsequently allowed to proceed to Saint Petersburg²³⁰. The Russian proposition offered to Yaqub Beg was to allow Russian merchants freedom of passage through Altishahr, to set a flat single tariff on both Muslim and Russian merchants and to allow them to build caravan-serais in Altishahr as well as to demarkate the border in accordance with the 1860 Peking Treaty. These efforts were to no avail as Yaqub Beg chose neither to accept Russian conditions nor to reply to von Kaufman letters throughout 1869²³¹. In 1868 Turkestan authorities sent captain Vladimir Reintal as an envoy to Yaqub Beg; yet apparently this embassy failed to reach its objectives based on Alexei Kuropatkin's remark that the embassy "was not received favorably²³²." Although Russian officials in Tashkent were suspicious of Shaw and Heyward's adventures in Kashgar it is unlikely that they seriously contemplated the British to be in position to influence Yaqub Beg's policies at that time. Russian hostility to Yaqub Beg stemmed from other factors such as previous personal encounters with him, and the threat of either an alliance with the Taranchi population of Kulja or an annexation thereof by Yaqub Beg's forces. Therefore it was these reasons coupled with a separate dynamic of hostile actions between Russia and the Ili Sultanate²³³ and not the presence of the British in Kashgar that influenced Russia's decision to occupy the Ili region in 1871²³⁴. Rather, Yaqub Beg himself and his forces were seen as a threat credible enough to justify a preemptive operation in Kulja²³⁵.

In the 1870s diplomatic exchanges between Kashgar and Britain and Kashgar and Russia grew in significance. The first such embassy headed by colonel Alexander von Kaulbars arrived in 1872 and managed to negotiate a trade agreement under which Russian

²³⁰ Terent'ev, *Rossiiia i Angliia v Srednei Azii*, 139-140.

²³¹ Ibid., 142.

²³² Kuropatkin, *Kashgariia*, 3.

²³³ Ili Sultanate was a polity centered in Kulja and created by the Taranchi forces after they were able to successfully defeat Qing forces in northern Xinjiang and subjugate the Sibe people living in the region. From 1867 and until Russian occupation in 1871 Abu'l-'Ala Khan ruled over the Sultanate.

²³⁴ Noda, *Reconsidering the Ili Crisis*, 172 and Moiseev, *Rossiiia i Kitai v Tsentral'noi Azii*, 109, 116.

²³⁵ Morrison, *The Russian Conquest of Central Asia*, 205-206.

merchants were guaranteed safe passage and tariffs similar to those imposed on Muslim merchants²³⁶. One of the goals of this agreement pursued by Russia was to have a viable *casus belli* against Yaqub Beg; in case he failed to guarantee the safety of Russian subjects in Kashgar Russian officials could use this occasion to further expand Russian-controlled territory if the need thereof was to arise²³⁷. Although an interesting point on its own, Kuropatkin elaborates neither on the viability of this *casus belli*, nor on whether there were alternative interpretations of this commercial agreement by Russian officials. Nevertheless, this point illustrates the inherently hostile view of Yaqub Beg's rule by the Russians, at least by the Russian military stationed in the Turkestan district.

One of the reasons that Russian commercial agreements with Yaqub Beg were also regarded as potential *casus belli* was due to the arguably limited value of Russian trade with Kashgar. We have more extensive commentary on commercial opportunities in Xinjiang in Lev Kostenko's publication where he lamented that the provinces of Xinjiang could not produce valuable products of their own; their main role in trade with Russia was to be a transit route to the Qing empire's internal provinces²³⁸. However, unlike the late 1860s by 1872 the strategic situation around Altishahr was shifting. Yaqub Beg's victories in eastern Xinjiang further reinforced the perception of his rule as stable and strong. He was aware of tense relations between the Russians and the British and therefore an unnecessarily hostile Russian position could further bring Yaqub Beg towards the British especially in the light of the recent occupation of Ili. The Qing court was also predisposed to view Russians with suspicion after the Kulja operation²³⁹. With these considerations in mind it is understandable that officials in Tashkent would be willing to send another embassy to improve relations with Yaqub Beg yet at the same time still retain a position of strength to pressure Badaulet if

²³⁶ Kuropatkin, *Kashgariia*, 49.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

²³⁸ Kostenko, *Sredniaia Aziia i vodvorenii v nei russkoi grazhdanstvennosti*, 343.

²³⁹ Hopkirk, *The Great Game*, 640.

needed. Of course, as Terent'ev states, officials of the Turkestan general governorship were eager to minimize British influence in Kashgar²⁴⁰.

In response to the Russian embassy by colonel Kaulbars, Yaqub Beg asked to send an embassy of his own to Saint Petersburg. The permission was granted and in July of 1873 certain Molla Tarap Khwaja Umar arrived in Saint Petersburg where emperor Alexander II received him and a letter from Yaqub Beg. For Tarap Khwaja the agenda was to discuss with Russia's highest officials further facilitation of trade relations between the two countries²⁴¹. Saint Petersburg newspapers of the time on the other hand insinuated that the envoy arrived to discuss the possibility of Russian guarantees against Qing forces. By this moment Russian government was comfortable dealing with Yaqub Beg in an official capacity, and the emperor's audience speaks clearly in favor of Russia's willingness to recognize Yaqub Beg's state, it nonetheless was in no way predisposed to sacrifice its stable relations with the Qing to prop up some a relatively small ruler such as Yaqub Beg.

Having reached an agreement with the Russians, Yaqub Beg also invited the British to send an envoy, which they did in 1873. This time the British, desiring to obtain a similar trade agreement and to gather as much intelligence on Kashgar as possible, equipped an expedition numbering more than 300 people. Having concluded its official part, the expedition conducted reconnaissance of roads and passes connecting Altishahr to Russian territories as well as Kashgari border forts²⁴². Having expended such serious effort and attention to the country Forsyth's embassy came to the conclusion that British commercial opportunities in Kashgaria were slim because of the small size of its market and severed trade links with Qing interior due to continuing military action in the east²⁴³. The importance of

²⁴⁰ Terent'ev, *Rossiiia i Angliia v Srednei Azii*, 145.

²⁴¹ "O Kashgarskom posol'stve," *Turkestansii Sbornik* 75 (1874): 88, 93.

²⁴² Hopkirk, *The Great Game*, 641 and "Po povodu izvestii iz Kashgara, napechatannykh v Augsburgskoi vseobshchei gazete," *Turkestansii Sbornik* 75 (1874): 113.

²⁴³ Hopkirk, *The Great Game*, 649.

eastern trade routes for Altishahr was evident from the fact that since the beginning of the Dungan revolt Kashgaris were forced to buy tea imported from Vernyi in Semirech'e²⁴⁴.

Despite the more official exchange of embassies in 1872 and 1873 between Russia and Kashgar and somewhat tense relations with the Qing, the question of formal recognition of Yaqub Beg's rule in Altishahr by Russia was a controversial one with varying opinions in public but the government proceeded cautiously without clearly adopting one view over the other. Whereas Russian press argued that an agreement between Britain and Kashgar was not prerequisite for a formal recognition of Altishahri independence, referring to previous precedents when Russia concluded agreements with neighboring entities without explicitly considering them as independent. In the case of Altishahr the Qing nominally ruled the territory and even appointed imperial residents (*ambans*) there. The British on the other hand were more inclined to regard Yaqub Beg as a legitimate and independent ruler of Altishahr citing Sir Douglas Forsyth that the exchange of embassies was a factual recognition of independence²⁴⁵.

The final shift in Russian view of Yaqub Beg's rule in Kashgaria happened during the last Russian embassy to the court of this adventurer. In October of 1876 a 60 men strong retinue headed by captain Alexei Kuropatkin left Osh and in mid December of that year arrived in Kurla²⁴⁶ to open negotiations with Yaqub Beg regarding the revision of actual borders between the former Khanate of Khoqand (since 1876 Russian Ferghana oblast)²⁴⁷. In the years following the Khanate's submission to Russia Yaqub Beg managed to take forward positions in mountainous areas which previously belonged to the Khanate and construct there a number of fortifications²⁴⁸.

²⁴⁴ "Neskol'ko slov o nastoiashchem polozenii torgovli v Kashgare," *Turkestansii Sbornik* 75 (1874): 125.

²⁴⁵ "Neobkhodimost' priznaniia nezavisimosti kashgarskogo emira," *Turkestansii Sbornik* 75 (1874): 108.

²⁴⁶ Kurla was one of the cities in the Tarim Basin situated east of Kucha.

²⁴⁷ Kuropatkin, *Kashgariia*, 5-6, 9.

²⁴⁸ Sergei Moiseev, *Vzaimootnosheniia Rossii i Uigurskogo gosudarstva Iettishar* (Barnaul: Barnaul'skii gosudarstvennyi pedagogicheskii universitet, 2003), 140.

This episode is notable because von Kaufman's letter which Kuropatkin delivered to *Badaulet* contained veiled threats and open demands to surrender several forts. The forts in question were Ulugqat, Irkeshtam, Echin, and Nagra-Chaldy²⁴⁹. The letter among others contained the following passage: "Your agreement to recognize this line by Turkestan general-governor's will shall be the most compelling evidence from your side to further strengthen friendly relations with powerful Russia."²⁵⁰ Although the embassy did not express explicit threats to Yaqub Beg, Kuropatkin authoritatively declared the former that he would not return to Tashkent unless Yaqub Beg accepted Russian demands and refused any renegotiation of the proposed border changes. After weeks of Yaqub Beg's officials asking the Russians to reconsider, they were forced to acquiesce to whatever the terms von Kaufman put forward²⁵¹. Kuropatkin explained that the reasoning behind Russia's more assertive stance vis-à-vis Altishahr was due to two reasons. First, by this point Russian administration in Tashkent had been aware of Yaqub Beg's precarious position in Kashgaria as considerable portions of the local population did not support him; in part Yaqub Beg lost the local population's support because he preferred Khoqandis to local Altishahris as his retinue and advisers; others grew unsatisfied with high taxes and insecure, intermittent trade. Second, Yaqub Beg's main weakness lay in the inadequate supply and training of his military forces compared to the advancing Qing army under Zuo Zongtang²⁵². Therefore at this point the Russian administration expected a quick restoration of Qing power in Altishahr and sought an advantageous position in border negotiations before the Qing return.²⁵³

²⁴⁹ Ulugqat (Ulugchat, Wuqia) is currently a county in westernmost part of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), PRC; Irkeshtam (Erkeshtam) is a village and a border crossing on the Kyrgyz side of the Sino-Kyrgyz border.

²⁵⁰ Kuropatkin, *Kashgariia*, 8.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁵² Zuo Zongtang was a Qing statesman and military official who was instrumental in defeating the Taiping rebellion and was afterwards assigned to lead military operations against the Muslim revolt in Gansu, Shaanxi, and Xinjiang.

²⁵³ Kuropatkin, *Kashgariia*, 13-14.

Qing withdrawal and creation of several Muslim polities underscored political developments in the 1860s Xinjiang. Elsewhere in Inner Asia Russia's southward expansion and British attempts to prevent the Russians from reaching India transformed the international situation in this region. Russia's relations with Yaqub Beg highlight the multitude of foreign policy considerations Russian policy makers were aware of: On the one hand there were the practicalities such as facilitating Russian trade in the region and Russia's limitations in communications and troop provisioning in Turkestan. On the other hand Russian administration pursued a number of strategic objectives, the chief of which was diminishing British presence in Xinjiang, denying Yaqub Beg the opportunity to further expand and strengthen his rule, and maintaining cooperative relations with the Qing. The questions whether to send an embassy to Kashgar or whether to receive one were inextricably linked to the legitimacy of Yaqub Beg's rule and Qing claims on the territory. In the end, ironically precisely because of the embassies both the British and the Russians dispatched to Yaqub Beg's court both powers scaled down their apprehension and significance of this state. Trade in the region without access to China's interior markets was limited and, especially for Russia, formally aligning with Kashgar was hardly ever an option: the border with Kashgar was a relatively short one in the far-flung southeastern corner of the empire. The border with the Qing, on the contrary, stretched for thousands of kilometres and Russia was not willing to risk a military conflict on the grounds of its recognition of Yaqub Beg's rule in Kashgar. In fact a greater insight into the state of affairs in Badaulet's domains revealed its internal fragility and after all as his title translates to "the Fortunate One" he was an individual who used the disorder in Altishahr to his own advantage yet his state was poor and militarily weak with no clear administrative structure and succession line and most importantly seemingly perpetually at war with the Qing. Therefore ultimately if for the Qing Yaqub Beg was a self-

styled ruler of a rebel province, for Russia he was an adventurer whose endeavors would unravel as soon as he would lose any engagements with the Qing forces.

3.2 Ethnic and religious policies in the Ili region

The Muslim revolt and its spread in Qing Xinjiang was one of the most brutal internal conflicts in the 19th century which resulted in extensive destruction throughout the region, waves of refugees and cross-border crossings and ultimately in an overhaul of Xinjiang once the Qing authority was finally restored. The conflict also coincided with Russian and British imperial expansion in Inner Asia. The two powers sought to use the events in Xinjiang to further their interests and positions in the region. The reasons for the conflict were equally complex. On the one hand Qing economic policies in Xinjiang and instability in Qing internal provinces led to dwindling financial support from the center and increased tax burdens on the local population fueling local discontent. However, the second important dimension of this conflict was religious one. The Muslim revolt was the latest in a series of conflicts between various ethnic and religious groups inhabiting the region. This subchapter therefore aims to provide a concise overview of historical religious interactions in Xinjiang and based on published materials illustrate the goals and patterns of Russian involvement in the religious aspect of the conflict during the occupation of Ili by Russian forces. The overview does not intend to be an exhaustive discussion of historical religious interactions in Xinjiang, rather it strives to highlight the existence of specific features of Russian religious policy in the 1870s Ili and intends to situate the argument in a historical frame.

The two major religious groups which had long been present in the region by the time of the revolt were Sunni Muslims and adherents of Tibetan Buddhism. Buddhism had been continuously present in the area since the beginning of the Common Era with different states

in the region playing an essential role of both being a transit center between India and China as well as a thriving center of Buddhist culture on its own. Such states included the Uyghur Qaghanate, and the Uyghur state of Qocho; the latter existed between the mid 9th and mid 14th centuries²⁵⁴.

While Islam began to spread in Xinjiang from the 10th century with conversion of the Qarakhanids, the more westerly situated contemporaries of the Qocho Uyghurs, the proper Islamization of the region, especially the cities of the Tarim Basin, ensued in the 16th century thanks to the spread of Sufi activities^{255 256}. The Naqshbandiyya order and its branches - the Ishaqiyya and Afaqiyya - became so prolific in the Tarim cities that the orders were involved in political matters and were in a bitter feud with each other²⁵⁷. Concurrently the Gelugpa school of Buddhism became prominent far outside Tibet, in particular among the nomadic peoples of northern Xinjiang (Zungharia) and further east in Mongolia. Although the expansion of both Tibetan Buddhism and Sufi lineages did not necessarily lead to the conflict between the two communities, political rivalry between the Ishaqis and Afaqis allowed for amenable relations with Tibet as either faction sought allies²⁵⁸.

The Muslim revolt irrespective of economic and communal reasons had religious implications and rhetoric. Alexandr Geins describes efficient organization of the rebels centered on mosques as bases of operations and supply centers. Russian authors also ascribed clergy considerable influence on the Muslim rebels instigating the latter on actions against the Qing²⁵⁹. Here we also have evidence of destruction of Buddhist temples while looted treasures from said temples were used for financing khwaja tombs and mosques. Captured Qing loyalists were given the opportunity to convert to Islam in some cases; if the captured

²⁵⁴ Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 77.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 84.

²⁵⁶ James A. Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 80.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 87.

²⁵⁹ Geins, *O vosstanii musul'manskogo naseleniia ili dungenei v Zapadnom Kitae*, 194, 195-196.

did convert, they could be considered as equal to the rebels and if they refused to convert, the Dungan rebels made the Qing loyalists into forced laborers²⁶⁰.

The authors such as Geins were not immediate witnesses of the events in Ili and they relied on reports from both Kazakhs who fled the conflict, merchants from Kopal and most importantly sultan Tezek, a chieftain of the Alban tribe and a colonel in Russian army. While reliance on local Kazakh informants does provide such reports with authenticity corroborating the events in the Ili from Qing and local Muslim sources would certainly strengthen the argument regarding the treatment of captured loyalist forces by the Muslim forces.

Such a treatment by the rebels coupled with involvement of the Kirghiz and Kazakhs led to varying reactions from the Qing loyalists. Some groups, in particular the Sibe, made attempts to come to an accommodation with the rebels, while other groups resorted to armed struggle or sought refuge in Russian region of Semirech'e. After the fall of Manchu forts all 8 Sibe *nirus* in Xinjiang decided to surrender to Muslim forces (chiefly to the Taranchi) on the conditions that the Sibe would be allowed to practice their religion and lifestyle, would not be called upon by the Muslims to fight Qing forces, and both Sibe and Muslims would be prohibited from marrying people from either community. Solons surrendered to the Taranchi leader under similar conditions²⁶¹. Nonetheless, despite protection and non-interference promised by Abu'l-'Ala Khan (also known as Abil-Ogly), the Sultan of Ili, the Sibe were still subject to animosities and attempts to attack them have been undertaken by some of the Sultan's officials²⁶². As for the confrontation tactics, the most prominent and successful example of such struggle was by the Oirat forces under the leadership of Bla ma dkar po, known in Russian sources as Chagan-Gegen. This lama from Tarbagatai who took weapons

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 197.

²⁶¹ Diakov, *Vospominaniia Iliiskogo Sibintsa*, 108.

²⁶² Ibid., 115-117.

to help relieve Chuguchak and later defeated the Kazakhs on the Russian territory, was an eccentric figure and likewise engendered polarising opinions. For his actions the Qing court bestowed this local monk with a title of *ho thog thu*²⁶³. The Russian authors were less flattering in their comments on Chagan-Gegen, especially in the wake of him and his forces unilaterally crossing the Russo-Qing border in a punitive expedition²⁶⁴. This episode demonstrates that the Russian administration did not view Buddhist leaders of the conflict in any particularly positive manner. This contrasts with the positive image of and the support to the Buddhist community in Ili the Russian administration was willing to provide once they occupied the region.

In June of 1871 Russian forces under general Gerasim Kolpakovskii after a short military operation against Abu'l-'Ala Khan, the Sultan of Ili, occupied Kulja and the surrounding Ili region. The event resulted in a 10-year long Russian rule in the region before the final resolution of the matter in the 1881 Treaty of Saint Petersburg. Sources on the Russian rule in the region, only recently ravaged by a brutal civil war with religious undertones, show that the Russian administration sought to portray itself as impartial, neutral and just power when approaching the tense relations between various ethnic and religious groups in Ili. Although the sources at hand are scarce and provide hardly any qualitative data, they nevertheless shed light on some curious views the Russian administration held on the local population. Besides the administration's concern at building a positive image of the Russian rule they also sought to decrease the influence of the ulema and former officials where it was possible at the same time approving of the growing role Buddhism played in religious life and education policies of the Ili region. I further discuss these two sources in greater detail.

²⁶³ Lobsang, *The Invention of a Tibetan Lama General*, 76.

²⁶⁴ *Mongol'skii vozhd'*, 193.

The first source is a short article detailing an Orthodox celebration in Kulja on July 22 1871. The representatives of all major ethno-religious groups were invited to the celebration. Those included the most respected Taranchi such as former officials at the sultan's court and the ulema. Kazakh chiefs were also invited to the celebration. From the Qing loyalists' side Oirat chiefs, Sibe, and Solon commanders as well as former Manchu and Han Qing officials also attended the event. Before the official ceremony began, some of the latter group of representatives gathered to discuss the construction of a Buddhist temple. Notably, they declared their gratitude to Kolpakovskii's offer to initiate the temple's construction and announced that various Oirat tribes committed to provide 1500 rubles and free manpower and transport for the upcoming construction. The site for the new temple was chosen to be on the spot of a previous monastery in the vicinity of Kulja. All participating parties expressed their congratulations to general Kolpakovskii²⁶⁵. During the official part the Muslims and the Buddhists were seated at the opposite side of a terrace where the celebration was happening. Although there were apparently enough seats only for senior figures, the author noted that lots of minor Qing officials and lamas were also present on one side of the terrace.²⁶⁶ As for the entertainment there were three music performances by Han, Taranchi, and Russian performers²⁶⁷. The inclusion of three groups of performers possibly symbolized the end of the conflict and reconciliation under Kolpakovskii's auspices.

The second source discussing Russia's policies in Kulja by Nikolai Pantusov²⁶⁸ is more specific with regards to Russian rule in Ili, its stated goals and the views on the local population. First, Pantusov discusses the region's political status and the objectives of the Russian administration. Ili's political status was perceived as provisional and thus Turkestani

²⁶⁵ Nikolai Aristov, "Prazdnik 22 iul'ia v Kul'dzhe," *Materialy dlia statistiki Turkestanskogo kraia* Vol. II: 250.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 252.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 254.

²⁶⁸ Nikolai Pantusov was a Russian orientalist, ethnographer and an official in the Semirech'e provincial administration responsible for the matters of education, press, statistics, and the Kulja chancellery during Russia's occupation of Ili.

officials considered no measures aimed at permanently annexing the territory to Russia. Therefore the objectives of the administration included first the protection of the wellbeing of the inhabitants and law-enforcement, second the preservation of local traditions and administration in as close a state as they were before the Russian occupation to either facilitate the territory transfer back to Qing authorities or to allow for a smooth integration of Kulja into Russian empire and third maintaining an equilibrium and equal treatment between major ethnic and religious communities in Ili²⁶⁹. Therefore, as the author notes, Russian rule in the region was observational in nature aimed at serving as an intermediary between the region's principal communities²⁷⁰. Local administration in Kulja was delegated to native inhabitants with Sibe and Oirats living under the rule of the chiefs approved by the Qing authorities before the Muslim revolt, while the rest of the inhabitants - the Han Chinese, the Dungans and the Taranchi were given the right to elect their own town commandants and judges²⁷¹. Although the local inhabitants were given limited autonomy and Russian administration declared its non-involvement in local customary law practices it nevertheless established a network of agents to monitor the activities of potentially politically unreliable citizens²⁷². To maintain the policy of equal treatment among the natives, Russian administration declared that disputes and lawsuits involving members of different ethnic or religious communities should be decided by mixed courts²⁷³.

Pantusov also clarifies Russian religious policy in the Ili region. First of all, he directly states that the previous period of Muslim rule in Kulja after the revolt must be regarded as *vrednoe* (detrimental). Apparently this designation refers to the consequences of the conflict for the Ili region and its people but it is also likely Pantusov's own negative

²⁶⁹ Nikolai Pantusov, *Svedeniia o Kul'dzhinskoi raione za 1871-1877 gody*, (Kazan: Universitetskaia tipografiia, 1881), 1.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 3, 5.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 8.

perception of Islam. Although no persecution of Islam was considered by Russian authorities they deemed supporting Islam did not render any good (*pol'za*) for the Russian state. In fact local Russian administration was advised not to antagonize Islam but at the same time not to provide any semblance of government concern regarding the religion. The administration prohibited any officials in the Ili to interfere in any way in the internal workings of the ulema, including their election. Neither were the construction and support of mosques allowed to officials; only private entities and individuals could do so at their own volition²⁷⁴. Although Russian officials in Kulja demonstrated complete lack of interest towards Islam, it was far from truth. Pantusov notes that the government designated special officials to monitor “for tricks and means of Muslim propaganda”²⁷⁵. In sum these policies towards Islam in Ili are reminiscent of Turkestan general-governor von Kaufman’s *ignorirovanie* policy and were likely a direct expansion thereof to this region.

No less entrenched was the mistrust of the Dungans specifically. Apparently Russian officials were deeply concerned with a possible collusion between the Dungans and Taranchi. The Russians were determined to destroy “any traces of the Taranchi rule” among the Dungan community. The mistrust of the Dungans was so deep that the Russian administration formally prohibited any Dungan person following Taranchi/Turkic traditions or lifestyle (such as wearing a turban) from being appointed to any position in the Ili administration. Peculiarly, the Russians encouraged communication and good relations between the Dungans and the Han Chinese²⁷⁶.

Unlike their views on Islam Russian administrators in Ili had fairly positive perceptions of Buddhism in Ili. Starting from Kolpakovsii’s gesture at temple restoration in the early days of Russian occupation the authorities were eager to render material and moral

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 78.

²⁷⁵ Ibid. 79.

²⁷⁶ Ibid. 79.

support to Ili's Buddhist communities to facilitate the restoration of their status and financial situation. Similarly, the Russians were also inclined to support Chinese writing schools as a means of countering the ulema influence in the region²⁷⁷. Although contemporary Russian sources portrayed Buddhism not much better than they portrayed Islam, Buddhism was thought as an integral part of the Orientalist discourse on the Qing empire: a backward and stagnant empire²⁷⁸.

Unfortunately, Pantusov's work does not discuss religious policies any further and provides little to no quantitative data in this respect besides the population numbers divided by ethnic and religious factors. Nonetheless, it is not the lack of specific data which is remarkable but rather the rhetoric and perception of ethnic and religious categories the authors espouse. What we can clearly see is that the authors such as Aristov and Pantusov were certain of the positive effect on communal relations that Russian presence in Ili had by assuming the role of a mediator and stabilizing force²⁷⁹. Although the specificities of Russian policies in Ili were hardly representative of what officials in Saint Petersburg thought of ethnic and religious categories in the distant *krai*, certain things were likely true both in the capital and among Turkestan generals: the ambiguous political status of the Ili region itself and constraints it lay upon Russian policies as Pantusov himself clarifies²⁸⁰. For men like general Kolpakovskii it was important not only to fill the vacuum left by the retreating Qing and to preemptively deal with Abu'l-'Ala Khan before Yaqub Beg could but also to present Russia as a better, more benevolent force than either of the former regimes. One of the easiest ways to cultivate such a positive image was to prevent the communal violence of the Muslim revolt by abstaining from the conflict and yet preventing the feelings of alienation and anxiety among the locals, by enforcing public order. Of course for Kolpakovskii and his

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 79-80.

²⁷⁸ Afinogenov, *Spies and Scholars*, 212.

²⁷⁹ Pantusov, *Svedeniia o Kul'dzhinskoi raione za 1871-1877 gody*, 1, 2.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

associates such as Pantusov imperial benevolence it was more than a simple tactic to prevent a chaotic conflict from proliferating beyond the borders; as military men they were willing to permanently annex the territory and thus supposedly good governance over the Ili region underscored that Russians could manage the territory better than their Qing counterparts or so the moral argument went.

Russian empire, as a relatively impartial party in the Muslim revolt did in effect build a positive image of itself among the various communities in Xinjiang; if during the revolt in the late 1860s Semirech'e authorities accepted thousands of Oirat and other loyalist refugees, after the Qing reconquest it was Muslims who chose to relocate - several thousands of Taranchi and Dungan people resettled to the Russian side of the Ili valley where they established compact settlements with the pattern largely persisting up to this day²⁸¹.

3.3 Russia in the aftermath of the Revolt

In 1857 West Siberian governor-general Gustav Hasford spoke of sending Russian forces to occupy Ili even if such a course of action could have led to a potential military conflict with the Qing. Less than 15 years later general Kolpakovskii triumphantly entered Kulja, only this time justifying the military action by assisting the Qing and keeping order in the territory until the Qing forces could return the Ili region to the Qing control. Hasford's ideas appeared in a special note attached to Chokan Valikhanov's file on his top secret reconnaissance mission in Altishahr only in 1904, almost half a century later, could the public at large read pieces of this secret correspondence²⁸². Kolpakovskii's efforts at bringing reconciliation to Ili by organizing a celebration dedicated to a member of the Russian

²⁸¹ O.I. Zav'ialova, "Iazyk i kul'tura kitaiskikh musul'man-khueitszu," in *Dungane: istoriia i kul'tura: rossiiskie dorevoliutsionnye raboty o dunganakh*, ed. M.R. Madivan (Moscow: Nauka - Vostochnaia literatura, 2017), 18-19.

²⁸² Valikhanov, *O Sostoianii Altyshara*, 330.

imperial family were on the other hand publicly available on the pages of the leading Turkestani periodical and governor-general von Kaufman's pet project - the *Turkestanskii Sbornik*²⁸³.

This episode illustrates the different modes in which information on Xinjiang and Russia's actions there was created and distributed. The wealth of Russian sources on Xinjiang and the Muslim revolt allow us to interpret not only the events and political or military actions they discuss but also the nature of the sources themselves: the rationales, aims, and objectives with which the said sources were produced. They present an opportunity to elucidate how sources on the Muslim revolt integrated in a greater production of knowledge on China in the Russian Empire and how such knowledge influenced the way Russia perceived its own role in Inner Asia.

First of all it is important to categorise the sources: the archival materials contain specific and detailed information on political activity in the borders, reconnaissance reports and official correspondence. Most of such information never saw the light of the day during imperial times as it was created by the bureaucracy for the bureaucracy. However, some of such bureaucratic details eventually made their way to the general public as memoirs and historical works. As the said bureaucracy more often than not was staffed by military officers, men who wanted their endeavors to be known and remembered by their compatriots or were tasked with compiling official imperial historiographies, we have such publications as Babkov's account of his service on the Russo-Qing border or Terent'ev's history of Russian conquest of Central Asia. Another category is the published statistical sources. Ordinarily those were also not for public eyes yet they still played an important role in shaping discourses and policies. Pantusov's detailed statistical publication on Russian-ruled Kulja was instrumental for the Turkestan governor-generalship in underscoring the highly

²⁸³ Aristov, *Prazdnik 22 iul'ia v Kul'dzhe*, 250-254.

successful Russian rule in Ili (or at least presenting it more successful than the Qing rule in the decades before the Muslim revolt).

However, was the brief Russian rule more successful than the century of Manchu control? What was the impact and aftermath of Russian involvement in the Muslim revolt? The most obvious example of the aftermath of the revolt in general and Russian actions in particular was the exodus of certain portions of the population to Russian Semirech'e. First it were the Qing loyalists who fled communal violence and in the later stage of the conflict it were the Muslims who sought refuge in the Russian territory fearing possible reprisals at the hands of Zuo Zongtang's forces. The first communities of Dungans numbering approximately 3000 people arrived to the Semirech'e in the late 1877 even before the final settlement of the Kulja status. Those were the Dungans fleeing the Qing territory after their rebellion in Gansu and Shaanxi was crushed²⁸⁴. After the ratification of the 1881 Treaty of Saint Petersburg some 50 thousand Taranchi and Dungans chose to relocate to the Russian territory where Semirech'e authorities provided them with plots of land in the areas close to the newly negotiated Russo-Qing border²⁸⁵. Unlike earlier publications which portrayed the Muslims and the revolt overall with negative connotations this source ascribes considerable significance in the settlers' arrival; to prove his point Selitskii quotes another source from which we can see what the local authorities thought of the Dungans and the Taranchi by the early 20th century. Now the local bureaucracy regarded them as "healthy and well-fed people in the midst of green orchards as if in a tropical forest" i.e. transforming the environment of the Semirech'e province by engaging in agriculture. The presence of the Muslim settlers from the Ili valley also had political significance for the author - it demonstrated the moral supremacy the Russian rule had over the local inhabitation to that of the Qing rule.

²⁸⁴ Fedor Poiarkov, "Poslednii epizod dunganskogo vosstaniia (Malen'kaia stranichka iz proshloi zhizni Semirech'ia)" in *Dungane: istoriia i kul'tura. Rossiiskie dorevoliutsionnye raboty o dunganakh*, (Moscow: Nauka, 2017), 130.

²⁸⁵ I. Selitskii, "Kul'dzhinksie pereselentsy pogranichnoi s Kitaem polosy," *Izvestiia obshchestva arkhologii, istorii, i etnografii pri Imperatorskom Kazanskom Universitete* Vol. XX 6 (1904): 243.

Not least was the thought of the settlers joining the Russian army by conscription²⁸⁶. Although I doubt the change in attitude towards the Muslim settlers from Xinjiang correlated with the perceptions of Islam elsewhere in Turkestan, as the Turkestani administration remained apprehensive of its Muslim population until the end of imperial times, the perceptions of the *kul'dzhinskie pereselentsy* is perhaps illustrative of Russia's more secure position in Central Asia compared to the Qing chiefly due to its relatively easy-handed rule in Kulja and willingness to accept refugees from Xinjiang both during and after the Muslim revolt. This image was further improved by the contrasting policies introduced by the Qing after the reconquest of Xinjiang. Qing officials radically remade the territory, abolishing its status as a far-off military colony and integrating it as a newly established province in 1884. Subsequently, though with arguable outcomes, the Qing authorities attempted to pacify the Muslim population through agriculture and small, tightly knit communities as well as introduce a network of Confucian schools to instill Confucian values among the Muslims and prepare a class of local bureaucratic intermediaries versed in Chinese²⁸⁷.

Conclusion

By the beginning of the 1870s the Turkestan general-governorship had become the major institution defining and conducting Russian policies on Xinjiang. By now the more cautious approach of the mid-1860s had given way to a more proactive intervention into the region. We can explain the change in approach due to on the one hand the astounding initial successes the Muslim rebels had against the Qing forces but also because the Qing-Muslim conflict attained an international scope. The most important change was the creation of an independent Muslim state ruled by Yaqub Beg, a strongman and adventurer from Khoqand

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 323-324.

²⁸⁷ Schluessel, *Land of Strangers*, 52.

who could use the political and military instability in Altishahr to his benefit. Although relatively weak compared to neighboring Russia and the British India, Yaqub Beg's regime initially seemed to be strong and militarily capable of withstanding Qing incursions. This explains Russian readiness to negotiate with Yaqub Beg - on the one hand there were uncertainties as to what the final status of Xinjiang would be, on the other hand the Russians could obtain the same advantages with Yaqub Beg, they were able to negotiate with the Qing prior to the Muslim revolt. The subsequent Russian embassies could achieve an advantageous outcome of their negotiations by a combination of measures aimed at diplomatically recognizing Yaqub Beg as the ruler of Altishahr and by applying diplomatic and military pressure on him. Apprehensions towards increasing British commercial and diplomatic presence in the region were another factor facilitating formal engagement with Yaqub Beg by officials such as Kaul'bars or Kuropatkin.

Further to the north the Ili region was the center of the Muslim revolt in the mid-1860s but towards the end of the decade there too various rebel groups managed to unite under Abu'l-'Ala Khan's authority. Yet already in 1871 Russian forces under colonel Kuropatkin's command would invade and institute a Russian-backed administration for the next 10 years until the territory's final secession to the Qing. It is not entirely clear as to what were the reasons for the Russian annexation of Ili, most Russian sources cite the need to stop violent incursions from the Abu'l-'Ala Khan's territory and accusations that the Khan was complicit in hiding the criminals and refusing to send them over to the Russian territory. As the Russian sources provide only part of the picture we can only speculate whether Abu'l-'Ala Khan was complicit in such incursions or simply could not control the people nominally under his control or the Russian narrative is lacking in context and details. However, another viable and well documented reason for the Russian occupation of Ili was the execution of a

preemptive operation in the Ili as the Russian officers expressed concern for Yaqub Beg's potential incursion into the Ili by the early 1870s.

The Russian sources, mainly Pantusov's work and publications in *Turkestanskii Sbornik* provide a glimpse into how Russian officials in the Turkestan general-governorship such as Kolpakovskii envisioned and applied ethnic and religious policies in a region the political status of which was ambiguous. For them the goal was to present Russia as a neutral force and not a participant in the Muslim revolt. This allowed Kolpakovskii to act as a bridge between different ethnic and religious communities in Kulja. If the territory was to stay as a part of Russia it would already have its social and political institutions aligned with the rest of the Turkestan general-governorship and if the Ili would be returned to the Qing, the Russians would be able to leave the territory with a positive image of their rule, i.e. as a force capable of preserving peaceful relations between the Muslims and the Buddhists. It should be noted that the sources in question do not tell us whether Russian policies in Ili achieved the goals Kolpakovskii's administration envisioned, nor do they provide the views of local inhabitants on the Russian rule in Kulja.

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to analyze the role Russia played in the Muslim revolt of 1864-1877 and how the revolt itself affected Russia's position in Central Asia. The original hypothesis this thesis put forward was that Russian approach towards the uprising was flexible and depended on changes in the ongoing conflict. Likewise, this thesis proposed that considerations of religious and ethnic factors in the Muslim revolt influenced Russian officers and administration's decision making in the border regions.

The first chapter explored the Russian advance in Central Asia during the 1850s-1860s. It attempted to shed light into the creation and functioning of the Turkestan general-governorship. Similarly in this chapter I provided historical background of the Muslim revolt including the conquest of the region by the Qing empire in the mid 18th century, the discussion of the subsequent political and economic regime instituted in the Qing Xinjiang. Finally this chapter introduced, albeit in a limited manner, the discussion of knowledge production and dissemination about Xinjiang by Russian officers, secret agents and intellectuals (often combining some if not all such roles, as Chokan Valikhanov's case clearly illustrates).

In the mid-19th century Russian frontiers in Central Asia reached Qing Xinjiang however, as both the parties had resolved the border demarcation issue less than a year prior to the beginning of the Muslim revolt they were unable to implement any of the changes negotiated; therefore, the Russo-Qing border remained relatively porous and easy to cross. At the same time Russia was in the midst of its Central Asian campaigns which resulted in the establishment of the Turkestan general-governorship in 1867. The new territory would be an important party in the Muslim conflict a few years later.

The Qing on the other hand having established a military government in Xinjiang in the mid-18th century by the beginning of 1860s were increasingly unable to effectively govern the territory and their garrisons suffered from the lack of funding. Deterioration of the state of the Qing forces in the region coupled with an already dubious level of political legitimacy the Qing court enjoyed among the Muslims of Xinjiang the essential conditions for a successful uprising were in place.

The second chapter based on the textual analysis and interpretation of a number of published and archival sources attempted to reconstruct the situation on the Russo-Qing border in the 1860s and to illustrate the strategic conundrum that so perplexed Russian decision makers of the time: should we support one party in this conflict over the other and if so - which one, or neither? This question is fundamentally close to what this thesis asks: what was the nature of Russia's involvement in the Muslim revolt and what were the underlying reasons for such an interference.

During the early period of the revolt the Russian response to the sudden collapse of the Qing authority throughout Xinjiang was in flux and ambiguous. The government's initial policy of 'sit and wait' was a compromise and serves as evidence of both Russia's vulnerable position and of contemporary uncertainties of Xinjiang's long-term political status. Russia's lenient approach was the result of both its willingness to preserve favorable relations with the Qing with whom it only recently concluded a series of advantageous agreements. On the other hand the astounding initial successes of the rebels and active participation of Kazakhs who were Russian subjects coupled with only meager and scattered military resources in the region were major constraints on the Russian ability to support Qing. To that we also need to add the prevalent idea among Russian intellectuals and military men in the mid 1860s that the Qing court lost Xinjiang for many years if not forever. In sum, the second chapter illustrates well the discrepancy between the need to prevent the spread of the uprising into Russian

territory and even more significantly to stem the movement of Russian subjects across the border to the Qing territory to take part in the ongoing conflict. At the same time Russian intelligence reports were of highly unfavorable opinion of the rebels and favored the restoration of the Qing power in Xinjiang not necessarily as a friendly power but as a reliable and predictable partner. Other Russian sources both implicitly and explicitly supported the restoration of the Qing power in the region. I tend to believe the preference for the Qing rule over Xinjiang over the latter becoming fully independent and consisting of a number of weaker Islamic polities stemmed from the perception of Qing rule in Xinjiang resting on similar assumptions to that of the Russian rule in Turkestan and the Kazakh Steppe: both Russia and Qing were non-Muslim empires ruling over Muslim communities in adjacent regions; i.e. they shared a fundamental vulnerability and therefore were unlikely to attempt to cause the other to lose control over their portion of the Central Asia. However, once the Qing authority in Xinjiang collapsed due to the events beyond Russia's control all the latter could do initially was to provide some tacit assistance to the Qing while trying to avoid from being branded as a clear Qing ally by the rebels to ensure the revolt did not cross the border.

The third chapter examines the shift in Russian policies towards the Muslim polities which resulted in diplomatic engagement with both Abu'l-'Ala Khan's polity in Kulja and Yaqub Beg's regime in Altishahr, including the exchange of embassies and recognition of Yaqub Beg's rule. Russian engagement also included military actions against Abu'l-'Ala Khan and threats thereof against Yaqub Beg. However, unlike the 1871 military action in Ili it is doubtful military actions against Yaqub Beg were seriously considered by military officials in Tashkent. Russian occupation of Ili aroused tensions with Beijing, so further Russian advance into Xinjiang would likely cause a stern reaction from the Qing court which was determined to restore its control over Xinjiang. An equally negative reaction would have come from the British India as well; British officials envisioned Yaqub Beg's state as a buffer

state between Russia and India. However, despite the fact that both Britain and Russia were interested to secure their influence in the Tarim Basin, the region's dependence on trade links with Qing interior meant there was little incentive for commercial activities in an independent Altishahr and therefore by the mid-1870s neither Russian nor British officials were eager committing considerable military resources to this region.

During its temporary occupation of the Ili region the Russian administration attempted to find a careful balance between the Buddhist and Muslim communities while also upholding von Kaufman's *ignorirovanie* policy towards Islam. The disproportionate support towards Buddhist community of Ili cannot be readily explained except for the same idea of striving for control and balance. As the Buddhist communities of Sibe, Oirats, and the Han suffered after the uprising they were forced either to flee or to submit to the Dungan and Taranchi forces. With the Russians having established their rule over the region, symbolic gestures towards the Buddhist community in Ili apparently had the goal of reinforcing the Russians' neutrality in the conflict and restoring the religious situation in the area to what it used to be before the conflict.

To reiterate, by the time of the Muslim revolt Russia was an ascendant power on the global stage while the Qing was in the midst of a major turmoil and was losing territory to European powers, including Russia, the situation above demonstrates that Russia was more predisposed to preserving the Qing and treating it somewhat fairly rather than deal with arguably weaker yet potentially more subversive Muslim states of Ili and Altishahr. Ironically Russian fear and distrust of Islam in the late 1860s was contrary to the note West Siberian governor-general Hasford attached to Chokan Valikhanov's report on his travels to Kashgar in the wake of the 1857 Khwaja rebellion. Hasford's position was to essentially render support and diplomatic recognition to a potential future Muslim state in Xinjiang. General Kolpakovskii's later policy of promoting interethnic and inter-religious cooperation in the

Russian occupied Kulja is to some degree an amalgamation of the two previous approaches and illustrates shifts in Russia's Xinjiang policy yet again.

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