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The Eye of the Tsar: Intelligence-Gathering and Geopolitics in Eighteenth-Century Eurasia

A dissertation presented

by

Gregory Dmitrievich Afinogenov

to

The Department of History

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
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in the subject of

History

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The Eye of the Tsar: Intelligence-Gathering and Geopolitics in Eighteenth-Century Eurasia

Abstract

This dissertation argues for the importance of knowledge production for understanding the relationship between the Russian Empire, the Qing Dynasty, and European actors, from the mid-seventeenth to the early nineteenth century. It focuses specifically on intelligence-gathering, including espionage, as a genre of intellectual work situated in state institutions, oriented toward pragmatic goals, and produced by and for an audience of largely anonymous bureaucrats. It relies on archival sources from Moscow, St. Petersburg, Paris, London, and Rome, as well as published materials. The dissertation begins by investigating how seventeenth-century Siberians compiled information about China, and how maps and documents were transmitted first to Moscow and then to Western Europe to be republished for wider audiences. It then examines the post-Petrine shift to more specialized forms of intelligence-gathering, focusing on industrial espionage in the Moscow-Beijing trade caravan. As the dissertation shows, the changing priorities of the Russian intelligence gathering apparatus shaped and often crippled the ability of Russian Qing experts to address wider audiences. On the mid-eighteenth-century Russo-Qing border, the dissertation follows the building of a robust Russian intelligence network in Qing Mongolia amid unprecedented inter-imperial tension, and its ultimate failure to achieve desired geopolitical ends. These intelligence failures are then shown to provide a compelling

new explanation for the collapse of European imperial attempts at diplomacy in East Asia in the last third of the eighteenth century. Finally, the dissertation concludes by showing how, by means of strategic forgetting, intelligence was reconstructed into academic sinology during the reign of Alexander I.

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Author's Note

Historical dates are given as they appear in sources: Russian ones in the Julian calendar, which in the eighteenth century was ten days behind the Gregorian, but Jesuit, British, and French in the Gregorian. Russian names are transliterated according to the modified Library of Congress system now in general use. Chinese names and words are rendered in pinyin, including, where possible, Russian translations. Manchu words are transliterated using the Möllendorf system.

Spies, you are lights in state, but of base stuff,
Who, when you've burnt yourselves down to the snuff,
Stink and are thrown away. End fair enough.
Ben Jonson, " On Spies"

Introduction

1. Knowledge and Ignorance

This story is about knowledge: the way lines are drawn between different kinds of knowledge, sorting the hidden from the widely known; the choices that determine what knowledge gets made and circulated, and which audiences it comes to address; and, finally, how both knowledge and ignorance shape the relationships between states. For historians, of course, these questions are not new. Yet they have generally been driven to study only one sector of this coordinate system. Scholars focus on knowledge that is public, scientific, or academic rather than restricted or concealed; produced by prominent individuals rather than anonymous bureaucrats; successfully gathered and analyzed rather than incorrect, ignored, or misunderstood. By the time the story concludes, it will be clear just how much the traditional approach has left out, and how integral this remainder must be, not only for histories of knowledge but also for those of what we think of as the non-Western world. As I will show, eighteenth-century Russia's intellectual relationship with the Qing Empire—and the vast territories that came to impinge on this relationship—cannot be understood without fundamentally reframing our expectations about both knowledge and international politics.

It is hard for us imagine that early modern Russia or its Inner Asian collision zone with China produced any sort of knowledge that we might recognize as such. In this we have inherited the standards of Enlightenment historiography, which saw Russia and Eurasia as a space defined by its potential for being civilized on Western

terms.[1] The traditional metrics by which the "progress of enlightenment" was measured at the time—literacy, markets (including literary ones), predominance of the liberal rather than the military professions—continue to influence our own, and Russia in the long eighteenth century did badly on all of these.[2] Printed publications in Russia consisted overwhelmingly of translations from French and German; their readership, according to the best recent estimates, included considerably less than one percent of the population; virtually none were published or read outside Moscow and St. Petersburg, let alone east of the Urals.[3] Max Okenfuss, controversially, has argued that there was no such thing as a Russian Enlightenment. Even those scholars who disagree have tended to focus on the era's cultural rather than its intellectual achievements, evidently in large part because of the lack of material.[4] Russian Siberia and the Inner Asian lands that bordered it, at least before the turn of the nineteenth century, seemed to be still more benighted: though this vast territory appears in scholarship as the object of ethnographic, botanical, and other research, Siberian voices are almost never heard.

[1] See Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe : The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

[2] Clare Jackson, "Progress and Optimism," *The Enlightenment World*, 2004, 177–93.

[3] V. D. Rak, *Russkie literaturnye sborniki i periodicheskie izdaniia vtoroi poloviny XVIII veka : inostrannye istochniki, sostav, tekhnika kompiliatsii* (Sankt-Peterburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 1998); A. Iu. Samarin, *Chitatel´ v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XVIII veka* (Moskva: MGUP, 2000).

[4] Max Okenfuss, *The Rise and Fall of Latin Humanism in Early-Modern Russia : Pagan Authors, Ukrainians, and the Resiliency of Muscovy* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995); Douglas Smith, *Working the Rough Stone : Freemasonry and Society in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1999); Exceptions include Cynthia Whittaker, *Russian Monarchy : Eighteenth-Century Rulers and Writers in Political Dialogue* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003); Michael D. Gordin, "The Importation of Being Earnest: The Early St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences," *Isis* 91, no. 1 (March 1, 2000): 1–31, doi:10.2307/237556.

How is it possible to write an intellectual history of a place whose intellectual life seems so inaccessible to historians, if it existed at all? My argument is such a life not only existed, but in its own peculiar way even flourished, around the wild landscapes of southern and eastern Siberia, including the threads these extended to the Russian and Qing imperial capitals. The Ukrainian and Western European immigrant communities of clergymen and academics which have served historians as the intellectual bellwethers of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Russia left only a small imprint here.[5] So did that onetime bogeyman of Russian liberals, the despotic patrimonial state, and the rapacious aristocratic patronage networks which have displaced it more recently in the scholarly conversation—but neither did anything like the "civil society" some have begun to find in the period play a significant role.[6] This was a world of the middle ranks both literally, for the Russian Empire was governed by the Table of Ranks, and figuratively, denoting people as far below the grandees of St. Petersburg society as they were above the peasants who comprised the overwhelming majority of Imperial Russia's population. These were not bourgeois or gentry professionals. They were, for the most part, the salaried employees of bureaucratic institutions: officials like Varfolomei Iakobii, with vast authority in a narrow domain but with worldly achievements amounting to a stone house and a medal or two; students like Larion

[5] See, e.g., Serhii Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Simon Werrett, "An Odd Sort of Exhibition: The St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences in Enlightened Russia" (D. Phil., University of Cambridge, 2000).

[6] See, respectively, Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime* (New York: Scribner, 1974); John LeDonne, *Absolutism and Ruling Class: The Formation of the Russian Political Order, 1700-1825* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Joseph Bradley, *Voluntary Associations in Tsarist Russia: Science, Patriotism, and Civil Society* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009).

Rossokhin, sent to Beijing with concrete instructions but returning home to little besides a desk and a shared room; indigenous elites like the Evenki Pavel Gantimurov, valued for their nomadic connections but certainly not in line for promotion to the nobility; artisans like Osip Miasnikov, recruited for government business and forgotten when their results proved meager.[7]

These men (and they were all men) were not numerous, but together they produced thousands of pages of strategic evaluations, spy reports, documentary translations, transcripts of conversations, and volumes of collated scraps and fragments, all of them dealing with the vast Qing realm with which their lives and careers were so tightly entwined. The kind of knowledge state institutions wanted and their employees produced was almost always of a singular kind, not at all like the works intellectual historians usually study. It avoided theory, the expectation of immortality, and explicit self-reflection in favor of timeliness and pragmatism; it was almost never destined to circulate beyond the institutions that birthed it; and, finally, its authors often remained anonymous and rarely strove to cultivate a distinct authorial identity. Following the eighteenth-century usage, I call this type of knowledge "intelligence."

It might seem strange to consider intelligence as a subject of intellectual history. After all, every bureaucracy by its very nature produces documents. Three major differences make Russian intelligence documents about the Qing fundamentally

[7] On Russian officialdom, see Walter M. Pintner and Don Rowney, eds., *Russian Officialdom : The Bureaucratization of Russian Society from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Peter B. Brown, "Guarding the Gate-Keepers: Punishing Errant Rank-and-File Officials in Seventeenth-Century Russia," *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Neue Folge, 50, no. 2 (January 1, 2002): 224–45; and on the College of Foreign Affairs specifically, see Anna Joukovskaïa, "Le service diplomatique russe au XVIIIe siècle: genèse et fonctionnement du collège des Affaires étrangères" (EHESS, 2002).

distinct from the firewood requisitions or land surveys they might superficially resemble—and make them especially compelling for contemporary readers. First, they concerned an object of study that in Western Europe and Russia alike was still known almost exclusively through the limited and biased testimony provided by Jesuit missionaries; this made acquiring Russian intelligence desirable not just for officials in Moscow and St. Petersburg but in London and Paris as well. Second, gathering intelligence took Russians well beyond the offices and estates of the imperial interior. These texts were the product of networks ensnaring Junghars, Kazakhs, Mongols, Manchus, Chinese, and even the Jesuits themselves, and as such reveal the delicate interdependencies and striking human stories that characterized Russia's presence in this borderland. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, many of them were not just privileged but secret and remained unknown not just to their contemporaries but to ours as well. Their contents shed light on a whole world of knowledge lurking behind the staid façade of Russian officialdom.

"Public," "privileged," and "secret" refer to different types of knowledge. In the archives of the postwar United States, it has been claimed, classified documents far outnumber public ones.[8] The same was true to a much greater extent for Imperial Russia and especially for Muscovy. With the exception of a proportionately insignificant handful of manuscript or printed books, woodcuts, certain laws, and the like, almost every written text produced in Russia was privileged—that is, assumed not to circulate beyond a narrow spectrum of official recipients. A further subset was explicitly classified as secret. But the line between these two categories was not always

[8] Peter Galison, "Removing Knowledge," *Critical Inquiry* 31, no. 1 (2004): 229–43.

certain. For instance, Peter the Great's 1720 *General Regulation*, which set up the structure of colleges (*kollegii*) that formed the central administrative complex of the empire, prescribed either death or eternal galley slavery for such crimes as "secretly carrying off College letters or documents for evil purposes, either temporarily or permanently" and "revealing College resolutions to inappropriate outside persons, announcing protocols prematurely, or disclosing the votes or opinions of members." These penalties applied to "superiors as well as inferiors."[9] Despite this stringency, bodies like the Privy Chancellery (*Tainaia kantseliariia*) were set up alongside ordinary institutions and explicitly charged with handling secret matters—with "secrecy" being in part a measure of significance as well as informational restriction. Such arrangements were far from unusual in early modern European states. The main difference was that in Russia the market for books, newspapers, and journals, and hence the category of public knowledge itself, was minuscule in comparison.

The line between privileged and secret in Qing-related intelligence documents is often even harder to trace, especially before the mid-eighteenth century. While many sources are explicitly marked "secret," others dealing with similar matters are not. I have generally based my categorization of them as being one or the other on circumstantial evidence such as whether they bear directly on what would now be called "national security" and the degree of trepidation with which they are referred to by their readers and writers. Likewise, what distinguishes espionage from intelligence-gathering more broadly is usually the severity with which a given agent is ordered to

[9] Mikhail Speranskii, ed., *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii*, series 1 (Sanktpeterburg: Tip. II otdeleniia Sobstvennoi EIV Kantseliarii, 1830), VI:158; see also Jan Plamper, "Archival Revolution or Illusion? Historicizing The Russian Archives and Our Work in Them," *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Neue Folge, 51, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 57–69.

avoid detection in one clause or another of his instructions or the fear he expresses about being caught. These were not fundamentally distinct forms of activity, as open-source intelligence (OSINT), human intelligence (HUMINT), and signals intelligence (SIGINT) might be today.[10] One thing about secret documents is clear, however: intelligence-gathering was expected to, and frequently did, shade into more concrete forms of action (which I generally call "secret diplomacy"). Instructions enjoining an agent to pump his sources for privileged details also encouraged him to develop better relationships with them and lay the groundwork for hypothetical future defection in case of a diplomatic confrontation or outright military conflict.

Where there was espionage and secret diplomacy, there was also failure on a large scale. (Indeed, it is difficult to identify even a single Russian covert effort against the Qing that was successful even in general terms.) This makes it especially essential to avoid the traditional habit of eighteenth-century historians: instead of beginning with concrete acts like observation, copying, and sketching, on the basis of which we can plot the systems that organize their products into bodies of knowledge, we have often begun with the most ambitious fantasies of eighteenth-century projectors and taken the data, such as they are, as confirmation. This tendency is not just present, as might be assumed, in theory-driven narratives inspired by Michel Foucault or James Scott: the institutional boosterism characteristic of Russian-language historiography is equally subject to totalizing monumentality, seeing the founding of a school or a correspondence as something worth celebrating regardless of how short-lived or

[10] For an overview of the structure of contemporary intelligence-gathering practice, see, e.g., Edward H. Kaplan, "Intelligence Operations Research: The 2010 Philip McCord Morse Lecture," *Operations Research* 60, no. 6 (July 3, 2012): 1297–1309, doi:10.1287/opre.1120.1059.

ineffective it may have been. Failure, on the terms defined by eighteenth-century people themselves, was a basic component of knowledge production in the period.[11]

The odd coexistence of fantasy and failure is especially key for understanding both Russia and Europe's relationship to the Qing. Between the mid-seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries, China and its borderlands figured prominently in the dreamworld of Western geopolitics. Access to its trade held the key to untold commercial riches. The seeming success of Catholic missionaries at the imperial court made the augmentation of Christ's flock by hundreds of millions of Chinese converts appear to be an imminent prospect.[12] For Russians, military dominance over the Qing held the promise of wealth and security for Siberia, in the near term, and eventually hegemony in Eurasia and in the Pacific. The Amur valley—a territory which Muscovy formally ceded to the Qing in the 1689 Treaty of Nerchinsk after military reverses—was regarded by influential Russians as a lost Eldorado whose supposed agricultural productivity and easy access to the ocean could have given economic meaning to all of the empire's eastern conquests, from Irkutsk to Alaska.[13]

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[11] A particularly successful use of this approach is Andre Wakefield, *The Disordered Police State : German Cameralism as Science and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

[12] The most thorough account of the former is Louis Dermigny, *La Chine et l'Occident: le commerce à Canton au XVIIIe siècle, 1719-1833* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1964); the classic statement on the latter, Arnold Rowbotham, *Missionary and Mandarin : The Jesuits at the Court of China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1942).

[13] See Mark Bassin, "Expansion and Colonialism on the Eastern Frontier: Views of Siberia and the Far East in Pre-Petrine Russia," *Journal of Historical Geography* 14, no. 1 (January 1988): 3–21, doi:10.1016/S0305-7488(88)80124-5; and for the nineteenth century, Mark Bassin, *Imperial Visions : Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Note however that the archival documents, which Bassin does not consult, suggest that the Eldorado myth about the Far East in fact persisted throughout the eighteenth century.

The problem was that neither Russians nor Western Europeans had the ability to exert their influence in Beijing in order to realize these dreams. The famous German polymath Gottlieb Leibniz hoped that Petrine Russia, thanks to its geographical location and newfound orientation towards the values of Protestant Europe, would act as a civilizational mediator between the enlightened Chinese and European lands. Aside from the Jesuits, who had their own interests and who were formally in the service of the Qing emperor, no better alternative existed than to hope for direct supernatural intercession. Even the closed trade entrepôt of Canton (Guangzhou) and the Portuguese-administered port of Macao (Aomen) nearby, both of which hosted flourishing communities of European factors and merchants, failed to offer a route to the halls of power in the capital. The Russians, for their part, possessed an entrepôt of their own (after 1727) in the northern Mongolian border town of Kiakhta, but virtually no significant military presence east of the Urals and certainly no ability to overawe the Qing with their power or cultural dominance.

Intelligence and other kinds of knowledge acquired an outsize importance when Europeans could not simply exterminate indigenous populations, as in the Americas, seize wealthy commercial and political centers piecemeal, as in South and Southeast Asia, or found their own trading outposts, as in Africa. Beginning in the 1640s with the first longform firsthand accounts of the Qing conquest, Europeans devoured Jesuit and occasionally Dutch reports from China.[14] With the appearance of Jean-Baptiste Du Halde's 1735 *Description … de la Chine*, by far the most thorough treatment up to that

[14] Prominent works include Martino Martini, *Novus Atlas Sinensis* (Amsterdam: Joh. Blaeu, 1655); Joan Nieuhof, Pieter de Goyer, and Jacob de Keizer, *Die Gesantschaft der Ost-Indischen Geselschaft in den Vereinigten Niederländern, an den tartarischen Cham …* (Gedruckt und verlegt durch Jacob Mörs, Buch- und Kunst-händlern, 1666).

point, interest in Chinese culture reached a fever pitch.[15] *Chinoiserie*, an aesthetic sensibility based on the imitation of Chinese artworks and export goods such as furniture and porcelain, became prominent in this period, while authors such as Voltaire took moral and intellectual inspiration from Jesuit translations of Confucian classics. The sources for Du Halde's groundbreaking volumes were French Jesuits who had been sent to Beijing by Louis XIV with the explicit goal of combining missionary work, science, and *raison d'état*.[16] Britain cultivated Jesuit informants and gathered intelligence through East India Company agents; eventually, in 1791 and 1815, it sent two massive embassies whose results were as much intellectual as diplomatic.[17] Knowledge in East Asia was not quite power, but it could appear to substitute for a lack of it.

Intelligence about the Qing had an even greater appeal for Muscovy and the Russian Empire (a title which Peter the Great proclaimed in 1721). Russia came into military conflict with its southeastern neighbor in the mid-seventeenth century, yet had also devoted considerable resources to developing direct and indirect trade with the Qing. From the 1610s on, Russian diplomats, missionaries, military officers, and other agents were ordered to report on the strategic and commercial situation in Qing-controlled areas to which they had access. They were expected to make full use of both licit and illicit means, ranging from getting escorting officers drunk to measuring road

[15] Isabelle Landry-Deron, *La preuve par la Chine : la "Description" de J.-B. Du Halde, Jésuite, 1735* (Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales, 2002).

[16] Isabelle Landry-Deron, "Les Mathématiciens envoyés en Chine par Louis XIV en 1685," *Archive for History of Exact Sciences* 55, no. 5 (April 1, 2001): 423–63, doi:10.1007/s004070000033.

[17] Gao Hao, "The Amherst Embassy and British Discoveries in China," *History* 99, no. 337 (October 1, 2014): 568–87, doi:10.1111/1468-229X.12069.

distances using a wheeled distance-measuring machine. The goal of this intelligence-gathering was to stay abreast of potential military threats, but also to prepare the ground for a possible future war of conquest which would bring Russian soldiers back to the Amur or even to the Great Wall. For a time, spies had an even more strategically vital function: they served as intermediaries between Russian officials and Mongols or other borderland actors in negotiations about defection and political allegiance. In the end, the visions of power projected by Russian rulers and bureaucrats onto the Qing rested on the shoulders of their spies, as military forces in the region were never strong enough and diplomats failed again and again as far as imperial ambitions were concerned.

Only in the middle of the nineteenth century did British and Russian geopolitical ambitions begin to be realized through annexation and military conflict, with Britain wresting Hong Kong and extensive trade concessions from the Qing in the First Opium War of 1839-1840 and Russia finally seizing Northern Manchuria, the Amur, and the Maritime Region in the 1850s.[18] Yet by this point China for Europeans was no longer the mythically prosperous and commercially decisive world power the Jesuits had conjured up, and in fact the late Kangxi era, which ended with the emperor's death in 1720, proved to be the high point for Qing rule. Russia's conquest of the Far East is striking more in its brazenness than in the sophistication of its intrigue, although the methods and personnel involved reflected the long legacy of Russian intelligence on the Qing border. This imperialist coup did not result—at least not

[18] See S. C. M. Paine, *Imperial Rivals: China, Russia, and Their Disputed Frontier* (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1996); William Rowe, *China's Last Empire : The Great Qing* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2009), 165ff.

immediately—in the defection of Mongolia or the fall of the Qing dynasty. It was a very different and ultimately far less consequential scenario from the one eighteenth-century strategists anticipated.

Why, then, is the apparently orphaned world of Russian intelligence-gathering worth studying at all? Aside from the more general analytical dividends already described above, there are three principal reasons. The first is that the theory and practice of Russian intelligence in China helps us explain large- and small-scale events that would otherwise be baffling. Why was the Qing government so concerned about Russian influence in Inner Asia despite the manifest lack of a serious military threat? Why did Russians strain to exercise their influence at the Vatican on behalf of the defunct Jesuits in the early nineteenth century? How did a Hungarian exile come to be buried in Madagascar alongside two Russian refugees? Answering questions as unexpected as these requires making sense of a major covert Russian component in Eurasian and Pacific geopolitics throughout the long eighteenth century. This has, in effect, been entirely absent from the literature.

If intelligence was so important for Russo-Qing relations in the period, this cannot be discerned in the influential English-language literature about the subject, which was all written nearly a half-century ago.[19] For subsequent researchers on the subject, these have been the authoritative references, and no equal work has emerged in the meantime, despite the enormous changes in historiographical practice since that

[19] Clifford Foust, *Muscovite and Mandarin: Russia's Trade with China and Its Setting, 1727-1805* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969); Mark Mancall, *Russia and China; Their Diplomatic Relations to 1728* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971); Eric Widmer, *The Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Peking during the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976).

era. There is an important reason why intelligence makes no appearance in these books except in vague and glancing terms: they were all written without any use of Russian archives, being based largely on reproductions of documents contained in nineteenth-century historical publications. Subsequent studies have focused on the reception or "image" of China in eighteenth-century Russia, although the materials they use scarcely allow us access to any but the most elite level of Russian readership.[20] Indeed, to find an archivally based work on Russo-Chinese relations we must go back nearly a hundred years, to John Baddeley's classic *Russia, Mongolia, China.*[21] Intelligence is precisely the sort of field which cannot be studied without archival documents, both because its materials were generally either privileged or explicitly secret and because nineteenth-century antiquarians had good reasons not to emphasize such activities. The ignorance of eighteenth-century Europeans thus mirrors our own, and for similar reasons. Small wonder, then, that the very concept of Russian spies in eighteenth-century China sounds foreign and exotic even to experts in Russian or Qing history. While various types of agents and go-betweens—including those who dabbled in espionage—have recently begun to feature prominently in historical scholarship, the archives of Russian intelligence offer us for the first time the opportunity to study covert action systematically from the inside.[22]

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[20] See, e.g., Barbara Maggs, *Russia and "Le Rêve Chinois": China in Eighteenth-Century Russian Literature*, Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century ; 224 (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1984); David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism : Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Susanna Soojung Lim, *China and Japan in the Russian Imagination, 1685-1922: To the Ends of the Orient* (New York: Routledge, 2013). A broader work is Bassin, *Imperial Visions* but it does not use archival sources either.

[21] John F Baddeley, *Russia, Mongolia, China* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1919).

[22] Simon Schaffer, ed., *The Brokered World : Go-Betweens and Global Intelligence, 1770-1820* (Sagamore Beach, Mass.: Science History Publications, 2009). Serious scholarship on Russian espionage is virtually nonexistent; for a representative example, see V. S. Grazhul′, *Rossiiskaia razvedka XVIII stoletiia: tainy*

Russian-language scholarship on the Empire's relationship with the Qing has not adequately represented the issues involved either. To be sure, masterworks like P. E. Skachkov's *Ocherki istorii russkogo kitaevedeniia* (*Essays on the History of Russian Sinology*) are much more encyclopedic and exhaustively archival than anything that exists in English, but even Skachkov's excellent institutional intellectual history freely conflates different kinds of knowledge-production and severs them from their geopolitical and cultural contexts.[23] The flaws in Soviet diplomatic history run even deeper. Produced as part of an ongoing debate with Chinese academics about whether or not Imperial Russia's policies toward the Qing were "imperialist"—itself an outgrowth of the Sino-Soviet split—Soviet monographs glossed over inconvenient moments (like espionage) which suggested anything other than peaceful commercial intent. The work of the leading Russian-language historian of Russo-Qing relations, V. S. Miasnikov, has been firmly in this tradition, which has continued to shape post-Soviet scholarship.[24] The most valuable contribution to the study of this topic in Russian, undoubtedly, is the long-running series of published documents *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XVII v.: dokumenty i materialy* and its successors for the 18th and 19th centuries (the first stopped at two large volumes; the second is on its sixth and still going; the last appears to have stalled at one). These documents, which now number

galantnogo veka (Moskva: Veche, 2013); but cf. Iannis Karras, "Ocharovanie i razocharovanie: greki i russkaia politika v nachale XVIII v.," in *Istoriia rossiisko-grecheskikh otnoshenii i ikh perspektivy v XXI v.* (Moskva: RFK, 2010), 60–65.

[23] P. E. Skachkov, *Ocherki istorii russkogo kitaevedeniia* (Moskva: Nauka, 1977); see also P. E. Skachkov, "Znachenie rukopisnogo naslediia russkikh kitaevedov," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 1 (1960): 117–23.

[24] E.g., V. S. Miasnikov, *Dogovornymi stat' iami utverdili: diplomaticheskaia istoriia russko-kitaiskoi granitsy XVII-XX vv.* (Khabarovsk: Priamurskoe geograficheskoe obshchestov, 1997); E. L. Besprozvannykh, *Priamur'e v sisteme russko-kitaĭskikh otnosheniĭ XVII-seredina XIX v.* (Khabarovsk: Khabarovskoe Knizhoe izd-vo, 1986).

several thousand, nonetheless constitute a fraction of the available materials on Russo-Qing relations in Russia's archives, and they reflect a fairly narrow set of historiographical interests. Even this material, which is freely available in US libraries, has not been exploited by Western historians, perhaps because diplomatic history has long since fallen into abeyance in the field and the documents seem at first glance to be useful for little else.[25]

A final important reason to study Russo-Qing intelligence in the long eighteenth century is that it offers a powerful and generative way to link together four areas of scholarship that had hitherto been imagined as well-defined entities comfortably separate from one another: scholarship on Russia as an empire, the New Qing History, studies of the Jesuits in China, and histories of eighteenth-century science and of the Enlightenment. Bridging these fields is not simply a cocktail-party exercise, but an opportunity to revisit the geographical and methodological assumptions that give coherence to these scholarly traditions—a chance to write a transnational history that is neither about large-scale flows of commodities or people, nor a "global microhistory" focusing on individuals, but something in between.[26] State-based visions for intelligence

[25] N. F. Demidova and V. S. Miasnikov, eds., *Russko-kitaĭskie otnosheniia v XVII veke. Materialy i dokumenty*, 2 vols. (Moskva: Nauka, 1969); N. F. Demidova, V. S. Miasnikov, and S. L. Tikhvinskiii, eds., *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XVIII veke. Materialy i dokumenty.*, 4 vols. (Moskva: Nauka, 1978); M. B Davydova and S. L. Tikhvinskii, eds., *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XIX veke: materialy i dokumenty* (Moskva: Pamiatniki istoricheskoi mysli, 1995).

[26] Examples of the former include Robert Finlay, *The Pilgrim Art : Cultures of Porcelain in World History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); and Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton : A Global History*, First edition. (New York: Knopf, 2014); the latter includes Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Plumes : Ostrich Feathers, Jews, and a Lost World of Global Commerce* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons : The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006). Some attempts to reconcile the two in the context of intellectual history include David Armitage, "The International Turn in Intellectual History," in *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*, ed. Darrin M. McMahon and Samuel Moyn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 232–52; Emma Rothschild, "Arcs of Ideas: International History and Intellectual History," *Transnationale Geschichte: Themen, Tendenzen Und Theorien*, 2006, 217–26.

gathering lead people and processes operating in all sorts of distinct environments to collide with one another: Jesuits with Mongols, spies with astronomers, Orthodox Christians with Catholics and Buddhists. In the next section, I will demonstrate where my work fits into these fields and their current research agendas, both complementing and serving as a correction to emerging historiographical trends.

2. Four Worlds

In the past two decades, historians of the Russian Empire have begun to emphasize the specifically imperial features of this unusual state. Though its territorial contiguity and seemingly uniform Russian-speaking Orthodox population were once seen as signs of categorical difference from other European settler-colonialist empires—a situation which began to change in the nineteenth century, as the conquest of Turkestan and rule over a hostile Congress Poland pushed it into a self-consciously imperialist direction—contemporary historians have identified imperial struggles in new times and places, from sixteenth-century Kazan to nineteenth-century Mari and Chuvash communities on the Volga.[27] Everywhere, Muscovite and Russian officials were forced to confront the empire's heterogeneity and protect Russian and Orthodox hegemony without provoking active dissent on the part of colonized populations. In some cases, like the Cossack and Bashkir revolts of the early eighteenth century, they went too far, and

[27] Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire : A Multiethnic History* (Harlow, England ; New York: Longman, 2001); Matthew P. Romaniello, *The Elusive Empire : Kazan and the Creation of Russia, 1552-1671* (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012); Paul W. Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy : Mission, Governance, and Confessional Politics in Russia's Volga-Kama Region, 1827-1905* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini, eds., *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

faced revolts explicitly targeted against metropolitan rule.[28] This new range of scholarly interests has also encouraged renewed attention to Russia's intellectual history and the role of institutions like the Academy of Sciences and the Imperial Geographical Society in constructing representations of non-Russian peoples throughout the Empire.[29]

For the most part, however, the focus on the Russian Empire's relationship to its diverse internal populations has not been accompanied by any comparable work on its external neighborhood. Inevitably, Europe—particularly Britain—figures prominently in histories of the eighteenth century, because it was the principal point of reference for Russia's elites as they launched and took part in the modernizing processes Russia underwent during the Petrine and Catherinian eras, including the adoption of everything from European dress to language and architecture.[30] Even work on Siberia, a region which fundamentally depended on its connections with non-Russian lands, has failed to emphasize non-European actors and voices. Only in the past few years has a research agenda loosely labeled "Russia in the World" finally emerged to push the

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[28] Brian J. Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries : Cossack Communities and Empire-Building in the Age of Peter the Great*, New Studies in European History (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009). For more general overviews of recent work in this vein, see Andreas Kappeler, "Spaces of Entanglement," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, no. 2 (2011): 477–87, doi:10.1353/kri.2011.0017; Jeff Sahadeo, "Visions of Empire: Russia's Place in an Imperial World," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 11, no. 2 (2010): 381–409, doi:10.1353/kri.0.0151; Willard Sunderland, "What Is Asia to Us?: Scholarship on the Tsarist 'East' since the 1990s," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, no. 4 (2011): 817–33, doi:10.1353/kri.2011.0049.

[29] Austin Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire : North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845-1917* (Montreal ; Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002); Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors : Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Vera Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient : The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations : Ethnographic Knowledge & the Making of the Soviet Union*, Culture and Society after Socialism (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005) connects this to a later period.

[30] See, e.g., James Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution in Russian Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004).

boundaries of inquiry outward to the Ottoman Empire, Persia, and Mongolia.[31] My work sits firmly in this developing tradition, and demonstrates what should have been understood all along: Russian historians cannot afford to ignore transnational history because the boundaries separating Russia from the outside world are not as firm as we would sometimes like to believe. In the eighteenth century, for instance, the Kazakhs were very much a foreign power despite their oaths of allegiance and their later incorporation into the Empire, while vital links tied Buriats with Mongols and Russian Evenki with Manchurian ones. Even more broadly, Russia under and after Catherine II saw itself as a global power with extensive maritime ambitions, to which the field's "Little Russianism" fails to do justice.

Indeed, a flourishing and up-to-date literature on Inner Asian borderland connections already exists—but Russian historians have been largely absent from the discussion. Since the 1980s, the so-called New Qing Historians have transformed the traditional narrative of late imperial Chinese history. It was once uncontroversial to see this history as a relatively unbroken line testifying to the continuity and civilizational appeal of Chinese culture, which had the ability to assimilate even its steppe conquerors and quickly break down their nomadic traditions. This applied most of all to the numerically insignificant Manchus—who overthrew the Ming Dynasty in 1644—and for decades the Manchu language was abandoned by scholars who judged it a waste of effort to read documents which seemed largely copies of Chinese texts anyway. The New Qing Historians rejected this consensus, both methodologically and interpretively,

[31] E.g., Willard Sunderland, *The Baron's Cloak: A History of the Russian Empire in War and Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014). See also forthcoming work by Erika Monahan and others.

and found a very different story. Throughout the reign of the last imperial dynasty, but especially in its eighteenth-century golden age, Manchu rulers and servitors remained preoccupied with preserving their unique nomadic identity against the temptations of sedentary life and leveraging their steppe heritage to make new claims to power.[32]

The New Qing History's attempt to bring Inner Asia to China also meant reexamining what had brought China to Inner Asia. Recent work on the Qing relationship to Tibet, Xinjiang, and Mongolia has demonstrated that power in Inner Asia was vital to the Qing's self-conception as heirs to the legacy of Chinggis Khan. To a great extent, this invocation of common steppe traditions also provided its subject peoples—like the Mongols—with a viable ideology for participation in imperial rule. This new perspective on Eurasian history has expanded the limits of the traditional Sinosphere well beyond East Asia. Qing appeals to steppe authority were heard as far west as the southern Volga, from which the Kalmyk/Torghut nomads (Russian subjects since the early seventeenth century) staged the last great migration in the history of the steppe in 1771.[33] Qing historians have thus found themselves obliged to grapple with the Russian presence in the region, because the northern limits of Qing expansion were everywhere constricted by Russian power. Recent dissertations in Qing history have

[32] Mark C. Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Pamela Kyle Crossley, *Orphan Warriors: Three Manchu Generations and the End of the Qing World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990); Patricia Ann Berger, *Empire of Emptiness: Buddhist Art and Political Authority in Qing China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003).

[33] See Michael Khodarkovsky, *Where Two Worlds Met: The Russian State and the Kalmyk Nomads, 1600-1771* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

traced the policies put in place against the Russian threat and the ways that Mongols found themselves subject to coercion and influence from both sides.[34]

The renewal of interest in Russo-Qing relations on the part of Qing historians has not yet, as I have shown, been answered by any comparable effort by Russianists. Both groups have continued to rely on studies from the 1970s as their main sources. My dissertation is aimed at more than filling an urgent need, however. By focusing on the stories of people who participated in the multilayered Russian intelligence apparatus targeting the Qing, I have been able to trace interactions between Russians and Qing subjects on the ground, in Beijing as well as in the northern borderlands. No one has yet turned to eighteenth-century Russian bureaucratic records as a source for the bottom-up history of Mongolia, for example, yet these sources contain information about Mongol attitudes and beliefs that would have escaped Qing administrators. While such archival documents need to be treated carefully, as constructions reflecting the prejudices of Russian actors rather than as direct reflections of Mongol experience, they still form a fruitful new resource for Eurasian historians. Reconsidering Russo-Qing relations from the Russian point of view offers new opportunities for both sides by demonstrating that Russia was not an alien Western interloper but an integral part of the Inner Asian world. It also confirms the insight of the New Qing Historians that Qing and China are not synonymous. The individuals Russians encountered when they

[34] Peter Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2005); Johan Elverskog, *Our Great Qing: The Mongols, Buddhism and the State in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006); Benjamin Samuel Levey, "Jungar Refugees and the Making of Empire on Qing China's Kazakh Frontier, 1759-1773" (Ph.D., Harvard University, 2014); Jonathan Schlesinger, "The Qing Invention of Nature: Environment and Identity in Northeast China and Mongolia, 1750-1850" (Ph.D., Harvard University, 2012); Devon Margaret Dear, "Marginal Revolutions: Economies and Economic Knowledge between Qing China, Russia, and Mongolia, 1860 - 1911" (Ph.D., Harvard University, 2014).

crossed the border were almost always Mongols and Manchus, not Chinese, and the bureaucracies they dealt with were run by Manchus. Considerations like these have led me to use "Qing" rather than "China" throughout the text, particularly when referring to matters beyond the Great Wall.

The third tradition I aim to engage with in this project is the history of the Jesuit presence in China. Although this field is arguably older than scholarly Russian history itself—the earliest works date to the mid-seventeenth century—it has not been immune from substantial methodological shifts in recent decades. With more non-Jesuits writing the history of the Society and focusing on questions not rooted in "apology and polemic," as John O'Malley put it, Jesuit historiography has been rejuvenated by a burst of new interests.[35] In the 1990s and 2000s in particular, Jesuit missionary efforts were seen as a royal road to studying early modern globalization, particularly because they appeared to manifest forms of cultural contact and hybridity that had hitherto been excised from histories of European imperialism.[36] The China mission in particular provided a good test case, both because of its cultural and scientific knowledge-production and because of its prestige, duration, and proximity to imperial power. Studies of the Jesuit China mission have shown how the institutions they created merged indigenous Chinese influences with Counter-Reformation European ones, but

[35] John W O'Malley, ed., *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773* (University of Toronto Press, 1999), 3.

[36] Luke Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Steven J. Harris, "Long-Distance Corporations, Big Sciences, and the Geography of Knowledge," *Configurations* 6, no. 2 (1998): 269–304, doi:10.1353/con.1998.0018; Florence Hsia, *Sojourners in a Strange Land: Jesuits and Their Scientific Missions in Late Imperial China* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009); Trent Pomplun, *Jesuit on the Roof of the World: Ippolito Desideri's Mission to Eighteenth-Century Tibet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); and the essays in O'Malley, *The Jesuits*.

also how Jesuit scholars attempted to present Confucian knowledge to European audiences while reconciling it with Catholic theology.[37]

With rare exceptions, work on the China Jesuits has focused on the mission's most successful period, which ended with an imperial ban on Christianity in 1721—a period which also saw the most intellectually significant publications based on Jesuit sources. Yet the mission continued to exist in increasingly straitened circumstances for another century. During this time, the changing, increasingly scientific, focus of Jesuit efforts and the reduced resources available to the Society led it to seek out new connections. St. Petersburg was one of them. Although historians of the Jesuits have long pointed to Russian collections as a key source on late China Jesuit history, the only recent Western study that has used Russian archival documents is an article in Portuguese.[38] My project will be the first to revisit Jesuit history through Russian eyes, analyzing both the content of the letters between the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Jesuits in Beijing and the structure of the relationship between them—the institutions, personnel, and ideological commitments that kept it going. It also traces this relationship further. After the Society of Jesus was dissolved by order of the Pope in 1772, Catherinian Russia, incongruously, became its only protector. I have already shown in an article how Russian intelligence agendas in China were shaped by this

[37] David Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989); Liam Matthew Brockey, *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579–1724* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2007).

[38] Noël Golvers, *Libraries of Western Learning for China: Circulation of Western Books between Europe and China in the Jesuit Mission (ca. 1650 – Ca. 1750). Vol. 1. Logistics of Book Acquisition and Circulation* (Leuven: Ferdinand Verbiest Institute, 2012); Joâo Manuel S. A. Miranda, "Alguns aspectos do intercambio cientifico e cultural entre a Academia das Ciencias de Petersburgo e a comunidade dos «Jesuitas Matematicos» em Pequim nas decadas de 30-50 do seculo XVIII," in *A Companhia de Jesus a a missionação no Oriente*, ed. Nuno da Silva Gonçalves (Lisboa: Brotéria :Fundação Oriente, 2000), 331–64.

development, making the Jesuits part of a wide-ranging global conspiracy against the British.[39] Russo-Jesuit contacts in Beijing went deeper than scholars have imagined. Through the archives of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission, I have been able to trace how both groups interacted with one another in a city where they were outsiders.

Finally, and most broadly, this study will contribute to the growing body of scholarship on European scientific and intellectual engagements with the eighteenth-century world, especially the Pacific. Here, again, the past two decades have brought major changes. In particular, an emerging focus on the location of knowledge—the ways in which it changes as it is carried from place to place, reinterpreted, and often sent back to its point of origin—has driven new kinds of inquiry into the link between science, empire, and commerce.[40] The most influential theoretization of this approach came earlier, with Bruno Latour's work on "centers of calculation." According to Latour, what makes European scientific knowledge unique is not its empirical soundness but its ability to be projected over great distances, brought back to metropolitan centers, and iteratively improved by subsequent voyages. Hence, too, its unique link with empire.[41] Latour's canonical example is the French explorer La Pérouse's encounter with natives of the North Pacific island of Sakhalin, and the

[39] Gregory Afinogenov, "Jesuit Conspirators and Russia's East Asian Fur Trade, 1791–1807," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 2, no. 1 (February 24, 2015): 56–76, doi:10.1163/22141332-00201003.

[40] James A. Secord, "Knowledge in Transit," *Isis* 95, no. 4 (December 2004): 654–72, doi:10.1086/430657; Harold Cook, *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); James Delbourgo and Nicholas Dew, eds., *Science and Empire in the Atlantic World* (New York : Routledge, 2008); David N Livingstone, *Putting Science in Its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

[41] Bruno Latour, *Science in Action : How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987).

resurgent field of Pacific studies has certainly benefited from exploring the impact of science on European imperial encounters in this region.[42]

My study contributes to this literature in two ways. First, it demonstrates what the personal and correspondence networks of the European Republic of Letters looked like on the periphery of the "civilized" world, where the communicative norms of the eighteenth-century scholarly world could not be relied on to facilitate the movement of knowledge. Even when Russians (or employees of the Russian state) produced scientific or academic knowledge rather than intelligence, they had to rely on state actors of all sorts, from experienced spies to caravan workers. The Russian Academy of Sciences, for instance, found itself deeply entangled with the state intelligence apparatus in China, while Jesuit scientists hoping to use Russia as a route for communication with the West repeatedly encountered intelligence-based obstacles. Unlike colonial settings, moreover, where Europeans had more or less unrestricted access to overseas people and territories, the fact that Russian knowledge-gathering in the Qing realm unfolded against a backdrop of official suspicion and control was decisive. Even public knowledge in the Russo-Qing context thus became in a sense a subset of intelligence, since it was inextricably dependent on the people and institutions that gathered covert material.

Second, and more importantly, my dissertation challenges a range of assumptions built into the Latourian model and many of its derivatives. Although scientific knowledge depended on empire, it did not form the main arena for empire's

[42] David Armitage and Alison Bashford, eds., *Pacific Histories: Ocean, Land, People* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Ryan Tucker Jones, *Empire of Extinction: Russians and the North Pacific's Strange Beasts of the Sea, 1741-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

intellectual concern: intelligence was equally important, because it grounded the struggle for military and commercial supremacy on which empire itself relied. Yet intelligence was very different from scientific knowledge as we commonly imagine it, even if sources and individuals could produce both simultaneously. Intelligence is not subject to iterative improvement, and it does not gain in value by circulating through scholarly correspondence networks. Scientific knowledge could be gathered on the spot by any competent European botanist or astronomer, while intelligence relied on the cultivation of informants with access to sufficiently valuable data. These were desperately lacking in much of the European imperial world, especially China—and as I will show, bad information was responsible for much of the disaster that European diplomacy with the Qing had been in this period. Intelligence, as I have sketched out above, brings out the importance of intellectual failure in a way that scientific knowledge does not. This has been a key omission in recent attempts to define ignorance as an object of study: by focusing on the deliberate suppression only of scientific knowledge, "agnotologists" leave much of the field unsurveyed.[43]

I am not the first, of course, to bring intelligence into focus as an object of historical research in the long eighteenth century. Researchers in a wide variety of fields have understood its significance. Notably, C. A. Bayly's legendary *Empire and Information* used the British Empire's information-gathering practices in India as way of understanding the limits of imperial power over diverse indigenous communities and

[43] See Robert Proctor and Londa L. Schiebinger, eds., *Agnotology: The Making and Unmaking of Ignorance* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2008).

the risks involved in coopting local informants.[44] More recently, the New Diplomatic History has focused on the marginal figures, particularly spies and couriers, that shaped early modern international relations; if the field was once seen as a matter of "what one clerk said to another," today diplomatic historians must deal with a much larger cast of characters. This has also meant paying attention to the global and peripatetic careers of a host of go-betweens.[45] Recent work by Matthew Mosca has used intelligence to explore what the Qing Empire knew about the outside world and how conflicting flows of information led it to make crucial geopolitical miscalculations.[46] Yet intelligence has had its most fruitful career in the study of the early modern Ottoman Empire. By making it central to their reconstruction of the politics of the Mediterranean world, Ottomanists have linked the complicated tangle of personal relationships between imperial officials, foreign diplomats, and nonstate actors in Constantinople to the larger world of international politics.[47] All of these researchers have made intelligence meaningful because of its connection to broader historical problems and processes. This study aims to do likewise.

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[44] C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[45] John Watkins, "Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): 1–14, doi:10.1215/10829636-2007-016; Robyn Adams and Rosanna Cox, eds., *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Schaffer, *The Brokered World.*

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

[47] John-Paul A. Ghobrial, *The Whispers of Cities : Information Flows in Istanbul, London, and Paris in the Age of William Trumbull*, First edition. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Emrah Safa Gurkan, "Espionage in the 16th Century Mediterranean: Secret Diplomacy, Mediterranean Go-Betweens and the Ottoman Habsburg Rivalry" (Ph.D., Georgetown University, 2012).

3. Sources and Structure

This dissertation relies primarily on archival and manuscript sources gathered at ten different collections in Moscow and St. Petersburg. These do not, notably, include what would have been the most logical archive for this project: the Archive of Foreign Relations of the Russian Empire (AVPRI), which has been closed for renovation since 2012. As I have discovered, however, a great number of documents produced at the College of Foreign Affairs—the state body most responsible for shaping Russo-Qing intelligence, whose papers are in AVPRI—can be found in copy form in manuscript collections as well as the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts (RGADA). (Copies were made for a variety of reasons, but generally they were produced every time a document moved from one institution to another, as a matter of record-keeping; subsequent centuries have left many out of place.) My manuscript research also incorporates the papers of other key institutional bodies, including the Imperial Academy of Sciences and the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission, as well as individual actors and collectors. The result has been an unexpectedly vast and diverse body of material: the documents I have consulted are written in Russian, French, German, Latin, and English, as well as occasional fragments of Manchu and Chinese. Nor are they limited to top-down, bureaucratic reports and complaints. Russians in China, as it turns out, were enthusiastic note-takers and letter writers; occasionally their marginalia and commonplace books have been valuable to my argument. This has enabled me to concentrate on the individuals involved in Russia's intelligence apparatus, bringing the lives and experiences of ordinary eighteenth-century Russians into view.

I have also been able to conduct research in Western European collections: the British Library and National Archives in London, several archives and libraries in Paris, and the Jesuit archives (ARSI) in Rome. These documents demonstrate the value of a transnational approach. Certain items are direct copies of materials in Russia; others reference events that can only be understood through the lens of Russian reports. But Western sources are valuable beyond their direct connections: they also place Russian intelligence in comparative perspective. They make clear that in certain ways the Russian intelligence project was unique, both because of its ambition and because of the sheer amount of material that it generated. Neither France nor Great Britain ever assembled a collection of secrets as large or as closely based on native Qing informants as Russia.

The story begins in the middle of the seventeenth century, as the Muscovite state began its first explorations of Ming and Qing China. Chapter I demonstrates the vitality of Muscovy's intellectual culture as it sought to reconcile conflicting sources, from the Jesuits to the Mongols, to produce intelligence reports. It also traces how, throughout the seventeenth century, nearly all of the significant documents produced by Muscovite chancellery clerks, diplomats, and intellectuals about Russo-Chinese relations were at various times smuggled out by European ambassadors, translated, and published by presses in Amsterdam, London, and Berlin. Meanwhile, the foreigners who staffed Russia's diplomatic corps and were enlisted in carrying on these relations published their own journals and travelogues when they returned from Beijing. By 1720, Russo-Qing relations were so well-known in Europe that Jonathan Swift set the final part of his sequel to Robinson Crusoe in China and Siberia. Early modern Russia,

Europe, and Eurasia, then, were not self-enclosed worlds but ones connected to each other by an infrastructure of intelligence.

In the Petrine era, this began to change. Chapter II analyzes the Moscow-Beijing caravan trade in the first half of the eighteenth century, which in addition to its commercial value was deeply enmeshed in Russian intelligence projects. Russian agents conducted extensive industrial espionage, none of which was known or discussed in Europe. At the same time, the caravans carried letters sent back and forth between the Beijing Jesuits and the Imperial Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg. As I demonstrate, this supposedly pure scientific exchange of ideas depended on the infrastructural support of the Russian state and its intelligence apparatus. The emergence of post-Petrine Russian espionage, then, was linked to the mobility of goods and was from the beginning intertwined with more familiar intellectual agendas.

At the same time, Russian missionaries and students began to be sent to Beijing on a regular basis starting in the 1720s. Chapter III focuses on their lives and careers over the course of the whole century, as they navigated the complex landscape of Qing Beijing as part of a Russian missionary community whose mortality rate (largely of violence and disease) reached fifty percent. It then follows them back to St. Petersburg, where they found employment within the Academy of Sciences and the College of Foreign Affairs. By studying their largely unsuccessful attempts to produce public, rather than secret, knowledge for the benefit of a large audience, this chapter frames the contradictions involved in Russo-Qing intelligence. The students at the Russian mission were well-qualified experts on the Qing, and often major bibliophiles, but their role within the state apparatus prevented them from realizing their aspirations to join the Republic of Letters. The paradox of the Beijing students—that they were trained at

great effort and expense, but largely sidelined after their return—shows the uneasy way the intelligence apparatus fit together with other institutional paradigms, and the significance failure and luck played in its realization.

Yet Russia was also engaged in far more direct and consequential intelligence work. Chapter IV moves east to the borderlands between Russia and the Qing Empire following the Qing conquest of the Junghar Confederation in 1755-1757. During the crisis that followed, Russia created a vast intelligence network in Mongolia and the former Junghar lands, both to gather information and to encourage the Mongols to defect to Russian rule. This chapter follows the obscure figures who served as Russia's informants, agents, and spymasters, tracking their methods and assessing the consequences of their secret diplomacy. It then shows how these attempts ultimately backfired, with the Torghut migration serving as an ironic counterpoint to Russia's ambitious plans for the steppe peoples. Here is the heart of Russo-Qing intelligence and its nexus with broader Russian ambitions for geopolitical and commercial dominance, because the existence and purpose of this espionage and secret-diplomacy effort was reshaping the borders of Eurasia.

None of these projects were known or discussed in detail in Europe. Chapter V takes a transnational view of intelligence failure, drawing on materials from Paris and London to show how the high officials of the British and French empires relied on intelligence about the Russo-Qing relationship that was highly inaccurate, outdated, and misleading. In the 1770s, the French thought the Russians were about to invade the Qing realm and overthrow the dynasty. In the 1780s-early '90s, the planners of the British Macartney embassy to Beijing based their understanding of diplomatic protocol on published sources nearly seventy years out of date. Meanwhile, in Russia itself the

accumulation of uncirculated intelligence meant that the right hand often did not know what the left hand was doing. Intelligence failure did not result simply in unsatisfied curiosity. It also shaped state policy and transformed the balance of power Northeast Asia and the North Pacific for decades to come.

By the early nineteenth century, Russian diplomatic and other officials had lost faith in the production of secret intelligence about the Qing realm, in part because the apparatus of border informants had largely fallen apart. Chapter VI shows how the 1820 installment of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing was given a wide-ranging brief to study the Qing languages as well as history, medicine, literature, and other forms of academic knowledge; the missionaries were tied to the Imperial Academy of Sciences, which previously had been reluctant to devote funds or energy to scholarship about the Qing. These academic studies set the tone and created the institutional background for the massive flourishing of sinological studies in nineteenth-century Russia. Public or academic knowledge, in other words, emerged from the ruins of secret knowledge and relied on acts of willful forgetting to obscure its origins.

The arc of my dissertation traces a path that goes beyond the conventional chronological delimitations of Imperial Russian history, which still take Peter's reign as a point of departure (if now increasingly out of convenience rather than methodological commitment). I begin, then, with the seventy-year period between Fedor Baikov's return from Beijing in 1657 and the signing of the Treaty of Kiakhta in 1727-1728. In some ways, I argue, Muscovy was more similar to both post-Petrine Russia and Europe in its intellectual practices than we like to believe. In other ways, it was unexpectedly different: more rather than less open to foreign infiltration, more rather than less tolerant of cultural hybridity and textual circulation. It is to this paradoxical claim to

which I now turn in the first chapter, as we try to see how it was that illiterate Siberian Cossacks came to find an eager readership in Paris and London.



Figure 1: Eurasia in the 1690s

Chapter I

The Russo-Qing Encounter and European Intelligence, 1675-1725

If there was one thing everyone in seventeenth-century Europe believed about Russia—which they knew as the tsardom of Muscovy—it was that it was a deeply paranoid and anti-intellectual place, so distrustful of learning that innocent foreigners in search even of basic information were immediately suspected to be spies. "Indeed, hitherto no man of parts or abilities has been suffered to travel the Country," wrote the English doctor Samuel Collins in 1671, "For the people are very jealous, and suspect those who ask them any questions concerning their Policy, or Religion, they being wholly devoted to their own Ignorance … and thus they verifie the old Saying, *Ars nullum habet inimicum prater ignorantem* [Knowledge has no enemy but the ignorant.]"[1] Neither did Muscovites appear inclined to learn from their neighbors. Grigorii Kotoshikhin, a longtime bureaucrat in the diplomatic service, said as much in 1666—at least once he had escaped to a safe distance from the Kremlin. "Men of the Russian state are in their nature boastful and unsuited to any affairs, because they have no good learning in their state and accept none besides boastfulness and shamelessness and hate and injustice," and therefore anyone who travels abroad is "tortured in the same fashion as one who has taken up arms against the tsar."[2]

[1] Samuel Collins, "The Present State of Russia In a Letter to a Friend at London; Written by an Eminent Person Residing at the Great Czars," ed. Marshall Poe, 1671, 14–15, http://ir.uiowa.edu/history_pubs/1.

[2] Grigoriĭ Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii v carstvovanie Alekseja Mixajloviča* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 65–66.

Historians once echoed Collins, Kotoshikhin, and their colleagues. In one of the most famous analyses of the Muscovite political system, Edward Keenan placed special emphasis on its "extraordinary hermetic silence and denial to outsiders of even general or trivial information that might have political significance."[3] Subsequent efforts to probe this veil of silence have revealed how tattered it really was; to take only one example, though Muscovite authorities went to eonsiderable lengths to keep foreign ambassadors isolated, this failed to prevent them from gathering local knowledge.[4] More broadly, we now take almost for granted that Muscovy was linked to the rest of Europe both through parallel processes of development like state-building and military modernization and through border-crossing people and commodities.[5] Yet, for all the flintlock muskets and Baroque pilasters brought east by European servitors, it is still hard for us to imagine Muscovy producing knowledge about the outside world or Muscovite knowledge being an object of more than ethnographic curiosity for foreign readers.[6] Muscovy and Europe still seem to have shared an uncomfortable silence, even if it is now one of mutual disinterest rather than taciturn incomprehension.

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[3] Edward L. Keenan, "Muscovite Political Folkways," *Russian Review* 45, no. 2 (April 1, 1986): 129, doi:10.2307/130423.

[4] Marshall Poe, *A People Born to Slavery : Russia in Early Modern European Ethnography, 1476-1748* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 39ff; and, more generally, Robert O. Crummey, "The Silence of Muscovy," *Russian Review* 46, no. 2 (April 1, 1987): 157–64, doi:10.2307/130624.

[5] Jarmo Kotilaine and Marshall Poe, eds., *Modernizing Muscovy: Reform and Social Change in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004); Angela Rustemeyer, "Systems and Senses: New Research on Muscovy and the Historiography on Early Modern Europe," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 11, no. 3 (2010): 563–79, doi:10.1353/kri.0.0180.

[6] But for an earlier period, see Simon Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, C. 950-1300* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Here, I will demonstrate that Muscovy still has the ability to surprise us, both with the unexpected inventiveness of its intelligence-gathering practices and with the unintentional—and eagerly-exploited—porosity of the apparatus that was meant to keep them secret. I will focus on a problem that deeply preoccupied both Russian and Western European observers in the second half of the seventeenth century: the Muscovite state's relationship with the newly established Qing empire, which British, Dutch, and Jesuit actors were keen to exploit and which the Russian government was equally anxious to preserve for itself. The northern road to Beijing through Siberia, Mongolia, and the Great Wall was the only means of traveling between Europe and China without a lengthy, dangerous sea voyage around the Cape of Good Hope or a treacherous trip through the Islamic states of Southwest and Central Asia. Moreover, no Westerner landing at the handful of approved trading ports on the Chinese coast (later reduced to Canton—Guangzhou—alone) could travel beyond their limits unless he was explicitly cleared in advance by the court. A route controlled continuously by a Christian power was powerfully attractive to commercial as well religious interests in Europe.[7] Yet the connection proved in the end to be an informational one rather than a physical one: although Westerners never succeeded in making use of the Siberian route to China, by the end of the seventeenth century almost nothing related to military, diplomatic, and commercial relationships between the two empires remained a secret in Europe.

[7] See Joseph Sebes, ed., *The Jesuits and the Sino-Russian Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689); The Diary of Thomas Pereira.*, Bibliotheca Instituti Historici S.I.; v. 18 (Rome: Institutum Historicum S.I., 1962), 88–105.

In 1698, the London physician Jodocus Crull wrote confidently that "the Muscovites having once been made sensible of … the vast Profit that must needs arise to their own Country … have left no stone unturn'd, not only to make the best Discovery they could of those *Tartarian* Nations, but also by settling a fair Correspondence with them, to open to themselves a free passage into China."[8] How was it that a Grub Street hack like Crull, who never went to Russia and did not specialize in it, could make such a claim and then describe a portion of Inner Asia where no Protestant had ever set foot?

Figuring out an answer to this question requires carefully redefining our familiar vocabulary of "facts," "data," and "information."[9] When an early modern writer wanted to fill his (or her) text with data about a remote and inaccessible country, his instinct was typically not to survey the range of available testimonies and present an overall analysis in his own words. Instead, he generally turned to the closest and, in his view, the best source he had close to hand and copied it as needed directly into his text. This was doubly true in the case of a hack writer like Crull, who was on a tight schedule (the afterglow of Peter the Great's Grand Embassy to Europe in 1697-98, which made the incognito tsar a celebrity everywhere he went) and thus borrowed

[8] Jodocus Crull, *The Antient and Present State of Muscovy: Containing a Geographical, Historical and Political Account of All Those Nations and Territories Under the Jurisdiction of the Present Czar [...]* (A. Roper and A. Bosvile, 1698), 61ff.

[9] See also Ann Blair and Devin Fitzgerald, "A Revolution in Information?," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History, 1350-1750*, ed. H. M. Scott, vol. I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 244–68; Ann Blair, *Too Much to Know : Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven Conn: Yale University Press, 2010); Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

liberally from predecessors like John Milton.[10] Accordingly, Crull's account of Russo-Qing relations was taken directly from a 1693 English translation of the Jesuit Philippe Avril's *Voyage en divers états d'Europe.*[11] But the trail does not end there. As we will see, Avril's own account was plagiarized from a book by an erstwhile Russian ambassador to Beijing, whose text had been mostly drawn from a 1655 publication by yet another Jesuit writer. What Crull's well-timed plagiarism (a word first popularized in this period) shows us is that early modern "facts" existed not in the form of decontextualized bits of abstract data, but as concrete passages of text passed freely from one book to another.[12] Thus Laurence Sterne's Slawkenbergius, writer of a treatise on noses, goes "begging, borrowing, and stealing … all that had been wrote or wrangled thereupon in the schools and porticoes of the learned" and produces a "thorough stitched DIGEST" as a result.[13]

My argument, then, is that we can undo the stitches and follow these passages back to where they came from, or at least to a general source, and thereby trace a network of textual circulation stretching all the way from London to Beijing. I will

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[10] R. D. Bedford, "Jodocus Crull and Milton's A Brief History of Moscovia," *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, 47, no. 186 (May 1, 1996): 207–11.

[11] Philippe Avril, *Travels into Divers Parts of Europe and Asia: Undertaken … to Discover a New Way by Land into China* (Goodwin, 1693), 137ff.

[12] For more on copying as an early modern intellectual practice, see Fred Schurink, "Manuscript Commonplace Books, Literature, and Reading in Early Modern England," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (September 1, 2010): 453–69; Ann Blair, "Humanist Methods in Natural Philosophy: The Commonplace Book," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 53, no. 4 (October 1, 1992): 541–51, doi:10.2307/2709935; William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions : The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

[13] Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (R. and J. Dodsley, 1761), III:175–178.

begin by considering a series of texts dealing with Siberia and China produced within the Muscovite bureaucracy in the 1670s and '80s. As I will show, the fundamental characteristic of these works is their hybridity, their opportunistic use of materials drawn from Inner Asian and Jesuit as well as Russian sources. Then, I will trace how these texts were acquired by Western European visitors in Moscow and repurposed for consumption abroad, sometimes openly, sometimes indirectly. The third section will turn to those numerous foreign-born employees of the Muscovite court who published their own work in the West after having served in diplomatic missions to Beijing. Finally, I will conclude by demonstrating how swiftly this period of Russo-European intellectual exchange came to an end after 1720. This final irony—the comparatively hermetic and closed intelligence landscape of "Westernized" post-Petrine Russia—underscores the uniqueness of the late seventeenth century, when European avidity, Muscovite dependence on foreigners, and the imperviousness of Northeast Asia to European explorers came together to produce a truly transnational intellectual commerce. Muscovy, I conclude, was in fact a central rather than a peripheral part of what we know as the "great encounter of China and the West," above all because it was a source and a conduit for privileged information.[14]

1. Making Hybrid Frontier Texts in Seventeenth-Century Muscovy

One indication that Muscovite culture might not have been as paranoid, anti-intellectual, and xenophobic as it was once supposed is the existence of a whole genre

[14] The phrase comes from D. E Mungello, *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500-1800* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009).

of formalized texts recounting voyages beyond the frontiers of Russia: the *stateinyi spisok*, or diplomatic deposition. These documents were submitted as a required duty by Muscovite ambassadors returning from embassies abroad, though they were generally composed by the embassy's clerical staff (in part as a means of keeping tabs on the ambassador).[15] They could be fifty pages long or vastly more: the one Savva Vladislavich submitted after the 1727 embassy that resulted in the signing of the treaty of Kiakhta consisted of two volumes totaling over one thousand manuscript sheets.[16] *Spiski* served multiple functions, including making sure that the ambassador did not allow the tsar's honor to be insulted in any way, but one of their principal goals was to gather information about foreign lands. *Spiski* with cultural or geographical details are attested starting from the sixteenth century and deal with destinations as far apart as England, Georgia, and Florence.[17]

In the first half of the seventeenth century, Muscovites knew virtually nothing about their southeastern neighbors except that a trade route to China was of major commercial importance to their European trading partners. Hence even the earliest record of a Russian voyage to China, the brief "Description of the Chinese state and Mongol lands" composed by the Siberian clerk Ivan Petlin in 1619, contains extensive details about customs, flora, fauna, and architecture.[18] Petlin even found the time to

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[15] The European context of these kinds of diplomatic works is represented in, e.g., Adams and Cox, *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture*; and Filippo de Vivo, *Information and Communication in Venice: Rethinking Early Modern Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 48–85.

[16] RGADA (Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts), f. 1385, op. 1, d. 398.

[17] See, for instance, the *spiski* collected in *Puteshestviia russkikh poslov XVI-XVII vv.: stateinye spiski* (Moskva: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1954).

[18] Demidova and Miasnikov, *Russko-kitaĭskie otnosheniia v XVII veke. Materialy i dokumenty*, I:79–90.

note that "the female sex there is very gentle to the male, with girls and women like these I would live my whole life and finish out my days, if only it were possible not to part from them before I die," although this particular passage was marked "written accurately, but it is inappropriate to write such things in a diplomatic deposition" by the recording clerk.[19]

Still, Petlin's mission was an ad-hoc endeavor led by a man without the standing to act as a full envoy, and indeed it is unlikely that he ever met the Wanli emperor (who at any rate was too fat and sick to leave his palace). Fedor Baikov's mission to Beijing in 1654 was a different story. The Russians already knew something of the dynastic transition which had taken place in 1644, when the Ming Dynasty fell and Manchu warriors from the northeastern steppes proclaimed the new Qing Dynasty. As the first full Russian ambassador to the new rulers, Baikov was given much more thorough instructions. He was instructed to "investigate by means of all measures, secretly, using bribes and liquor to recruit the [Qing] escorting officer or some other person" such questions as the Qing emperor's attitude to the tsar and the prospects of Russo-Qing trade. More generally, he was to inquire widely into Qing commodities, geography, foreign relations, and economics, as well as describe the peoples living between Siberia and the Qing border. Although in contemporary terms such forms of knowledge-gathering would belong to very different categories of activity—espionage and geography, HUMINT (human intelligence) and OSINT (open-source intelligence)—there is no evidence the Muscovites saw it that way. Whether gathered openly or secretly,

[19] OR RNB (National Library of Russia Manuscript Department), f. 775, d. 4968, l. 425ff. See Skachkov, *Ocherki istorii russkogo kitaevedeniia*, 295n33.

foreign intelligence was the ambassador's responsibility and on his return the contents of his *spisok* would be the privileged property of the Ambassadorial Chancellery. He was to ensure that "no person or anyone would know about these instructions in any way, and not to speak to anyone either in China or on the way there about his mission."[20]

In the second half of the seventeenth century, the production of both foreign-authored and Russian works about Siberia began to create a new and distinctive frontier literature about Russo-Qing relations.[21] Russia's Siberian conquests were described in Western travelogues as early as the mid-sixteenth century, but the increasing depth and sophistication of foreign accounts of Russia vastly increased the amount of information available, starting from the work of Adam Olearius in 1647.[22] In the same period, Muscovite authorities embarked on a new and information-dense administrative consolidation of the newly-conquered eastern part of Siberia. The first *chertëzh*, or map, which included Eastern Siberian lands was composed in 1667 under the Tobolsk governor (*voevoda*) Petr Ivanovich Godunov, perhaps even personally drawn up by him. In later years the preeminent Siberian cartographer would be a Tobolsk clerk named Semën Remezov, the subject of a major recent study of Russian

[20] Demidova and Miasnikov, *Russko-kitaĭskie otnosheniia v XVII veke. Materialy i dokumenty*, I:161–162.

[21] The work of A. I. Andreev is the most comprehensive discussion of this new genre; see A. I. Andreev, *Ocherki po istochnikovedeniiu Sibiri: XVII vek* (Leningrad: Izd-vo Glavsevmorputi, 1939); and A. I. Andreev, *Ocherki po istochnikovedeniiu Sibiri: XVIII vek*, 2. izd., ispr. i dop (Leningrad: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR [Leningradskoe otd-nie], 1960). For an innovative treatment of seventeenth-century Siberia more generally, see Erika Monahan, "Trade and Empire: Merchant Networks, Frontier Commerce and the State in Western Siberia, 1644-1728" (PhD Thesis, Stanford University, 2007).

[22] A more or less exhaustive catalogue of Western testimonies about Siberia is in M. P. Alekseev, *Sibir´ v izvestiiakh zapadno-evropeiskikh puteshestvennikov i pisatelei : vvedenie, teksty i kommentarii : XIII-XVII v.v.*, Izd. 2. (Irkutsk: Irkutskoe oblastnoe izd-vo, 1941).

cartography.[23] But it would be misleading to think of Russian geographical knowledge as being exclusively cartographic and visual in nature. *Chertezhi* in Muscovy were linked to works known variously as gazetteers (*dorozhniki*), transcriptions (*rospis' chertezhu*), descriptions (*chertëzhnoe opisanie*), or books (*kniga chertezha*) (in other cases the written description does not correspond to any known map). Unlike maps, which offered a bird's eye view, these descriptions mapped out routes from place to place from the perspective of a traveler, often including the length of time it took to move from one town to another along roads or riverine routes.[24] Along the way, they incorporated descriptions of local peoples, trading opportunities, and foreign countries beyond the border—often drawing on existing texts for material. In the mid-twentieth century, A. V. Andreev produced an exacting survey of these works and the maps to which they were linked, revealing a complicated and imperfectly preserved patchwork of documents.

Godunov's 1667 map (which has turned up in both Russian and Western archives in a number of possibly simplified versions) was composed in Tobolsk in conjunction with two other texts: a "Memorandum concerning the Qing Land" (*Vedomost' o Kitaiskoi zemle)* and a prose *rospis'* which traced Siberian routes and contained repeated mentions of the Qing. Together, the three documents illustrate the complex web of sources and interactions that governed the production of knowledge

[23] Valerie A. Kivelson, *Cartographies of Tsardom: The Land and Its Meanings in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006).

[24] For the contemporary American equivalent, see Katherine Grandjean, *American Passage: The Communications Frontier in Early New England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

about the Qing state in Muscovy. The map itself (preserved by Bagrow as part of two distinct Remezov copies) is quite suggestive:

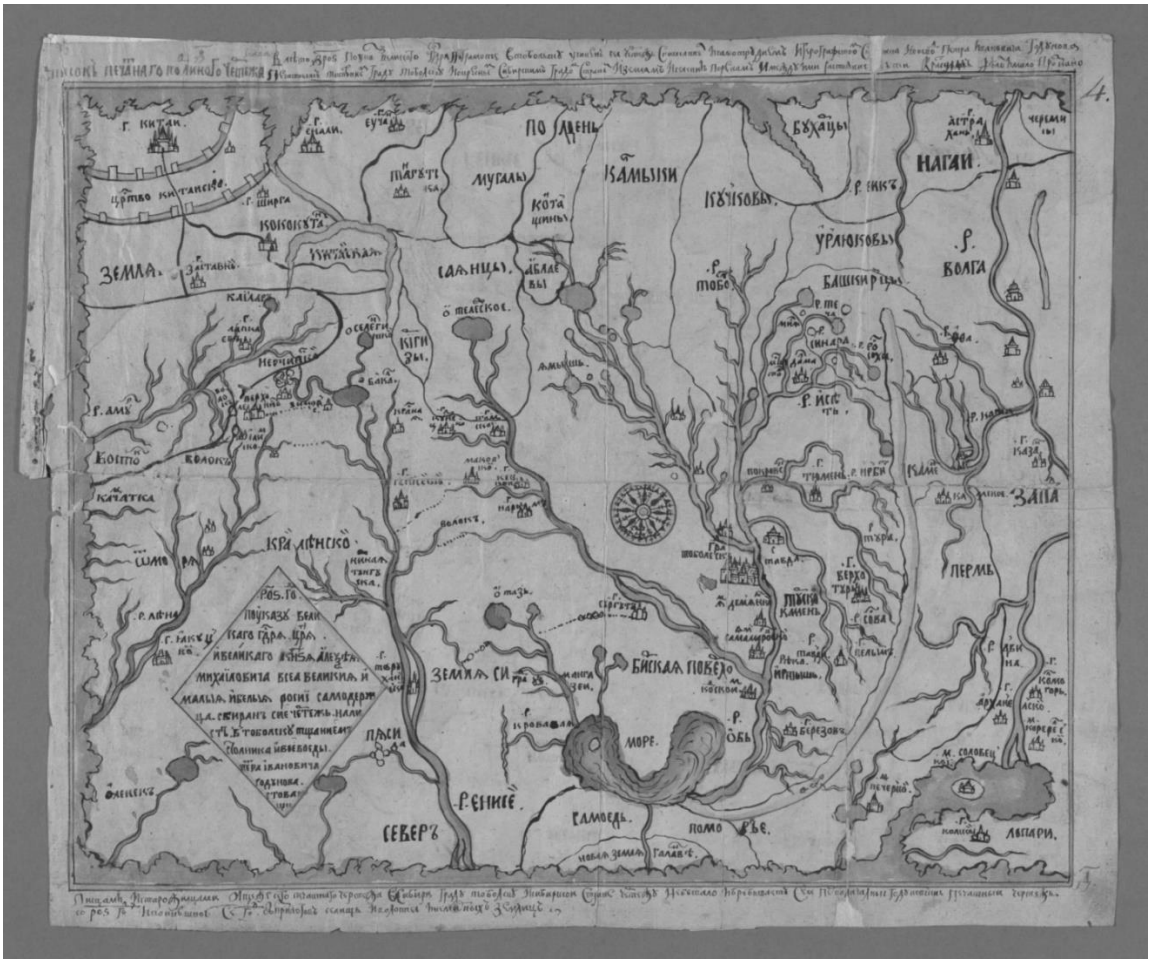


Figure 2: Godunov's map of Siberia[25]

North is at the bottom. Beijing (as the town of "Kitai," the Russian word for Chinese or Qing) is in the upper left corner, encircled by two sets of walls (which also enclose the "Qing kingdom," although a "Qing land" stretches well beyond the walls). Of course, since there is in fact only one Great Wall, this immediately poses some

[25] Leo Bagrow Collection of Maps of Siberia, 1667-1726 (MS Russ 72). Houghton Library, Harvard University.

interpretive difficulties. But they do not end there. North of the wall, east of "Kokokutan," there is a city labeled "Zastavnoi," or "Gate City." This can only refer to Kalgan or Zhangjiakou, the Great Wall pass all travelers from Russia to Beijing had to transit through—but here it is depicted separately from the wall. At the extreme south of the map is a town labeled "Euchan." What could this possibly mean?

In fact, the map reflects the heterogeneity of its sources, many of which were likely oral or have been lost. One of the texts on which it was obviously based, however, is Baikov's *spisok* of his 1654 embassy to Beijing. There Baikov describes his voyage through "Kokokotan" (i.e. Huhu hoton, modern-day Hohhot) and the "zastavnoi gorod," which he also calls "Kapka" (likely a copyist's misreading for "Kalka," that is, Kalgan). He also says that "the wall"—which he does not name or otherwise render distinct—runs all the way from the "Qing rhubarb city of Sukchei." "Sukchei" here is Suzhou—not the more famous Suzhou of the Yangzi delta, but the major rhubarb-producing center known today as Jiuquan in Gansu province—and it is in fact the same as our "Euchan."[26] Finally, near the end, he claims that eight walls separate Beijing ("Khanbalyk") from the "zastavnoi gorod." [27] In other words, the unknown author of the 1667 Godunov *chertëzh* has awkwardly borrowed material from Baikov and slotted it in around testimony gleaned from other sources, which were presumably more insistent on the significance of the Great Wall.

[26] Another version of the Godunov map spells "Euchan" as "Suchai" (the two sets of letters are very easily confused in Muscovite handwriting) and both are positioned roughly where Suzhou would be. See Kivelson, *Cartographies of Tsardom*, plate 18.

[27] Demidova and Miasnikov, *Russko-kitaĭskie otnosheniia v XVII veke. Materialy i dokumenty*, 184.

The diversity of testimonies is even more apparent in the "Description of the Qing Land," which formed the second of Godunov's documents. This is a brief compendium of available information about the Qing state, composed of individual sentences arranged in nearly random order. It covers customs such as clothing, trade, geography, and religion. The "Description's" direct sources include Baikov and Petlin's reports, although they rely on them for only a small portion of the text as a whole. It also incorporates information from "foreigners and visiting Bukharans [Turkestanis] and Tatar servitors," as a result of which certain sections are far better-developed than others. For instance, the text includes a detailed description of Tibetan Buddhism from what seems likely to be an internal source, given the precision with which rituals are described, while persisting (like Baikov) in calling Beijing "Khanbalyk"—a name it had not held for three centuries.[28] In the same chronicle (*khronograf)* which contains the surviving version of the description, Godunov's text is followed by another, which is marked as "from a different report of the same year, written by a native-born Qing citizen through the Kalmyk [i.e. Western Mongol] language." This account, very likely also collected by Godunov, is a narrative about the origins of the *kitaiskii* (in this case, Manchu rather than Chinese) people. It depicts them as having migrated from the region of Tobolsk around 1100, under pressure from Muslims and growing forestation of the steppe. As a whole, this "native Qing" report is a mixture of origin myth similar

[28] P. E. Skachkov, "Vedomost' o Kitaiskoi zemle," *Strany i narody vostoka* 2 (1961): 206–13; Andreev, *Ocherki po istochnikovedeniiu Sibiri: XVII vek*, 15ff.

to the official Manchu origin story in the *Manzhou shilu* and historical testimony about Chinggis Khan and his descendants.[29]

In other words, Godunov in Tobolsk had access to both manuscript Russian sources and a variety of miscellaneous informants from different parts of Inner Asia. The written transcription that accompanied his map demonstrates how this kind of information was woven into the general texture of Siberian geography. The transcript described the southern route from Tobolsk thus: "By steppe to Astrakhan through the Kalmyk ulus [a Mongol term for "domain"] and through the Bukharan uezd [here, Russian term for "territory"] and past uluses across the Iaik river is two months of travel … and to Astrakhan and to the Qing state using the indicated route [on the map?], the path is by steppe from Tobolsk, there are large lakes and rivers but these cannot be described [or mapped], because those who know and have been there do not know their names." Much of the text deals with the southeastern frontier and ultimately with routes to Beijing, but again reflects the same heterogeneity as the rest of Godunov's corpus. Where the northern and western portions are strictly transport-oriented, the frontier sections emphasize the Qing military presence and the need to pass through the territory of borderland peoples. The penultimate paragraph describes Beijing as "Kambazlik" (possibly indicating a debt to Baikov), but the final one deals with the town of "Kvinsan," in which "there are various Russian vegetables and all sorts of field grain sown." This refers in fact to Qingcheng, yet another name for

[29] OR RGB (Russian State Library Manuscript Department), f.344, n. 123, l148-155. On the Manchu origin myth, see Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China*, 44ff.

Huhuhoton—this one Chinese rather than Mongol. Although this is only one example of a *chertëzhnoe opisanie* from the second half of the seventeenth century, it is far from the only one to display a preoccupation with Russo-Qing relations. Nor is it the only one in which frontier sources reflect highly miscellaneous research practices. Both aspects of Siberian geography defined writing on the Qing through the end of the Muscovite period.[30]

By the 1680s, Muscovite geographical writing and cartography had become increasingly sophisticated, especially in the Ambassadorial Chancellery (*Posol'skii prikaz*) in Moscow (which gathered materials like the ones submitted by Godunov). A map composed by A. A. Vinius, then a Chancellery clerk, during this period shows a marked improvement in cartographic technique, although it is very much in the tradition of the Godunov *chertëzh*. It renders the Qing frontier far more accurately, distinguishing Dauria from Mongolia, removing the superfluous second Great Wall, and omitting the "zastavnoi gorod" so misleadingly borrowed from Baikov. Although it also includes a putative cartographic grid, in fact this seems more impressionistic than accurate since the lines do not correspond to known latitudes and the distances between them are unequal; its indications of nomadic territories are more valuable. Vinius's map would later serve as a major influence on the Siberian maps composed by Remezov and his sons between 1698 and 1702. Although Remezov never flirted with grids or other appurtenances of European scientific mapping, his maps paid close

[30] OR RGB, f. 256, n. 294, l. 19-24. For other similar texts, see OR RGB, f. 236, n. 31, l. 328ff. The text cited here along with others was published imperfectly in the nineteenth century. See A. A. Titov, *Sibir´ v XVII veke: sbornik starinnykh russkikh statei o Sibiri i prilezhashchikh k nei zemliakh* (Moskva: G. Iudin, 1890).

attention to detail, avoided the Godunov map's errors, and carefully noted nomadic lands.[31]

This did not mean that Siberian geographic writing was becoming more accurate or empirically-grounded. In fact, a 1686 text composed most likely by Nikifor Veniukov, a subclerk at the Ambassadorial Chancellery, reveals the deep confusion its congeries of sources could provoke. When Godunov had been compiling his geographical texts, he had only to square a handful of conflicting descriptions and maintained the ability to resolve discrepancies by having recourse to live informants. Veniukov, it seems, was not so lucky, even if he did have the Chancellery's library at his disposal and despite the fact that he had travelled to Beijing in 1675 and again in 1685-86, just before composing the text. His "Description of the New Territory of the Siberian State" (*Opisanie novyia zemli sibirskogo tsarstva)* begins straightforwardly enough with a familiar chronicle account of Ermak's conquest of Siberia in the 1580s. Then it begins to draw upon existing map transcriptions (*chertëzhnye opisaniia*), augmenting them with new levels of detail from other works, including Baikov's *spisok*. This works well enough for Siberian towns and rivers, but Veniukov also attempts to provide an exhaustive description of the Qing state, and this gets him into serious trouble. Veniukov thinks the Kangxi emperor's name is "Makha," Beijing is still "Kambalyk," and the Qing and the "Nikan" (i.e. Chinese or Ming) states are separate. Worse, he tries to provide a capsule history of the Qing conquest which is bewildering in its inaccuracy. He manages to misdate it by a decade, confuse different stages of the

[31] Andreev, *Ocherki po istochnikovedeniiu Sibiri: XVII vek*, 24–91; Kivelson, *Cartographies of Tsardom*, 133ff. See also OR RGB, f. 256, n. 346 (the Chertezhnaia kniga).

dynastic transition, and incorrectly name and describe every participating actor. His choice of names, however, hints at the origins of his sources. One Chinese emperor is referred to as "Abdur," a distinctly non-Manchu, non-Chinese word that implies a Bukharan informant (although no actual point of reference is identifiable). Moreover, the description contains a passage referring to "Makha's" support for the Jesuits and the remarkable success of the Society of Jesus in building churches and converting a full quarter of the Qing population (these Jesuits are said incorrectly to have reached Beijing through the Siberian overland route from Poland), which seems to come from a Jesuit source. Even the puzzling elements in Veniukov's text point to the multiplicity of its sources. At one point, he uses the word "burkhanniger," which occurs nowhere else in the Russian textual tradition. This can mean one of two things: the Mongol *burqan-u ger* ("the god's yurt," i.e. a Buddhist shrine) or the Latin *niger* "black" attached to the Mongol *burqan* "deity." Muscovite textual hybridity did not necessarily create robust texts, but it did encourage the synthesis of a remarkably wide-ranging selection of testimonies. [32]

Veniukov's awkward grappling with his sources looks even stranger in light of the fact that a detailed and factually reliable—if somewhat obsolete—account of the Qing conquest and empire had been available in Russian for a decade by the time he began to write. In 1674, the Moldavian aristocrat Nikolai Spafarii, one of Muscovy's most educated foreign servitors, embarked on a long embassy to Beijing.[33] During the

[32] OR RGB, f. 256, n. 294, l. 1-19. For the published version, see *Sibirskiia letopisi* (S.-Peterburg: Tip. I. N. Skorokhodova, 1907), 367–395.

[33] This famous if inconclusive adventure has been extensively treated elsewhere. To take only the sources in English: Baddeley, *Russia, Mongolia, China*, II:203ff; Mancall, *Russia and China; Their Diplomatic*

course of the embassy, Spafarii met Ferdinand Verbiest, leader of the Beijing Jesuits, who served as a Latin-Manchu translator for the embassy in Beijing. Verbiest's expectation was that currying the favor of the Russian tsar would facilitate the creation of an overland route through Siberia for Jesuit missionaries, which he regarded as an urgent necessity owing to the dangers of the naval voyage to Macao. Although the sources do not give us any reason to think that Verbiest actually gave Spafarii any secret information, he certainly cultivated the impression of being a trusted contact in the Qing capital. Spafarii went home with a letter from Verbiest to the tsar and a number of books, including Martino Martini's 1655 *Novus Atlas Sinensis* and 1654 *De Bello Tartarico*.[34]

These two texts would form the foundation of Spafarii's greatest work, the misleadingly named *Description of the First Part of the Universe…* (*Opisanie pervyia chasti vselennyiia…*). In essence it is a translation of the *Novus Atlas Sinensis*, modified at key moments in the beginning and at the end, bound together with a description of the Amur River that Spafarii composed during his journey and with the translated *De Bello Tartarico* added at the end.[35] The *Opisanie* exists in dozens of manuscript copies, dating all the way from its date of composition (1677-78) to the early nineteenth

Relations to 1728, 65–111; Michel N. Pavlovsky, *Chinese-Russian Relations* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), 99–145, and so on.

[34] On the fate of these books, see Noël Golvers and Efthymios Nicolaidis, *Ferdinand Verbiest and Jesuit Science in 17th Century China: An Annotated Edition and Translation of the Constantinople Manuscript (1676)* (Athens: Institute for Neohellenic Research, 2009), 55–76 and passim.

[35] The only existing published version, despite the high quality of the reproduction, is missing both the Amur text and the translation of *De Bello Tartarico* because its manuscript original is unique in omitting both; this gives a distorted picture of the book. Nicolae Milescu Spafarii, *Opisanie pervyia chasti vselennyia imenuemoi Azii, v nei zhe sostoit Kitaiskoe gosudarstvo s prochimi ego gorody i provintsii* (Kazanʹ: Imperatorskii Universitet, 1910). I am grateful to Evgeny Grishin for his assistance in locating a copy.

century.[36] All indications are that during that time it was the most popular description of China available anywhere in Muscovy or in the Russian Empire. Although it was not printed until 1910, not a single Russian-language published work of comparable length or depth existed until 1774, when Du Halde's *Description … de la Chine* was translated and issued in Russian.

No other manuscript work dealing with China has survived in such a large and diverse array of copies. Ex-libris inscriptions and other paratextual material reveal a wide range of readers, from clerics to nobles and merchants. They also hint at the breadth of the uses to which the book's readers put it. A 1735 copy contains a long and turgid acrostic dedication to a cousin of Catherine I, spelling out "WITH THE INDUSTRIOUSNESS AND EAGER STRIVING OF HER GRACE THE LADY-IN-WAITING MARFA KARLOVNA SKOVRONSKAIA."[37] Another copy, from fifty years later, says "this book was given to me in Kazan in the year 1778 by Lieutenant General and Cavalier Count Petr Fedorovich Apraksin, which he received in Dalmatov Monastery [in the southern Urals], where he was imprisoned for eloping with the lady-in-waiting Countess Razumovskaia and for marrying her while having a living wife."[38] A third came from the personal library of the 1680s favorite Prince Golitsyn; a fourth

[36] Many of these have not hitherto been recognized as being in fact copies of the *Opisanie*. My sources here include: OR RGB, f. 96, n. 35; f. 205, n. 102; f. 92, n. 107; OR GIM, Muzeinoe sobranie, n. 3998; Zabelin, n. 311; Chudova m-ria, n. 361; RGADA, f. 181, d. 223; f. 196, op. 1, n. 1615; OR BAN, 16.2.9; 32.12.6; 17.9.10; Tek post 90; 32.6.18; Pushkinskii dom DKh, op. 13, n. 182; op. 23, n. 223; SPbII, f. 36, op. 1, d. 289; f. 36, op. 1, d. 290; OR RNB, f. 550, F-IV-141; f. 550, F-IV-179; f. 550, Q-IV-1; f. 550, F-IV-87; f. 550, F-IV-289; f. 550, Q-IV-384; BNF, Fonds Slave 35.

[37] OR RGB, f. 96, n. 35, l. 200ff.

[38] OR RNB, f. 550, F-IV-289, l. 1v.

belonged to a Moscow merchant.[39] Although secular manuscript books, even those with such an evidently wide circulation, are typically sidelined in both Russian and Western studies of readership and book culture, indications are that Spafarii's text is highly unusual in the geographical and social breadth of its circulation.[40]

Leafing through his 1910 published version of Spafarii's *Opisanie*, the early twentieth-century scholar John Baddeley reluctantly accused Spafarii of deliberate plagiarism. In part, he had good reason to: nearly the entire text is borrowed from Martini and certain passages are altered to conceal Jesuit authorship. But what Baddeley failed to appreciate was the extent to which the *Opisanie* is a hybrid text in the Muscovite tradition, one which was never intended to be seen as original work. The best evidence of this is Spafarii himself.

The authorial manuscript has miraculously survived unrecognized among any number of derivative versions since 1678.[41] This original lacks something even Crull's plagiarized work bore proudly: a title page, attribution, signature, or any indication of authorship. Although title pages are common casualties in the fight for manuscript

[39] OR RNB, f. 550, F-IV-87; Pushkinskii Dom, Peretts Collection, op. 23, n. 223.

[40] See, e.g., Iu. K. Begunov, "Rukopisnaia literatura XVIII veka i demokraticheskii chitatel' (Problemy i zadachi izucheniia)," *Russkaia literatura*, no. 1 (1977): 121–32.

[41] OR RGB, f. 92, n. 107. There are a number of reasons to conclude that this is, in fact, the original. First, after the Amur chapter, there is a Latin line reading "Laus Deo, qui concessit incipere, et finite [Blessed be the Lord, who allows us to begin and complete [a work]]." It is much easier to imagine Spafarii writing this than a Russian churchman. Second, everything including numbering and dates is consistent with a seventeenth-century text. Third, the hand is quite similar to verified Spafarii autographs (see O. A. Belobrova, "Ob avtografakh Nikolaia Spafariia," *Trudy otdela drevnerusskoi literatury* 36 (1969): 259–65.Finally, there are the marginalia. In the passage about lychees on l. 126 the marginal note "We ate these in Beijing and brought some back with us" is rendered particularly awkwardly in a different, later, manuscript (OR GIM, Zabelin 311, l. 170). The copyist has taken the marginal note from this manuscript and incorporated it brutally into the body of the main text, without regard for grammar or meaning. The same phenomenon can be seen in a number of other manuscript versions of this passage, with the quote being inserted at different points in the text, and can be observed for other marginalia as well. This leaves little doubt that this is the original from which the copies were ultimately derived.

preservation, an apparently eighteenth-century scrawl on the end flyleaf proclaims "this book was written nobody knows by whom," raising the likelihood that the original version had no attribution to Spafarii. Indeed, very few of the surviving versions mention Spafarii's name anywhere and a substantial proportion are therefore misclassified in library catalogues as cosmographies or the like. It is not hard to see, then, that a charge of plagiarism is distinctly odd in the context of an essentially medieval authorship regime like Muscovy's, since Spafarii does not seem to have claimed personal credit for the work in writing. His colleagues and superiors, meanwhile, would have known that Spafarii never went outside Beijing and therefore could not possibly have described all of Martini's fifteen Chinese provinces from personal experience—after all, he had submitted a *stateinyi spisok* which described in great detail just how preoccupied he had been with the bureaucratic runaround at the Qing court.

Instead, although Spafarii did make significant alterations to the introductory portions of Martini's volume (the first twenty chapters of the translation's total of 58, along with the Amur text that makes up chapter 59), it is his scattered marginal notes that contain his most personal contributions. Next to a description of a kind of saddle, Spafarii notes that "the Mongols on the Selenga have the same kind"—because, after all, he had had the opportunity to observe these personally on his journey. Next to a line in his Amur description, which mentions a large island opposite the river's delta, Spafarii writes what may be a note to himself: "See if this is not a Japanese island" (which it was not, of course, but rather Sakhalin). And next to a florid description of lychees, which calls them the finest Chinese produce of all, Spafarii notes that "we have eaten these in

China and have brought some back with us."[42] Two of this hybrid text's components, in other words, are the Jesuit Martini's original text and the personal observations of Spafarii as the compiler, in which he talks to back to the writer he is copying. The third were the same kinds of geographical sources used and produced by Veniukov and Godunov. Finally, the fourth was the testimony of native and Qing informants, represented primarily in the "Description of the Amur River" (which later also circulated independently, its authorship unknown until Andreev revealed it in the twentieth century). Explicit references to them suggest that Spafarii may have tried in vain to learn about the mouth of the Ussuri from locals, but did succeed in interviewing Daurian Cossacks about navigation on Siberia's Pacific littoral. The description ends with the line "the askaniama [*ashan i amban*, that is, Spafarii's escorting Manchu official Mala] said that you can sail from the mouth of the Amur to China but it is far, because you need to circle the great Korean peninsula which extends far into the sea."[43]

The Muscovite corpus of hybrid texts about Siberia and the Qing empire, then, does not seem to be the product of an intellectual establishment hidebound by illiteracy, xenophobia, and superstition. Rather, it reveals an official bureaucracy scrambling to collate and reconcile a growing pile of diverse and global sources about a topic of unusually pressing strategic interest, with greater or lesser success. Although they never demonstrated any awareness of humanist source-critical methods or any willingness to participate in the European Republic of Letters, Muscovy's officials nevertheless produced knowledge that was of tremendous value to Westerners. Over

[42] OR RGB, f. 92, n. 107, l. 88, l. 160, l. 126.

[43] OR RGB, f. 92, n. 107, l. 157v-161.

the course of the last quarter of the seventeenth century, Western writers and diplomats showed their appreciation for the Siberian geographical corpus in the most concrete possible way: with both commercial and intellectual interests at stake, they spent time, energy, and cash to obtain access to the maps and documents it produced.

2. The Pursuit of Russian Intelligence, 1625-1705

Western powers were a constant background presence in Russo-Chinese relations before these relations even existed. In 1604, the English ambassador Thomas Smith negotiated with Tsar Boris Godunov in an attempt to obtain permission for English merchants to "pass through [the tsar's] lands to Persia, East India, and in search of China, which [King James VI/I] is willing to repay with his fraternal love." Godunov refused on the pretext that the southern borderlands were threatened by a Persian-Ottoman conflict. Twelve years later, just after the establishment of the Romanov dynasty, the English tried again and were once more refused. In September 1618, less than a year after the English ambassador received his letter of rejection, the Tomsk Cossack Ivashko Petlin departed for the first Russian embassy to the Ming emperor.[44] The commercial advantages of the overland route were obvious: even given the inefficiency of the Russian transportation system, it would be far less risky than naval travel around the Cape of Good Hope and through the Indian Ocean. For English merchants of the Muscovy Company, who had a long-established (even, for a time, monopolistic) relationship with the Muscovite court, Russia offered the additional benefit of circumventing first Portuguese and then Dutch hegemony in the East Indies.

[44] Demidova and Miasnikov, *Russko-kitaĭskie otnosheniia v XVII veke. Materialy i dokumenty*, 40–91.

In fact, starting from the middle of the sixteenth century, English and Dutch navigators began actively looking for a northeastern sea route around the Arctic Circle north of Siberia. (Until global climate change opened the passage in recent years, the ice was too thick to permit this kind of navigation.)[45]

The most well-known of the English travel accounts of this period were those collected and published between 1582 and 1625 by Richard Hakluyt and his successor Samuel Purchas. Volume XIV of Purchas's *Hakluytus Posthumus*, devoted to Arctic exploration in general and Russia and Siberia in particular, contained a translation of Petlin's *Rospis*' of his embassy to the Ming, most likely obtained (as an earlier document suggests) through the English ambassador and Muscovy Company agent Sir John Merrick.[46] In other words, large audiences in England had access to theoretically privileged Russian documents about relations with China a scant six years after they arrived in the Kremlin. Needless to say, since early seventeenth-century Muscovy had no secular printing presses or reading publics of any kind, it is very probable that far more people read Petlin in English than in Russian, despite the fact that Petlin neither spoke any Western language nor had ever travelled west of Moscow. This example serves as a potent indication that the interface between the world of Muscovite bureaucratic textual circulation and that of Western intelligence should not be seen in the narrow context of secrecy and mercantile intrigues, but within a much broader history of the book.

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[45] For a general overview, see T. Armstrong, "In Search of a Sea Route to Siberia, 1553-1619," *Arctic* 37, no. 4 (December 1, 1984): 429–40 and the other articles in this issue.

[46] Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus: Or Purchas His Pilgrimes: Contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells by Englishmen and Others,* (Glasgow: J. MacLehose and sons, 1905), XIV:272ff.

By the last quarter of the seventeenth century, the political and economic stakes of the Russo-Qing relationship had not lowered as far as Europeans were concerned, even though the Qing realm was a much more familiar place than it had been in 1604. In place of indirect encounters mediated by Mongols, military confrontations between Russians and Qing subjects had begun to occur in Manchuria starting in 1652, while Qing commodities were becoming increasingly prominent in Siberian trade marts. Rhubarb, a medicinal root obtained from the Sichuan-Gansu region of China via Bukharan merchants, had become a major Russian export to Europe by the 1650s, with thousands of pounds sold in London and elsewhere every year.[47] The 1689 Treaty of Nerchinsk, the first formal treaty signed by the Qing government with a European power, both opened the way for Russian caravans to travel directly to Beijing and radically improved the fortunes of the China Jesuits, whose participation in the negotiations contributed to the Kangxi emperor's 1692 decree of toleration for Christianity.[48] For the Dutch, who had consolidated control over Japanese trade with Europe through Nagasaki but had been driven out of Taiwan by the Qing in 1662, Russian Northeast Asia held the promise of unexploited commercial potential; mining the Russian foreign policy establishment was crucial for gathering information about the region.[49]

European powers whose practical interest in Northeast Asia was more remote also found ways to obtain maps and texts produced in the context of Russo-Qing

[47] Clifford Foust, *Rhubarb : The Wondrous Drug* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 46ff.

[48] Brockey, *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579–1724*, 166ff.

[49] Ilya Toropitsyn, "Chto stoialo za kartoi Severo-Vostochnoi Azii N. Vitsena, prepodnesennoi v dar russkim tsariam v 1690 g?," *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, no. 33 (2012): 67–78.

relations. In 1673, a Swedish military agent named Erik Palmqvist travelled to Moscow, where he obtained no fewer than sixteen different maps, including Godunov's 1667 map of Siberia and a later one from 1673. He "secretly observed and drew them, with risk to my own person, and also received information from Russian citizens in exchange for money." Palmqvist's album is one of the earliest surviving cartographic sources on Siberia.[50] After his return from Beijing, Spafarii, perhaps smarting from his lackluster post-China career, was the primary point of contact for foreigners in search of privileged information. In 1684-1687, the Swedish envoy J. G. Sparwenfeld was dispatched to Moscow, where he met Spafarii and "had a long talk with him about his Chinese journey. He confirmed that Cambaluc and Peking are the same, that the capital of China is situated not far from the wall and that Khan-Balik is nothing else but *Principis Locus* or *Aula Caesaris* [the emperor's court], but the correct proper name is Peking." Though this brief encounter seems casual, Sparwenfeld returned to Stockholm with (among other things) a map of Siberia and a copy of Spafarii's magnum opus, which is now in the Bibliothéque Nationale in Paris.[51] In 1689, the French traveler (and minor diplomatic agent for the French and Polish crowns) Foy de la Neuville also met Spafarii, found him "very clever," and had numerous conversations with him. Neuville mentions Spafarii's reticence, because "telling me all I wanted to know could have earned him a beating on the tsars' orders." Yet the manuscript of his work at the Bibliothéque Nationale, unlike the published version, says that Spafarii had been sent to

[50] Andreev, *Ocherki po istochnikovedeniiu Sibiri: XVII vek*, 43–45.

[51] Johan Gabriel Sparwenfeld, *J.G. Sparwenfeld's diary of a journey to Russia 1684-87* (Stockholm: KunglVitterhets Historie Och Antikvitets Akademien, 2002), 205; Leo Bagrow, "Sparwenfeld's Map of Siberia," *Imago Mundi* 4 (January 1, 1947): 65–70, doi:10.2307/1149750. The Spafarii manuscript is in BNF, Fonds Slave 35.

Beijing "on the pretext of establishing a peace treaty with the Chinese, but actually solely to discover a means of establishing overland commerce through Muscovy." Though Neuville's geopolitics are a little garbled, it is clear that Spafarii was not as discreet as the published version suggests.[52]

No less important were more abstract religious and intellectual interests, sometimes linked with grand political visions. Russia's geographical location as a Christian state placed directly between Europe and China was uniquely appealing to certain European visionaries. In the 1670s, a Saxon envoy named Lorenz Rinhuber attempted to persuade the Muscovite court that Russia was particularly well-placed to mediate between the two powers. It has been argued, although it is unclear on what grounds, that this proposal helped motivate the Russians to send Spafarii to Beijing.[53] The philosopher Gottfried Leibniz had even grander plans for Russia. In his 1697 work *Novissima Sinica*, he praised Providence for ordaining that Peter I, "the Monarch of the Muscovites, whose vast dominions connect China and Europe" had seen fit to emulate Western European civilization: Russia would serve as the nexus between two great civilizations. Leibniz did not restrict himself to idle musings. His correspondence with Russian and Western diplomats and statesmen reveals repeated efforts to bring into being a Siberian overland route for Westerners to travel to Beijing and back.[54]

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[52] Foy de la Neuville, *A Curious and New Account of Muscovy in the Year 1689* (London: School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, 1994), 65–71; BNF, NAF-5114, l. 57-59. On Neuville's role as agent for the French and Polish kings, see Isabel de Madariaga, "Who Was Foy de La Neuville?," *Cahiers Du Monde Russe et Soviétique* 28, no. 1 (January 1, 1987): 21–30.

[53] Mancall, *Russia and China; Their Diplomatic Relations to 1728*, 65–70.

[54] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Novissima Sinica Historiam Nostri Temporis Illustrata*, 1697; V. I Ger'e, *Otnosheniia Leibnitsa k Rossii i Petru Velikomu po neizdannym bumagam Leibnitsa v Gannoverskoi biblioteke* (Sankt-Peterburg: Pechatnia V. Golovina, 1871).

Although Leibniz was not preoccupied with Christian missionary goals, the Jesuits were among his principal clients in the search for an overland route. We have already seen that Verbiest saw collaboration with Spafarii as essential for achieving this end; his eagerness to cooperate with a schismatic came from a sense of the greater danger posed by the China mission's continued dependence on naval travel. The first major problem with the sea route was mortality. In 1687, the Jesuit Philippe Couplet lamented that out of six hundred missionaries sent to China only one hundred had arrived, "the rest having consummated their sacrifice along the way by means of disease or shipwreck." This was an exaggeration, but around a quarter of China-bound Jesuits—the Society's elite, who had often trained for years to obtain this highly desirable assignment—did die en route to Macao.[55] Secondly, the China mission relied on the Portuguese *Padroado*, the authority over the Eastern Hemisphere granted to the Portuguese crown by the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas. But by the middle of the seventeenth century Portuguese power in the Indian and Pacific Oceans was at a nadir, displaced by Dutch—hence Protestant—competition. Moreover, French Jesuits were reluctant to rely on Portuguese ships owing both to inter-imperial and inter-Jesuit rivalry. The sea route thus posed a political as well as a practical problem.[56]

In 1687, a year before his death and continually preoccupied with the problem of the overland route, Ferdinand Verbiest sent a letter to Jesuit General Charles de Noyelle

[55] For a more critical look at these statistics, see Frederik Vermote, "The Role of Urban Real Estate in Jesuit Finances and Networks Between Europe and China, 1612–1778" (University of British Columbia, 2013), 36–81; See also Frederik Vermote, "Passage Denied! Dangers and Limitations of Jesuit Travel Throughout Eurasia During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *World History Connected* 10, no. 3 (October 2013).

[56] Sebes, *The Jesuits and the Sino-Russian Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689); The Diary of Thomas Pereira.*, 88–134.

in Rome. The letter, which did not find its addressee alive, said that he had met a Russian envoy (Veniukov) in Beijing and had become persuaded that the overland route through Russia was becoming a viable option. The new Jesuit general, Tirso Gonzalez, took an interest in Verbiest's proposal and ordered the Czech Jesuit Georgius (Jerzy) David—then residing in Moscow as part of a small Jesuit mission—to investigate the possibility.[57] David's interest in China is reflected in passing in his 1690 account of the state of Muscovy, where he describes the Qing trade goods for sale at the local markets.[58] More consequentially, however, David managed to procure a map of the route from Moscow to Beijing, possibly from Spafarii or another Ambassadorial Chancellery official—and at just the right time, because David and the rest of the Jesuits were expelled from Muscovy after the fall of Regent Sofiia in 1689. At the same time, Verbiest's close Beijing associate Antoine Thomas sent his own set of maps to Rome, which bear marked similarities to David's. According to the seventeenth-century Jesuit historian T. I. Dunyn-Szpot, who was writing a history of the China mission as these events unfolded, Verbiest had managed to persuade the Russian envoy (presumably Veniukov) to give the Jesuits a copy of the map which Russians used on their way to Beijing. This common parentage likely accounts for the similarities between the maps, and points to the way that Jesuits halfway across the world from each other were simultaneously struggling to take advantage of Russian geographical sources.[59]

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[57] Henri Bosmans, "Le problème des relations de Verbiest avec la Cour de Russie," *Annales de la Société d'Émulation de Bruges* 63–64 (1913): 193–223; 98–101.

[58] The complete text is published in translation in A. S. Mylnikov, ed., "Svidetel'stvo inostrannogo nabliudatelia o zhizni russkogo gosudarstva kontsa XVII veka," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 1, 3, 4 (April 1968).

[59] ARSI Jap-Sin 105-1, l. 97-100. See Anthony Florovsky, "Maps of the Siberian Route of the Belgian Jesuit, A. Thomas (1690)," *Imago Mundi* 8 (January 1, 1951): 103–8, doi:10.2307/1150062; Eugenio Lo Sardo, "Antoine Thomas's and George David's Maps of Asia," in *The History of the Relations between the*

The most significant of these Jesuit efforts was that of Philippe Avril. Under the influence of Verbiest's earlier plans for an overland route, which he had likely heard about from Philippe Couplet in 1684, Avril first travelled throughout the Middle East and the southern shore of the Caspian Sea in search of a route through Muslim-controlled territories.[60] In 1686, however, a peace treaty between Russia and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth made provision for anyone with a passport from the Polish king to travel through Muscovite lands. (The Jesuits had pushed for a special provision for missionaries to be allowed through to China, but Muscovite negotiators declared this to be superfluous.) Avril met with King Jan III Sobieski and obtained his support for a Jesuit expedition, but ultimately all the assembled missionaries were expelled from Russia at the last minute on the pretext of border conflict in Siberia.[61] A sudden change in the political climate—the fall of Regent Sofiia in 1689, and with her the Jesuit-friendly Prince Golitsyn— put a definitive end to Avril's plans. He returned to Paris bitterly disappointed, but eventually produced a successful narrative of his travels.[62]

Avril's text, the *Voyage en divers états d'Europe et d'Asie*, reveals both the extreme suspicion with which Jesuits were treated in Russia and, ironically, the numerous occasions the they had given had to justify that suspicion. He describes a grueling four-hour session of questioning by paranoid Muscovite officials "just as if we

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Low Countries and China in the Qing Era (1644-1911), ed. W. F. Vande Walle (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 75–84. Both writers appear to find it difficult to account for these similarities.

[60] Ronald S. Love, "'A Passage to China';: A French Jesuit's Perceptions of Siberia in the 1680s," *French Colonial History* 3, no. 1 (2003): 85–100, doi:10.1353/fch.2003.0009.

[61] Sebes, *The Jesuits and the Sino-Russian Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689); The Diary of Thomas Pereira.*, 96–100.

[62] Philippe Avril, *Voyage en divers états d'Europe et d'Asie, entrepris pour découvrir un nouveau chemin à la Chine* (J. Boudot, 1693).

had been actual criminals."[63] Yet ten pages later, he offers readers a look at "what the Relations kept in the Moscow Chancellery tell us" about the "many new routes which have taken them gradually towards China"—reflecting his success in obtaining privileged information. Avril's list of routes is in fact a free, adapted translation of the fifth chapter of Spafarii's *Opisanie pervyia chasti…*, entitled "Of what land routes there are to China, and where various Siberian peoples go." This chapter is one of Spafarii's original contributions to Martini's text, and through Avril it would be copied by Crull.[64] It is ultimately unclear how secret the *Opisanie* was meant to be, considering how easily foreigners obtained access to copies, but the impression in Russia was unquestionably that Jesuit espionage had become brazen and unwelcome. In an anonymous memoir written around 1699, the papal envoy Christoph Ignaz von Guarient summarized the situation:

> The Muscovites are convinced—and their stubborn conviction cannot be overcome or destroyed by any counterarguments—that Roman missionaries by their well-known and famous cunning are studying the shortest routes (to China) and that by no other expedient than the treacherous communication of such facts they aim to acquire the goodwill and mercy of the Chinese, and that from this there will come great ruin to the entire Muscovite state. Given this state of affairs, I consider it useless and dangerous to send missionaries to the Muscovite state in any fashion.[65]

[63] Ibid., 160–161.

[64] Ibid., 170ff; Spafarii, *Opisanie pervyia chasti vselennyia*, 15–19.

[65] "Soobrazheniia kasatel'no moskovskoi missii/Cogitationes circa missionem Moscoviticam," in M. O. Koialovich, ed., *Pis´ma i doneseniia iezuitov o Rossii: kontsa XVII i nachala XVIII veka* (Sankt-Peterburg: Senatskaia Tipografiia, 1904), 196–202, 370–374. For attribution, see Paul Pierling, *La Russie et le Saint-Siège* (Paris: Editions Plon, 1896-1907), IV:154n2.

Evidently, even if Spafarii did not feel that it was totally safe to discuss privileged affairs with foreigners (as Neuville's testimony suggests), he felt no similar qualms about providing them with copies or extracts of his work. Yet Guarient's observation implies Muscovite authorities continued to regard the pursuit of such information as espionage.

More broadly, Russia's hybrid texts—based on a mixture of domestic, Siberian, Inner Asian, Jesuit, and even Qing sources—had proved equally susceptible to appropriation by foreign actors with the right connections. Nicolaas Witsen, author of *Noord en oost Tartaryen* (*North and East Tartary*, first published 1692, 2nd ed. 1705), was by far the most successful foreigner in this regard, perhaps in all of Russian history. He was born in 1641 in a wealthy Amsterdam family, received a law degree from Leiden University, and went on his only voyage to Russia in 1664-65—before Spafarii had even arrived in Russia and Godunov's Siberian project was even a twinkle in his eye.[66] In that brief sojourn he managed to obtain a copy of Baikov's *spisok*, which he eventually published in Melchisédech Thévenot's *Recueil des voyages* (a kind of Continental counterpart of Haklyut and Purchas).[67] In subsequent years, Witsen was elected burgomaster of Amsterdam thirteen times and numbered among the most influential Dutch statesmen of his generation. Instead of meeting Russia's Ambassadorial Chancellery officials on their own turf, then, Witsen made contact with them as they

[66] See Johannes Keuning, "Nicolaas Witsen as a Cartographer," *Imago Mundi* 11 (January 1, 1954): 95–110.

[67] Melchisédech Thévenot, *Recueil de voyages de Mr Thevenot* (Paris: Estienne Michallet, 1681), [69ff]. For more on European editions of Baikov's *spisok*, see N. F. Demidova, "O variantakh stateinogo spiska posol'stva F. I. Baikova v Kitai," in *Voprosy sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoi istorii i istochnikovedeniia perioda feodalizma v Rossii: sbornik statei k 70-letiiu A. A. Novosel'skogo*, ed. N. V. Usti□u□gov (Moskva: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1961), 270–80.

conducted negotiations in Europe. Eager for Witsen's support, powerful men like Chancellery head A. A. Vinius (who was related to Witsen and whom the Dutchman eventually rescued when he fell into disfavor with the tsar) were happy to provide him with the geographical and ethnographic materials he craved. In addition to Vinius, who held the key to the Chancellery's collections, after Peter's Great Embassy of 1697 Witsen was also on good terms with Fedor Golovin, the Russian negotiator at Nerchinsk. Golovin provided him with crucial information both orally and in writing. Finally, Witsen regularly corresponded with Peter the Great himself and with A. A. Matveev, the powerful Russian ambassador in London, Paris, and the Hague.[68]

The result was one of the most compendious works on Eurasian history written before the nineteenth century. Its second edition consists of over a thousand pages of material covering roughly everything north and east of Constantinople (though not, for example, Japan, despite the extensive Dutch-Japanese contacts in that period). Starting from what is today called Manchuria, *Noord en oost Tartaryen* winds its leisurely way counterclockwise, working westwards toward the Crimea and then eastwards through Siberia.[69] Beyond this loose structure, the book is a jumble of second-hand reports assembled and then jammed together without regard for conflict or repetition. It is also astonishingly digressive, with long sections about Africa or New Guinea shoehorned

[68] Nicolaas Witsen, *Severnaia i vostochnaia Tartariia : vkliuchaiushchaia oblasti, raspolozhennye v severnoi i vostochnoi chastiakh Evropy i Azii*, trans. V. G. Trisman (Amsterdam: Pegasus, 2010), III:35–139; see also A. N. Kirpichnikov, *Rossiia XVII veka v risunkakh i opisaniiakh gollandskogo puteshestvennika Nikolaasa Vitsena* (Sankt-Peterburg: Slavia, 1995).

[69] On the relationship between "Tartary" and "Manchuria," see Mark C. Elliott, "The Limits of Tartary: Manchuria in Imperial and National Geographies," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no. 3 (2000): 603–46, doi:10.2307/2658945. I have found no evidence to support a Russian origin for "Manchuria" as a place name; Russians typically referred to it as "Dauriia."

into the narrative at the slightest pretext. Its novel contribution consists of the sheer diversity and originality of the sources Witsen was able to bring to bear on his chosen topic, which in some ways remains unmatched to this day. In his preface, he boasts of the scope of his work:

> I gave myself the goal of compiling a map and description of these little-known lands, because I had the opportunity to converse with many *Tartars, Greeks, Persians,* and with people who have experienced captivity in Asian lands. I have discoursed with Chinese who have visited *Tartary* and given me samples of Chinese and Tartar script; I have received communications from Dutchmen who have visited Beijing and Hocksieu [Fuzhou]. Besides this, I received intelligence from *Tartary* itself as well as *Muscovy, Astrakhan, Siberia, Persia, Georgia, Turkey*. Even from *India* I have received descriptions of life in East and Northeast Asia; from *Niuhe* [Manchuria], *Mongolia, Kalmuckia* [Jungharia], *Altyn* [Western Mongolia], *Siberia, Samoedia, Tungusia*, countries lying beyond the Chinese Wall.[70]

This passage, which appears to represent Witsen as the hub of a global intelligence network of monumental scope, in fact understates his reliance on Russia and its ethnographic collections. Of the seventeen places named in the second half of this passage, nine were covered almost entirely through Russian sources and at least two more drew on them partially.[71]

Muscovite sources appear in Witsen's text in a number of forms. Sometimes they are direct translations of documents from Muscovite archives, reproduced with clear titles and a certain degree of fidelity. Of this kind is the "Brief Overview of the voyage of an embassy which His Tsarist Majesty, tsar of Muscovy, sent in A. D. 1654 or 7162 by the Russian calendar, to the Great Khan of Tartary in the Chinese capital

[70] Witsen, *Severnaia i vostochnaia Tartariia*, I:ix.

[71] See also László Hajnal, "Witsen's 'Dagur' Material," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 47, no. 3 (January 1, 1994): 279–326.

Beijing, which the Russians call Kombalyk." This is, of course, a copy of Baikov's *spisok*. But Witsen also had access to more obscure documents, like "A report from a letter written from Selenginsk in 1687 about a voyage on Lake Baikal" (provided to him by Golovin).[72] In other cases, Russian sources include reports of conversations or correspondence, either with a named or an unnamed interlocutor. This can include Golovin himself or, say, "a Kalmyk prince with whom I conversed in Moscow."[73] Finally, certain passages that appear in text which seems to be Witsen's original work are in fact taken directly from Russian texts. In the section on the Amur River, a paragraph reads: "The *askaniama* (which is the name of a Tartar gentleman in *Beijing*) said that from the mouth of the Amur river it is possible to arrive in China by sea … This report about the *Amur* ends here." As we have already seen, the *askaniama* is the *ashan i amban* Mala, and the extract is from Spafarii's chapter on the Amur; although the passage marks the end of a report, it does not clearly mark its beginning.[74] Indeed, Spafarii appears repeatedly unnamed in the text as "a Slavic writer whose works are still unpublished." Witsen quotes from him in describing Korea, apparently unaware that he is in fact quoting Spafarii's translation of Martini.[75]

With its overwhelming profusion of Russian materials, Witsen's *Noord en oost Tartaryen* represents the convergence of late-seventeenth-century European learned culture and the Muscovite practice of creating hybrid geographic texts. Much like

[72] Witsen, *Severnaia i vostochnaia Tartariia*, II:1085ff, II:853.

[73] Ibid., II:815; I:364.

[74] Ibid., I:113.

[75] Ibid., I:71.

Veniukov—part of whose *Opisanie novyia zemli…* appears in Witsen's book—the Dutch writer was less interested in creating a coherent, interpretive narrative than in the accumulation of available evidence. If this practice raised concerns among Muscovite elites for the secrecy of the information he published, they did not express this in writing. Instead, according to the Dutch historian Bruno Naarden, Witsen himself restricted the circulation of his work (and his monumental map of Siberia) out of discretion.[76] In the 1730s, Philipp von Strahlenberg wrote that although "the Curious of our Times have flatter'd themselves with the Hopes of seeing a Treatise written by the late Mr. Nicholas Wittsen … the Copy of this Work, being bought by a great Prince and taken away from the Press, those Hopes were frustrated." The implication was that Peter the Great had deliberately bought and suppressed the book.[77] *Noord en oost Tartaryen* was not widely available until the posthumous third edition, published in 1785—long after it had ceased to have any practical relevance in intelligence terms.[78] This perhaps explains why sheets from Witsen's book were carefully annotated and preserved among the papers of Joseph-Nicolas Delisle, a French astronomer, geographer, and spy who served at the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences in 1725-47.[79]

Over the course of the seventeenth century, Muscovite government documents about Siberia and China were acquired on a large scale by foreign agents. For a variety

[76] Ibid., III:8–9.

[77] Philipp Johann von Strahlenberg, *An Historico-Geographical Description of the North and Eastern Parts of Europe and Asia* (London: Printed for W. Innys and R. Manby, 1738), 4.

[78] Nicolaas Witsen, *Noord en oost Tartaryen: behelzende eene beschryving van verscheidene Tartersche en nabuurige gewesten, in de noorder en oostelykste deelen van Aziën en Europa … ontworpen, beschreven, geteekent, en in 't licht gegeven,* (By M. Schalekamp, 1785).

[79] Archives Nationales, MAR/2JJ/73.

of reasons, like the fact that many of these agents were themselves bound by secrecy, most of these documents did not reach a wide audience (though some, like Petlin's spisok and the Spafarii text quoted by Avril, certainly did). Instead, the majority of Western Europeans with an interest in the subject had to learn about Russo-Qing relations from another major group of sources: the published works of foreign-born employees of the Muscovite state who had travelled to Beijing on diplomatic missions. These publications would shape European understandings of the Siberian frontier and even, in part, the culture of the Qing court for the remainder of the eighteenth century.

3. Publishing and Russo-Qing Relations, 1695-1720

Nikolai Spafarii, as we have seen, was the principal contact for foreign visitors to Moscow who wanted to learn about his voyage to Beijing. Yet he himself never deliberately published a single line, and Witsen's publications of parts of his work never acknowledged his name. Despite his extensive connections and Western education, then, his audience in the West was ultimately considerably smaller than Petlin's or Baikov's unwitting one. (In addition to Thévenot's publication and the extract in Witsen, Baikov's *spisok* appeared in at least one edition by the Prussian Sinologist Andreas Müller.[80]) In the 1690s, however, this calculus would change, as the Germans Isbrandt Ides and his secretary Adam Brand published widely read accounts of their embassy to Kangxi's court, which lasted from 1693-1695. The fact that they were not Russian proved to be decisive. In the next century and a half, Russia's relationship to

[80] Andreas Müller, *Abdallae Beidavaei Historia Sinensis...* (Berlin: Bielkius, 1689), [64ff].

the Qing would be narrated to Western Europe by people who maintained a certain distance from Muscovite political culture.

Isbrand Ides, whose name is spelled a half-dozen different ways, was a German from Schleswig-Holstein. Although biographical information about him is quite scanty, it seems likely that he moved to Russia around 1687, at the age of thirty, having already amassed a solid commercial fortune. His personal proximity to Peter the Great led to his being named head of an embassy to Beijing, which he regarded primarily as a lucrative commercial opportunity. In Beijing he did not achieve any of his minor diplomatic goals, but did realize nearly a fifty percent profit and acquired a pile of commodities which he immediately distributed to creditors and allies upon his return. Since neither he nor Brand spoke Latin, it is unlikely that any serious calculations about dialogue with the Jesuits influenced the decision to send them to Beijing: more likely, they were simply in the right place at the right time. [81]

An abbreviated initial account of Ides's voyage appeared in Berlin only a year after his return, as part of Christian Mentzel's *Kurze Chinesische Chronologia*; Mentzel said he had received it via Johannes Royer, the Brandenburg ambassador in Moscow, and that the author planned to produce a more complete version later.[82] Leibnitz subsequently republished a Latin translation of Mentzel's text in *Novissima Sinica*. But both of these versions differ substantially from the full version, which under Witsen's supervision (he claimed he had worked from Ides's manuscript notes) was printed in

[81] Schleswig-Holstein in the seventeenth century was still Danish territory, which explains why certain sources insist on referring to Ides as a Dane. Isbrant Ides and Adam Brand, *Zapiski o russkom posol'stve v Kitai, 1692-1695*, ed. M. I Kazanin (Moskva: Glav. red. vostochnoĭ lit-ry, 1967), 1–14; Mancall, *Russia and China; Their Diplomatic Relations to 1728*, 200ff.

[82] Christian Mentzel, *Kurze Chinesische Chronologia* (Rüdiger, 1696), 141ff.

Dutch in 1704 as *Driejahrige Reize naar China…*. In the ensuing two decades the text would go through a half-dozen more editions in English, German, and French (the English actually antedated the German by a year despite the fact that Ides had originally written in Hamburg dialect). Later it would also be included in such works as the 1737 English edition of Cornelius de Bruyn's *Travels into Muscovy, Persia, and Parts of the East-Indies.* Meanwhile, Adam Brand's notes had appeared in Hamburg in 1698 under the title *Beschreibung der Chinesischen Reise*, and were then reissued in English and French. Ides and Brand's work, despite the fact that they were neither scholarly nor particularly curious, and despite the insignificance of their embassy, had become by far the most widely distributed account of Russo-Qing relations—far outpacing, for instance, Witsen's own.[83]

Neither publication was in any sense illicit. Peter the Great specifically authorized Ides to print maps and engravings of Siberia to illustrate his journey, and Witsen obliged with gusto—the final version included 29 images and a map.[84] Unlike *Noord en oost Tartaryen*, neither Ides nor Brand included privileged materials or revealed confidential information. In comparison with the *spisok* Ides submitted upon his return, the published travelogues are silent about his exact instructions or the substance of Russo-Qing negotiations, secrecy in which was considered part of his responsibility; ceremonial details, on the other hand, appear to have been fair game for publication abroad. But this is a small minority of Ides and Brand's material: the *spisok*

[83] Andreev, *Ocherki po istochnikovedeniiu Sibiri: XVII vek*, 82–85.

[84] Ides and Brand, *Zapiski o russkom posol'stve v Kitai, 1692-1695*, 23–25.

itself is less than thirty pages long.[85] What attracted audiences to their work, in addition to the material on Beijing, were the numerous details about the towns, landscapes, and non-Russian peoples of Siberia, which of course are absent from a bureaucratic document like the *spisok*. Ides satisfied their ethnographic curiosity. "Samojedes," he says, "when they design a Merry-making, they stand in couples opposite to each other, throw up one of their Legs, and mutually clap the Soles of their Feet so hard with their Hands that it may be heard at a distance. Instead of singing they make a howling noise like that of Bears, they neigh like Horses, or chirrup like young Birds."[86]

Brand's successor in the publishing of works related to Russo-Qing relations was a Swede named Lorents Lang (Lorenz Lange). He may have been an adopted son of Peter's court surgeon Areskin (Erskine), a prisoner of war captured at the Battle of Poltava (1709), or a military engineer hired by the Russian government. Either way, he had clearly decided to stay in the Russian service for good; eventually he would become vice-governor of Irkutsk, where he died in 1753. Unlike Ides and Brand, whose involvement with the southeastern frontier was accidental and fleeting, Lang was one of the most pivotal figures in the entire eighteenth-century history of Russo-Qing contact. He travelled to Beijing no fewer than six times between 1715 and 1737, sometimes spending years at a time there. Journals relating to four of these voyages were published in various European languages in the eighteenth century, although only two of these publications were contemporary (within a decade): 1715-1716 and 1721-

[85] The full spisok is in ibid., 323–347.

[86] Evert Ysbrants Ides, *Three Years Travels from Moscow over-Land to China: Thro' Great Ustiga, Siriania, Permia, Sibiria, Daour, Great Tartary, &c. to Peking.* (London: W. Freeman, 1706), 92.

1722.[87] The former became particularly well-known, because it was released as part of Friedrich Weber's 1721 work *Das Veränderte Rußland* (known in English as *The Present State of Russia).* Weber, who Lang had met in 1718 upon his return from Beijing, was among the first Westerners to provide a systematic assessment of the transformation that had taken place in Russia during the reign of Peter the Great; two editions in English and two in French appeared within four years. Although Lang's diary did not fit neatly with the rest of Weber's text, it certainly served to demonstrate Russia's global ambitions.[88]

Weber's publication of the 1715-16 journal was followed by another heavily abridged Lang work: a brief but all-encompassing "Description of China." Its textual history illustrates some of the peculiar ways in which the Muscovite manuscript tradition intersected with the world of published work. The text, which was finally published in full in 1986, consists of thirteen chapters dealing with Chinese religion, science, history, and so on. The last section, which fits rather awkwardly with the rest, is entitled "On the complaint raised to the Emperor in January 1712 against the Christian religion."[89] In fact this is a fragment from a manuscript Jesuit historical text called the *Acta Pekinensia*, compiled in Beijing by the German Jesuit Kilian Stumpf in 1705-1712.[90] Stumpf had met with Lang in Beijing and provided him with a variety of

[87] T. K. Shafranovskaia, "Puteshestvie Lorentsa Langa v 1715-1716 gg. v Pekin i ego dnevnik," *Strany i narody vostoka* 2 (1961): 188–205; T. K. Shafranovskaia, "O poezdkakh Lorentsa Langa v Pekin," *Sovetskoe kitaevedenie*, no. 4 (1958): 155–59.

[88] Friedrich Christian Weber, *Das Veränderte Rußland* (Nicolaus Förster, 1721), 72–116; Laurent Lange, *Journal de la résidence de Laur. Lange, agent de sa Maj. Impér. de la Grande Russie à la cour de la Chine dans les ann. 1721 et 1722* (Leyde: Abraham Kallewier, 1726).

[89] Lorenz Lange, *Reise nach China* (München: VCH, Acta humaniora, 1986), 86–90.

[90] ARSI Jap-Sin 138, f. 1344ff. I am indebted to Ad Dudink for his help in identifying this fragment.

Jesuit materials, which included, but probably were not limited to, a copy of this fragment and a letter to the Holy Roman Emperor. Although it is unclear if he ever composed a version of his description in Russian, several manuscript copies, without any indication of source or authorship, exist in Russian translation in Moscow and St. Petersburg manuscript collections. One of these, for instance, is bound together with a manuscript edition of a 1710 geographical text made to look like a printed book.[91] Since Weber never published Lang's full description, these copies must have been made before the manuscript was taken out of the country and deposited in the German lands (the 1986 publication is based on two manuscripts found in East German libraries). At least one Russian version, moreover, is translated directly from Weber.[92] As a composite of Russian, Qing, and Jesuit sources, assembled by concatenation and circulated anonymously, Lang's "Description" closely resembles a traditional Muscovite hybrid text.

Finally, the most important eighteenth-century direct source about Russia and the Qing for the English-speaking world was in many ways an anomaly—not least because it was published long after the others. This was the Scot John Bell's *Travels from St. Petersburgh in Russia, to various parts of Asia*, first published in Glasgow in 1763 and widely circulated thereafter (including in Russia, where it was published in 1774). Despite the late date of its publication, it contains travel notes from Bell's youth as a doctor in the Izmailov embassy, which travelled to Beijing in 1719-1721. Since Bell had no particular diplomatic role and was not entrusted with any privileged assignments,

[91] OR RGB, f. 205, n. 19.

[92] OR RNB, f. 777, n. 252.

there is no official Russian version with which to compare it; his charms lay elsewhere, as a keen, detail-oriented, and often funny observer of Qing and Siberian life. He notes, for example, that "when a Chinese and a Tartar are angry at one another, the Tartar, in reproach, calls the Chinese louse-eater; and the latter, in return, calls the other fish-skin coat; because the Mantzur Tartars, who live near the river Amoor, subsist by fishing, and, in summer, wear coats made out of the skins of fishes."[93] In a sense, the fact that a book now more than four decades out of date acquired such popularity throughout Europe hints at just how limited new knowledge about the region had seemed to become.

4. From Sinology to Intelligence

The Izmailov embassy was not successful, although in January 1723 the London *Evening Post* reported that "the Resident of Russia has receiv'd advice from Petersburg, that his Court is in great Expectation of concluding a very advantigious Treaty of Commerce, with the Emperor of China."[94] After the embassy's return no further privileged, secret, or even public documents related to Russo-Qing relations were published in Europe or acquired by Western spies until the nineteenth century, with the exception of a handful of cases in the 1780s. As far as eighteenth-century Europe was concerned, this relationship had been frozen in time at the moment Izmailov crossed the Siberian border, with the intervening period filled in by guesswork and speculation. Even

[93] John Bell, *Travels from St. Petersburg in Russia to Diverse Parts of Asia* (Glasgow: Foulis, 1763), I:336.

[94] *Evening Post,* "News," Jan. 20-23, 1722/3.

though news of the frontier trade at Kiakhta, which began after the 1727 treaty, did gradually filter in (especially after the publication of William Coxe's *Account of the Russian Discoveries…* in 1780), the treaty itself does not seem to have ever been discussed in a Western source.[95] Instead, books like John Bell's were marketed as providing accounts of "those Parts … which are like to be the Scene of Action in the War apprehended between the two potent Empires of Russia and China," a war which was never in serious danger of coming to pass.[96]

In 1730, Strahlenberg's *Das nord- und ostliche Theil von Europa und Asia* (*The Northern and Eastern Part of Europe and Asia*) became the first competitor to Witsen's stillborn *Noord en oost Tartaryen* to reach a wide audience. Strahlenberg, who had lived in Tobolsk for a decade, had every opportunity to produce a text superior to Witsen's. Yet he makes almost no mention of the Qing, provides details about Siberia that are vastly more schematic and poorly sourced than Witsen's, and substitutes irrelevant linguistic speculation for documentary evidence.[97] The document pipeline that had worked so well for Witsen, funneling texts from Siberia to Moscow and thence to Amsterdam, had not survived until Strahlenberg's day.

One reason might have been that the circulation of these texts in Russia itself was also more restricted. Although Petrine Westernization created a secular print market and a system of state schools, no substantial printed descriptions of China

[95] William Coxe, *Account of the Russian Discoveries Between Asia and America* (London: Nichols, 1780), 197–250.

[96] *Lloyd's Evening Post*, Feb. 24-27, 1764.

[97] Strahlenberg, *An Historico-Geographical Description of the North and Eastern Parts of Europe and Asia.*

appeared until the 1770s.[98] Neither did any manuscript supplant Spafarii. The only remotely comparable document that is found in more than a single surviving copy is Savva Vladislavich's *Secret Information about the Strength and Condition of the Qing State* (*Sekretnaia informatsiia o sile i sostoianii Kitaiskago gosudarstva*), composed in 1731. In this text Vladislavich draws on personal observations as well as Spafarii's *Opisanie pervyia chasti* and a number of contemporary Jesuit and European writers to provide an up-to-date secret intelligence assessment of Qing power, urging caution and far-sightedness in planning for a military confrontation. The handful of surviving copies of this text show no indications of sale, ownership, or use, like ex-libris inscriptions or marginalia. If it circulated, its range was confined to a narrow set of institutions.[99] Instead, all evidence points to the fact that for Russian manuscript (and, indeed, print) consumers Spafarii continued to fill the role more contemporary works might have played until new translated publications overtook him by the last quarter of the century. This meant, of course, that Russians were relying on a Jesuit work from 1655 for well over one hundred years.

In this respect, then, the Muscovite period was far from an era of xenophobic paranoia about the circulation of knowledge. It was an age of unparalleled, if perhaps unintentional, openness, when texts could circulate with relative ease between Beijing,

[98] For Russian printing and literacy, see Gary Marker, *Publishing, Printing, and the Origins of Intellectual Life in Russia, 1700-1800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Gary Marker, "Literacy and Literacy Texts in Muscovy: A Reconsideration," *Slavic Review* 49, no. 1 (April 1, 1990): 74–89, doi:10.2307/2500417.

[99] SPbII, f. 36, op. 1, d. 153; OPI GIM, f. 450, n. 204; AV IVR, R. I, op. 1, d. 12; AV IVR, R. I, op. 1, d. 13. The text was published by Spasskii without a preface as Savva Vladislavich, "Sekretnaia informatsiia o sile i sostoianii Kitaiskago gosudarstva," *Russkii vestnik*, no. 2–3 (March 1842): 180–244, 281–337. This short-lived publication is now a bibliographical rarity.

Moscow, and points beyond. The connecting route Leibniz hoped to build already existed, and in the future things would only become more difficult. This era left its imprint on Western culture in a way nothing the Russo-Qing relationship produced in the eighteenth century ever would.

I offer two examples from the eighteenth-century British canon. Daniel Defoe's sequel to *Robinson Crusoe*, 1719's *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe,* eventually takes its hero through China and into Siberia. This final portion takes its local color entirely from Isbrand Ides. Having traveled from Macao to Beijing with his friend, a Portuguese navigator, Robinson finds himself stranded until he learns some delightful news:

> He told us that there was a great Caravan of *Muscovite* and *Polish* Merchants in the City, and they were preparing to set out on their Journey by land to *Muscovy* within four or five Weeks, and he was sure we would take the Opportunity to go back with them, and leave him behind to go back all alone. I confess, I was surpris' d with his News, a secret Joy spread it self over my whole Soul, which I cannot describe, and never felt before or since, and I had no Power for a good while to speak a Word to the old Man; but at last I turn'd to him; how do you know this, said I, are you sure it is true? Yes, says he, I met this Morning in the Street an old Acquaintance of mine, an *Armenian*, or one you call a *Grecian*, who is among them; he came last from *Astracan*, and was designing to go to *Tonquin*, where I formerly knew him, but has alter'd his Mind, and is now resolv'd to go with the Caravan to *Muscow*, and so down the River Wolga to *Astracan*. Well, Segnior, says I, do not be uneasy about being left to go back alone, if this be a Method for my return to *England*, it shall be your Fault if you go back to *Macao* at all. [100]

The "secret Joy" Crusoe feels, of course, is the sudden realization that China is in fact connected to Europe through Russia. The names in the paragraph serve to conjure the

[100] Daniel Defoe, *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe: Being the Second and Last Part of His Life, and of the Strange Surprizing Accounts of His Travels Round Three Parts of the Globe* (W. Taylor, 1719), 306.

vast Eurasian trading world, in which Armenians and Astrakhan played a major role, but it is the Russian caravan on which he would have to depend for his journey home.

This caravan also forms the backbone of Oliver Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World*, first published in the *Public Ledger* in 1760-61. This work takes the form of letters written by "From Lien Chi Altangi to the care of Fipsihi, resident in Moscow; to be forwarded by the Russian caravan to Fum Hoam, first president of the ceremonial academy at Pekin in China." Altangi is a man who has known "all the rigours of Siberian skies," but in London finds himself in an alien and very distant world (which Goldsmith, in imitation of Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes*, hopes to criticize). Only the slim thread of the Russian trade route connects him with Beijing; it is, as in Defoe, the final trace of Leibniz's imagined connecting chain between civilizations. The evocation of the caravan is, unbeknownst to Goldsmith, rather bittersweet: it had just three years earlier finished its final journey.[101]

What Goldsmith and Defoe knew but we have forgotten is that the early European encounter with East Asia—which has buttressed countless narratives about the rise of the global and helped spark the "crisis of the European conscience" that, for some, led to the Enlightenment—was not just about merchants and missionaries and their perilous sea voyages.[102] It was also an overland Russo-Qing encounter to which Western Europeans were spectators. As Russians signed treaties with the Qing

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[101] Oliver Goldsmith, *The Citizen of the World: Or, Letters from a Chinese Philosopher, Residing in London, to His Friends in the East. ...* (Dublin: Ewing, 1762).

[102] C. A Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2004), 44ff; Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient : Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Miles Ogborn, *Global Lives : Britain and the World, 1550-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 295ff; for the "crisis," see Paul Hazard, *La crise de la conscience européenne : 1680-1715* (Paris: Fayard, 1978).

emperor, established permanent footholds in the Forbidden City, and sent caravan after caravan without fear of vanishing abruptly into the briny deep somewhere between Lisbon and Macao, all of them advantages thus far inaccessible to Western powers, they could only watch from a distance—above all, by procuring, translating, and copying Muscovite geographical compilations and diplomatic reports. For Russian historians, unaccustomed to having their subject looked upon from any perspective but a normative and ideological one, this realization should be startling. Instead of being eternally at the periphery of an ever more triumphant European globalization, Russia played an active part in it from the outset, intellectually no less than economically. Even more unexpectedly, its intellectual contribution was not the result of the religious and cultural uniqueness its elites, then as now, constantly proclaimed. Instead, it was in the very hybridity and polyglossia of its texts, the way they incorporated the voices of texts and informants from all over the Eurasian world. Intelligence experts in early modern London or Amsterdam may have already had the *secret du roi* down to a science, but none yet worked across distances so vast and cultural borders so intractable. For that, they turned to the Russians.

Chapter II

The Noblest Commerce: Moscow-Beijing Caravans as Intelligence Nexus

In 1694, a Brandenburg agent in Moscow observed that "the Muscovite people are entirely incapable of searching for … curiosities [*Curiositäten*], because they do not devote the slightest effort to anything that does not smell of money or bring some obvious benefit." He was apologizing for his inability to supply information of scholarly value to Gottfried Leibniz, who dreamed of a Westernized Russia as an intellectual link between the great civilizations of Europe and China.[1] But for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Russians, the Qing empire very much smelled of money, as did its curiosities. This meant that commerce—particularly in the post-Petrine era—went hand-in-hand with certain kinds of knowledge: not commentaries on Confucius or the intrigues of the Spring and Autumn Period, but industrial technologies, military dispositions, and medical practices. We will see in the coming pages that the gathering of this type of pragmatic, state-centered knowledge, which was decidedly of "obvious benefit," was closely tied in with the Moscow-Beijing caravan trade. I will first explore the ways in which the institutional structure of the caravan was set up to enable and delegate intelligence-gathering. Then, I will examine how this structure shaped something that seems at first to belong to an entirely different intellectual sphere: the

[1] Ger'e, *Otnosheniia Leibnitsa k Rossii i Petru Velikomu po neizdannym bumagam Leibnitsa v Gannoverskoi biblioteke*, 5. Quoted in Yuri Slezkine, "Naturalists Versus Nations: Eighteenth-Century Russian Scholars Confront Ethnic Diversity," *Representations*, no. 47 (July 1, 1994): 170–95, doi:10.2307/2928790.

scientific correspondence between the Imperial Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg and the community of Jesuit polymaths in Beijing.

Over the past few decades, scholars have begun to pay close attention to the relationship between knowledge and economic practices in the early modern period. We have increasingly come to realize that knowledge-production and secrecy were not just elements of elite intellectual or bureaucratic culture, but were integral to the lives of artisans, merchants, and other ordinary people.[2] Meanwhile, economic historians have demonstrated that industrial espionage was a persistent concern of eighteenth-century states and not the anachronism it once seemed. Russia in particular was a leading practitioner of early modern technology theft, largely by means of offering lucrative contracts to experienced foreign entrepreneurs.[3] In this context the Russo-Qing encounter stands apart, both because secrets were pursued by clandestine bribes and direct observation rather than recruitment and because their pursuit was so generalized, haphazard, and ad-hoc. Nonetheless, post-Petrine Russian officials were serious about devoting both people and resources to the intellectual function of their trade caravans. Unlike the comprehensive, hybrid intelligence reports produced by

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[2] See Paola Bertucci, "Enlightened Secrets: Silk, Intelligent Travel, and Industrial Espionage in Eighteenth-Century France," *Technology and Culture* 54, no. 4 (2013): 820–52, doi:10.1353/tech.2013.0123 (I am indebted to Heidi Tworek for this reference); Elaine Leong and Alisha Rankin, eds., *Secrets and Knowledge in Medicine and Science, 1500-1800* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011); Pamela O. Long, *Openness, Secrecy, Authorship : Technical Arts and the Culture of Knowledge from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); Karel Davids, "Craft Secrecy in Europe in the Early Modern Period: A Comparative View," *Early Science and Medicine* 10, no. 3 (August 1, 2005): 341–48, doi:10.1163/1573382054615398 (as well as the other articles in this issue).

[3] John R. Harris, "Movements of Technology between Britain and Europe," in *International Technology Transfer: Europe, Japan, and the USA, 1700-1914*, ed. David J. Jeremy (Brookfield, Vt.: Edward Elgar Publishing, 1991), 9–30; John R. Harris, "Industrial Espionage in the Eighteenth Century," *Industrial Archaeology Review* 7, no. 2 (1985): 127–38; John R. Harris, *Industrial Espionage and Technology Transfer : Britain and France in the Eighteenth Century* (Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 1998); See also Doron S. Ben-Atar, *Trade Secrets: Intellectual Piracy and the Origins of American Industrial Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).

diplomats in the Muscovite era, it was meant to be realized in material rather than in textual form, largely by low-ranking employees who spent most of their careers far away from the foreigners in the capitals.

1. The Varieties of Caravan Intelligence

Between the 1650s and the 1750s, the Moscow-Beijing trade caravan was the most visible and concrete manifestation of Russo-Qing relations. It brought the pelts of tens of thousands of woodland creatures, carefully stockpiled in advance in Siberian depots, south to Beijing, and brought back silks, porcelain, tea, and objets d'art for consumption by the imperial court and the nobility in the capitals. Before it was supplanted by the Kiakhta trade in the 1730s, this was the main commercial artery that connected the two empires. It was important less in gross economic terms than as an indication of future potential and a vector for (paradoxically) the growing Westernization of elite Russian tastes, which like their French and British counterparts were beginning to incorporate East Asian commodities.[4] For the Qing customers who bought Russian furs in Beijing, on the other hand, they served as a marketable and prestigious signifier of Manchu frontier heritage.[5]

[4] See, e.g., Luba Golburt, *The First Epoch: The Eighteenth Century and Russian Cultural Imagination* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), 205–238. On tea, see Audra Yoder's forthcoming dissertation, "For All the Tea in Russia: A Cultural History of Tea under the Romanovs, 1616-1917" (Ph. D., University of North Carolina).

[5] Schlesinger, "The Qing Invention of Nature," chap. 2.

The economic aspects of the trade caravan have received a significant amount of attention from Western historians.[6] The most thorough study, which analyzes the century of caravan trade on the basis of published sources, concludes that it was, financially speaking, at best a break-even proposition for the crown: even if the record books for a particular run showed a profit, this did not reflect the opportunity cost of the venture, the true cost of the furs being sold (since the state generally acquired these as tribute in kind), or the overhead required for maintaining the caravan's administrative support structure. If caravans continued to be sent until 1755, it was because they did not actually lose money on paper.[7] This apparent lack of economic significance should push us to seek other explanations for its persistence. The Beijing caravan, after all, produced so many corruption scandals, diplomatic tensions, and administrative headaches that it is hard to imagine the Russian state maintaining it simply because of the nominal profits it might have yielded.

Soviet scholars began to explore some of these other aspects in the 1950s, particularly in the context of the long and illustrious career of Swedish-born caravan director Lorents Lang. (We have already encountered him in Chapter I.) They noticed that Lang's responsibilities in the Qing Empire included not just commercial matters, but also the dispatch of correspondence, the acquisition of books and maps, and the supervision of industrial spies. Yet even as they unearthed these remarkable documents,

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[6] Some of the earliest work includes Gaston Cahen, *Histoire des relations de la Russie avec la Chine sous Pierre le Grand (1689-1730)* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1912); Gaston Cahen, *Le livre de comptes de la caravane russe à Pékin en 1727-1728* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1911).

[7] Foust, *Muscovite and Mandarin*, 105–164. Such shoddy accounting was far from uncommon in eighteenth-century Russia. See Michael Confino, *Domaines et seigneurs en Russie vers la fin du XVIIIe siècle; étude de structures agraires et de mentalités économiques.* (Paris: Institut d'études slaves de l'Université de Paris, 1963).

they failed to make sense of why it was that Lang had been given such a vast brief, or how it fit into the larger framework of Russian knowledge-making about the Qing. It was to them merely the disconnected preparatory material for nineteenth-century Russian sinology.[8] This, I contend, is precisely the wrong perspective. In order to understand why the Russian state spent so much effort making its caravan into a vehicle for knowledge, we must look at the intersection where ideas and commerce intermingled.

One way in which eighteenth-century Russians understood this intersection was through their idiosyncratic interpretation of curiosity (*kuriozitet*). Curiosity (as manifested, for instance, in "cabinets of curiosity") has, of course, played a major role in studies of early modern European art, science, and culture, where it has helped pin down the particular passion animating the era's intellectual pursuits.[9] But in the Russo-Qing context the use of the term was associated less with experimentation and sightseeing by gentlemanly virtuosos than with the acquisition of commercially compelling material objects, especially those made valuable by their East Asian origins and the techniques used in their manufacture. In 1752, for instance, the caravan director Aleksei Vladykin was ordered to obtain "Chinese as well as Japanese goods needed for Her Imperial Majesty's court as well as for other highborn persons, and especially the best possible curiosities [*iz kurioznykh veshchei kak vozmozhno lutchikh*]."[10] A set of

[8] Skachkov, *Ocherki istorii russkogo kitaevedeniia*, 30ff; Shafranovskaia, "O poezdkakh Lorentsa Langa v Pekin"; Shafranovskaia, "Puteshestvie Lorentsa Langa v 1715-1716 gg. v Pekin i ego dnevnik."

[9] See, e.g., Neil Kenny, *The Uses of Curiosity in Early Modern France and Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Justin Stagl, *A History of Curiosity: The Theory of Travel, 1550-1800* (Langhorne, Pa.: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995).

[10] RGADA (Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts), f. 248, op. 113, d. 1214, l. 22-27.

1735 instructions to Lang spelled out in exacting detail what "curiosities" could and could not include:

> Lacquered items of Japanese manufacture including cabinets and boxes[,] porcelain trays and cups colored and wrought with gold, also Japanese, and pick them by matched sets … and buy no unmatched pieces of tableware, and also do not buy those painted only in blue unless very fine Japanese work … but buy cups woven with silver or bronze threads and silk tapestries, and … curtains … no less than three arshins [appx. 2.2 m.] in length … and do not buy or trade old curtains sewn on a black or white brocade, nor those with Chinese characters except those on which there are also flowers and people or birds … and the aforementioned curious items should total no more than fifteen thousand rubles.[11]

Curiosity, in other words, did not just entail searching for unique objets d'art that presented intellectual interest. When Vladykin's brother Eremei attempted to bring close to one hundred pieces of porcelain tableware and other objects back from Beijing, only to have them confiscated at an internal customs post, he argued—successfully—that these goods had been acquired *iz kuriozitetu* rather than for sale.[12] It is clear to us, as it was to the customs officials, that these were commodities, but being curious raised them to a more exalted level. "Curiosity," or rather eighteenth-century Russians' materialistic understanding of it, underpinned the caravans' the wholehearted pursuit of industrial espionage: the briefs of spies like the Tobolsk silversmith Osip Miasnikov, whom we will meet below, included a mandate to acquire any sort of "curious things" they might identify.[13]

[11] RGADA, f. 248, kn. 181, l. 25.

[12] RGADA, f. 248, o. 113, d. 485a, l. 715ff.

[13] RGADA, f. 214, op. 1, ch. 8, d. 5376, l. 10.

But curiosity was only one of the motivations behind caravan-based intelligence gathering. Another major focus was strategic. After all, the caravan offered Russians their only opportunity to traverse spaces in the Qing realm that were not subjected to constant Qing surveillance and control, where they could assess potential logistical problems or evaluate local defenses in the event of a future military conflict. We have seen how Russian visitors like the ambassadors Baikov and Spafarii gathered information of this kind throughout the seventeenth century; in the eighteenth, as embassies became less frequent, caravan directors and their subordinates replaced them. The caravan's commercial activities, moreover, offered many opportunities to conceal the exchange of illicit objects such as maps and documents. The Governing Senate and the College of Foreign Affairs did not fail to take advantage of such materials when their agents acquired them, nor to duly reward the finder. Accordingly, any set of instructions issued to a caravan director bore the boilerplate warning that "Any affairs which are subject to secrecy should not be discussed in personal letters, not [even] to him who sent you, aside from true [official] reports."[14]

My main focus here is intelligence-gathering as it was practiced in the half-dozen caravans that traveled between Moscow and Beijing from the 1727 Treaty of Kiakhta to the unofficial end of the caravan trade in 1755. These caravans differed in a number of ways from their pre-Kiakhta predecessors. First, they were limited by treaty to at most one every three years, a schedule aimed at keeping fur prices high as well as limiting Russian access to Beijing. Second, they were organized, staffed, and tightly controlled by the state. This was a sharp departure from the previous period, when

[14] E.g., RGADA, f. 248, kn. 181, l. 246.

Siberian merchants could use fictive diplomatic paperwork to launch unmonitored caravan ventures. Finally, as a direct result, the new caravans were much more institutionalized. (In fact, for the Russian portion of its journey, the caravan relied on the posts for travel and hence existed as an abstract institution rather than a concrete train of people and animals.) Each post-1727 caravan had a treasury (the *karavannaia summa*), which paid salaries to a director, a commissar, a suite of sworn crown agents (*tseloval'niki*), a doctor, and so on, while its composition and instructions reflected the input and involvement of a number of government bodies: the Senate, the College of Foreign Affairs, the Siberian Bureau (*prikaz*), local Siberian administrators, and the Academy of Sciences. Typically, preparations for a caravan would begin up to a year in advance; trained personnel would be requisitioned by the appropriate agencies and commanded to come to Moscow. The caravan would spend a year or more on the road, remain in Beijing for three to six months, then take another year to return, at which point its imports would be auctioned off. Often, outstanding disputes and investigations resulted in one caravan's books being open well into the tenure of the next—and the caravan which departed Moscow in 1753 had been in preparation since 1750.

The post-Kiakhta Moscow-Beijing caravan was a sprawling, inefficient mobile bureaucracy involving hundreds of people (and thousands of animals), responding to demands from a wide range of other bureaucracies. This fundamental heterogeneity was reflected in its intelligence gathering practices as well, as the chart below demonstrates.

Type of Intelligence	Gathering Institution	Caravan Role	Examples
Journals and ledgers	Senate	Chancellerist	Iakov Nesmeianov; Mikhail Postnikov
Maps	Senate; College of Foreign Affairs; Academy of Sciences	Commissar; caravan director; student	Eremei Vladykin; Lang
Books and documents	Senate; Academy of Sciences	Caravan director; doctor	Lorents Lang; Franz Jellatschitsch
Translation services, local contacts	Russian Ecclesiastical Mission (Synod)	Student (accompanying caravan or at Beijing mission)	Larion Rossokhin; Ivan Bykov
Medicine Botany	Medical Chancellery; Academy of Sciences	Doctor	Karl Heick
Industrial espionage	Senate; Siberian Prikaz; Academy of Sciences	Merchant; doctor	Osip Miasnikov; Andrei Kursin

Figure 3: Functions of the Moscow-Beijing caravan

As the entry for "journals and ledgers" might suggest, not all of the knowledge assembled by caravan personnel was covert in nature. Instead, caravan employees followed pragmatic considerations in gathering intelligence along a spectrum ranging from simple day-to-day meteorological and ethnographic observations to the secret and potentially risky bribery of officials for access to classified Qing documents. It is hard to identify a bright line between the two in the minds of the Russians, especially since no one appears to have ever been punished for failing to observe secrecy in matters of intelligence-gathering. Yet they clearly regarded some forms of it as being riskier and hence worthy of reward than others. Such tasks often figure as justifications in requests

for promotions and raises, either before or after the fact.[15] On the other hand, official bodies were not unduly concerned about the qualifications of caravan employees, and regarded with equanimity news that an assignment had been bungled due to laziness or drunkenness (though at one point Lang suggested that his chancellerist might "serve better with a sword than in the caravan with a pen.")[16] Since the caravan's overseers rarely had any one specific intelligence goal in mind, a shotgun approach would have been amply justified; in point of fact, however, it is difficult to identify even one area in which the Russian agents were entirely successful.

2. Caravans and Strategic Intelligence

Travel journals and other forms of geographical intelligence were among the most well-established of the caravan's intelligence practices. A mid-eighteenth-century *poverstnaia kniga* (gazetteer of postal routes) originating in the Astrakhan procuracy used data from Savva Vladislavich's 1725-1730 caravan journal to establish the official route from Moscow to the Qing border (via Verkhotur'e and Selenginsk).[17] Although information of this sort about routes was of great interest to state officials, who sought to reduce the caravan's expenses while minimizing security risks, it was not secret and formed only a small part of the geographical responsibilities of the caravan.

[15] E.g., RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 485a, l. 109ff.

[16] RGADA, f. 248, kn. 181, l. 58.

[17] OR RGB (Russian State Library Manuscript Department), f. 178, n. 1317, l. 99.

The caravan's journal generally went beyond a mere sketch of the route. It could often contain travel impressions and drawings, such as this illustration of Qing soldiers (left and center) and a Korean (right) from 1737:[18]



Figure 4: Fragment of a caravan journal with images of two Qing soldiers, a Korean, and a Buddhist shrine (RGADA)

[18] Both of these drawings are from OR RGB, f. 199, op. 1, p. 349, ch. 2 (one of G. F. Müller's portfolios). The marginal annotations are by Larion Rossokhin.

More substantively, these drawings and observations were often focused on objects of strategic interest, such as these plans of the fortifications at the Great Wall crossings of Xuanfu and Kalgan (Zhangjiakou):

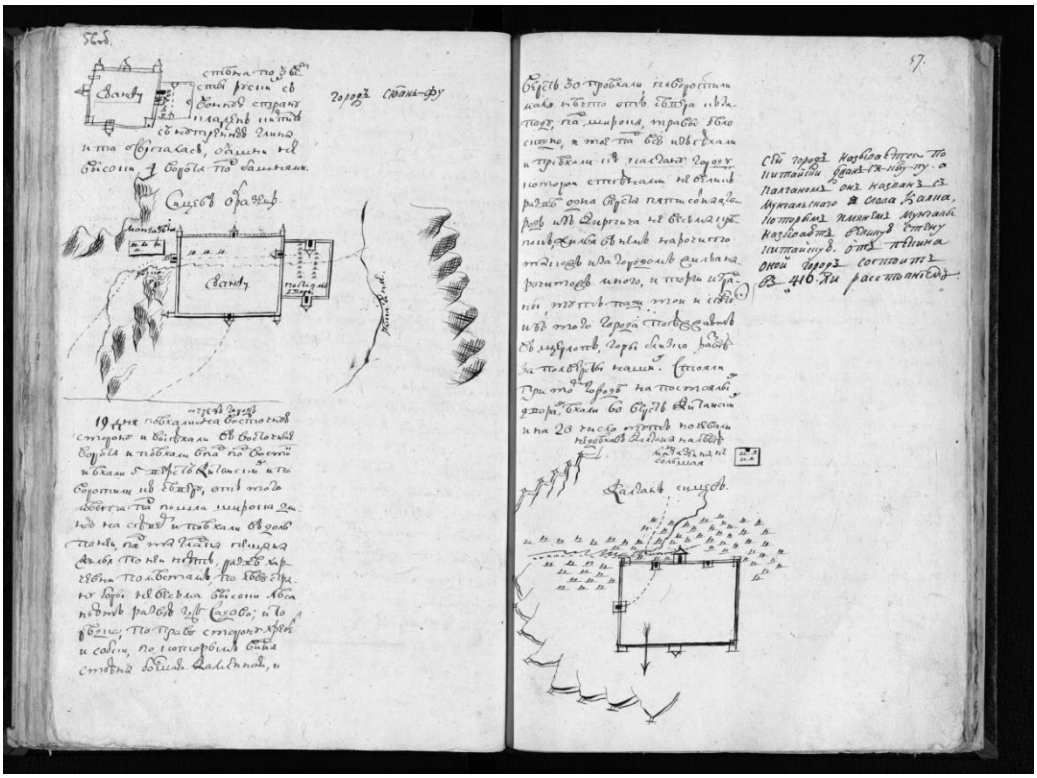


Figure 5: Drawings of Qing fortifications, from same journal (RGADA)

As diplomatic tensions between Russia and the Qing intensified in the 1750s, strategic considerations began to play a larger role in in intelligence-gathering. The instructions issued to Eremei Vladykin for the 1752-55 caravan went into great detail about why and how intelligence was to be gathered and how this was to be kept secret. Despite this emphasis on secrecy, however, the actual data to be gathered were by contemporary standards fairly innocuous:

> Because a state caravan is currently going from Russia to the Qing state, and the situation [*polozhenie*] of the places and residences between

> Kiakhta and Beijing and elsewhere (which have not been surveyed in previous caravans) is unknown, the Senate has determined that sub-ensign [*podporuchik*] of geodesy Eremei Vladykin is to be sent with this caravan, and he is to survey and discover [this situation], and what people live there and what their numbers are, and where they obtain food and income, as well as where the rivers are, what they are called, and how distant they are from one another, and from where and to where they flow, describe all this thoroughly and map it … but while doing so this Vladykin is to conduct himself in an artful and secret fashion so that the Qing cannot discover or learn about this task from anyone or bear the slightest suspicion. And for this reason he is not to tell anyone that he is an officer of geodesy, but rather call himself a caravan commissar, and neither is he to disclose this to the Russians in the caravan, except for the director.[19]

Vladykin's journal amply fulfilled these obligations. To give precise measurements of distance, he employed a surveying machine (*verstomernaia mashina*, probably one resembling a small wheeled cart). In passing through Kalgan, he observed that the Great Wall had collapsed in several locations, that the guard consisted of around 500 soldiers in total, and that although no artillery was to be seen he had learned that there were cannon stored in the local armory. Like a number of contemporary Russian observers, he remarked on the poor quality of the garrison's matchlock rifles, gunpowder, and equipment. Later, taking a more broadly ethnographic tone, Vladykin noted the degree of lip service paid to Mongol Buddhists in the Qing capital and speculated that it was intended to prevent dissatisfaction and revolt among the Mongols—though his attendant remark that most of the Mongols in fact desired to become Russian subjects was perhaps overoptimistic.[20]

Vladykin supplemented his journal with a series of maps, as specified in his instructions. Some he evidently composed himself, but the majority (covering "the

[19] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 485a, l. 109.

[20] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 485a, l. 705v, 714.

eastern side of the Qing state, which is quite unknown to the Russians but has been determined to be most valuable to know for future enterprises") were procured secretly from contacts at the "palace library" with the help of students from the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission. Vladykin and his assistant Bashmakov spent "day and night" furiously copying the maps so they could be returned to the library's collections. The haul, which both Vladykins presented to the Senate on their return in 1756, included three maps of the Amur region (including Korea and some of the Japanese islands), three of Inner and Outer Mongolia, seven of various provinces, and one of the city of Beijing. All told, the collection cost 1,500 rubles to acquire—the equivalent of three years' salary for Vladykin, which the Senate was happy to compensate. The Amur maps were particularly crucial (and expensive), because the region was a focus of imperial expansion and because the Senate was in the midst of preparing a Third Kamchatka Expedition to sail down the Qing-controlled river.[21]

This was not the first set of maps acquired and turned in to the Senate by caravan intelligence. In 1738 (while Aleksei Vladykin was still a student at the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission), caravan director Lorents Lang reported to Empress Anna that he had located "a geographic map of the entire realm of the Qing emperor on 32 sheets, which I obtained during my current stay in Beijing through the exertions of the language student Larion Rossokhin, on which by his own labors he has also marked the place names with Russian letters." For his pains Rossokhin received a scant 150-ruble reward.[22] Did the Russian Senate and College of Foreign Affairs judge this map so

[21] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 485a, l. 685-688.

[22] RGADA, f. 248, kn. 1102, l. 1564-1567.

inadequate or outdated that Vladykin had to retrace Lang's steps? Rossokhin's atlas was likely a version of the imperially commissioned Kangxi Atlas, and hence would have represented one of the era's most reliable sources of geographical information about the Qing.[23] There is no direct evidence in the sources, but the most likely explanation (especially considering the Senate's note that these places "have not been surveyed by previous caravans," which also ignores the journal) is that this collection of maps was simply forgotten by the time the 1753 caravan was due to be sent. The Russian state's appetite for intelligence about the Qing realm may have been voracious, but it was also indiscriminate.

In addition to maps, caravan personnel were also on the lookout for Manchu and Chinese texts, particularly those with geographical and other strategically valuable content. Many of these were bought and carried from Beijing by students like Rossokhin; we will see in Chapter III what became of these materials afterwards. Others, however, were purchased by people who often had very little idea what they were buying. The massive translation of the *Baqi tongzhi* (*Comprehensive History of the Eight Banners*) Rossokhin embarked on during his last years of life was the direct result of a purchase made in Beijing by Eremei Vladykin. In all likelihood, Vladykin thought he was fulfilling his commission to collect geographical data by purchasing the *Da Qing yitongzhi*, a vast geographical compendium, only to discover upon his return that he had bought *The Comprehensive History of the Eight Banners.*[24] In 1748, Rossokhin

[23] Likely the 1721 edition. See Mosca, *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy*, 104–105. Although the later Yongzheng and Qianlong atlases were considerably larger, most of the new plates covered territories beyond the Qing borders that were long familiar to European cartographers.

[24] RGADA, f. 248, f. 113, d. 485a, l. 759ff.

identified fifteen "newly released" books, mostly multivolume histories, held by "various ranks of people"—almost certainly members of the caravan that had returned to Moscow and St. Petersburg the previous year. He persuaded the Academy of Sciences to pay almost two hundred rubles to acquire them for its library.[25]

The caravan director and commissar, as in the case of the Vladykin brothers, were in direct contact with the highest levels of Russian bureaucracy—the Senate and the various iterations of the Imperial Privy Council. But other, less important agencies also tried to exploit the caravan's structure. The caravan doctor, who was typically of foreign origin and employed by the College of Medicine or its predecessor, the Apothecary Bureau, also filled an intelligence role. Since rhubarb root, a highly regarded and expensive medicament, was one of the major goods in Russo-Qing commerce (Russians transshipped the root to Western Europe at vastly inflated prices), the medical departments had a vital interest in the trade; the well-known reputation of Chinese medicine supplied the remaining justification.[26] Yet the initiative for the first Russian doctor to be sent to Beijing originated with Kangxi. When the Qing ambassador Tulišen met Siberian governor Matvei Gagarin in 1713, he relayed Kangxi's request for a surgeon or physician, and in 1714, the Scottish surgeon Thomas Garvine was assigned to accompany Lang's caravan to Beijing. Upon his arrival he successfully treated the emperor.[27] Although it is unclear whether Garvine was entrusted with any particular

[25] ARAN (Archive of the Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg Branch), f. 3, op. 1, d. 114, l. 45-52. [Also in Sukhomlinov]

[26] See Foust, *Rhubarb*.

[27] Richard Burgess, "Thomas Garvine--Ayrshire Surgeon Active in Russia and China.," *Medical History* 19, no. 1 (January 1975): 91–94.

intelligence assignment, on the way back he brought with him letters to the Holy Roman Emperor from the Jesuits and medicine sent by them specifically to the Czar.[28]

The doctor's function as a producer of knowledge evolved in an ad hoc fashion. After one caravan returned to St. Petersburg in 1739, its doctor Karl Heick wrote to the Medical Chancellery asking for a raise from his pitiful 200 ruble salary on account of the distance and harsh conditions of the trip. The senate approved a full fifty-percent raise, but also sent him a set of instructions to justify the increase, "as this Heick [*Geik*] will on occasion serve the medical craft by finding yet-unknown plants and medical information, for which the Medical Chancellery will issue instructions, for indeed he has already found some useful discoveries and has sent these in to the Medical Chancellery together with certain rare seeds and drugs."[29] In 1743, the Beijing Jesuit Antoine Gaubil wrote to Joseph-Nicolas Delisle in St. Petersburg that he had met with Heick ("Mr. Charles Hueich, a surgeon of Rostock") and given him a collection of coins to be delivered to Count Andrei Osterman—evidently neither man knew that Osterman had already been disgraced and exiled.[30] This was likely Heick's last trip to Beijing, at least as caravan doctor. In 1744, he was replaced by a medic of Croatian origin named Franz Lukas Jellatschitsch (the German spelling; Franc-Luka Jelačič in Croatian, Frants Luka Elachich in Russian). Jellatschitsch—whom we will encounter again below—had a much broader brief. In addition to his duties as a healer, the Medical Chancellery asked

[28] Demidova, Miasnikov, and Tikhvinskiii, *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XVIII veke*, I:177.

[29] RGADA, f. 248, kn. 181, l. 46-47.

[30] Antoine Gaubil, *Correspondance de Pekin, 1722-1759*, ed. Rene Simon (Genève: Éditions Plon, 1971), 559–560.

him to keep a journal, study Chinese medicinal practices, and send frequent reports. He was also expected to procure raw kaolin (porcelain clay), identify "Chinese wrought amber and discover how it is made," discover anything he could about glassmaking in China, and learn "how to tell the true ginseng [*enzing*] root from the false and by what signs." The "Catholic fathers" were to serve Jellatschitsch as consultants in all such matters. The scattershot and barely relevant nature of these requests was not motivated in the text by any detailed explanation. Clearly the role of doctor implied an intelligence component, but the content of that intelligence seems to have been determined largely by the idle musings of Jellatschitsch's Chancellery superior.[31]

3. Industrial Espionage

The Medical Chancellery's requests for kaolin and other craftwork materials betrayed no knowledge of the fact that the caravan was already serving as the staging ground for a wide-ranging project of industrial espionage in these fields. Although eighteenth-century Russia was constantly obtaining technological know-how in licit and illicit ways, it did so primarily by importing skilled workers from all over Europe, taking advantage of their expertise in high-technology areas such as mining. The foreign servitors who traveled to Beijing with the caravan, such as Lang, Garvine, and Heick, were one manifestation of this phenomenon: had Tulišen asked for a Russian-born doctor to attend Kangxi, it is unlikely that any of them would be found.[32] In the Qing

[31] ARAN, f. 3, op. 1, d. 808, l. 15.

[32] See, e.g., Lindsey Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1998), 309–316.

context, however, Russian industrial espionage meant clandestinely observing working practices and strategically bribing craftsmen to reveal their trade secrets. This may be why it ultimately proved to be of such limited use.

The most valuable secret to be gained was the recipe for Chinese porcelain, which depended on the use of kaolin and special high-firing kilns capable of maintaining temperatures over 1300° C. In 1712, the Jesuit François d'Entrecolles was conducting research into the process at the Jingdezhen porcelain factories: although Lang was in Beijing in 1715 and was in close contact with the Jesuits, he did not mention the new research. In fact, the whole question should have been moot. In 1709 the German "alchemist" Johann Friedrick Böttger (or rather, more likely, his mentor Ehrenfried von Tschirnhaus) had finally discovered the secret of porcelain-making, with Europe's first manufactory opening in the Saxon city of Meissen later the same year. Although Chinese-made porcelain continued to sell well in Europe until the mid-eighteenth century, in part because it was considered to be both cheaper and higher-quality, the technical barriers to breaking the Qing monopoly had been lifted.[33] Peter the Great had extensive contacts in the German principalities, and the porcelain secret was not confined to Saxony for long; indeed, the Russian tsar employed a Saxon porcelain master named Peter Eggebrecht to import the craft just as Lang was arriving in Beijing. But nothing came of this. No porcelain manufacturing existed in Russia until

[33] Finlay, *The Pilgrim Art*, 48–77, 274ff; Martin Schönfeld, "Was There a Western Inventor of Porcelain?," *Technology and Culture* 39, no. 4 (October 1, 1998): 716–27, doi:10.2307/1215846.

the reign of Elizabeth, although one Ivan Grebenshchikov did manage to produce the cruder, less high-fired faience.[34]

It is therefore all the more surprising to see a reinvigorated Russian interest in industrial espionage in the Qing Empire, including porcelain, between 1735 and 1755. In the former year, the historian and high official Vasilii Tatishchev reported to the Cabinet that while in Tobolsk he had met with a silversmith named "Maslov," "who had been in China." (His name, as subsequent reports clarified, was actually Miasnikov, and it is not clear in what capacity he had gone there.) According to Tatishchev, "it is clear that he did not waste his time there … he said he saw how they make vessels out of hard stone [perhaps jade] and would have worked himself but did not know what to call the materials in Russian, and had not brought any with him, so he asked me to send him there for a year … he seems to be an intelligent man and no drunk." Miasnikov was dispatched with Lang's 1735 caravan to learn as much about Qing handicrafts as he could.[35] Although he achieved some success in studying metalwork and miscellaneous crafting techniques, Lang pleaded on his behalf that "he was not in a position to fulfill his duty entirely":

> The Qing never let Russian people leave the embassy compound without a guard for any reason, and these guards never let Russian people out of their sight for a minute, from which it happens that not only their artisans but any sort of people use any means to distance themselves from conversation [*konversatsii*] with Russians so as not to fall under suspicion,

[34] Baron N. B. von Vol'f, ed., *Imperatorskii farforovyi zavod, 1744-1904* (S. Peterburg: Izdanie Upravleniia farforovymi zavodami, 1906), 1–6. This chapter in von Vol'f also contains a description of Miasnikov and the Kursins' experiments. The account I provide below is intended to correct, expand, and hopefully supplant the more fragmentary narratives in von Vol'f, Skachkov, and Foust (the latter relies entirely on von Vol'f).

[35] RGADA, f. 248, kn. 1102, l. 1403-1409, 1537-1538.

> and in Beijing it often so happens that people perish from suspicion alone without any other basis, from which comes inexpressible harm to our trade.

In addition to learning the local techniques, Miasnikov managed to acquire samples of ore and other components; most importantly for the Russians, he discovered how to repair broken porcelain vessels using iron braces. Lang requested that Miasnikov be dispatched for a third trip to China with the next caravan. His instructions demonstrate how secrecy could be a tool of internal, not just external, security: it was essential to "keep this task entrusted to him secret or pretend that he is only spending his time in these tasks for his own curiosity, for if the common people and especially near the border discover that he is seeking ores for the good of the state, then it is likely that they will try to cause problems so that they do not find themselves being used for such work in time, and if the Qing discover [his efforts] then they may conceal their arts from us even more."[36]

The Cabinet agreed with Lang that industrial espionage needed to be continued, ordered a three-hundred-ruble reward to be issued to Miasnikov, and had him transferred to the Qing border together with his whole family. For the next trip, he was to locate three literate artisans in Siberia to serve as students.[37] Yet this enterprise was to be far less successful. Miasnikov located two pupils, of whom one turned out to be an incapable drunk. When the caravan returned in 1743 and the Cabinet attempted to determine whether Miasnikov had actually accomplished anything in Beijing, the silversmith denounced the new caravan director Firsov for refusing to buy precious

[36] RGADA, f. 248, kn. 1102, l. 514-516.

[37] RGADA, f. 214, op. 1, ch. 8, d. 5378, l. 10; f. 248, kn, 181, l. 171.

stones for his research and for otherwise obstructing his work. He claimed he had found a Chinese porcelain master who was willing to share the secret for the astronomical sum of 2000 taels (about 3500 rubles), but that Firsov had refused to pay, saying that the caravan was due to leave too soon to be of use. Consulted to adjudicate this accusation, the Siberian Bureau failed to respond for five years, leaving Miasnikov and his two students to draw pay uselessly in the capital. At last in 1749 the imperial treasury staged a demonstration in the ballroom of the Winter Palace, at which the three craftsmen successfully repaired (with braces) a consignment of state-owned porcelain tableware. Of course, this left Russians no closer to the secret of porcelain manufacturing—after all, Miasnikov had supposedly learned the repair trick a decade before. Nothing else he had discovered in Beijing proved worthwhile.[38]

The director of the next caravan, Gerasim Lebratovskii, was determined to have better luck. When his caravan arrived in Kiakhta, he discovered a local resident named Andrei Kursin, who had been experimenting with kaolin deposits he had found in the area. Lebratovskii took him with him to Beijing. With the help of Mission student (and future caravan director) Aleksei Vladykin, Lebratovskii and Kursin managed to locate a porcelain-maker who was willing to share the secret at a cost of 1,933 taels (3,286 rubles; the total cost of the director's experiments exceeded 5,200 rubles, or almost $250,000 in today's money).[39] He demonstrated the craft in an empty temple and provided Lebratovskii with a detailed set of written instructions. On his way home in 1746, Lebratovskii picked up Andrei Kursin's brother Aleksei and brought them both to

[38] RGADA, f. 248, kn. 183, l. 206-221.

[39] RGADA, f. 248, kn. 181, l. 361; f. 248, op. 113, d. 968, l. 17ff.

St. Petersburg, where he set up an experimental porcelain factory near a brickworks. Thereafter the narratives diverge. In a lengthy complaint, Aleksei Kursin claimed Lebratovskii's informant had provided faulty information, that the project was doomed, and that the director was simply trying to cover up the fact that he had wasted such a vast sum of the tsar's money; in the service of this lie, Kursin claimed, he had been forced to misrepresent how much he really knew about the process. Lebratovskii—whose letters as reproduced in the complaint really do show an escalating sense of desperation—insisted that they merely needed time and the proper materials to put the Chinese recipe into practice. (In all likelihood, the lack of kaolin was a key problem even if the recipe was in fact reliable.) The venture folded without ever having produced more than two test cups, and it is unclear how close to porcelain these actually were.[40] Lebratovskii, at any rate, had remarkably bad timing. In 1744, the Moscow metallurgists Gunger and Vinogradov successfully developed the recipe on their own and founded the Imperial Porcelain Factory, which remains in existence to this day. Chinese porcelain would play no part in its history.

The Kursins, however, went back to Beijing once more, together with Miasnikov's old pupil Dmitrii Popov. Since porcelain was no longer a going concern, they concentrated on a different species of craftwork: what Russians call *finift'*, or enameled silverware. It is unclear what drew the Kursins to Qing-produced finift' in particular, since Russia has its own such tradition dating back to the medieval period; still, finift' goods appear frequently in the caravan's cargo manifests. The likeliest

[40] RGADA, f. 248, kn. 188, l. 62-88. See also Iurii Dushkov, "Kursiny v Irkutske," *Zemlia irkutskaia*, no. 5 (1995): 13–17.

explanation is that they sought the recipe for their vivid mineral-based colors. Along the way, the Kursins were overcome with enthusiasm for yet another industrial espionage project, which they seem to have conceived on their own: adopting Qing alcohol distillation techniques (of baijiu or another high-proof grain spirit) to the Russian market, since these were "much more convenient" than Russian methods. A third project was building a machine to carve stones like jade into vessels. The latter two efforts ended in utter failure, with the brothers alternately blaming the perfidy of the informants and the lack of appropriate materials. The first, however, was a partial success. The Kursins did manage to create a finift' goblet and tray weighing approximately 300 grams, but some of the colors and decorations they had learned to create were unavailable in Russia. As of 1758, they had been issued with a state-owned building in Moscow in which to carry on the trade. What happened to this business is unknown, although the Chinese import clearly failed to displace the Rostov tradition.[41]

Yet Miasnikov and the Kursins, for all their failures, were at least knowledgeable and conscientious craftsmen. In 1737, Lang was ordered to take on Stepan Dames, the son of the director of the Nerchinsk silver mines. Dames was expected to go to Beijing and, like Miasnikov, study Qing metallurgy—in particular, the means by which silver- and goldsmiths there extracted their own metal from raw ore on a piecemeal basis. There were two problems with this plan. The first was that "there are no ore smelters except for iron either in Beijing or in the immediate area, those are all near the Indian border in Yunnan province, which everyone says is very full of gold, silver, and copper, while in other places even where there are minerals, there are no smelters by imperial

[41] RGADA, f. 248, op. 40, kn. 2930, l. 530-535; f. 248, kn. 183, l. 255ff.

order, except for Yunnan." More seriously, however, it turned out that "he Stepan Dames had not learned anything of his father's craft, which is why no benefit accrued from his trip." The Cabinet ordered that Dames be sent back to Nerchinsk for training, but thereafter his name disappears from the records. Personnel uncertainties such as these were a perennial problem for the administrators of Russo-Qing affairs.[42]

We have arrived, then, at two seemingly contradictory conclusions about the role of intelligence in the Moscow-Beijing caravan trade. The first is that it was extensive, multifaceted, and thorough, involving multiple levels of actors, significant levels of covert activity, and substantial investment of resources both administrative and financial. The second is that it was mostly devoid of meaningful results. Even when cadres were adequate and local sources did not mislead, the knowledge acquired left no lasting impact on Russian society; in particular, industrial espionage by means of bribery turned out to be decidedly inferior to actually employing trained foreign experts (which was diplomatically impossible in the Russo-Qing context). None of this prevented administrators from continuing to incorporate intelligence requirements into the caravan's brief, most likely because it remained one of the few sources of leverage left to Russia amid a deteriorating diplomatic situation. It was these tensions that brought the caravan to a final end in 1760, when the College of Foreign Affairs decided that the diplomatic situation had escalated to such an extent that "it is to be feared that the Qing will raid and despoil our caravan if it is sent at this time." What was to be a

[42] RGADA, f. 248, kn. 1102, l. 1564-1568.

temporary halt turned out to be a permanent one two years later, when Catherine II ascended the throne.[43]

4. Caravan Intelligence and the Academy-Jesuit Correspondence

Between the 1730s and the 1770s, the Jesuit missionaries in Beijing and the Imperial Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg carried on an extensive, if frequently interrupted, scientific correspondence. Both sides insisted that this "commercium plane nobilissimum" ("clearly the noblest commerce") was an exemplary case of learned men communicating with one another in the service of knowledge, and the Russian empress's (indirect) support for it would redound to her glory. The material and political context of the Academy-Jesuit was already a major theme in V. P. Taranovich's 1939 essay on the subject, only published in 2004, which to this day remains the only comprehensive study of the correspondence. Subsequent work has moved steadily away from this contextualization, in part because much of it is based on a partial set of letters copied and brought to Europe by the Jesuit François-Marie Gaillard in the early twentieth century; in stripping away the logistical and ancillary paperwork that accompanied the letters, Gaillard's collection has contributed to the sense that these were merely letters like any other. It would be easy to agree: after all, this trans-Eurasian connection seems to have been a concrete realization of Leibniz's dream of Russia as a bridge between European and Chinese civilization. But seeing the Academy-Jesuit correspondence as a horizontal Jacob's ladder of disembodied texts flitting back and forth across four thousand miles of space would be to miss its fundamental

[43] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1322.

constant: its dependence on the Moscow-Beijing trade caravan. As we will see, the material dimension of this correspondence shaped its origins, its content, and its results. In its dependence on the caravan, the "noblest commerce" demonstrated another way that intellectual and commercial aspirations were intertwined; if not exactly intelligence-gathering, it shared with it both aspirations and personnel.[44]

The Jesuit use of the "Russian Route" (or "Siberian Route") for the dispatch of letters predates the Imperial Academy of Sciences, which was founded in 1724, by at least two decades. In 1708, Kilian Stumpf and Dominique Parrenin (German and French Jesuits respectively) visited a group of Russian merchants in Beijing to receive some letters from the Jesuit College in Moscow. The letters were delivered with the seals removed, leading Stumpf to conclude that "no one can write through this route except openly."[45] This violation of communicative protocol, combined with the well-known Russian reputation for paranoia, made the Russian Route a poor choice for internal Society matters requiring confidentiality. But the Tournon legation and the final stages of the Rites Controversy, episodes in which the Jesuits found themselves embroiled in conflict with the Papacy and European Catholic elites, revealed the route's utility for another purpose: the delivery of letters to Europe clarifying and defending the Jesuit position, which were meant to be widely disseminated. Stumpf sent one such letter, accompanied by a copy of the 1701 *Brevis Relatio* (a text which provided a positive view

[44] Taranovich's study was unpublished until it was printed in T. A. Pan and O. V. Shatalov, *Arkhivnye materialy po istorii zapadnoevropeiskogo i rossiiskogo kitaevedeniia* (Sankt-Peterburg: Sankt-Peterburgskii filial Instituta vostokovedeniia, 2004). See also Stanislav Juznic, "Building a Bridge Between the Observatories of Petersburg and Beijing: A Study on the Jesuit Avguštin Hallerstein from Present-Day Slovenia, Celebrating the 310th Anniversary of His Birth," *Monumenta Serica* 60 (2012): 309–406; Golvers, *Libraries of Western Learning for China.*

[45] ARSI (Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus), Jap-Sin 138 (Acta Pekinensia), l. 848.

of the Jesuit presence in the Kangxi emperor's realm) and, possibly, a brief description of China, apparently to the Moscow Jesuits in June 1712. The letter seems not to have survived in Latin, but at least three manuscript versions dating to the mid-eighteenth century exist in Russian archives in Church Slavonic. This means that its circulation had not been restricted to its direct addressees, and that it found an eager public in the Russian clergy.[46] Another letter, addressed to Superior General Tamburini, was sent to Vienna via Moscow in 1717 and survives in a Latin version.

The success of the Russian Route in this context was closely linked to the fact that the caravans employed such a large and specialized staff. Although in theory Russian caravan merchants in Beijing could serve as couriers for the missionaries' correspondence as well as anybody else, in practice the Jesuits, from Stumpf onwards, placed their trust almost exclusively in the Western Europeans in Russian service. This applied particularly to the doctors, who were invariably of non-Russian origin, though foreigners such as Lorents Lang served in other positions as well. European servitors in Russia were in this period rarely of aristocratic or gentry origin, and indeed their willingness to abandon their old lives for what was likely a lifetime appointment in Russia testified to their marginal status. Yet their educational backgrounds and knowledge of Western languages made them more credible vectors for correspondence than the culturally alien Russians and Siberians who made up the bulk of the caravan. Moreover, as Antoine Gaubil discovered when he lent money to a missionary named Nikita (probably Chekanov), Russians were not bound to the same standards of

[46] Russian State Library, Manuscript Department (OR RGB), f. 299, n. 81; Library of the Academy of Sciences, Manuscript Department (OR BAN), 17.8.34 and 25.2.1.

honorable gentility that prevailed among Westerners. An early modern gentleman's word guaranteed his honor and he could thus be trusted implicitly when he promised to carry a letter; this was not true for the clerks and petty bureaucrats who served in the caravan.[47] From Thomas Garvine in 1715 to Franz Lukas Jellatschitsch in the 1750s, then, Europeans served as a bridge between Beijing and Moscow just as much as Moscow served as one between Europe and Beijing.

Hence it was not surprising that Vladislavich, arriving in Beijing in 1727 to negotiate the Treaty of Kiakhta, turned out to have "8 or 9 Catholics—Dalmatians, Venetians, Germans or Poles—in his suite," as Antoine Gaubil reported.[48] (Vladislavich himself, though Orthodox, was from modern Croatia.) He was well-received by the Jesuits, to whom he offered a European atlas as a gift and whom he courted with vague (and empty) promises of free passage through Russia for the Society. Indeed, it was probably encounters with him that led Gaubil to begrudgingly write to Souciet in 1730 that "it must be admitted among the Russians there are a few who know what they're doing."[49] Yet Vladislavich's undeniable charms paled next to those of his subordinate Lang, who had known the Jesuits since his first trip to China in 1715. Lang was not just the superb administrator and agent he seemed to the Governing Senate: he also combined a fine Halle education with an extensive knowledge of European languages. Gaubil thought him "un très honnête homme et fort estimé." More importantly, Lang was equally popular in St. Petersburg, where his expertise on Chinese matters,

[47] Gaubil, *Correspondance de Pekin, 1722-1759*, 635–638, etc.

[48] Ibid., 167.

[49] Ibid., 254.

particularly related to trade, was widely acknowledged.[50] This was why the academic Theophilus Siegfried Bayer, Professor of Antiquities at the Imperial Academy of Sciences, first grilled him for particulars about China, then entrusted him to deliver a copy of his new book, *Museum Sinicium*, to the Jesuits in Beijing, along with a series of letters to Dominique Parrenin and others. In return, when Parrenin, Gaubil, and other Jesuits saw Lang in Beijing in 1732, they provided him with letters of their own.

The Academy-Jesuit correspondence, then, did not begin as the official channel of communication between institutions—the Academy on one side and the Jesuit colleges on the other—that it would later become. It was an essentially private connection made possible by the ability of Lang to negotiate different social milieus structured by patronage relations. This had concrete material effects. Lang's connections in Beijing allowed him to obtain Chinese objets d'art for his patron, Count Osterman (from whom they were later confiscated when he fell from power). His services to the Academy and personally to its president, Baron Korff, meanwhile, allowed him to procure a place for his nephew there. Personal and institutional relationships were often mingled. In 1737, for instance, Lang wrote to Korff on his way back from Beijing that

> I have taken the liberty, having nothing else to have the honor of offering from this very hasty voyage, of obtaining a very old Chinese Chronology from the learned Father Gaubil in Peking to humbly present to Your Excellency (*zum Present … gehorsahmst zu praesentieren*) as one of the rarest antiquities, along with which there is another copy from this father to be forwarded to Monsieur Freret in Paris, and he asked me to pass it on

[50] Ibid., 313.

> to the St. Petersburg Academy for further forwarding, so I take the liberty of humbly requesting such a forwarding from Your Excellency.[51]

Lang, in other words, was able to deftly parlay his services as a middleman both to secure his Jesuit connections and to please his patrons at home. In fact, for the Jesuits his intervention was indispensable, since they regarded sending any packages or correspondence through the hands of Chinese or Mongol intermediaries as exposing them to charges of treason, while—as later experience proved—Russian state servitors were untrustworthy.[52] This left him ideally placed to serve the function expected of him at the Academy, which soon had more extensive requests.

In September 1734, after delivering the Jesuits' return letters, Lang officially offered his services as a facilitator to a meeting of the Academy. The professors fell to it with gusto, with Bayer, the botanist Amman, and the anatomist Du Vernoi assembling a list of books (which ran to dozens of titles, mainly works authored by seventeenth-century Jesuit missionaries) and questions for their new correspondents. Bayer himself was tasked with writing on behalf of the Academy, although his letters maintained the warm, personal tone of his earlier correspondence. It was only at the end of his letter to Ignatius Kögler, Andrea Pereyra, and Carel Slavicek that he noted that the academy would not only "ordain your correspondence (*commercium*) with us with a most honorific decree," but would also transmit all the books it published "to your College."[53] In 1734, this correspondence would clearly separate itself into three categories: the

[51] Lang to Korff, 21 Oct. 1737, Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg Branch (ARAN), R. III, op.1, d. 187a, l89-90.

[52] Gaubil, *Correspondance de Pekin, 1722-1759*, 373.

[53] Bayer to Parrenin, 3 Nov. 1737, ARAN, R. III, op. 1, d. 187a, l39-40.

letters of Bayer, the letters of Delisle, and the letters of the Academy as an institution. If the first two were deep, lengthy intellectual encounters between scholars with pre-existing ties, the last—ultimately the most important—was something else entirely.

After the 1730 publication of his *Museum Sinicum,* Bayer had extended his inquiries into Chinese chronology and began to compose a massive Chinese dictionary. According to a manuscript biographical sketch of Bayer, Osterman's patronage was key for this project: the count procured for him printed copies of the *Hai pian* and *Zi hui*, two seventeenth-century Chinese dictionaries, along with Parrenin's manuscript Chinese-Latin dictionary (given originally to Vladislavich).[54] Letters to and from Bayer deal largely with linguistic matters, with Parrenin attempting to walk the academician back from his doomed project of formulating a key to the Chinese language. This correspondence has been treated extensively elsewhere.[55] What is important to note about it here is that Bayer and his correspondents seem to have conceived of it as something largely separate from the *commercium litterarium* they undertook as representatives of institutions, as well as from the Russian Route on which this *commercium* depended. In fact, Bayer wrote that he would "ask the Vice-Chancellor [i.e. Osterman] to tell me if an occasion [to send letters] arises; if none does, I will give it to your Fathers in Pondicherry, who can send it on through Canton to your college."[56] Parrenin, who discouraged him from using the Indian route, also noted that he had "written in a small way to the Imperial Academy in the name of all the French Fathers

[54] ARAN, R. III, op.1, d. 187a, l105-7.

[55] Knud Lundbæk, *T.S. Bayer, 1694-1738 : Pioneer Sinologist* (London: Curzon Press, 1986).

[56] Bayer to Parrenin, 15 Nov. 1733 (draft), ARAN, R. III, op. 1, d. 187a, l22-24.

in Peking, putting us forward as people looking to satisfy etc." The Jesuit, in other words, saw his interactions with Bayer as distinct from more collective ones.[57]

The distinction between private and institutional correspondence is even more apparent in the letters between Gaubil and the astronomer and geographer Joseph-Nicolas Delisle, who carried on an extensive exchange after 1732. Like Bayer, Delisle kept a firm line between the two: "I will ask of you only what I need personally, and I will only send you things that depend on me and belong to me."[58] Yet unlike the German antiquarian, Delisle was recognized by the Jesuits even before he accepted his appointment in St. Petersburg; Alexandre de la Charme wrote to him in 1734 that "I don't have the honor of being known by you, but I do have that of knowing you, not solely by reputation, which I share with many others, but I also flatter myself that I have seen you [in person]."[59] In fact, Delisle had received Kögler's observations by means of an Italian correspondent a number of years earlier, and had first written to him then.[60] As Delisle's letters to Gaubil show, he felt he had much more in common with the Jesuit savant than with his academic subordinates: "There is … a great difference between mémoires that are exact and made by capable mathematicians, like those which emerge from the hands of Jesuits, and the majority of those that one can expect from the people of this country, who have only just begun to enter into the

[57] Parrenin to Bayer, 29 Dec. 1736, ARAN, R. III, op. 1, d. 82, l54-56.

[58] Delisle to Gaubil, end of 1734, ARAN, R. III, op. 1, d. 82, l45v.

[59] De la Charme to Delisle, 13 Jul. 1734, ARAN, R. III, op. 1, d. 82, l32-35.

[60] Delisle to Grammatici, 11 Jun. 1729, Archives Nationales de France, 2\JJ\61, n. 88.

sciences and have not done so enough to produce an equivalent work."[61] Gaubil echoed his correspondent: "Certainly the Russians are greatly obliged to you and your brother de la Croyère. You'll make the whole land of this vast empire properly known, while here we'll devote all our efforts to giving you information about Tartary."[62] The strength of this personal connection endured not only after the initial Academy-Jesuit correspondence had broken down—as evidenced by a 1743 Gaubil letter in which he complained to Delisle that he had seen "no books, no lettres, no news" since 1737—but also after Delisle stopped being part of the academy altogether, a departure soon accompanied by scandal.[63]

Delisle's correspondence with Gaubil had a geopolitical dimension. Throughout his time in Russia, the French astronomer was spying for the French minister Maurepas—copying the maps that he was employed to produce, a secret task which would eventually earn him a royal stipend.[64] When he and Gaubil exchanged geographical information, they were engaged in matters of international importance. Particularly this applied to the geography of Kamchatka, which was kept secret as a

[61] Delisle to Gaubil, end of 1734, ARAN, R. III, op. 1, d. 82, l47v.

[62] Gaubil, *Correspondance de Pekin, 1722-1759*, 374.

[63] Ibid., 560.

[64] Delisle's espionage has yielded a large scholarly literature and a rather incoherent debate. See Lydia T. Black, "The Question of Maps: Exploration of the Bering Sea in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Sea in Alaska's Past: First Conference Proceedings* (Anchorage: Office of History and Archaeology, Alaska Division of Parks, 1979), 6–50; A. V. Postnikov, "Novye dannye o rossiiskikh kartograficheskikh materialakh pervoi poloviny XVIII v., vyvezennykh Zh.-N. Delilem vo Frantsiiu," *Voprosy istorii estestvoznaniia i tekhniki*, no. 3 (2005): 17–38; Marie-Anne Chabin, "L'astronome français Joseph-Nicolas Delisle à la cour de Russie," in *L'influence française en Russie au XVIIIe siècle*, ed. Jean-Pierre Poussou, Anne Mézin, and Yves Perret-Gentil (Paris: Institut d'etudes slaves, 2004), 504–20. The latter, perhaps the last of several attempts to argue that Delisle was not a spy, suggests that his ingenuous letters to his sister prove him incapable of it. Yet the direct evidence is ample. See, for instance, Delisle to Donsenbray, 23 Dec. 1727, Archives Nationales, 2\JJ\61, n. 45.

matter of national security (see Chapter V). Gaubil often asked for information on Kamchatka from Delisle.[65] Although this seems to have been fruitless, any discussions between the two men necessarily occupied the uneasy border zone between public scientific knowledge and privileged state intelligence.

By contrast, the letters the Academy produced and received as an institution belonged to a very different genre, one which was studiously officious. The most obvious distinction is length. Parrenin's June 1737 letter to the Academy runs to all of 160 words; his letters to Bayer average around 1,000. Second, their subject matter had little in common. The Jesuits' letters to Bayer and Delisle were full of the raw material of Sinology: astronomical observations, linguistic notes, discussions of history and chronology. The only topic treated at any length in their letters to the Academy (addressed to Korff) is the virtue, nobility, and honor of maintaining a long-distance *commercium* of this kind, with perhaps a smattering of scholarly news. Finally, though many of Bayer and Delisle's letters are certainly genteel enough, the institutional missives are replete with performative exaggeration: Pereyra's 1736 letter to Korff calls the invitation to correspondence a "most benevolent" act of "munificence" and an "extraordinary favor" of which "we are barely worthy"—though the Academy in fact seems to have received by far the better end of the deal. In other words, the airy rhetoric of intellectual communion served to paper over the tangible commercial and material realities of the correspondence.[66]

This did not mean that the Academy as a body did not attempt to engage

[65] E. g. Gaubil, *Correspondance de Pekin, 1722-1759*, 647–648.

[66] Pereyra to Korff, 28 Dec. 1736, ARAN, R. II, op. 1, d. 187, l8-9.

intellectually with the Jesuit colleges. The nature of this engagement is suggested by the questionnaires put together by Amman and Du Vernoi, neither of whom had the benefit of deep personal or reputational ties with the Jesuits. While some of them were answerable, many of the anatomist Du Vernoi's questions were far too general: "[What are the] varieties, species, properties, uses, internal and external structure of their animals[?]" Others were rather specific: "Are worms found in their bodies during life and after death, and which ones?" The botanist Amman had a similar problem. In addition to the generalities, which would have constituted mere grunt work for their largely elderly correspondents—he asked for "minerals, metals, colors, etc. with their preparation, use etc." as well as "animals, birds, fish, insects, with descriptions and pictures"—Amman asked about ginseng, rhubarb, tea, and tobacco, topics which the Jesuits had addressed frequently in scholarly literature.[67] Small wonder: the academicians had devoted less than a month after discovering their newfound opportunity for direct contact with China to writing up their questionnaire.[68]

In June 1737, Parrenin provided a list of responses to the two questionnaires as an attachment to his letter. He began by addressing Amman's questions, to which his answers are a well of what seems to be poorly disguised irritation: "I have written not a little about rhubarb to the Parisian Academy in recent years, which see in the book published in Paris in 1726 under the title *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses.*, 17th collection"; "this famous root [ginseng] Father Jartoux of pious memory has written about … in the tenth collection of the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*"; "On the 4th and 6th: *vide* the

[67] Academy to Collegio Occidentalis, ARAN, R. III, op. 1, d. 6, l49v-l55. Thanks to Rachel Koroloff for the transcription.

[68] N. I. Nevskaia, *Letopis´ Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk* (Sankt-Peterburg: Nauka, 2000), I:144.

Nouveaux memoires sur l'état present de la Chine by Father Louis Le Comte, volume 1, 2nd ed., pages 175, 3769, etc. This author recounts what he sees well and I have nothing to add." Some of Amman's questions he simply ignored. This was likely because both of these printed collections would have been obvious points of departure for anyone genuinely interested in Jesuit sinology, since they contained the latest published information about the topic. Du Vernoi's questions received an even more casual treatment: in one paragraph, he simply directed the anatomist towards the 17th, 21st, and 22nd *Lettres édifiantes* and left it at that.[69] (Du Vernoi's response was gracious; he wished that the Society be preserved from the calumnies against it and sent an additional series of questions.[70]) The only question from either professor which Parrenin saw fit to answer at length concerned the treatment of venereal disease in China. He produced a text of several pages that included two Chinese recipes (perhaps left to Bayer to translate) for the treatment of sexually-transmitted disease; this he gave to the caravan doctor Karl Heick to pass on to the Academy.[71]

The real value of the Academy's intellectual exchange with the Jesuits was not in the ideas expressed in letters but in physical objects, including books. Along with Parrenin's letter, Lang carried 3 crates (*Kasten*) of books provided in response to the list drawn up by Bayer three years earlier, although judging by the manifest, the final total was considerably less than the ambitious original request (some books seem to have been included individually). They included classic Jesuit works like Giulio Aleni's

[69] Parrenin to Academy, 16 May 1737, ARAN, R. III, op. 1, d. 82, l61v-67.

[70] Du Vernoi to Parrenin, 9 Dec. 1739, ARAN, R. III, op. 1, d. 187a, l117-118.

[71] Parrenin to Du Vernoi (?), 21 Mar. 1737, ARAN, R. III, op. 1, d. 187a, l74-80. (See also R. III, o. 1, d. 95.)

Wanwu zhenyan and Francesco Brancati's *Tianshen huike*, as well as more obscure texts, such as an essay by the Christian Manchu prince Depei. By the end of the century, all three books had been translated into Russian—and Depei's work turned out to be something of a bestseller.[72]

Botany, a major source of the Academy of Sciences' international reputation, was also an important component of the Academy-Jesuit correspondence. Lang carried a collection of botanical materials for Amman, "both for safekeeping and to be planted in the Academy's garden." They included "56 different types of Chinese seeds, wrapped up into little bags made of Chinese paper, upon which their Chinese names are written." There were also two samples of Chinese tobacco and two preparations of wormwood.[73] In his reply, Amman gave the Jesuits a full report on the results of their botanical dispatch. 29 of them sprouted; listing them with their Chinese names, he seems to have laboriously identified each by the grown plant it produced, and provided a reflection on why the remaining ones did not. In exchange, Amman sent the Jesuits (specifically Parrenin) 64 seeds of his own.[74]

The successful delivery of such physical objects, much more so than letters, required active institutional support, an area in which gentemanly camaraderie between Western Europeans would not be sufficient on its own. On his way to Beijing in 1735, Lang wrote to Korff that "I reassure Your Excellency that the goods committed

[72] Aleksei Leont'ev, *Tian´ shin´ ko: to est´ Angel´skaia beseda* (Sankt-Peterburg: Imperatorskaia Akademiia Nauk, 1781); Aleksei Leont'ev, *Depei kitaets* (Sankt-Peterburg: Imperatorskaia Akademiia Nauk, 1771). See also Aleksei Agafonov, *Van udzhin iuan* (1791), OR BAN 31.3.15.

[73] ARAN, f. 3, op. 1, d. 14, l556.

[74] Amman to Parrenin(?), 31 May 1739, ARAN, R. III, op. 1, d. 6, l62v-68v. Thanks to Rachel Koroloff.

to my keeping by the Academy will remain safe, but on the return to the borders, where the customs officials are, they can be all sorts of difficulties and many objects can be damaged or even totally lost." He suggested that the Academy request a special edict from the Russian Senate declaring its crates exempt from customs inspection.[75] The Academy addressed its request directly to Her Imperial Majesty's Cabinet, which granted it, with the certificates given to a courier who was to intercept Lang before he reached the Qing border. This particular danger was averted in a timely fashion.

Nonetheless, this did not resolve the central dilemma, which was that Lang had only by accident ended up as both caravan director—and hence representative of the Russian Empire's material interests in the Russo-Qing trade—and as facilitator of the Academy-Jesuit correspondence. This helps explain why, after 1740, the correspondence ground to a halt. It certainly did not seem to be doing so at the time. In fact, the Academy had assembled quite a large package of responses, including Amman's seeds and an honorary member's diploma for Gaubil, which was ready to be sent in time for the next caravan's departure.[76] This turned out to be February 1740. Yet unlike the previous caravans, which had made the correspondence convenient, this one was headed by Erofei Firsov. Lang, who was getting on in years, had accepted a position as the vice-governor of Irkutsk (that is to say, he governed Irkutsk and hence oversaw all Russo-Chinese border trade, but was subordinate to the governor of Siberia). He had personally recommended the appointment of Firsov to take his place.[77]

[75] Lang to Korff, 17 Mar. 1735, ARAN, f. 3, op. 1, d. 14, l523-4.

[76] ARAN, R. III, o. 1 d. 6.

[77] RGADA, f. 248, kn. 181, l115ff.

For the correspondence, this was a poor choice. As Gaubil put it in a letter to Delisle, Firsov "acquitted himself very badly in performing the commission you and the others had given him for us."[78] Gaubil could only write this in 1746, when the package was finally delivered; in 1743, after a series of Russian couriers and Firsov's caravan had passed him by without a single letter, he could only assume that the Academy had abandoned its correspondence with the Jesuits. This was, in fact, enough to effectively squelch the correspondence as it had been imagined by its initial participants. After all, by the time Gaubil's letter finally reached Delisle in Paris in 1748, every single Jesuit (except Gaubil and de la Charme) who was involved originally had died, and every single academician had either died or left the Academy.

Firsov's failure to deliver only reinforces the centrality of Lang and the network of relationships he cultivated to the success of the Russian Route correspondence. This was only partially due to Lang's own mastery of learned sociability. Much of it could be ascribed to his social class. As a foreigner with special skills, he entered Imperial Russian society on the same level as the lesser nobility with whom he competed for patronage. By the time he ceased to direct the Beijing caravan, he had reached the rank of state councillor, which was the highest rank most foreigners could expect to earn. Firsov, by contrast, was an ordinary Siberian merchant, and his appointment to the directorship of the caravan—which meant direct responsibility for hundreds of thousands of rubles in merchandise and silver—brought with it only a promotion to collegiate assessor, slightly above a typical petty bureaucrat.[79] He could not have

[78] Gaubil, *Correspondance de Pekin, 1722-1759*, 565.

[79] RGADA, f. 248, kn. 181, l194.

expected personal connections with the Jesuits to mean much for his career, and he certainly felt no personal attachment to the Jesuits as individuals. Perhaps more importantly, in 1741 Elizabeth ascended the throne and sent Osterman into Siberian exile, while in 1740 Korff had been assigned to the diplomatic service in Denmark. There was, in short, little pressure on Firsov to keep up the patronage connections Lang has so laboriously built up.

As Irkutsk vice-governor, Lang actually turned out to be the proximate cause for the failure of the only 1740s attempt to reconnect with the Jesuits. Sometime in 1747, after the package entrusted to Firsov had arrived in Beijing, the Academy received a package from the Jesuits containing "some books, grasses, flowers, and other things that don't exist in Europe." (Records of these materials do not appear to have survived, perhaps due to a fire at the Academy the same year.) "Because the Academy has always had a correspondence with the Fathers living in Peking," it was decided to assemble a set of Academy editions as well as botanical materials to send in return, per the Jesuits' request. (It is unclear if this involved sending any letters as well; if it did, they appear not to have survived.) Many of the plants and seeds involved had been acquired at some cost in Europe, being unavailable at the Academy. But there turned out not to be a triennial caravan that year, and it seemed that the only solution was to send it to Lang in Irkutsk so that he could entrust it either to a courier or to a Chinese or Mongol trader for delivery to Beijing.[80]

Three years later, when the Academy was preparing a new package to be sent with the resumed caravan and wanted to know what had happened with the previous

[80] ARAN, f. 3, o. 1, d. 808, l3.

delivery, the Irkutsk Provincial Chancellery reported that the boxes were still in Irkutsk and there was no way of sending them except by caravan. Its circuitous report offered a few different explanations before settling on the real one:

> State Councillor and Irkutsk Vice Governor Lang, due to his previous experience in Beijing, knows well that the aforesaid Fathers or Jesuits that live there do not want to receive any Russian deliveries from Qing subject peoples, and hold this belief for an important reason, for if it is discovered or if the Qing person with whom that delivery will be sent reports it to the Chinese tribunal [Lifanyuan], they will not escape beatings for this, or will be considered suspicious.[81]

Indeed, Gaubil and presumably others had warned the Russians of the danger of such deliveries, and the original 1734 announcement in the St. Peterburg newspaper announcing the Academy-Jesuit correspondence had had to be retracted to protect the Jesuits from charges of espionage.[82] Though Lang no doubt contributed to the safety of his friends in the Qing capital, the effect was to impose another crushing five-year delay in the correspondence.

Nothing more could be sent until the next caravan departed, and the Academy was finally informed in 1751 that a dispatch was planned soon. In March of 1752, the Academy received a petition submitted by Franz Lukas Jellatschitsch, who had long been an academic employee. He explained that (as we saw above) he had been to Beijing and carried out a number of intelligence-related tasks for the Medical Chancellery in 1744-47. In the process, he had evidently gotten to know the Jesuits well enough that he was eager to see them again and serve the Academy at the same time.[83]

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[81] ARAN, f. 3, o. 1, d. 808, l10-12.

[82] Pan and Shatalov, *Arkhivnye materialy po istorii zapadnoevropeiskogo i rossiiskogo kitaevedeniia*, 39–40.

[83] ARAN, f. 3, o. 1, d. 808, l13-14.

The professors accepted eagerly, though this involved negotiations on multiple levels about the eventual source of his salary. The key difference between Jellatschitsch and Lang was that the latter, while acting on behalf of the Academy in conjunction with his other roles, was never paid by the institution. Jellatschitsch, by contrast, was the Academy's designated representative in the complex tangle of institutional interests any caravan involved.

His mission was far from being limited to the simple delivery of a few boxes and the collection of letters in response. The Academy, aiming to make the most of the opportunity, charged him with a far weightier task: to locate replacements for the hundreds of Qing texts, artifacts, and other curiosities that had disappeared in a 1747 fire. A hand-drawn watercolor catalogue of the destroyed collection was issued to Jellatschitsch so that he could identify similar objects while on location.[84] It also contained an extensive list of books assembled by the Academy's Manchu and Chinese translator Larion Rossokhin, who had once contributed dozens of Manchu books to the library himself. This drew mainly on Etienne Fourmont's catalogue of Sinological collections in France, although Rossokhin used his own extensive Beijing experience as well: for instance, Jellatschitsch was expected to obtain an official, but unpublished, Manchu history of the Oirats called *Ūlet i unenggi sekiyen* from the Lifanyuan archivists "secretly, by means of kindness and gifts." (He did not do so.)[85] Furthermore, Jellatschitsch's instructions enjoined him to collect naturalia, to prepare commentaries on the works of Gmelin and Du Halde, and to compose a sociological assessment of "the

[84] ARAN, f. 3, o. 1, d. 808a.

[85] ARAN, f. 3, o. 1, d. 808a, l11ff. See Etienne Fourmont, *Linguae Sinarum Mandarinicae hieroglyphicae grammatica duplex, Latinè, et cum characteribus Sinensium* (Hippolyte-Louis Guerin, 1742).

condition of the three colleges in China, by whom and how they are controlled, who among them has the most power, who is considered the most learned, and with whom would it be best to carry on scientific correspondence." In all of these purchases and investigations he was to actively solicit the help of the Jesuits, in addition to securing the exchange of texts for the future.[86]

In order to accomplish his tasks, Jellatschitsch needed to become as much a merchant as an intellectual explorer. In his initial application, he had included a list of "Objects in demand in China": scissors, pins, knives, soap, towels, and so on. He proposed that selling these would defray some of the cost of shopping for curiosities. The academy agreed; ultimately he would go on to exceed the allotted sum, making a profit of 163 rubles (about 100 taels) on an investment of 390. This defrayed only a small portion of the final cost of his purchases—800 rubles, equal to two years' worth of his salary. The Academy had also specified that he set aside a portion of the initial sum to buy gifts for the Jesuits in Moscow, while he himself suggested reserving some money for "gifts" to the Chinese, from whom "great things may be obtained through small expenditures."[87] Only the latter appears to have come to pass: none of the Jesuits who wrote to the Academy mentioned receiving anything besides the packages long since prepared for them.[88]

Jellatschitsch's mission, then, was something of a small caravan in itself: he went to Beijing with two fully loaded horses and a considerable sum of money, and

[86] ARAN, f. 3, op. 1, d. 808, l200ff.

[87] ARAN, f. 3, op. 1, d. 464, l221ff, d. 808, l46ff.

[88] ARAN, R. III, op. 1, d. 187, 34-51.

returned with three horses, several hundred rubles in debt from the vast collection he had acquired.[89] ("Horses," in this case, denotes something closer to fungible "horse-units," since they were replaced at every postal station.) Like Lang, he had asked the Academy to procure an edict exempting his crates from inspection, and indeed this seems to have worked successfully—under the end of the journey. Upon his arrival in Moscow, a Siberian Bureau official discovered that "those places in which items are contained [i.e. crates] have many Kiakhta customs and caravan seals in a damaged condition, while others have no seals at all." This was, as the bureaucrat put it, "not unsuspicious." The crates had been sealed to prevent the evasion of customs duties under the cover of Academy privileges, and their absence now seemed to suggest that he had been a smuggler after all. Jellatschitsch, who said that the seals had been damaged while being loaded and unloaded repeatedly over the course of the journey, was ordered to proceed to St. Petersburg, where Rossokhin and an Academy commissioner waited for him. After painstakingly inspecting every crate and item and comparing it with his manifest, they cleared him on all charges, and only then was he able to consider the voyage a success.[90]

The inspectors would have had no easy task: Jellatschitsch had proved to be an exemplary buyer. His manifest included fifty books and 274 other items, including clothing, braziers, games of cards and chess, mirrors, buttons, statuettes, prisms, "a doll depicting a wife beating her husband with a stick," "a Chinese cart with a horse upon which five dolls play a game while riding around the streets during the New Year," and

[89] ARAN, f. 3, op. 1, d. 464, l244-250.

[90] ARAN, f. 3, op. 1, d. 808, l207ff.

much more. Many of the books he brought seem to still exist in the collections of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts in St. Petersburg, and they certainly appear in Julius Klaproth's nineteenth-century catalogue of the Chinese and Manchu manuscripts at the Academy Library.[91] The packages he brought from the Jesuits contained still more books and sets of astronomical observations as well as botanical materials, for, as their letters testified, Jellatschitsch had successfully delivered the boxes of books and seeds that had been moldering in Irkutsk for five full years (though not all of the Jesuits knew this).

The Irkutsk boxes had been a major concern for the Academy's botanist Ivan Krasheninnikov. The "bulbs, roots, anemones, ramuncules and seeds" they contained had been obtained by the former academician Gmelin in Tübingen, and because they were European culinary herbs, which the Academy's gardeners did not cultivate, they could not be readily replaced (though with some effort they could be found among St. Petersburg's vegetable-growers). Furthermore, botanicals, unlike books, were inherently time-sensitive. As Krasheninnikov confidently declared, those sent in 1748 "were certainly no longer good for anything except being sent along with fresh ones to demonstrate to them how much the Academy is willing to exert itself to satisfy their requests." Yet even if Jellatschitsch were given a box of new botanicals to bring with the caravan, the bulbs would "grow along the way and then rot," the roots, anemones, and ramuncules would go stale, and the seeds, presumably, would lose their vitality.

[91] ARAN, f. 3, op. 1, d. 808, l137-147; Julius von Klaproth, *Katalog der chinesischen und mandjurischen Bücher der Bibliothek der Akademie der Wissenschaften in St. Petersburg*, ed. Hartmut Walravens (Berlin: C. Bell, 1988).

They needed to be sent with a special courier or not sent at all.[92]

The Academy, predictably enough, responded to this problem with total inaction. The old seeds in Irkutsk would suffice to demonstrate the Academy's loyalty, and that was what mattered. To everyone's surprise, however, the Jesuit Pierre d'Incarville wrote to the Academy's new president Count Kirill Razumovskii in November 1756 that "the seeds I received by your last, though they were very old, succeeded [in sprouting]." He also asked for more, and these were sent in December 1756; they included the seeds of more herbs like rosemary and thyme, which d'Incarville had asked for specifically, as well as those of peonies, lotus, and others, added by the new botanist Hebenstreit of his own accord. The Russian requests were the same as two decades prior, mostly expensive cash crops: rhubarb, tea, and ginseng (these were sent by the Jesuit Louis Desrobert, due to the death of d'Incarville, but he had no more useful information to offer owing to his lack of botanical knowledge).[93] Against all odds, the exchange of seeds had succeeded, but it neither yielded any new knowledge or led to any serious cultivation of Chinese botanical rarities in Russia.

This new correspondence seemed to warrant a genuine attempt to exchange scientific news. On the Jesuit side, Augustin Hallerstein sent his astronomical work, while d'Incarville contributed a large natural-history compendium (published eventually by the Moscow Society of Naturalists in 1812).[94] Others passed along antique books and maps. In response, along with Hebenstreit's seeds, the physics professor G.

[92] ARAN, f. 3, op. 1, d. 808, l42v.

[93] Desrobert to Razumovskii, 9 May 1755, ARAN, R. II, op. 1, d. 187, l24-25.

[94] See *Mémoires de la Société impériale des naturalistes de Moscou* (1812), III:103-128, IV:26-88.

V. Richmann—who would be killed in an accident involving an electrical experiment soon afterwards—sent a long letter with an account of the latest electrical research, including Benjamin Franklin's.[95] The astronomer Stepan Rumovskii presented a critical analysis of some recent observations; this was an important time for astronomy, because a Transit of Venus—one of the first occasions for truly global scientific collaboration—was due to occur in 1761.[96]

Unfortunately for both sides, the caravan's abolition in 1760 frustrated any continuing effort at correspondence. The further exchange of letters would require the services of the couriers who traveled from Russia to Beijing frequently (in fact, documents in Russian archives suggest that the exchange of angry diplomatic letters was ramped up deliberately to provide more occasions for couriers).[97] Yet couriers were expensive and their entire purpose was to transmit letters quickly and efficiently; the Academy could not expect to be contacted and then to take six months or longer to prepare a package of gifts and letters, as it could with a caravan. Moreover, many of the couriers were sent from Selenginsk near the Qing border, rather than St. Petersburg, and the authorities there were utterly unconcerned with the convenience of institutions in the capital. In the end, although Razumovskii was a high-ranking nobleman and thus had a network of contacts throughout the Empire, virtually no Academy correspondence ended up traveling by courier.

The last significant Academy package, which included the final shipment of

[95] Richmann to the Jesuits, n.d., ARAN, R. III, op. 1, d. 187a, l109-112.

[96] Rumovskii to D'Ollières, 15 Mar. 1756, ARAN, R.III, op. 1, d. 187a, l119-120.

[97] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 485a, l821.

seeds and letters, was entrusted to Vasilii Bratishchev, a diplomat who attempted unsuccessfully to negotiate access to the Amur River for Russian ships, in 1756. Razumovskii provided Bratishchev with letters of recommendation to the Beijing Jesuits, hoping that their place at the Qing court—which was habitually overestimated by Russian officials—would allow them to intercede on his behalf with the emperor. This expectation was not fulfilled, and any attempt to leverage the Academy-Jesuit correspondence for geopolitical ends was terminated for the time being.[98] Meanwhile, hopes for the continuation of the exchange were not high. Two previously unknown draft letters remain in the archives of G. F. Müller, the Academy's historian and learned secretary. They are dated December 27, 1760, and addressed to Gaubil and Hallerstein. Even the emendations in his letter to Gaubil—to whom he wrote because "I must maintain correspondence with our members," to whose ranks the Jesuit had belonged on an honorary basis since 1739—suggest the degree to which all confidence in the Russian Route had disappeared:

> Il est vrai que l'occasion d'ecrire à la Chine est a present plus rare, qu'elle n'a été jamais depuis le retour de Mr. Bratischtschew il nous a eté impossible de vous donner de nos nouvelles, ~~mais nous voulons esperer que~~ et je pourrois même douter, s'il avoit moyen de vous faire parvenir cette lettre ~~vous pourroit parvenir~~: cependant comme il ne s'agit pas des affaires politiques, mais uniquement de correspondance ~~litt de lettres~~ entre des Savants pour l'avantage des Sciences, je veux bien la hazarder.[99]

By that point Gaubil had been dead for over a year. His death marked the beginning of the end of the correspondence, but—contrary to Müller's expectations—not its absolute termination. The courier and diplomat Ivan Kropotov carried letters to Beijing and back

[98] ARAN, R. III, op. 1, d. 187a, l140-146.

[99] ARAN, f. 21, op. 3, d. 305/2, 305/4.

in 1763, with three of the Jesuits (Hallerstein, Benoist, and D'Ollières) sending responses; only one Academy letter went east with him in 1766. Thereafter the courier line went dead.[100]

This story does have an epilogue. The Academy's voluminous correspondence books, which began to be kept in an orderly fashion after 1764, contain several letters from the 1770s by Hallerstein and the much younger Jesuit arrival Pierre Martial Cibot. Cibot's essay on a Chinese mushroom, together with a number of astronomical observations contained in letters from Jean-Paul-Louis Collas (which do not appear in the letter books), were also received and published in the Academy's learned commentaries.[101] In another letter, Cibot offered fulsome gratitude to Catherine II for her protection of the Society after the dissolution bull of 1773, claiming that "I have abandoned all my literary connections and apply myself more than ever to cultivate the ones I have with you [Leonhard Euler, the learned secretary in this period] and with the Academy."[102] Yet all of these letters appear to have been sent through Paris (specifically the bookseller de la Tour) rather than Siberia, individually rather than institutionally, and as slim envelopes rather than boxes and bundles. A final ironic twist took place at the end of the eighteenth century. In 1798, Archimandrite Sofronii of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing found himself unable to send back news to St. Petersburg, owing to the habitual unwillingness of the Lifanyuan to pass along letters from missionaries. He was forced to turn to his friend, the Bishop of Beijing, who

[100] Copies of the 1763 letters are in Fonds Bosmans, Chine II, f. 97-119.

[101] Pierre-Martial Cibot, "Fungus Sinensium Mo-ku-sin," *Novi commentarii Academiae Scientiarum Imperialis Petropolitanae* (1774), XIX:373-378.

[102] Cibot to Euler, 10 Oct 1777, ARAN, f. 1, op. 3, d. 61, l87-88.

instructed him to keep him missive brief so as not to arouse suspicion because of the increase in the volume of paper. (In fact, the Jesuits had been forbidden by the Jiaqing court to maintain relationships with the Russian missionaries.) Sofronii's letters were smuggled to Canton and thence to the Russian resident ambassador in Lisbon. The Russian Route had briefly been made to run in reverse.[103]

Between 1731 and 1756, the Academy of Sciences and the Beijing Jesuits carried on a remarkable correspondence. Unlike the letters of Bayer and Delisle, and unlike the later messages carried by courier or passed through Paris, the Academy-Jesuit correspondence of that period existed for the sake of the material objects it brought to St. Petersburg. The books and plants received by the academicians from Beijing were not supplements to the letters that accompanied them: they made the letters worthwhile. It would therefore be a mistake to see the Moscow-Beijing trade caravan as engaging in industrial espionage and commerce on the one hand and facilitating intellectual exchange on the other. In the one case as in the other, curiosity drove a hunt for knowledge concretized in material form.

[103] Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA), f. 796, o. 81, d. 195, and f. 1374, o. 2, d. 1617.

Chapter III

Publish and Perish: Scholarship and Service at the Ecclesiastical Mission

Beginning in 1715, the Russian Empire was the only European country to maintain a permanent institutional presence in Beijing. Unlike the Jesuits and other Catholic religious orders, the personnel of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission were not in the direct service of the Qing emperors and could expect to return to Russia after about ten years in the capital; moreover, starting in 1727, the Russian mission included students whose primary vocation was learning the Manchu and Chinese languages and who were destined for secular state service. Not a single secular European enjoyed the same privilege until well into the nineteenth century. Russia could thus have every expectation of becoming a major European center for scholarship about the Qing Empire, as it had for scientific studies of Eurasia and the North Pacific. Unlike the Jesuits, Russians would not be committed to the sinophilic program which had, through publications like the *Lettres édifiantes*, produced the vogue for *chinoiserie* in eighteenth-century Europe. They would also be able to avoid clashes like the Rites Controversy which had cast doubt upon Jesuit studies of the Qing and would contribute to the order's downfall after midcentury. Finally, the seventeenth-century heritage of Muscovite sinological works circulating in Europe should have provided a suitable foundation.

And yet, as Iakinf Bichurin, archimandrite of the ninth mission, wrote in 1817, "the hundred-year-long existence of the Russian Mission in Beijing has yielded, we

might say, no benefit either for the sciences or for the arts."[1] He was stating a commonplace. All that the European scholarly community had to show for the mission's efforts were less than two dozen Qing texts published in the 1770s-1790s, as well as a growing pile of manuscript works and translations which almost no one would ever see and which remained almost entirely forgotten in the archives of the Academy of Sciences and the College of Foreign Affairs until the twentieth century. No eighteenth-century Russian student of the Qing languages ever corresponded with a Western academic colleague, and the two or three Russian translations that made it to small Western book markets had been retranslated and republished without the author's knowledge. All of this was a major departure from the Russo-European intellectual entanglements of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when numerous works originating from Russian caravans and embassies received wide circulation in the West. Against all expectation, in a history of sinology as an academic discipline eighteenth-century Russians would amount to no more than a footnote.

If these students never made their mark on academic sinology, they should have played a key role in the intelligence apparatus that developed in eighteenth-century Russia for studying the Qing Empire. But here, too, their role was more ancillary than directive, amounting to a scant handful of strategically interesting translations and secret journals produced over the course of the period. The men the Russian state consigned to a decade or more in Beijing were, upon their return, caught between the conflicting imperatives of state service and public scholarship, forced into a position that prevented them from realizing their public intellectual aspirations while also

[1] Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA), f. 796, op. 86, d. 167, l402-406.

limiting their influence on state policy. To recover their lives and experiences, these idiosyncratic figures must be replaced in their original contexts: first their social and intellectual environment at the Beijing mission itself, then to their place in the institutional settings of the Academy of Sciences and the College of Foreign Affairs. Coming of age among Manchus, Jesuits, and Chinese in the Qing capital gave the Russian students a unique perspective on Qing culture, one which could not easily be slotted into the framework of knowledge-production that had emerged in post-Petrine Russia. To treat this as a kind of failure is not to evade considering this history on its own terms, but to judge by the students' own criteria: their plaintive petitions for a chance at public recognition are ample evidence that they had expected something better. As the 1790s student Pëtr Kamenskii put it, they had given their "best years" and in return lost even "the hope of obtaining the common happiness of humanity."[2]

In search of sources about the Russo-Qing relationship in the long eighteenth century, scholars have frequently discovered the surprisingly numerous publications of the onetime Mission student Aleksei Leont'ev, taking them as evidence of a widespread Russian interest in China in the period.[3] Indeed, considering the small size of the book market in Catherinian Russia, the fact that Leont'ev was responsible for dozens of printed works seems both astonishing and important. But this apparent treasure-trove is apt to be seriously misleading if it leads us to neglect more critical questions: what was it that allowed Leont'ev to succeed where others failed? Why did no other Mission student out of more than twenty manage to make a halfway successful career as a man

[2] OR RNB, f. 550, FXVIII-24/1, l. 62.

[3] Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism*; Lim, *China and Japan in the Russian Imagination, 1685-1922*, 42–58. See also Maggs, *Russia and "Le Rêve Chinois."*

of letters? Institutionally centered accounts of the Mission, starting from the comprehensive nineteenth-century study by the cleric Nikolai Adoratskii, are helpful but leave us with little clear sense of its place in Russian intellectual and bureaucratic life.[4] There remains, then, much to be said about the way the Mission's students lived and worked in both Beijing and St. Petersburg.

The Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing existed in various forms from 1715 to 1954. It had been established nominally to provide for the spiritual welfare of a population of Russian captives taken from the Daurian town of Albazin when it was besieged and captured by Qing forces in the 1680s. These captives were enrolled as a company in the Qing Eight Banner system, settled in Beijing, and provided with brides from other banner populations, but they were encouraged to maintain their traditional religion (although within a couple of decades nearly all were nominal Christians at best). After Savva Vladislavich's successful negotiations for the Treaty of Kiakhta in 1727-1728, the mission acquired the additional function of training students in Manchu and Chinese and serving as an unofficial Russian consulate in the Qing capital. It possessed two compounds (a primary one in the south of the Inner City, once the hostel for Inner Asian ambassadors, and a secondary one around the St. Nicholas Chapel in the Albazinian quarter in the northeast). Ten or twelve Russians lived in the primary compound at any given time, with several Qing-subject overseers and servants. Although no formal schedule of shifts existed in the initial period, a new complement of personnel was rotated in roughly every ten to fifteen years. Until a massive

[4] Nikolai Adoratskii, *Pravoslavnaia missiia v Kitaie za 200 let eia sushchestvovaniia: opyt tserkovno-istoricheskago izsledovaniia po arkhivnym dokumentam* (Kazan′: Tip. Imperatorskago universiteta, 1887); the best, still indispensable account in English is Widmer, *The Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Peking during the Eighteenth Century*.

restructuring of the mission in 1818—which will be discussed in Chapter VI—missionaries were underpaid, undertrained, and entirely ill-equipped for their intended spiritual role, most notably because they were unable to communicate with most of their putative flock.[5]

My discussion will begin with the first and most prolific graduate of the Mission, Larion Rossokhin, whose struggles with academic bureaucracy consigned his promising career to permanent obscurity. I will then discuss Leont'ev's greater success in this regard and the constellation of factors which allowed him to ascend to respectability. Finally, I will consider Leont'ev's more obscure successors, notably the Torghut Anton Vladykin, whose struggles epitomize the continued clash between the expectations of service and aspirations to being a public intellectual even in the broader scholarly landscape of the 1790s and early 1800s.

1. Rossokhin: Down and Out in Beijing and St. Petersburg

Larion Kalinovich Rossokhin was born in 1717 in the village of Khilok near Selenginsk, east of Lake Baikal.[6] As the son of an Orthodox parish priest from a remote corner of

[5] Widmer, *The Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Peking during the Eighteenth Century*; A. S. Avtonomov, "Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' Russkoi pravoslavnoi missii v Pekine v XVIII-XIX vv.," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 7 (2005): 100–111; S. L. Tikhvinskii, ed., *Istoriia Rossiiskoi Dukhovnoi Missii v Kitae: sbornik statei* (Moskva: Izd-vo Sviato-Vladimirskogo Bratstva, 1997).

[6] The principal scholarly discussions of Rossokhin, whose birthdate and birthplace have been much disputed, are V. P. Taranovich, "Ilarion Rossokhin i ego trudy po kitaevedeniiu," *Sovetskoe vostokovedenie*, no. 3 (1945): 225–41; M. I. Radovskii, "Russkii kitaeved I. K. Rossokhin," in *Iz istorii nauki i tekhniki v stranakh Vostoka* (Moskva: Izd-vo vostochnoĭ lit-ry, 1960), 88–99; Skachkov, "Znachenie rukopisnogo naslediia russkikh kitaevedov"; Skachkov, *Ocherki istorii russkogo kitaevedeniia*, 41–52. Gaston Cahen made a suggestion, which V. P. Taranovich appears to support, that Rossokhin was born in 1707, but this was not supported by evidence and is disconfirmed by numerous references to him as a child in the archival documents, and by his entry into Platkovskii's Mongol school. Although later sources identify a variety of birthplaces, the only contemporary document identifies him as being from Khilok; see RGIA, f. 796, op. 11, d. 23, l359-60.

the empire during a period when Petrine reforms were eroding the status of the secular clergy, Rossokhin's future did not appear to contain an illustrious career.[7] Perhaps that is why in 1725 his father enrolled him in a residential school of Mongol established the previous year by Antonii Platkovskii, the archimandrite of Voznesenskii (Ascension) Monastery in Irkutsk, linking the child's fate to the Qing Empire for the remainder of his life. In 1729, when Platkovskii was appointed to head the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission, he took three of his students with him to Beijing. Rossokhin was among them; when he entered the Qing capital, he was only twelve years old.

The archimandrite was an apparently gifted but deeply flawed man. Born to a Cossack father in Kiev, he had come to Siberia in 1715 with one of his monastic superiors. In 1720, he was sent by express imperial order to Mongolia to proselytize Orthodoxy to the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu, the chief Buddhist spiritual leader in the Mongol lands, while the next year he was ordered to accompany the Russian envoy Lev Izmailov to Beijing. He was thus at least marginally qualified to supervise the intellectual development of his students. He claimed that while running the Mission he had studied Chinese (*nikanskii*) with a tutor he had hired at his own expense and "though imperfectly can speak the common tongue," even attempting some simple translation of liturgical texts and compilation of glossaries. If these claims are true (they were made in the context of an attempt to vindicate himself against criminal charges), Platkovskii's meager scholarly accomplishments outshone those of any subsequent leader of a mission until Iakinf Bichurin's arrival in 1807.[8] Whatever his intellectual

[7] See Gregory L. Freeze, *The Russian Levites: Parish Clergy in the Eighteenth Century* (Harvard University Press, 1977).

[8] RGIA, f. 796, op. 19, d. 356, l20ff.

credentials, as a leader Platkovskii was a disaster. Rossokhin reported that on the way to Beijing, the archimandrite forced him to act as his servant, confiscated his wages, and ruled over him with "coercion and beatings."[9]

Things only worsened after their arrival. In general, the eighteenth-century Russian Mission was a profoundly dysfunctional institution. Unlike Jesuits and other Catholic missionaries, who regarded a China posting as a privileged opportunity and prepared for it for years, the Russians were chosen haphazardly with a few months' notice and in almost all cases dreamed of nothing more than to be allowed to return. They lived in dilapidated quarters and occasionally suffered extreme poverty; the clergymen (and some of the students) never learned Manchu or Chinese and stewed in utter social isolation from the city around them. Moreover, they were constantly drunk. As one missionary with firsthand knowledge put it,

> Because of their endless and excessive solitude in Beijing and the insolence and insubordination of their subordinates, archimandrites develop melancholy [*skuka*], which produces great brooding [*zadumchivost'*], which induces them to drink much wine [i.e. vodka], the excessive consumption of which, though it produces great diseases and interrupts the life of many a drinker in Russia, produces these ruinous consequences in Beijing more quickly for one who has begun to drink excessively, because Chinese wine [presumably baijiu] is much more harmful than Russian, which is why it should be used more sparingly in that climate.[10]

As a result of these and other factors, mortality for any given mission hovered around an average of fifty percent, even though the Holy Governing Synod took pains to avoid

[9] RGIA, f. 796, op. 11, d. 23, l164ff.

[10] N. I Veselovskii, *Materialy dlia istorii rossiiskoi dukhovnoi missii v Pekine* (S. Peterburg: Tip. Glavnogo Upravleniia Udelov, 1905), 22. These reflections appear in a composite historical text and are either from the 1740s or the 1790s.

sending anyone past his mid-forties, and the students and lower-ranking clergy were typically in their late teens or early twenties.[11]

Platkovskii's mission was unusually bad—or perhaps unusually well-documented in legal correspondence. As the missionary Feodosii Smorzhevskii wrote in 1751, "Upon our departure from Moscow, a Synod clerk … showing us the enormous pile of Platkovskii matters at the Synod, said: 'Watch out that all of you don't produce so many affairs in Beijing.'"[12] One of these documents, which have survived at the Synod archive, is Platkovskii's diary ("Register of various memorable notes"). He seems to have kept this in an effort to compile material for accusations against the other missionaries and students (it contains almost nothing positive) but in October 1731 it was stolen from him by Rossokhin and the other students and given to the caravan director Lorents Lang. It is a truly remarkable work; written in a spare, laconic style, its 232 numbered entries reveal a litany of unceasing drunkenness, violence, and sexual misconduct:

> 55. Larion Rossokhin and Fedot [another student] were disgustingly drunk and Larion bit Feodot's hand 20th February [1730]
> 56. Larion did not know his lesson and cursed obscenely at the teacher Chenlao[?] and I wanted to birch him but he fled to the deacon Ioasaf's cell and the deacon did not give him up
> 57. Mikhailo was disgustingly drunk and almost died of drunkenness Ioasaf the deacon cursed at me and grabbed my breasts and dragged my beard while the priest Ivan choked me while Feodot and Larion also pulled me by my breasts …
> 71. May. May 4th the priest Ivan being disgustingly drunk sent [the student] Luka Voeikov to me the archimandrite supposedly to take his confession and when I came to [Ivan] he pulled down his pants and pointing to his anus [*govennuiu dyru*] said 'I can't […] give it your blessing

[11] See the composite list in Skachkov, *Ocherki istorii russkogo kitaevedeniia*, 358–360. For a sample list with ages, see RGIA, f. 796, op. 73, d. 327, l13-16.

[12] Veselovskii, *Materialy dlia istorii rossiiskoi dukhovnoi missii v Pekine*, 69.

> so I can be healthy.' Around the same time this priest almost stabbed me to death with his folding knife and I barely ran away …
> 74. May 21st the priest Ivan came to my cell and pissed in my tea and pissed all over my cell and befouled all my dishes[13]

Judging by the reports of the other members of the mission, Platkovskii was hardly an innocent victim of his disobedient subordinates. Before the archimandrite's arrival, Luka Voeikov and two other students had been operating under the authority of an imperial decree which theoretically removed them from ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Platkovskii ordered Voeikov, one of the diary's central antagonists, to "wipe his rear end with the decree," assumed absolute authority and in the ensuing months "dishonored and crippled" him.[14]

"Dishonored," in this case, may very well refer to rape. Sexual coercion was a pervasive feature of Platkovskii's mission. In December 1729, a convert named Afanasii, whom Platkovskii employed as a servant, wrote a formal accusation in Chinese. He claimed that one evening the archimandrite asked him to fetch the student Ivan Pukhort, who refused and told him to go back because "the archimandrite is a bad man [*nedobrogo sostoianiia*], it is night and I will not come to him." Platkovskii, Afanasii claimed, asked him to "lie with me as if with a blanket." When Afanasii refused, the archimandrite attempted to force him, eventually beating him and another Chinese servant with a stick. Rossokhin translated Afanasii's statement into Russian and submitted it to Lang; later, responding to the charges, Platkovskii claimed that his accuser was too old to be of sexual interest.[15] But the students and other missionaries,

[13] RGIA, f. 796, op. 11, d. 23, l137-155.

[14] RGIA, f. 796, op. 11, d. 23, l158ff.

[15] RGIA, f. 796, op. 11, d. 23, l644-5; RGIA, f. 796, op. 19, d. 356, l181ff.

too, faced similar accusations. Platkovskii had suggested that in February 1730 the student Fedot Tretiakov abducted the wife of a minor Qing prince "with her cart and horse" and evidently either demanded or received sexual acts. Rossokhin was accused of beating one of her servants over the head with a stick and the next day "treating the prince's men so they would not beat Fedot." He, of course, denied everything.[16] The Synod was reluctant to either investigate or prosecute such cases. Even Afanasii's accusations, which were supported by several witnesses including the students, appear to have been dismissed as hearsay.[17] Charges of embezzlement proved much more galvanizing, and in 1736 Platkovskii was imprisoned and dragged back to Russia in chains.

Rossokhin, whose youth did not protect him from all of the mission's violence but who was spared the worst of the abuse, took full advantage of his ample unsupervised time in Beijing. Platkovskii complained that he would eat meat during Lent, play hooky, and spend the night in all sorts of places: a Buddhist shrine belonging to the compound's Manchu warden Gundai, a Jesuit-owned tavern (Ch. *puzi*), the school building. If he was neglecting his studies, so were his colleagues—in fact, their Chinese and Manchu teachers frequently refused to come to the mission compound, citing their fear of being assaulted with fists or knives by their unruly and inebriated

[16] RGIA, f. 796, op. 11, d. 23, l450. It is not clear what Fedot was supposed to have done. The text says "took her … by force into the courtyard and *sramnogo uda prosil*," which seems inexplicable in this context but literally means "requested penis."

[17] Marianna Muravyeva has discussed the remarkably laissez-faire attitude of the early modern Russian Orthodox Church to homosexuality and even homosexual rape. See "Personalizing Homosexuality and Masculinity in Early Modern Russia," in *Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2012), 205–25.

students.[18] In 1734, Lange noted that aside from Pukhort, Tretiakov, and Voeikov, "there is no particular reason to hope that the other students will come to deserve the salary they have been granted by high imperial grace, for as I hear they have spent their time more in drinking than in learning languages for as long as they have been in Beijing." Platkovskii concurred: in 1736, just before he was arrested and brought back by that year's caravan, the archimandrite wrote to Tobolsk to request that Rossokhin and Mikhailo Ponomarev, another former Mongol school student, be "taken back to Russia and kept in fear in good hands, because these students are coming of age and acting out; specifically Ponomarev has taken to drinking, and Ros[s]okhin to being a rake [*molodetskaia okhota*; the specific meaning is hard to determine here] and if you do not deign to take them back to Russia soon they will lose themselves."[19] But Rossokhin remained in Beijing until 1740. Little is known of his early twenties except for the tantalizing suggestion, made by a missionary during a spat, that "the idler Ilarion Rossokhin cannot be trusted, for you [deacon Ioasaf] yourself said that you lived in sin with him for two years or so, and that you jointly concerned yourself with whores shamelessly at the Mongol tribunal [Lifanyuan]."[20]

[18] RGIA, f. 796, op. 11, d. 23, l137-155.

[19] RGIA, f. 796, op. 11, d. 23, l133-134, l359.

[20] RGIA, f. 796, op. 24, d. 213, l7-8. The specific phrase is *imeli staranie o bliadiakh*.

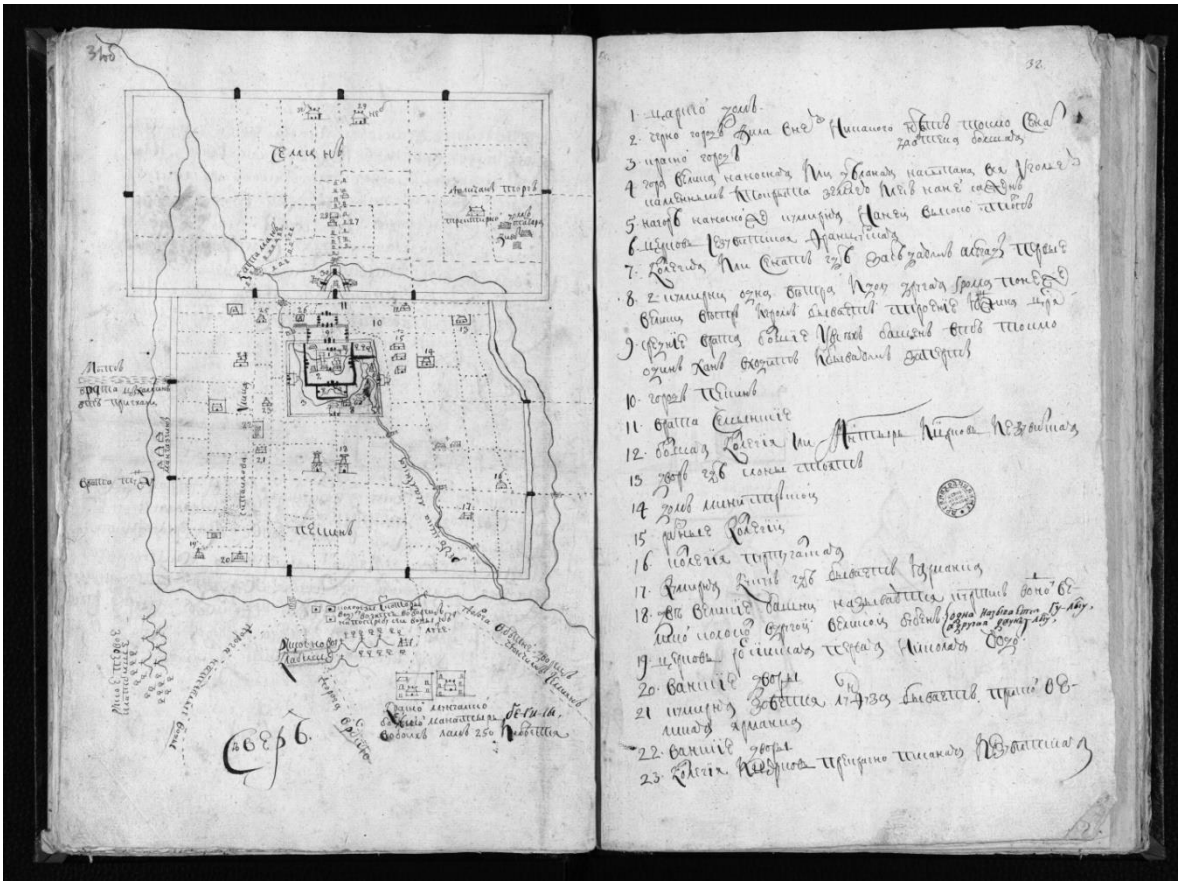


Figure 6: Map of Beijing, from Russian caravan journal (RGADA)

Russian caravan map of Beijing, 1736. South is up. The main Russian compound is at 26, just south of the Forbidden City; the Russian cemetery is to the north. (RGADA)

Rossokhin's adventures led him out into the city. His manuscripts, preserved in the archives and library of the Academy of Sciences, reveal a close familiarity with the details of Beijing life. In 1748, he was asked to annotate a manuscript of Spafarii's *Opisanie* (a text we examined in Chapter I). Rossokhin was critical of many details. "The writer is quite wrong to say that there is a great plenitude of fish in China … in Beijing, as I know, fresh fish is quite expensive in the summer, while salted fish is available but

so salty you cannot eat it." On a passage about the use of dog meat, he wrote, "I have never seen or heard of the Chinese valuing dog meat above all others or buying it at high prices to serve to gentlemen at feasts; dog meat is eaten by the most common of people, and that only out of poverty, and there are many who would never eat a bite of it." In another comment, he revealed an encyclopedic familiarity with the various forms of liquor available in Beijing: "Darasu: that is what Mongols call a drink made out of their millet, which is called huang jiu in Chinese, but this is considered the most common of drinks; the best, which comes from the southern cities, and especially Jiangnan province, is called mugua, bohua, shaoxing, huiquan, gujiu, laolai, louxue, qingxue, zhudong, baijiu."[21] On another occasion, he annotated the journal of a 1736 caravan, adding street names, locations, and local color to descriptions of various landmarks. He also contributed details and critiques to the journal writer's accounts of local customs ("In my whole time in Beijing I have never seen smoked cucumbers, obviously the writer is mocking us"). Rossokhin's observations suggest that he had traveled even outside of Beijing, to hot springs 70 li (about 25 miles) beyond the gates.[22]

Rossokhin was better integrated into the Manchu life of the city than into its networks of Westerners. In fact, he appears not to have even known the Jesuits' Western names—perhaps because he had never learned Latin, although this is uncertain. In a series of questions he answered for the historian G.-F. Müller, he referred to Matteo Ricci as Li Madou, Andreas Pereyra as Xiu Mode, and Augustin von Hallerstein as Liu Songling. He was not impressed with their Chinese literary

[21] Library of the Academy of Sciences, Manuscript Department (OR BAN), 32.6.18.

[22] Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts (RGADA), f. 199, p. 359, ch. 2, n. 4.

achievements.[23] On the other hand, he was employed at two Manchu-staffed Qing institutions. Starting in 1737, he translated diplomatic correspondence at the Lifanyuan; it was likely then that he discovered that its archives contained a classified work called *Ūlet i unenggi sekiyen* (*The True Origin of the Oirats*), which he later instructed the caravan doctor Franz Jellatschitsch to secure "secretly, by means of kindness and gifts," because it contained information about the Torghuts (Kalmyks) who lived under Russian sovereignty on the Volga.[24] He also helped teach the students at the Manchu Russian School, a Qing state institution which was intended to curtail the Lifanyuan's reliance on Russians (which it failed to do, since diplomatic letters translated into Russian by Manchus remained uniformly incomprehensible throughout the eighteenth century).[25] He noted that the school's students were Albazinians, part of the once Russian company whose spiritual needs the Ecclesiastical Mission was supposed to be servicing. Although in Russian they "could not count to two," Rossokhin observed, "the Manchus consider them native [Russians] and send them to the Russian school as if they were well-suited to studying the Russian language."[26]

Finally, we can gauge Rossokhin's participation in the Manchu culture of Qing Beijing by means of his book collection. When he arrived in St. Petersburg in 1741, he sold 52 books from his personal collection to the Academy. 26 of these were in

[23] RGADA, f. 199, p. 349, ch. 1, n. 5. I have identified the Jesuits based on their Chinese names using A. Pfister, *Notices biographiques et bibliographiques sur les Jésuites de l'ancienne mission de Chine: 1552-1773* (Imprimerie de la Mission catholique, 1932).

[24] ARAN, f. 3, o. 1, d. 808a, l11ff.

[25] Archive of the Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg Branch (ARAN), f. 3, op. 11, d. 15/3. See also Meng Ssu-ming, "The E-Lo-Ssu Kuan (Russian Hostel) in Peking," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 23 (January 1, 1960): 19–46, doi:10.2307/2718566.

[26] RGADA, f. 199, p. 391, n. 3, l18.

Manchu.[27] After his death in 1761, his wife sold 56 more that he had either kept to himself or acquired in the meantime. Of these at least 12 were Manchu or bilingual (this list has no original titles, so it is difficult to determine the precise number).[28] Together, the two collections would have produced one of the largest accumulations of Manchu books outside of East Asia. The nature of the books he collected is equally revealing. In addition to various well-known linguistic, pedagogical, geographical, legal, and historical texts, he also collected books which appear to be elements of Manchu vernacular print culture. The 1761 catalogue contains the first known mention anywhere of the "Eating Crabs" youth book, a humorous song-pamphlet that poked fun at relations between Manchus and Chinese.[29] Other original Manchu texts included the *Tondo unenggi fan gūn ni wen ji bithe* (a hagiography of a Qing official whose loyalty to the regime cost him his life during the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories), "a Manchu medical book with portions of anatomy" (possibly the same as the *Nimeku be dasara bithe* in another catalogue), and a "Manchu prosody." Rossokhin did not neglect Chinese either. He collected a number of Chinese and bilingual Chinese-Manchu editions of well-known novels, many of them illustrated, like the *Jin ping mei,* the *Xi you ji* (*Journey to the West*), and the *Shui hu zhuan* (*Water Margin*). His later translations, like a compendium of household advice called "Chinese Secrets," indicate that he made use of the daily use encyclopedias (*leishu*) that circulated among ordinary

[27] ARAN, f. 3, op. 1, d. 59, l200-208.

[28] ARAN, f. 3, op. 1, d. 267, l50-53.

[29] For a translation and discussion of this text, see Mark C. Elliott, "The 'Eating Crabs' Youth Book," in *Under Confucian Eyes: Writings on Gender in Chinese History* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2001), 263–81.

people in Beijing.[30] All of these texts, together with another batch Rossokhin acquired from other Russians who had returned from Beijing, formed the core of the Academy of Sciences' Manchu and Chinese book collections. Judging by subsequent catalogues, a number of them survived at least until the nineteenth century and perhaps longer, though many of Rossokhin's original contributions were evidently lost during a 1747 fire at the Academy.[31]

When Rossokhin left Beijing in 1740, then, he had come of age as a man, a translator, and a specialist in Qing language and culture. Of the three students who had come with Platkovskii to Beijing, he was the only one who survived into his twenties. For all of Lang and Platkovskii's initial misgivings, he had proved to be capable of state service after all: in 1738, after Lang had exercised his considerable patronage skills on his behalf, he was granted the rank of ensign (*praporshchik*, rank fourteen) and a salary of 150 rubles as a reward for having obtained and annotated a map of the Qing Empire (evidently a version of the Kangxi Atlas in 32 sheets).[32] Although an insignificant position, it was the entry-level rank of the Table of Ranks and meant that he could continue to advance in status if he fulfilled his duties diligently. But when he arrived in St. Petersburg, the College of Foreign Affairs decided it had no need of his services, primarily because it already employed a baptized Manchu captive named Zhou Ge.[33]

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[30] OR BAN, 16.2.9. Previous scholars have not connected this text to Rossokhin, but there is no question that it is a translation from the *Gu jin bu yuan* leishu. I am grateful to Wu Huiyi for pointing me to this text.

[31] For a later catalogue, see Klaproth, *Katalog der chinesischen und mandjurischen Bücher der Bibliothek der Akademie der Wissenschaften in St. Petersburg*.

[32] This was likely the 1721 edition. See Mosca, *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy*, 104–105.

[33] Skachkov, *Ocherki istorii russkogo kitaevedeniia*, 56–61.

Rossokhin was sent to the Academy of Sciences to "translate Manchu and Chinese books and to teach the above languages to four students."[34]

It is not in fact clear that the Academy ever had any need or desire to employ him at all. At any rate, it quickly became evident that he was an afterthought there. He had arrived at perhaps the most unpropitious possible time, when the Academy was dragged into the center of a bloody power struggle between rival court factions in the wake of Empress Anna Ioannovna's death in 1740. In the academic context, the battle lines were drawn between the supposedly "pro-Russian" supporters of the ascendant Elizabeth and the "Germans," represented by the Academy's director Johann Schumacher. (Schumacher was, among other things, accused of suppressing native Russian scholarship.) The director was briefly placed under house arrest, but by December 1742 he was released and returned to his position.[35] Rossokhin, though an obvious candidate for promotion in the nativist Elizabethan environment, was left to suffer in silence. Although a small initial request for a raise was granted, when he asked for assistants (including Zhou Ge) to be assigned to help him in teaching and translation, for which he had even secured College of Foreign Affairs support, Schumacher refused. As he explained to the College in September 1742, "The Academy of Sciences not only has no need for this Zhou Ge but cannot even support Ensign Rossokhin with a salary due to the fact that its budget has not been approved." When Rossokhin's salary was left unpaid, he was forced to pawn his clothes and dishes "to

[34] ARAN, f. 3, op. 11, d. 15/2; ARAN, f. 3, op. 1, d. 59, l201.

[35] See Simon Werrett, "The Schumacher Affair: Reconfiguring Academic Expertise across Dynasties in Eighteenth-Century Russia," *Osiris* 25, no. 1 (January 2010): 104–26, doi:10.1086/657265.

provide myself with daily food."[36] Matters improved slightly in 1743, when the Academy crisis had officially passed: the Academy bought out his pawned clothes, deigned to pay his rent for his shabby quarters on the Petersburg Side, and instructed him to send his latest translation—a collection of "secret affairs of the Qing state," in all likelihood a statistical table of Qing provinces and banner forces—to be given a handsome French binding. This work survives in several manuscript collections, suggesting that it at least circulated beyond the Academy.[37] But thereafter, although Rossokhin continued to produce translations at an impressive rate, he was left largely unremarked and unrewarded for his pains. Unlike his contemporary Mikhailo Lomonosov, who would become the premier Russian-born man of letters in the mid-eighteenth-century, no amount of honest labor would raise him from the level of the academy's service class of copyists and translators.

Rossokhin's misbegotten pedagogical role further revealed the absurdity of his position. Initially, the teaching of Chinese and Manchu was intended by the College of Foreign Affairs to be a core aspect of his appointment. He was supposed to have been assigned students from Teofan Prokopovych's gymnasium, one of the era's most progressive pedagogical institutions, and his pupils would arrive already knowing Latin and German; failing that, they would come from the Academy's own school. In practice he received half the original complement, and they would come from the St. Petersburg Garrison School—an institution for the freeborn children of soldiers, who as conscripted serfs constituted the most downtrodden class of imperial Russian society. Rossokhin

[36] ARAN, f. 3, op. 1, d. 59, l248ff.

[37] ARAN, f. 3, op. 1, d. 76, l25, l117-119. See, e.g., Russian National Library, Manuscript Department (OR RNB), f. 487, n. F-219.

performed his duties gamely, though his four students not only attended class but also lived in his apartment. Such an arrangement would have satisfied him but for the fact that the house already had soldiers quartered on it, which he pleaded in vain with the Academy to address.[38] His students, meanwhile, continuously asked for increases in pay: if Rossokhin was barely getting by on 180 rubles a year, the 12 rubles his students had been assigned must have bought little indeed.[39]

In his teaching, Rossokhin cleaved closely to the curriculum in use in Qing schools. Like pupils in all traditional Chinese institutions, Rossokhin's students learned to read and understand the Confucian *Sishu* (*Four Books*) and the children's classics *Sanzijing* (*Three Character Classic*) and *Qianziwen* (*Thousand Character Classic*). But Rossokhin's curriculum had a distinctly Manchu spin. The versions of these books he had brought from Beijing, quite likely those he had used himself during his studies, were bilingual, and his students eventually produced trilingual versions with a Russian translation attached to the Manchu and Chinese. Moreover, in his teaching he relied on one of the newest innovations in Qing pedagogy: a text called the *Qingwen qimeng*, first published in 1730. Used for teaching Manchu to bannermen, whom the imperial court judged to be in imminent danger of losing their native culture, this primer contained a casual, entertaining set of conversations drawn from everyday life. It offered a stark contrast to the ponderous pieties of the Confucian pedagogical classics. Although it is missing a title, a trilingual version of this text, complete with original preface, is preserved in the library of the Academy of Sciences complete with the signatures of the

[38] ARAN, f. 3, op. 1, d. 59, l218-242. The Academy did eventually pay for Rossokhin to move to Vasilevskii Island, but he was forced to move out again a few months later, evidently due to lack of funds.

[39] See Skachkov, *Ocherki istorii russkogo kitaevedeniia*, 44–45.

students involved.[40] But conscientious and up-to-date as it may have been, Rossokhin's teaching could not resolve the fundamental dilemma, which was that the Russian government was willing to fund the education of Qing-language experts but not their continued employment. Even though they may have successfully completed their studies, none of Rossokhin's students obtained relevant work; one later became an Academy clerk, while the others disappear from the historical record.[41]

In 1747, Rossokhin was placed under the supervision of the Academy historian G.-F. Müller, in effect as a research assistant. Though this position seemed to offer better use of his skills, in fact it only reinforced the glass ceiling separating him from professional scholarship. Müller, who made three times as much as his charge, sent Rossokhin questionnaires about such matters as Albazinian life in Beijing, the nature of Jesuit service in the Qing court, and the details of Buddhist beliefs, to which he dutifully responded; he was not invited to participate in the writing of original work.[42] When Rossokhin tried to strike out on his own, Müller filed a formal complaint:

> These translations and extracts he was supposed to submit to me, and I, seeing if they were in the proper state, was to report on them to the chancellery; but now I learn that the said translator Rossokhin has bypassed me, and telling me nothing, and not mentioning that he has completed these translations at my order, has submitted his translations and extracts directly to the chancellery, either because he despises me or for some other reason, and what sort of satisfaction [*satisfaktsiiu*] I should

[40] OR BAN, 32.6.17. Skachkov mistakenly attributes authorship of this text to Rossokhin himself.

[41] Skachkov, *Ocherki istorii russkogo kitaevedeniia*, 46–47.

[42] See, e.g., RGADA, f. 199, p. 391, n. 3; f. 199, p. 349, ch. 1, n. 33. For salary information, see, e.g., M. I Sukhomlinov, *Materialy dlia istorii Imperatorskoi akademii nauk* (Sanktpeterburg: Tip. Imp. akademii nauk, 1885), VII:453.

> receive for this I leave up to His Excellency the Count President to decide.[43]

At least Müller and his colleague Johann Fischer were willing to occasionally credit Rossokhin in their works; Müller even called him "the most experienced of translators" and his historical translations "not the least achievement of our century."[44] In Fischer's case, however, a mere mention was likely an understatement of the translator's role: he used Rossokhin's "reliable information" to write an article about Chinese imperial titles, which the German professor had no linguistic capability to evaluate. Rossokhin may have been more qualified in certain respects than his superiors, but it was clear that he would never be a professor.[45]

Rossokhin's reports to the Academy make it clear that he wished for a broader audience for his work. This was in spite of the fact that he cited the "praise" he received from his "Professors" when he finally asked for a much-delayed promotion to the next rank in 1757.[46] In 1747, submitting a translation of a historical work called *Panshi zonglun*, he asked that it be published "for the good of the Russian fatherland, so that the fruit of my labors would not be left without use"; he was refused "pending further consideration," and the work was forgotten.[47] In 1754, he informed the Academy chancellery that he had completed a Russian translation of the place names in a 37-map

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[43] ARAN, f. 21, op. 1, d. 101, l107.

[44] E.g. G. F. Miller, *Istoriia Sibiri* (Moskva: Izdatel′stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1937), I:26, 529.

[45] Taranovich, "Ilarion Rossokhin i ego trudy po kitaevedeniiu."; Johann Fischer, "Rassuzhdeniia o raznykh imenakh kitaiskogo gosudarstva i o khanskikh titulakh," *Ezhemesiachnye sochineniia* (October 1756), 321.

[46] ARAN, f. 3, op. 1, d. 225, l144.

[47] Sukhomlinov, *Materialy dlia istorii Imperatorskoi akademii nauk*, VIII:343–344, 359.

atlas, evidently a different one from that which he used in 1738. He argued that his transliterations of the names were far more accurate than in any European map he had seen, due to misleading inconsistencies in Western transliteration practices. "And if the chancellery … deigns to create one general map of the whole Qing state from this Atlas I have translated and send it to print," he wrote, "then in my feeble-mindedness I hope that no small glory would accrue to the Imperial Academy from this, especially because this Atlas is more complete than any other map of the Qing state in a European language." Schumacher ordered this to be done, but for some reason nothing was ever published.[48]

Perhaps the greatest opportunity for Rossokhin to make his name among the learned public came in 1756, when the members of the last Beijing caravan brought back a 16-volume book they thought was called "The History or Description of the Whole Qing State." The Senate, implicitly offering to foot the bill, sent the book to the Academy to be identified and translated in full—by far the largest Qing-language translation project ever undertaken in eighteenth-century Russia. Rossokhin noticed that it was not, in fact, a history or description of the whole Chinese state but rather a description of the Manchu Eight Banner system. (The book was the *Baqi tongzhi*, the *Comprehensive History of the Eight Banners*; in all likelihood the purchaser Eremei Vladykin thought he was buying the massive geographical compendium *Da Qing yitongzhi,* the last characters of which, though different in Chinese, would both be transliterated into Russian as *tundzhy*.) Nevertheless, he argued, the *Baqi tongzhi* was a worthy substitute:

[48] ARAN, f. 3, op. 1, d. 836, l 197-199.

> And now the said ensign Rossokhin reports that his description not only contains the laws and institutions of the Manchus themselves, but also all the Chinese rituals, and in a word the whole form of their government, for the ["]Geographical and historical description of the whole Qing state and the neighboring foreign countries known to them,["] [i.e. the *Da Qing yitongzhi*] which the Manchus have recently reissued, is based on the same foundations.

Rossokhin was bending the truth: the *Baqi tongzhi* is a deeply specialist work whose strategic import is far from clear, and which does not seem straightforwardly to share any "foundations" with its more useful cousin. Yet he ultimately managed to convince the Senate that the project was worth embarking on (at least, as the Senate put it, those portions which were "needed for Russia as well as the Learned World to know"), with the help of Müller, who testified that its contents were not matched in any existing foreign text. He even obtained the assistance of another Mission student—Aleksei Leont'ev, who had just returned from Beijing. On completion both were to receive a promotion in rank and a handsome financial reward. The Russian Senate, not known for its dedication to antiquarianism, had committed to a translation project as obscure as it was massive.[49]

Rossokhin's apparent success with the *Baqi tongzhi* was notable because it demonstrated the state's first and only real recognition of his struggle to distill his Chinese and Manchu reading into texts with foreign-policy relevance. Although his "secret" statistical compendium did circulate somewhat, other works with the same intent fell entirely deadborn from the pen. In 1750, for instance, he extracted several passages from an account of Kangxi's Mongol and Junghar conquests that contained "great insults and objectionable words" directed towards the tsar. Rossokhin tried to

[49] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 485a, l759ff.

elucidate the subtle deprecations contained in Qing diplomatic correspondence, such as spelling the word *han* (Ma. "khan") with an extraneous dot when applied to the Russian tsar to denote the latter's subordinate status.[50] No recognition seems to have been given to this text by any foreign-policy body, despite the fact that the 1750s saw an unprecedented escalation in hostile language (and thus an unprecedented Russian obsession with upholding national honor) in correspondence between the Lifanyuan and the College of Foreign Affairs. Still less did anyone seek out Rossokhin's input in drafting such letters or in formulating Russia's response to the Qing conquest of Jungharia in 1755-1757.

Larion Rossokhin died in 1761, having translated and annotated five volumes of the *Baqi tongzhi*. He was 44 years old, and left behind his widow Ekaterina (who received the substantial sum of six hundred rubles for his part in the work as well as a year's salary), his infant daughter Aleksandra, and his eighteen-year-old son Petr. Though there were thoughts of making his position hereditary, he had petitioned successfully for his son to be excused from any such studies, "him not having any inclination towards Manchu and Chinese, those being very difficult languages."[51] Not a single one of his dozens of works was published during his lifetime, although in 1764 Müller printed his annotated translation of Tulišen's *Yi-yu-lu*.[52] Eventually Larion Rossokhin made it into Nikolai Novikov's 1772 biographical dictionary of Russian

[50] ARAN, R. II, op. 1, d. 118.

[51] Radovskii, "Russkii kitaeved I. K. Rossokhin."

[52] Rossokhin, "Opisanie puteshestviia, koim ezdili kitaiskie poslanniki v Rossiiu," *Ezhemesiachnye sochineniia* (1764), 3ff.

writers, but under the name Ivan, and only because Novikov was under the impression that he had authored the *Qingwen qimeng*.[53]

It was the eventual publication history of the *Obstoiatel'noe opisanie…*, Rossokhin and Leont'ev's translation of the *Baqi tongzhi*, that most clearly encapsulated the futility of his struggle for relevance in an empire that had little use for his skills. In 1762, Leont'ev announced that the translation was complete, and the Senate issued an order "to print it as soon as possible."[54] But the Academy's head librarian, publisher, and bookseller Ivan Taubert balked at printing sixteen volumes which no one was likely to read or buy, and told the Senate falsely that the Academy as a whole had decided to print a small version (extracted from Rossokhin and Leont'ev's translation by the adjunct historian Schlözer) instead. Then Lomonosov weighed in with a condemnation of Taubert, which has characterized as a clash between German and Russian interests at the Academy, but in fact Lomonosov proposed yet another German historian—Fischer—to extract the book instead of Schlözer. Amid the squabbling, the *Obstoiatel'noe opisanie* was left to rot and Rossokhin remained forgotten. The book was only dug up and published in 1784, two years before Leont'ev's own death.[55]

2. Leont'ev: Getting Ahead

[53] Nikolai Novikov, *Opyt istoricheskago slovaria o rossiiskikh pisateliakh* (Sanktpeterburg, 1772).

[54] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 485a, l767.

[55] Mikhail Vasil′evich Lomonosov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moskva, 1950), IX:423–426; Skachkov, *Ocherki istorii russkogo kitaevedeniia*, 67–69; Aleksei Leont'ev and Ilarion Rossokhin, *Obstoiatel′noe opisanie proiskhozhdeniia i sostoianiia Man′dzhurskago naroda i voiska, v osmi znamenakh sostoiashchago*, 17 vols. (Sanktpeterburg: izhdiveniem Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 1784).

Aleksei Leont'ev was born in 1716, the son of a minor government clerk (*pod'iachii*). Though his social origins were about as humble as Rossokhin's, he had one important advantage: he attended the Moscow Slavic-Latin-Greek Academy, effectively the most influential and established school for both lowborn and aristocratic students in eighteenth-century Russia. (Rossokhin's Beijing contemporary Voeikov, among others, had also been a student there.) In 1739, when the Synod put out a call for volunteers not destined for the clergy to replace Rossokhin's class at the Mission, Leont'ev and his classmate Andrei Kaniaev (a merchant's son) declared themselves "eagerly willing" to go Beijing. In preparation, they were assigned to study with Zhou Ge, who taught them Manchu and possibly Chinese; Leont'ev, according to Zhou Ge's perhaps exaggerated report, had learned to write Manchu better than he did. The students arrived in Beijing, together with another student named Nikita Chekanov, only in 1743.[56]

Leont'ev and Kaniaev had arrived during a sort of interregnum in the mission, but in 1746 the archimandrite Gervasii Lintsevskii came to Beijing. Lintsevskii represented the Synod's attempt to renew the mission after the disastrous fifteen years of Platkovskii and his successors, for which a "skilled, learned, and temperate person" would be required. Though in some ways this expectation was disappointed, Lintsevskii was certainly an improvement. His first year was marred by his constant feuding with the caravan director Gerasim Lebratovskii, but thereafter the most serious charge against him was that he was a crypto-Catholic or at least a Catholic sympathizer, rather than embezzlement, rape, or murder, all of which would haunt other archimandrites. He also had the misfortune of having as his principal antagonist within the mission the

[56] RGIA, f. 796, op. 19, d. 293; Skachkov, *Ocherki istorii russkogo kitaevedeniia*, 58–62.

hierodeacon Feodosii Smorzhevskii, an intelligent and witty man who left behind a pile of sardonic notes eagerly devoured by future missionaries.[57] Smorzhevskii was a Western Ukrainian who had studied at a Jesuit college in Lviv, which filled him with lasting suspicion of the Society of Jesus; few things could have been better calculated to annoy him than Lintsevskii's attempts to endear himself to the Catholic missionaries in Beijing.[58] He therefore wrote a long denunciation to the Synod in which the archimandrite was cast not only as being servile and sympathetic to the Jesuits, but being an embarrassment to Orthodoxy. Lintsevskii suggested, for instance, that "it would be better for us, too, to fix our calendar." When asked by a Jesuit about Orthodox fasting, he said that "our Church is not a tormentor," at which point the Jesuits mockingly sent over a spread of decidedly non-Lenten delicacies. Lintsevskii had in fact visited the Jesuit colleges so indiscreetly that they were forced to ask him to come less often.[59]

The mission, then, was not only reasonably functional by eighteenth-century standards (even if one of the monks did "walk around at night with a pair of loaded pistols") but also enjoyed a great deal of contact with its European neighbors—unlike that led by Platkovskii, who once turned down a Jesuit invitation "on account of their scheming."[60] This proved to be essential for Leont'ev's success. The famous Jesuit

[57] See Veselovskii, *Materialy dlia istorii rossiiskoi dukhovnoi missii v Pekine*; Barbara Widenor Maggs, "'The Jesuits in China': Views of an Eighteenth-Century Russian Observer," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 8, no. 2 (December 1, 1974): 137–52, doi:10.2307/2737580.

[58] RGIA, f. 796, op. 23, d. 120, l172-176.

[59] RGIA, f. 796, op. 27, d. 341, l15ff.

[60] RGIA, f. 796, op. 27, d. 341, l73; RGIA, f. 796, op. 11, d. 23, l154-5.

historian Antoine Gaubil, who knew several generations of Beijing Russians personally, even wrote him a letter of recommendation:

> The students Alexis Leventief and Euphim Sognanski [i.e. Sakhnovskii] seem to me to have made good progress in Chinese characters and in the Chinese and Tartar languages. These Messieurs have always behaved themselves well here; I hope that the testimony I provide to their merit and their good and wise conduct will be of some use to them with regard to Your Excellency and M. Vice-Chancellor Count Vorontsov.[61]

Gaubil's good opinion was confirmed by Lintsevskii himself, who testified that "in both Manchu and Chinese [*nikanskii*] he is very diligent, and has a natural inclination to that study … also, he reads Manchu books, dynastic histories, and other materials on his own and has read and annotated much." Like Rossokhin, Leont'ev taught at the Manchu Russian School. He also learned to play a stringed instrument, perhaps the *erhu*, "which is usual for students who are learning." Leont'ev's classmates were for the most part equally successful. Kaniaev, in addition to his language studies, learned to make and repair watches, "from which he had the following incident, that the Heqing wang, that is … the son of the Emperor's younger brother, sent him a gold watch to be repaired, which he did, and satisfied this great lord so much that he now serves other honorable gentlemen." In addition to this, Kaniaev learned five musical instruments and played them "to chase away melancholy." Sakhnovskii, who had joined the others later, also learned the same skills but complemented them with hunting and painting. All in all, Lintsevskii wrote, "the three of them have become a sort of academy in the Russian

[61] Gaubil to [Academy president] Razumovskii, 28 April 1755, in *Correspondance de Pekin, 1722-1759*, 808–809.

compound in China, which had never been seen or heard of previously; and if in the future there be students from Russia, may God grant it would be again."[62]

But not everything was rosy. There was no triennial caravan in 1749, due to the increasing difficulty of trade, and the caravan for which preparations began in 1752 did not arrive in Beijing until 1755. For almost a decade, no salary payments were delivered from Russia, which seems to have forgotten about the missionaries entirely. Although Russian missions received a subsidy from the Qing court, it was not enough to cover the students' or missionaries' material needs. They were forced to pawn their clothing and possessions or use them as collateral for loans at exorbitant rates. "News of their poor condition," Lintsevskii said, "has reached one of the great ministers here, who, ruing over their life at length, also asked how they live, the poor men, without any attention from their own? I cite this deliberately to be decided by the College [of Foreign Affairs], for it seems to me that such speeches and regrets pertain to national honor; it would seem to be better and more honorable if such persons did not pity us." Moreover, the students complained that living too long in Beijing was bringing them close to "despair and regret for the loss of the years [best] suited to human life, during which they could have, like others, gotten married and borne children from their marriages, and from this there comes sorrow, and longing, and an obstacle to their business … just as [they say] the students who were there before us died from being here too long."[63] Kaniaev died of tuberculosis in 1755. His tombstone, located at the

[62] RGADA, f. 248, op. 39, kn. 2634, l273ff.

[63] RGADA, f. 248, op. 39, kn. 2634, l273-304.

Jesuit Zhalan cemetery, survived at least into the mid-20th century, when a rubbing was made of it:



Figure 7: Tombstone of Andrei Kaniaev, from Zhalan cemetery (USF Ricci Institute)

The implication in Lintsevskii's report—that the students' condition was risking Russia's diplomatic prestige—made for a brief round of handwringing at the Synod and the College of Foreign Affairs, but in the end little changed except that salaries began to be paid more regularly. Yet the increasingly tense diplomatic situation meant that state

bodies were developing a stronger interest in Qing affairs. Although Leont'ev was already forty years old by the time he returned to Russia in 1756, he was much better provided for by the College of Foreign Affairs than Rossokhin had been by the Academy: in 1757, Rossokhin complained that Leont'ev was already making 400 rubles a year and had been raised to the rank of lieutenant (*poruchik*, rank twelve), while he had languished in stasis for years.[64] The *Baqi tongzhi* translation project, which after all was considered strategic government business, provided another boost in rank: in 1762 Leont'ev became collegiate secretary (rank ten). Thereafter he continued to receive promotions on a regular basis, and by the time he died in 1786 he had reached the rank of aulic councillor (*nadvornyi sovetnik*, rank seven); rank eight was needed to secure hereditary nobility in the civil service. If not exactly meteoric, Leont'ev's rise showed that it was possible for a Qing expert to have a successful service career.

The College of Foreign Affairs afforded Leont'ev other opportunities for state service in addition to translating diplomatic documents. In 1768, he accompanied Colonel Ivan Kropotov to the Mongolian border for the negotiations surrounding an Addendum to the Treaty of Kiakhta, serving as secretary and translator. It was Leont'ev's retranslation of the treaty from the Manchu that allowed him to determine key inconsistencies between the Russian and Manchu texts. Leont'ev was paid one thousand rubles for the trip and Kropotov was instructed to "return this secretary here to the College as soon as your negotiations with the Qing have reached the desired conclusion."[65] Moreover, in 1761, Leont'ev, like Rossokhin and Zhou Ge before him,

[64] ARAN, f. 3, op. 1, d. 225, l431-2.

[65] RGADA, f. 1261, op. 1, d. 440. See also Yanagisawa Akira, "Some Remarks on the 'Addendum to the Treaty of Kiakhta' in 1768," *Memoirs of the Toyo Bunko* 63 (2005): 65–88.

began teaching students Manchu and Chinese; funded by the College, his school was far better supported than Rossokhin's had been. Although three of his initial class of four "stopped studying after a short time," the fourth, Iakov Korkin, successfully went to Beijing in 1770. There he made a scandalous reputation as a drunken lout "whose name Chinese mothers use to frighten their children when they cry," but the blame for that can hardly be laid at Leont'ev's feet.[66]

These successes in the foreign service notwithstanding, Leont'ev—despite being the most qualified Qing expert in the entire bureaucracy—had no impact on Russian decisionmaking, intelligence-gathering, or policy after the Addendum. These were monopolized either by leading statesmen in St. Petersburg (who operated on the basis of preconceptions and wishful thinking about the Qing Empire rather than reliable data) or by local officials in Eastern Siberia, who were increasingly losing touch with the informational landscape of the borderlands. There is no record of Leont'ev's being consulted during any of the foreign-policy crises that arose during the 1770s, such as the Torghut Exodus or the trade interruption at Kiakhta in the decade's latter years. He is mentioned only twice (once as a student, once as Kropotov's secretary) in Nikolai Bantysh-Kamenskii's lengthy 1803 history of Russo-Qing relations, written based on classified documents from the College of Foreign Affairs.[67]

His literary career was more noteworthy. Leont'ev published a few translations in 1764, but it was only in 1770 that his publishing career began in earnest. Between that year and his death in 1786, more than two dozen of his translations appeared in

[66] RGADA, f. 17, d. 75; Veselovskii, *Materialy dlia istorii rossiiskoi dukhovnoi missii v Pekine*, 37.

[67] N. N. Bantysh-Kamenskii, *Diplomaticheskoe sobranīe del mezhdu Rossiiskim i Kitaiskim gosudarstvami s 1619 po 1792-i g.* (Kazanʹ: Imperatorskii Universitet, 1882).

printed form (two more were released posthumously in 1788), a pace of production which had never been seen before and, proportionately to the size of the book market, would never be again.[68] The most controversial of these works has always been the very first. Published in the new journal *Pustomelia* (*Prattler*) in 1770, it was a translation of a text Rossokhin had brought from Beijing: the Yongzheng emperor's last testament, which settled the succession upon his son, the future Qianlong. 1770 also happened to be the year Catherine II's son Paul reached the age of majority and hence ended his mother's nominal regency. A generation of Soviet scholars argued over whether the journal's editor, the famous publisher Nikolai Novikov, deliberately printed the text as a piece of political subversion—and whether this act was the reason that the issue in which it appeared became *Pustomelia*'s last. Some have pointed out that the testament reappeared in an imperially supported translation two years later, while others draw attention to potentially crucial differences between the two texts. The debate remains unresolved to this day.[69]

The potentially seditious implications of Leont'ev's translation are apt to obscure the larger picture. The source of Leont'ev's publishing success was not primarily a receptive and even politically oppositional reading public primed by a growing interest in French *chinoiserie*; rather, it was substantial government support and investment. The years of Leont'ev's publishing career correspond almost exactly to those of the Society for the Translation of Foreign Books, a semi-institutionalized body

[68] See Hartmut Walravens, "Alexej Leont'ev und sein Werk," *Aetas Manjurica* 3 (1992): 404–31. (*Pace* Walravens, Leont'ev never made a second trip to Beijing; the book *Kitaiskii mudrets*, a translation of Robert Dodsley's *The Oeconomy of Human Life*, is also incorrectly attributed to him here.)

[69] For a recent summary, see Lim, *China and Japan in the Russian Imagination, 1685-1922*, 49–51.

which was created by Catherine II in 1768 and shut down in 1783. It was intended to promote the spread of the Enlightenment in Russia by providing state support both for the labor of translators and for the costs of printing their work. Initial forays were modest, but in 1769, the Society began to enroll translators employed at the Academy of Sciences. Leont'ev (evidently sharing time with College of Foreign Affairs) was among them. Although the Society was technically responsible for only three of his books (*Kitaiskiia mysli* (1772), *Kitaiskoe ulozhenie* (1778), and *Kratchaishee opisanie gorodam…* (1778)), the first of these was by far his most successful.[70] Likewise, though not formally affiliated with the Society, other Leont'ev publications were also printed at state expense. *Kitaiskii bukvar'* (1779), *Sy shu gei* (1780), and the three volumes of *Taitsin gurun ni ukheri koli* (1781) were paid for directly by the empress, while numerous other works were funded by the Academy of Sciences.[71] The Catherinian Russia in which Leont'ev made his career was a distinctly different place from the Elizabethan one in which Rossokhin made his; in Catherine's time Novikov had effectively brought private publishing into existence.[72] But although Leont'ev undoubtedly benefited from the book market and print culture Novikov had fostered, he owed his success more to robust, flexible, and sustained state financing than to private popularity. This was something Rossokhin had never had. To what extent was Leont'ev actually successful as a published writer? Unquestionably he had developed a certain respectability. By 1786, he

[70] See V. P. Semennikov, *Sobranie staraiushcheesia o perevode inostrannykh knig, uchrezhdennoe Ekaterinoi II 1768-1783 gg: Istoriko-literaturnoe izsledovanie.* (St. Petersburg, 1900).

[71] ARAN, f. 3, op. 4, d. 53/2; ARAN, f. 3, op. 4, d. 24/27; f. 3, op. 4, d. 31/17.

[72] Marker, *Publishing, Printing, and the Origins of Intellectual Life in Russia, 1700-1800*, 95ff.

had had a seal made for himself, a laurel-wreathed shield with his name and title in Chinese characters.[73]

Two of Leont'ev's books were printed in multiple editions, an indication of commercial success: *Depei kitaets* (1771, 1772) and *Kitaiskiia mysli* (1772, 1775, 1786). By the time the second edition of *Depei kitaets* appeared, he asked for copies "to give to my friends," which suggests that he was enmeshed in a literary community of some kind.[74] *Bukvar' kitaiskoi* and *Sy shu gei* were noticed and received a favorable review in the *Sanktpeterburgskii vestnik* (*St. Petersburg Herald*) in 1780; *Kitaiskoe ulozhenie* was extracted, though not reviewed, in the same publication in 1779.[75] Yet these scattered data points do not represent the whole picture. In 1808, the academy was forced to sell nearly half of the print run of *Kitaiskoe ulozhenie* by weight, it having remained unsold.[76] The multiple editions of *Depei kitaets* and *Kitaiskie mysli* may be misleading, because the print runs of the first were only 120 and 300 and of the second, 300, 300, and 500 (a typical Russian print run during this period was 600 copies). The true dimensions of Leont'ev's market are probably best estimated through the publishing history of *Taitsin gurun i ukheri koli*, Leont'ev's translation of the Qing code of laws. Leont'ev was allowed by the imperial cabinet to print "as many copies as he himself desires." The first volume was released in an enormous 1,200 copies, while the

[73] f. 3, op. 4, d. 68/1.

[74] ARAN, f. 3, op. 4, d. 24/27; f. 3, op. 4, d. 28/22; f. 3, op. 4, d. 28/39; f. 3, op. 4, d. 31/17.

[75] *Sanktpetersburgskii vestnik* , 1779, no. 4, 202-222; 1780, no. 6, 369-372.

[76] Semennikov, *Sobranie staraiushcheesia o perevode inostrannykh knig, uchrezhdennoe Ekaterinoi II 1768-1783 gg: Istoriko-literaturnoe izsledovanie.*, 60.

subsequent ones numbered a more modest 600 each. In other words, Leont'ev's audience could not have been more than one or two thousand readers and was likely rather smaller even than this.[77]

The same ambiguities obtain in the case of Leont'ev's international reputation, which like his domestic one was modest at best. The first edition of *Kitaiskiia mysli* appeared in German translation in Weimar in 1776, published by the local printer Karl Ludolf Hoffmann; another edition emerged in 1796.[78] In 1782, the same book was retranslated in part and published in Paris as a small 16o volume by one Levesque, part of a collection of "moral thoughts of various Chinese authors."[79] In 1774, the Nuremberg polymath Christoph Gottlieb von Murr, who had frequent contacts with the Imperial Academy of Sciences, asked the Academy's secretary Johann Euler in passing if he could "carry on a correspondence with Herr Leontiew for the discussion of Chinese literature," and if he could give him Leont'ev's address. No sign of a response or a correspondence has been recorded.[80] Aside from extracts in German-language publications in Russia, this appears to have been the sum total of Leont'ev's influence on the European scholarly community. Though he was better-known in Western Europe than any other eighteenth-century Russian Qing expert, this amounted to little; by contrast, a savant like Lomonosov had already been discussed and reviewed in such

[77] ARAN, f. 3, op. 4, d. 53/2.

[78] *Chinesische Gedanken nach der von Alexjei Leont'ew aus der manshurischen Sprache verfertigten russischen Uebersetzung ins Deutsche übersetzt* (Weimar: Hoffmann, 1776).

[79] Pierre-Charles Lévesque, *Pensées morales de divers auteurs chinois* (Paris: Didot aîné, 1782).

[80] ARAN, f. 1, op. 3, t. 61, l23-24.

publications as the *Monthly Review*, the *Journal des Sçavans*, and the *Philosophical Transactions.*[81]

Intellectually, Leont'ev owed what success he had to the book collection and correspondence practices of his predecessors. Two of his translations, *Depei kitaets* and *Tian' shin' ko*, were based on books Jesuit correspondents had sent to the Academy of Sciences in 1737: Francesco Brancati's 1661 *Tianshen huike* and the Christian Manchu prince Depei's 1736 *Shijian lu*. Both books had been created in the context of the Jesuit attempt to spread Catholicism in Qing China by influencing elite opinion. Yet it is not clear that Leont'ev even knew what these books were; certainly the translated texts give no indication of their doctrinally problematic origin. (A third Jesuit book, Guilio Aleni's 1628 *Wanwu zhenyan*, was translated and circulated in manuscript by Leont'ev's successor Aleksei Agafonov—but his translation silently omitted a portion related to cosmology, possibly for doctrinal reasons.[82]) Leont'ev's most successful work, *Kitaiskiia mysli* (*Chinese Thoughts*), was not a random assortment of Confucian staples, as the title might imply. Much of it was likely drawn from a book of Yongzheng's edicts to the Eight Banners called *Dergi hese jakūn gusa de wasimbuhangge*, which Rossokhin sold to the Academy in 1741.[83] The rest was extracted from the *Guwen yuanjian*, a famous Kangxi-era anthology; Rossokhin had asked Jellatschitsch to buy it in Beijing in

[81] *Monthly Review; or Literary Journal*, XXI:338-339; *Philosophical Transactions,* XLVIII:770; *Journal des Sçavans*, Jan 1759, 440-441.

[82] OR BAN, 31.3.15.

[83] Cf. Bibliothéque Nationale Mantchou 156. Rossokhin identifies the source simply as "jakūn gūsa," or Eight Banners.

1755.[84] Nearly all of Leont'ev's other translations are traceable directly to one of the books or pamphlets sold by Rossokhin in 1741 or left behind at his death in 1761. In other words, Rossokhin's unsung labor as a Qing, and especially Manchu-language, bibliophile made Leont'ev's success possible.

Leont'ev died in 1786. Even if his works were remembered after his death, they were not reprinted, and were followed by a lasting lull in the production of Qing-language translations. It seems the community that remembered him best was an unexpected one: Russia's Freemasons. In the 1760s-'80s, they had eagerly bought and reprinted Robert Dodsley's pseudo-Oriental *Œconomy of Human Life,* retranslated into Russian via French and published as *Kitaiskii mudrets* (*The Chinese Sage*). (Other editions came via German and possibly Italian).[85] They were thus uniquely receptive to moralizing texts from putatively non-Judeo-Christian traditions, and Leont'ev turned out to be an effective transmitter. I have identified two Masonic versions of *Depei kitaets*. One is in a Masonic anthology dating from after 1808, accompanied by a bewildering variety of fragments from other non-Christian writers, from Cicero to Mohammed.[86] Another, not otherwise marked as Masonic, is in the manuscript collection of a Freemason; it dates from approximately the 1820s.[87] The possessors of these texts would have been surprised to discover that they were in fact reading a

[84] ARAN, f. 3, op. 1, d. 808a, l13.

[85] E.g., Kitaiskii mudrets, ili nauka zhit' blagopoluchno v obshchestve… (St. Petersburg: V. Ruban, 1777) ; Ekonomiia zhizni chelovecheskoi, ili Sokrashchenie indeiskago nravoucheniia… (Moscow: Moscow University Press, 1765); Karmannaia knizhka dlia V*** K*** (Moscow: University Press, 1783).

[86] State Historical Museum, Department of Written Sources (OPI GIM), f. 440, n. 1198/a.

[87] Russian State Library, Manuscript Department (OR RGB), f. 267, k. 21, n. 4.

Jesuit-influenced Christian treatise. Leont'ev's role as a translator had effectively obscured its origins.

3. Aleksei Agafonov and Anton Vladykin: Two Steps Back

The diplomatic crisis in Russo-Qing relations, which began after the Qing conquest of the Junghar Khanate in 1755-57, made the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission's presence in Beijing somewhat more tenuous. No students were allowed to enter with Amvrosii Iumatov, Lintsevskii's successor, in 1755. In 1759, the Qianlong emperor briefly locked the gates of the mission compound with the remaining missionaries inside and hanged an edict on them forbidding any Qing subjects to enter. (The Lifanyuan denied that anything like this had taken place.)[88] Even after the gates opened, the missionaries felt uneasy. In 1766, Iumatov reported that "he should go to the St. Nicholas Church [the northern compound in the Albazinian quarter] but not only he the archimandrite but even a hieromonk is ashamed to go there on foot … for the common people, seeing a man in foreign clothing, insult him, laugh, and spit, and could even crush him in the crowd due to their numbers."[89]

The 1768 Addendum to the Treaty of Kiakhta provided for four students to be rotated with every mission. By the time a new shift, led by the archimandrite Nikolai Tsvet, arrived in 1771, Iumatov and all but two of his colleagues had already died. Tsvet, a teacher of French and German from the Trinity Sergius Monastery, brought with him three seminarians from Tobolsk: Aleksei Agafonov, Fedor Baksheev, and Aleksei

[88] Demidova, Miasnikov, and Tikhvinskiii, *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XVIII veke*, VI:232, 386n1.

[89] RGIA, f. 796, op. 42, d. 202, l33.

Paryshev. Leont'ev's infamous pupil Iakov Korkin also went with them; he died in Beijing in 1779. Whether by explicit order or by their own initiative, during their time in Beijing Agafonov, Paryshev, and Baksheev kept a lengthy journal of their contacts with Qing people and official bodies and the "secrets" they learned from them. In addition to documenting internal and external conflicts—such as the politically explosive undercurrent of Han nativism in the capital—and disorders with the mission itself, they also recorded more lighthearted encounters:

> On February 2, 1780 two [Manchu] officers came to our compound … and among other conversations asked us, what sort of leather clothing our soldiers wear when they do battle with the enemy so that it cannot be pierced by bullets, and if that is true? … We answered that our Russian soldiers … infantry as well as cavalry, always wear this leather armor to keep safe. Then they asked what sort of beast this hide was from, and where does it live? Hearing this, barely keeping from laughter, we responded that it lives under the ice in the North Sea … And a few days later we learned that the Khan had learned about this hide from someone, but did not know which beast it was from and therefore secretly sent those officers.

Their most important function, however, was determining if the Qing posed a military or political threat to Russia: after all, they had arrived immediately after the 1771 Torghut exodus. The journal, although it commented on such questions as Qing-Kazakh relations and the attempt of certain Russians to defect, was ultimately of dubious value in this regard. One of its more prominent entries purported to reveal a secret plot by Qianlong to undermine Russian military readiness through repeated interruptions of trade, which is unsupported by other contemporary evidence.[90] Whoever may have read this journal, I have found no evidence that it informed or influenced any decision

[90] The journal is reproduced, possibly in full, in OR RGB, f. 273, k. 27, n. 2, l206-271.

the Russian government may have taken in the 1780s, a period of dramatically heightened interimperial tension; as Chapter V will show, false and misleading frontier intelligence played a much greater role.

The three students went on to further employment in the foreign-affairs bureaucracy, but their attempt to transition to the world of public-facing scholarship as Leont'ev had done was less successful. Baksheev, who had compiled a manuscript Manchu dictionary while in Beijing, died in 1787, after having replaced Leont'ev for a year in St. Petersburg. Paryshev remained as a translator in Irkutsk. Agafonov came the closest out of any of them to a true literary career: five of his translations were published in 1788. There may be less here than meets the eye, however. In 1785, Irkutsk governor-general Ivan Iakobii sent three of Agafonov's translations to the Empress for her approval. Two of his publications were labeled "translated in Irkutsk," with the first being explicitly linked to the opening of the Irkutsk viceroyalty (namestnichestvo). In other words, Agafonov may simply have been the beneficiary of a burst of gubernatorial patronage intended as a means of demonstrating the province's literary achievements. After Iakobii was removed and sent back to St. Petersburg for trial in mid-1788, no other publications by Agafonov emerged (although a reprint came out in 1795, a year after his death).[91] Neither was any of his works reviewed or reprinted abroad. In a compendious list of published Russian-language materials relating to the Qing Empire, compiled by the academic I. Kh. Gamel' around 1830, his name is absent.[92] Agafonov closes out the brief list of students from the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission

[91] RGADA, f. 24, n. 62, ch. 1, l284; Hartmut Walravens, *Aleksej Agafonov: ein unbekannter Ostasienwissenschaftler des 18. Jahrhunderts: eine Biobibliographie* (Hamburg: Bell, 1982).

[92] St. Petersburg Institute of History (SPbII), f. 175, op. 1, d. 40, l14-19.

who managed to convert their unique training and life experiences into published scholarship. Their numbers are dwarfed by the dozen or so of their classmates who did not make it back from Beijing.

The most poignant of the eighteenth-century careers the Mission produced was that of Anton Vladykin. He was born in 1761 among the Volga Torghuts, but when the exodus fractured the Torghut community in 1771 he remained in Russian territory. He was baptized in Astrakhan and at the age of fourteen entered the seminary at Trinity Sergius Monastery.[93] In 1779, as a new mission was being gathered under the leadership of Ioakim Shishkovskii to replace Tsvet, he was attached to it as a student; the Synod authorities seemed to know only that he belonged to an "Asiatic people [*aziatskoi natsii*]." The journal kept by Agafonov and his colleagues had evidently inspired the Synod and the College of Foreign Affairs with a renewed sense of the mission's intelligence possibilities. Shishkovskii's instructions specified that he was to tell the Synod "of the conditions and behaviors there," while the College attached an additional sheet:

> During your tenure in Beijing, if you find artful means to do so, however without raising the slightest suspicion among the Qing or giving them occasion to see you as an eavesdropper on their affairs, discover whatever circumstances obtain in this distant state, which form their thoughts, behaviors, and the actions of their government, using this to keep a secret record to present to the College of Foreign Affairs upon your return.[94]

Shishkovskii appears to have done no such thing. Instead, he fell into the familiar habits of poor mission administrators: drinking and petty tyranny. One of his charges, the

[93] S. K. Smirnov, *Istoriia Troitskoi Lavrskoi seminarii* (Moskva: A.V. Tolokonnikov, 1867), 522–523.

[94] RGIA, f. 796, op. 59, d. 328, l13, 49-54, 110-113.

verger Ivan Orlov, was first exiled to the northern compound around St. Nicholas Church; when it turned out that Orlov had made it into an idyllic little corner (complete with apiary), the archimandrite held him by the queue and beat him nearly to death. Eventually Orlov managed to secure permission from the Lifanyuan to return to Russia, the most cherished dream a Beijing missionary could have.[95] The mission's students sent a letter with him to the Synod, in which they painted their Qing life in positive terms, with one exception: "O if only the Father Archimandrite's poor care for our well-being and certain oppressions would not bring us into faintheartedness!"[96] Orlov was lucky to have escaped. Vladykin was the only one of the mission's four students—none of whom had been over twenty when they joined—to make it back to Russia alive. Of the five dead, including the archimandrite, four had perished on the way back; a cryptic reference in the later archimandrite Kamenskii's reports to the Synod indicates that they had died violent deaths linked to their own misconduct (other sources point to fevers or tuberculosis, which may be a coverup).[97] A note scrawled by Kamenskii on his collection of these students' notebooks reads simply, "For smart missionaries, Beijing is a wonderful school, heaven; for ignorant ones, it is a prison of torment—hell."[98]

During his stay in Beijing, Vladykin composed a number of intelligence reports. One of these revealed the complete inability of the Manchu Russian school to produce competent translators: when a document supposedly sent by Russian officials to the

[95] RGIA, f. 796, op. 76, d. 406.

[96] RGADA, f. 24, n. 62, ch. 3, l68.

[97] RGIA, f. 796, op. 99, d. 877, l147-148; RGIA, f. 796, op. 76, d. 406, l1.

[98] Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Archive of Orientalists (AV IVR), f. 42, op. 1, d. 1, l286.

Torghuts in Xinjiang was captured and threatened to cause a diplomatic crisis, the Lifanyuan was forced to turn to the mission's students, not to the graduates of the Manchu school, to translate them.[99] This experience set Vladykin up for a successful career at the College of Foreign Affairs, which employed him as a translator. Like Leont'ev, he reached the rank of aulic councillor, but also earned an Order of St. Vladimir.[100] He was also recognized as an expert within the College apparatus. When the next archimandrite Sofronii, a well-meaning but ineffectual busybody, proposed a series of reforms to the mission's customs and practices, Vladykin was consulted to evaluate them. He suggested that Sofronii had not tried hard enough to fit into Beijing culture and advised cultivating "friendship and good acquaintance" with the Qing officer assigned as the mission's warden, "through which they can acquire more respect and honor from the people there, and their servants will scheme, dupe, and insult them less." If the Manchu and Chinese teachers were not coming often enough, making it necessary to hire a tutor, it was likely because their students were lazy or disrespectful, and besides, "the Father Archimandrite should not call the said hired tutor a tutor, but a friend and buddy, as it their custom." (As a student himself, he had called the assigned teachers "lazy and unforthcoming.")[101] Vladykin had accumulated enough credibility as a specialist that when the doomed Golovkin embassy was assembled in 1805, he was invited to serve as a Manchu and Chinese translator, one of its more highly paid

[99] OR RGB, f. 273, k. 27, n. 2, l272-281.

[100] AV IVR, f. 42, op. 1, d. 2, l305.

[101] RGIA, f. 796, op. 81, d. 195.

members—though the ambassador kept him on the sidelines and did not seek his input.[102]

Like his predecessors, however, Vladykin hoped to make a broader impact with the training he had received. He even called his manuscript books "A Manchu Abecedarium for the Benefit of Russian Youth" and "A Manchu Grammar for the Benefit of Russian Youth." (A third book, "Guide for Manchu Language Learners," contained a translation of the *Qingwen qimeng*; like Rossokhin, Vladykin had been taught Manchu with it in Beijing.) Although he established a school at the College of Foreign Affairs in 1798, it existed for only three years, far less than the three previous attempts. After it closed, he attempted to find an audience for his translations. He sent a copy of a Chinese novel called *J̌in yun qiu* to an unnamed aristocrat (I have been unable to identify it, and Vladykin claims the three characters are meaningless). Nothing apparently came of this.[103] In 1802, he presented a copy of a large Manchu dictionary, together with a smaller lexicon, to Chancellor Vorontsov—once again "for the further benefit of Russian youth who are studying." He hoped for "a presentation to His Imperial Majesty and a merciful petition [on its behalf] for high monarchical benevolence," presumably in securing state support for its publication. No response was forthcoming.[104] Vladykin died in 1811, having published none of his numerous manuscript works. The Russian youth on whose behalf he had labored would never see anything he had written.

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[102] Davydova and Tikhvinskii, *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XIX veke*, 113.

[103] OR RNB, f. 542, n. 727.

[104] OR RNB, f. 885, n. 596.

The experience of the students sent to Beijing by the Synod and the College of Foreign Affairs testifies not to a particularly unique or well-developed interest in China on the part of Russian reading publics, but to the marginality of these publics in Russo-Qing relations. Only Leont'ev was in the right place at the right time to make an impact on the public scholarship of his era. Neither institutions specifically dedicated to the promotion of academic knowledge—like the Imperial Academy of Sciences—nor intelligence-making institutions like the College cared to promote the engagement of their Qing-language translators either with a Russian or a European intellectual public. As a result, many careers terminated in the accumulation of a pile of manuscripts that would never be circulated or read. The failure to launch of careers like Vladykin's cannot be attributed simply to the lack of an appetite for sinological material, just as Leont'ev's success cannot be reduced to the presence of one. Once they returned to Russia from Beijing, their role was shaped by decisions made by and within the bureaucracies that formed their primary audience, which had often, in effect, forgotten they even existed. Knowledge production about the Qing in eighteenth-century Russia was not about readers or writers, but about the institutions that made decisions.



Figure 8: Eurasia in 1796

Chapter IV

Frontier Intelligence and the Russo-Qing Cold War, 1755-1769

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Qing empire had long ceased for Russians to be the mysterious land beyond the Mongol steppes, whose towns, trade goods, and rivers needed to be painstakingly described by rare visitors. Commerce had bound the two countries together for a hundred years; although few Russians, then as now, had direct experience of conditions beyond the border, the establishment of border trade at Kiakhta in 1727-28 had created a comfortable pattern of life for merchants from both sides. With the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission and the Moscow-Beijing caravan continuing and even expanding their roles as vectors for information, the same was beginning to be true of intelligence-gathering. Yet by themselves, these two institutions do not constitute much of an intelligence structure. It was the third main component, the system of espionage and secret diplomacy that developed along the vast Russo-Qing frontier, that was to be decisive in the 1750s and '60s—for the relaxed complacency of Russian officials was about to be profoundly disturbed. The events of those decades hinged on covert operations, and their outcome eventually shaped not just the imperialist annexations of the nineteenth century but the map of borders that exists in Eurasia today.

The first and last two-sided military conflict between Russia and China had taken place in the Muscovite era, as both countries expanded towards each other in the Eurasian steppe. By the middle of the seventeenth century, the conquering Manchus had replaced the isolationist Ming with the more outward-looking Qing Dynasty, while Cossack fur prospectors established settlements on the Manchurian border—farther

southeast than Russia would reach for two more centuries. But between the 1650s and 1680s, the Qing demonstrated in a series of battles that they could and would resist Russian encroachment. With the 1689 Treaty of Nerchinsk, Russian expansion was rolled back, while peaceful relations and commercial exchange were established between the two empires. In fact, Russia had purchased its remaining lands in Eastern Siberia at the cost of renouncing any claims on Mongolia and the Amur valley; still independent when negotiations were taking place at Nerchinsk, the Mongols became Qing subjects in 1691. The Qing faced a much greater problem with the Western Mongol confederation known as the Junghar Khanate. Having carved out an overland empire encompassing at its greatest extent everything from southern Siberia to the northern reaches of Tibet, the Junghars—especially under Tsewang (Ciwang) Rabdan (r. 1697-1727) and Galdan Tsereng (1727-1745)—posed a formidable threat to both Russian and Qing expansion. The Treaty of Kiakhta, which gave Russia privileges no other European country enjoyed until the Opium Wars, was the result of a conscious Qing attempt to forestall a Russo-Junghar alliance. It worked admirably well. Conciliated by trade, for several decades Russia made no further significant effort to interfere in Inner Asian politics.

Everything changed in 1755-1757, when a Junghar succession crisis led the Qing to invade and eventually destroy the khanate completely. The decade and a half that followed—the period on which I will concentrate here—would be the determining moment for relations between Russia and China for the next hundred years. On the one hand, Russia's sparsely peopled and poorly defended southeast now bordered a monolithic and triumphant Manchu empire which could raise hundreds of thousands of soldiers for a single campaign, while any leverage the Russians possessed had

disappeared along with the Junghar threat. On the other, the dissatisfaction and instability produced in Mongolia and the former Junghar lands in the aftermath of the invasion created an opportunity to claw back a portion of the claims Russia had surrendered since its seventeenth-century defeat in Manchuria. Yet Russia never did go to war with the Qing.

Because of how crucial these decades were for the future of Inner Asian history—they marked the beginning of Qing and Chinese control of Xinjiang as well as a crucial period for Russia's expansion into Central Asia—they have been a frequent topic of research both for Western and Soviet scholars. Their interpretations have much in common. Although Anglophone studies underscore the hesitancy and haphazardness of Russian policy in the Qing borderlands, while Soviet historians insisted on the peaceful and law-abiding nature of Russo-Qing engagement, both assume that commercial considerations superseded territorial ones and see the absence of open conflict as a mark of Russian disinterest.[1] This view is misleading. What appears to us as peaceful commerce in fact concealed a wide-ranging strategy of deception. Searching for a way to counteract the Manchu advantage, the leaders of Russian institutions like the College of Foreign Affairs did not turn to the familiar strategies they had used against their enemies in the western portion of the Eurasian steppe: military conquest based on technological, numerical, or organizational superiority. Instead, they came to

[1] Foust, *Muscovite and Mandarin*, 203–329; John LeDonne, "Proconsular ambitions on the Chinese border," *Cahiers du monde russe* 45, no. 45/1–2 (January 1, 2004): 31–60; Fred W Bergholz, *The Partition of the Steppe: The Struggle of the Russians, Manchus, and the Zunghar Mongols for Empire in Central Asia, 1619-1758 : A Study in Power Politics* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 351–404; Perdue, *China Marches West*, 256–292. Soviet perspectives include Besprozvannykh, *Priamur′e v sisteme russko-kitaĭskikh otnosheniĭ XVII-seredina XIX v.*; B. P. Gurevich, G. F. Kim, and S. L. Tikhvinskii, eds., *Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia v Tsentral′noi Azii: XVII-XVIII vv. : dokumenty i materialy* (Moskva: Nauka, 1989).

see "acting covertly and artfully"—by means of espionage, deception, and secret diplomacy—as their only path to advancing imperial goals.[2] By the end of the 1760s, Russia had substantially expanded its diplomatic influence in the former Junghar territories, and a powerful network of intelligence agents and informers extended from the trans-Baikal town of Selenginsk into the Mongolian and Manchurian frontier zones of the Qing Empire. Yet, as we will see, this success did not bring the consequences the Russian empire's rulers had expected.

1. Secrecy and Russo-Qing Relations in the Mid-18th Century

Every historian can stake claims to precedence on the basis of archival sources, especially in cases like this one, where all the available Western scholarship has relied exclusively on published material.[3] In this context, however, the archival sources are particularly indispensable, because documents dealing with espionage were (unsurprisingly) secret at the time and often remained secret until the end of the Soviet era. As a result, we have had only a glancing idea of how extensive Russian intelligence-gathering really was and how closely it was bound up with a defense and foreign policy agenda. The collections of the Senate "Secret Expedition" allow us to remedy this. Unlike the published historical materials available on the period, these papers reveal the intimate day-to-day details and individual actors involved in Russian

[2] RGADA, f. 24, n. 40, l8-11. See below for the context of this quotation.

[3] This includes particularly volumes 9-13 of *Senatskii arkhiv* (Sankt-Peterburg: Senatskaia tipografiia, 1888-1913). A more diverse but limited selection of documents is reproduced in G. Sychevskii, "Istoricheskaia zapiska o Kitaiskoi granitse (1846)," *Chteniia Imperatorskogo obshchestva istorii i drevnostei*, 2 (April-June 1875): 1-292.

intelligence activities in and around the Qing Empire: the mechanics of secret diplomacy, the recruitment and payment of sources, and the micromanagement by central agencies like the College of Foreign Affairs (the Russian Empire's foreign ministry). They allow us, for the first time, to reconstruct the full chain of knowledge production and consumption in the intelligence context, from Mongol sources to Russian agents, frontier officials, and the Empress herself.[4]

If seventeenth-century documents lacked an explicit classification as "secret," for these papers secrecy was both explicit and essential. In contrast to the pre-1730 period, during which diplomats, Jesuits, and other Western figures had extensive access to the highest levels of Russian foreign policy towards the Qing, by the mid-18th century the Russian government had apparently achieved success in keeping such materials confidential. A 1767 decree upbraiding a long list of provincial governors for sloppiness in dealing with secret papers does not include any of the officials responsible for the Qing frontier.[5] In 1764, the Earl of Buckinghamshire, the British ambassador in St. Petersburg, complained that "the greatest pains are taken to keep secret all the intelligence that comes from that part of the Empire" and "I have taken pains for some days past to get authentick information of the situation of the present disputes with China, as the greatest secrecy is observed in relation to everything that passes on that side."[6] In the early 1770s, a slew of top French officials, including Secretary of State

[4] The documents primarily used here are in RGADA, f. 248 (Senate), op. 113 (Secret Expedition). I have been unable to find sources on this institution, but the contents of its enormous collection suggest that it was responsible for gathering, storing, and recirculating secret foreign-policy material from all over the empire from the 1740s to the early 1770s.

[5] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 256.

[6] John Hobart, 2nd Earl of Buckinghamshire, *The Despatches and Correspondence of John, Second Earl of Buckinghamshire, Ambassador to the Court of Catherine II. of Russia 1762-1765*, Camden Third Series, v. 2-3

Henri Bertin, found themselves puzzling over a document from Kamchatka (judging by the contents, a well-crafted forgery, but containing passages obviously extracted from documents within the ambit of the Secret Expedition) which they could procure only because the Hungarian adventurer Maurice Benyovszky had been imprisoned there and ransacked the chancellery before escaping.[7]

Above all, this policy of secrecy was aiming to conceal Russia's precarious military situation on the Qing frontier—among the principal causes behind its turn to intelligence in the post-conquest period. Though its aggressive expansion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was driven in part by its military and technological superiority over the Siberian and steppe peoples it conquered, by the middle of the eighteenth century Russia's military presence in Siberia was woefully inadequate compared to its neighbors. An alarmed 1759 report from Siberian governor Soimonov pointed out that the two thousand miles between the easternmost Siberian Line fortresses on the Irtysh River and the border south of Irkutsk were entirely unguarded, so as to permit invasion "not just by cavalry but by carts."[8] In 1763, Varfolomei Iakobii, the commandant of Selenginsk and the Russian spymaster on the southeastern frontier, noted that only five thousand troops were available to guard the border of Manchuria and Mongolia, of whom fewer than half were regulars.[9] This meant that in an armed

(London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1900), II:161–168. These dispatches are discussed in Foust, *Muscovite and Mandarin*, 266–267.

[7] Archives Diplomatiques du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris, CP-Russie, t. 90, f. 69ff (1772). This incident will be discussed in more detail in Chapter V.

[8] RGADA, f. 214, op. 5, d. 2722.

[9] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 491.

confrontation Russia would be at a minimum of a ten-to-one disadvantage, and likely even more; worse, although the equipment carried by Qing troops was technologically somewhat inferior, Russia no longer had anything close to the near-monopoly on firearms and artillery it had enjoyed in previous eras.[10]

Another, perhaps even more important, reason for secrecy was the nature of Russo-Qing diplomatic exchanges in this period. While the Junghar Khanate had continued to exist and even win substantial military victories in its wars with the Qing, the Kangxi and Yongzheng emperors kept Russia on the sidelines through treaty concessions. This even led to two Qing embassies to the Russian imperial court, during which the envoys kowtowed to Empress Anna.[11] With the Junghars' destruction, and (as we shall see below) with the murky role Russia played in their final crisis, the Lifanyuan—the Bureau for Foreign Tributaries in Beijing—had little reason to be obliging. It sent increasingly scornful letters, as in this 1764 exchange:

> You asked us in your letter to stop writing rude words to you. Take this under advisement: in any matter there is an undeniable truth, while every human has a natural conscience. We formerly always wrote to you in the manner that peaceful coexistence demands. But we started to write rudely to you and shame you since you began to violate the treaty provision about fugitives … We were forced by necessity to respond rudely that you in every matter concoct excuses, do not do justice in anything, and consider neither your face nor your buttocks [Ma. *dere ura be bodorakū*; i.e. you care neither about your honor nor your well-being].[12]

[10] For Qing equipment, see, e.g., RGADA, f, 248, op. 113, d. 1551, l. 1055-1058 (a report from a Buriat about Mongol soldiers' weaponry).

[11] Mark Mancall, "China's First Missions to Russia, 1729-1731," *Harvard Papers on China* 9 (1955): 88; Giovanni Stary, *Chinas erste Gesandte in Russland* (Wiesbaden: In Kommission bei O. Harrassowitz, 1976).

[12] This is a Russian translation with key Manchu phrases noted separately. The author is impossible to identify; Manchu letters from the Lifanyuan are always signed simply "daicing gurun i tulergi golo be dasara jurgan." RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 485, l. 7.

This was not simply the product of the traditional arrogance and obliviousness later imputed to Qing diplomacy by the British ambassador Lord Macartney and his successors. In fact such letters were intended deliberately to chasten the Russians and shame them into reforming their perceived transgressions. One response to a letter from the College of Foreign Affairs, which had thanked the Lifanyuan for the honor of the hospitality accorded to a Russian envoy, mocked the idea that this hospitality was an honor: "even common peasants are allowed to view the emperor thus."[13]

The most galling of the arguments offered by the Qing, and the greatest source of potential embarrassment if they became known in Europe, were based on the idea that it was ridiculous for "that woman of yours [*suweni emu hehe niyalma*]" to compare herself to the Qianlong emperor: "We have never heard of the lord of a foreign kingdom being a woman, not a man … we laugh and have no words to continue such a discussion."[14] These were so offensive that Catherine II personally drafted at least one reply to the Lifanyuan.[15] The rejoinders offered by the Russians desperately cast about for a language to counterpose to the Confucian rhetoric of the Qing without sounding either too obsequious or too aggressive, while also implying that Russia did not fear confrontation:

> We know well enough already that your state is ancient, great, wealthy, and abundant in arts, sciences, and enlightened people; but we cannot accept that it owns everything under heaven, for aside from those people whom you do not know about or who know nothing about you, the lands of our empire occupy almost half the globe. Look at a map that depicts this artfully, and you will know this truth, and knowing it, will you not

[13] IVR, R. I, op. 1, d. 8, l31.

[14] IVR, R. I, op. 1, d. 8, l29.

[15] RGADA, f. 10, op. 1, d. 94.

> yourself become ashamed to compare us with Junghars and other Tartar hordes, whose miserable condition does not even permit them to be called states? …Our empire … is considered the greatest on earth, both for the extent of its lands and the number of kingdoms, princedoms, and peoples under its scepter who were formerly independent and noble states.[16]

If anything, these moves backfired. When the Lifanyuan perceived that Russia was threatening an invasion with its mention of "other measures," it sardonically called the Russians' bluff. This had the desired effect: the College of Foreign Affairs immediately backed down and said that it had used the term merely in defense of Russian honor.[17]

Russian officials had in fact already discovered that diplomacy would be insufficient to achieve their goals. In 1754, the prominent official Fedor Soimonov—soon to be governor of Siberia—arrived in Nerchinsk to prepare ships and personnel for a voyage down the Amur River and into the North Pacific. This was envisioned as a Third Kamchatka Expedition, following in the footsteps of Vitus Bering's earlier explorations. Russian officials had come to regard the Amur as crucial to their plans for the exploration and exploitation of fur-bearing territories in northeastern Siberia, the Pacific islands, and eventually Alaska. Without it, goods and supplies needed to be moved to the oceanic port of Okhotsk through the Stanovoi and Iablonovoi Mountains, a dangerous and ruinously expensive portage that precluded the building of large vessels. Anything that could not be carried by a donkey or packhorse was out of the question; anchors, for instance, had first to be divided into five parts.[18] In 1756, Vasilii Bratishchev was sent to Beijing to negotiate with the Qing court for permission to sail

[16] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 485, l18-19.

[17] IVR, R. I, op. 1, d. 8, l29.

[18] A detailed discussion of this problem, dating from thirty years later, is in RGIA, f. 1147, op. 1, d. 103.

down the river; at the same time, the letter from the College of Foreign Affairs he carried contained the pointed insinuation that the expedition was not to be abandoned in the event of Qing reluctance. According to a secret intelligence report Iakobii received from the Catholic missionary Sigismondo di San Nicola in Beijing, Qianlong had read the diplomatic letter Bratishchev brought and exclaimed, "Cunning Russia asks respectfully [to navigate the Amur] but announces that it has already prepared ships for the voyage, by which they imply that they will sail with or without permission." Permission was denied, in part, San Nicola reported, because of a desire to protect the pearl fishery in the Manchus' ancestral domains.[19] Though the Russians regarded this as a flimsy excuse, the fishery was actually of tremendous economic and symbolic value for the dynasty.[20]

Anticipating a rejection, Soimonov had been ready to sail down the Amur in force, but the College of Foreign Affairs found his proposal foolhardy and rejected it.[21] Plans for the expedition were put on hold indefinitely. Soon, however, the tone of diplomatic exchanges became more hostile in the wake of Qing allegations that Russia was violating the Treaty of Kiakhta. The new empress Catherine II began to revisit the prospect of a military solution, which had first been proposed by Iakobii in the 1750s. In 1763, the Siberian historian Gerhard Friedrich Müller prepared a memorandum considering the justifications for a war: the "insults and contempt" shown by the Lifanyuan, he argued, provided ample grounds to renew pre-Nerchinsk Russian claims

[19] RKO VI:205.

[20] Schlesinger, "The Qing Invention of Nature," 102–122.

[21] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 485b, l59-61.

on the Amur and Mongolia. Like other proponents of a military option, of whom there were several, Müller argued that the conquest of the frontier would be easier than it seemed at first glance: vastly outnumbered by resentful Han Chinese subjects and facing discontent from Mongols who would abandon it for Russia at the first opportunity, the Qing Dynasty would, if not collapse like a house of cards, at least be easily pushed into an advantageous peace.[22] Qianlong, for his part, had also considered war: he still maintained some claims over the region east of Lake Baikal and its Buriat and Evenki population (relatives of the Manchus and Mongols), and a Mongol spy reported to Iakobii in 1760 that a military council on the subject had taken place. According to the agent, the Qing generals were wary of the climactic difficulties of Siberian warfare and the uncertainties surrounding the Russian response.[23] Qianlong himself was reluctant to attack unless the war could be won at a single blow.[24] Thus neither party took any meaningful steps towards shattering the peace between the two empires, and Russia never committed to the required buildup of troops. In 1764, at the height of the tension, Russian military reforms increased the border's theoretical complement of troops by a factor of two, but this was phrased in purely defensive terms and would in any case fall far short of the numbers needed for an invasion.[25]

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[22] His memorandum is reproduced in Bantysh-Kamenskii, *Diplomaticheskoe sobranīe del*, 376–393.

[23] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 864.

[24] Lo-shu Fu, *A Documentary Chronicle of Sino-Western Relations, 1644-1820* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1966), 238–239. (Here and below, translations from this collection are his.)

[25] Fu's claim to the contrary in *Documentary Chronicle,* 551n232 is based on a misreading of a third-hand account. For the military reform plan, see Ch. Ch. Valikhanov, *Sobranie sochinenii* (Alma-Ata: Glav. red. Kazakhskoi Sov. Entsiklopedii, 1984), IV:215–223. See also LeDonne, "Proconsular ambitions on the Chinese border."

The diplomatic and military escalation and impasse thus came to constitute a kind of Cold War, albeit one with lower stakes. Intelligence and other forms of covert action substituted for military engagement and direct negotiation. As in the twentieth century, when neither side wanted to risk open rupture, the struggle for the loyalties of third parties became increasingly crucial. This role was played by the Eurasian peoples caught between the two empires. In the mid-1750s, the Khalkha leaders of Qing Mongolia were corresponding with Iakobii about defection, the Kazakh Middle Horde and the Uriangkhai of the Altai Mountains were swearing fealty to both sides, and Junghar fugitives were demanding asylum in Russia in the tens of thousands. By the end of the period in 1771, most of the Volga Torghuts (Kalmyks)—Western Mongols like the Oirats who dominated the Junghar Khanate, some of whom had been Russian subjects since the 1630s and others who had recently fled the Qing conquest—defected across the border in a dramatic migration famously chronicled by Thomas De Quincey.[26] Meanwhile, Khalkha Mongols and Buriats whose traditional grazing lands lay near the northern Mongolian border made for ideal intelligence agents for Russia, and traders from Bukhara and other small Central Asian khanates provided intelligence on Qing forces in the newly conquered territories (the future Xinjiang province).

The Russo-Qing Cold War played out principally in two theaters: the mountains and steppes around the former Junghar Khanate—where the borders of modern Russia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, and China meet—and the border regions east of Lake Baikal, including northern Mongolia and Manchuria. They were never isolated

[26] Thomas De Quincey, *Revolt of the Tartars and the English Mail-Coach* (London: Bell, 1895). (Contrary to some assertions, "Kalmyks" has been a Russian term for Western Mongolic peoples since the middle of the seventeenth century; it did not come about as a result of the exodus.)

from each other. Russian officials stationed in each theater routinely shared information and strategic deliberations, with Iakobii in his nominally insignificant town of Selenginsk serving as the key node for the collection and dissemination of intelligence along the entire Russo-Qing frontier; on the other hand, Qing armies and command staff sent to Xinjiang frequently included Khalkha Mongols or members of Solon, Daur, and other Manchurian tribes.[27] Nonetheless, very distinct conditions obtained in each theater. On the Irtysh River, which flowed down into Junghar territory, Russia established a chain of fortresses known as the Siberian Line. These included, among others, Omsk, Semipalatinsk, and Ust'-Kamenogorsk, which would later become important regional towns. Here relatively small and isolated Russian garrisons interacted on a constant basis with Kazakhs, Junghars, "Bukharans" (a general term for Turkestanis), and, after the conquest, Qing generals. The steppe was a region where Russia's imperial presence was still tenuous, characterized by ethnic and military volatility and lack of consensus on either empire's part about its legal responsibilities towards the other. Transbaikalia, on the other hand, had been mostly delimited during the preparation of the Treaty of Kiakhta. Russians, notably merchants, Cossacks, and inmates of the vast convict-labor silver mines of Nerchinsk, had been living there since the middle of the seventeenth century. Inter-imperial interactions on this frontier were highly regularized, with well-defined protocols for dealing with cross-border raiders and fugitives. At the same time, the closely related Russian-subject Buriats (northern

[27] See Loretta Eumie Kim, "Marginal Constituencies: Qing Borderland Policies and Vernacular Histories of Five Tribes on the Sino-Russian Frontier" (Ph.D., Harvard University, 2009).

Mongols) and Qing-subject Khalkha in this region were bound to each other by family and religious ties that enabled constant cross-border interaction.

2. Conquest and its Aftermath in Jungharia

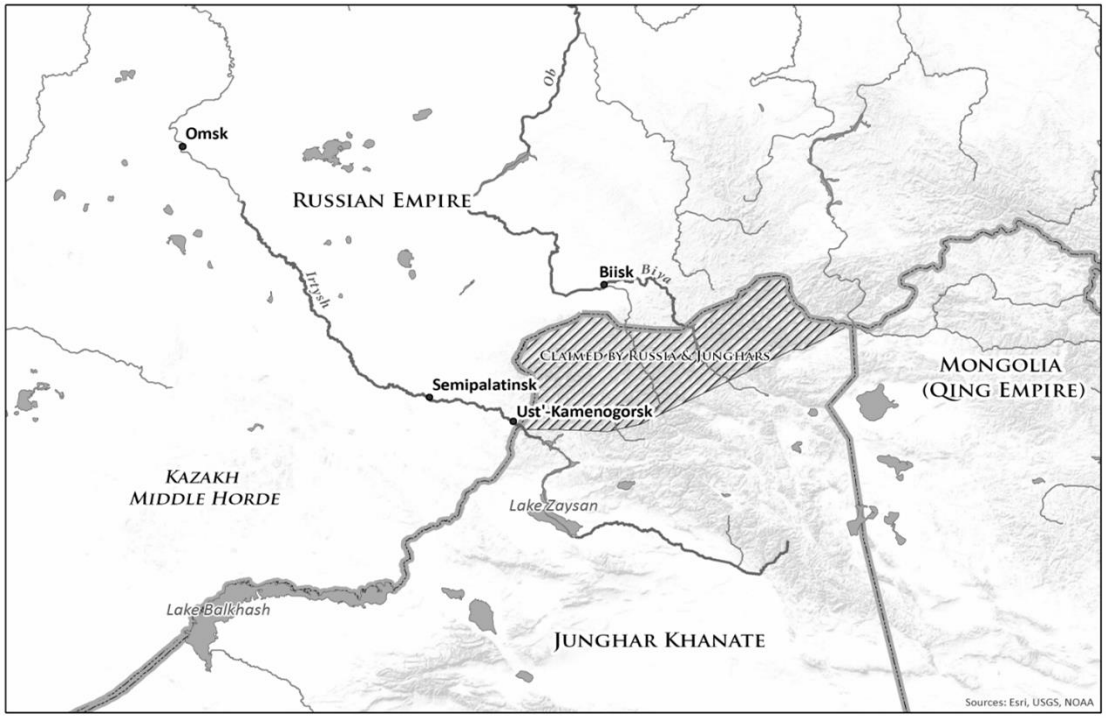


Figure 9: Jungharia before 1755[28]

Russians had begun to create an intelligence network around the Siberian Line, in an attempt to monitor the activities of the Junghars, well before the Qing conquest. Although formally the two states were never at war, small-scale warfare was a constant reality along the Irtysh and the upper reaches of the Enisei. In 1716, the Junghar leader Tsewang Rabdan captured the Swedish lieutenant J. G. Renat, who had been sent with

[28] Here and below, maps are my own work, but include data from China Historical GIS and other sources. Although the Kazakh steppe is not distinctly delimited here, this should not be taken to mean that Russia enjoyed full sovereignty there. This would not be the case until the nineteenth century.

other officers in Russian service to look for gold in Junghar territory, and put him to work mapping his lands and providing him with artillery to use in his wars against the Qing.[29] The Russian envoy Ivan Unkovskii, sent to investigate the potential for persuading the Junghars to accept Russian protection in 1722-24, was also (or primarily) expected to gather intelligence and maps of Jungharia, as his report indicates.[30] Later, in the 1740s, Russians constantly remarked the Junghar threat to their iron production facilities around Kolyvan and Kuznetsk (now Novokuznetsk), which escalated as Galdan Tsereng attempted to develop his own iron industry. While Junghars did not attack the mines in force, they did attempt to lure the Russians working there into their own service.[31]

As Galdan Tsereng fought the Qing in the 1740s, Russians kept a wary eye on the proceedings from afar. A Russian corporal stationed within the suite of Abulmamet Khan of the Kazakh Middle Horde reported on the beginning of another round of hostilities in 1742, which was speedily brought to the Senate's attention.[32] The same year, a "Bukharan" Junghar subject named Aibaga Bakhmuratov, who was evidently trading in Tobolsk, gave the Siberian Provincial Chancellery a full report on "the Russians and Tartars that live in [Tsereng]'s domain and on other things which he could learn [*rozvedal*] during his residence in that land." Five years later, Bakhmuratov arrived with a caravan from Kuren and secretly reported on the current situation in the

[29] See Perdue, *China Marches West*, 306–307.

[30] Archives Nationales de France, MAR/2JJ/77. (This is the copy of Unkovskii's report collected by Joseph-Nicolas Delisle during his residence in Russia.)

[31] SPbII (St. Petersburg Institute of History), koll. 115, op. 1, d. 1136, l130ff.

[32] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 108, l943-44.

Junghar lands in the wake of Tsereng's death in 1745. Most importantly, he announced that "they have no ill intent towards Russia but would like to remain in neighborly friendship, since at the moment they can barely handle their own people and have no need to enter into a quarrel with Russians."[33] Soon afterwards, he reversed himself and abruptly warned the Russians that the Junghars planned a large-scale raid. Yet the College of Foreign Affairs dismissed this news, arguing that it was an attempt to draw Russia into a conspiracy against Galdan's successor.[34]

Still, when this new Junghar ruler was in fact overthrown in 1750, fears grew that the victor Lama Dorji planned to make good on Junghar claims to adjacent territories Russia had been gradually annexing since the early eighteenth century. The Orenburg governor Ivan Nepliuev was ordered to secretly support the bid for power of Lama Dorji's rival Dawaci. As the College of Foreign Affairs explained to Empress Elizabeth in a 1758 memorandum, "the Junghar people, because of their power and the constant claims they made on Siberian border territories, were a dangerous neighbor, and therefore, because of future matters that may arise with this people, it was judged necessary to acquire the Junghar pretender Dawaci and another noble named Amursana for our own side."[35] But Nepliuev's courier was overtaken by events, Lama Dorji was killed by his own troops, and Dawaci ascended to the throne without Russian help in 1752.[36]

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[33] SPbII, koll. 115, op. 1, d. 1136, l2, l116-120. This second report may have been a relative of Bakhmuratov's; the name is garbled.

[34] SPbII, koll. 115, op. 1, d. 1136, l2, l198.

[35] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1527, l111-122.

[36] IVR (Institute of Oriental Manuscripts), R. I, op. 1, d. 8, l1-3.

This conflict formed the background for the first serious crisis of the Russo-Qing Cold War, which centered on Dawaci's then-ally Amursana. When Dawaci took power, he fell out with Amursana, who defected to the Qing—thus prompting the first stage of the conquest of Jungharia. In 1755, Qianlong's armies defeated Dawaci, but the emperor refused to make Amursana khan, and the opportunistic noble, together with the Khalkha prince Chingünjav (of whom more below), rose up in revolt. It was this uprising that led to what has often been called the Junghar Genocide, although this characterization has recently been challenged.[37] What is clear is that Qianlong crushed the revolt, ordered the name of "Junghar" extirpated (in favor of "Oirat," the leading Mongol tribe in the Junghar confederation), and commanded the killing or enslavement of perhaps 200,000 former Junghars. Yet Amursana himself, the final claimant to the khanate's throne, eluded him, and the furious emperor ordered a large-scale search.

Amursana had taken refuge with the powerful Sultan Ablai of the Kazakh Middle Horde, but in July 1757, he headed off in search of a more powerful protector, arriving at the Russian border fort of Semipalatinsk accompanied only by seven men. He was promptly and in the utmost secrecy packed off to the Siberian capital of Tobolsk, where he died of smallpox a few months later. In August, after repeated Russian denials, the Mongol *zaisang* (mid-level nobleman) Nurga arrived at the fort and announced that he had reliable evidence that Amursana was in Russian custody. The local commander, Major Dolgov-Saburov, told him that a party led by a Junghar claiming to be Amursana had attempted to cross the Irtysh River, but that afterwards they disappeared and the only thing left behind was an overturned boat. Eventually, the

[37] Levey, "Jungar Refugees and the Making of Empire on Qing China's Kazakh Frontier, 1759-1773."

Qing search party managed to fish a drowned corpse out of the Irtysh, but Dolgov-Saburov's scheme came to nothing when it turned out that the drowned man—unlike Amursana—wore his hair in a queue. The Qing now knew full well that Amursana was in Russian custody.[38] Qianlong's anger at the Russians was extreme, because of his suspicions that Russia was planning on using Amursana to advance its agenda in Jungharia. The Lifanyuan warned the Senate that if they had such plans, they should reconsider them, since he was likely to betray them just as he had betrayed the Qing and his fellow Junghars.[39]

Qianlong was, in part, right to worry. Dolgov-Saburov was acting on direct instructions from Siberian governor Vasilii Miatlev, who had ordered that if Amursana tried to come over to the Russian side he was to be "in a most artful and secret fashion, under heavy guard, conveyed to me in Tobolsk until further orders from the College of Foreign Affairs," while the official should "spread a rumor that he had perished under unknown circumstances."[40] But although the original justification for "acquiring" Amursana "to our side" had been countering Junghar claims in Siberia, the Qing conquest had made this strategy moot. The College of Foreign Affairs now wanted Amursana for his intelligence value: "to obtain from him, as a foremost participant and therefore more knowledgeable than anyone else, reliable information about the latest events and to see if anything of use to us can be gained from the complete conquest of

[38] "Istoricheskaia spravka o zengorskom narode," OR RGB (Russian State Library, Manuscript Department), f. 178, n. 1246.1, l42ff. This lengthy and revealing text appears to have been composed within the College of Foreign Affairs shortly after 1760, perhaps as a memorandum for higher officials.

[39] "Istoricheskaia spravka," l54-55.

[40] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1223, l1-4.

Jungharia by the Qing."[41] Whatever role Amursana might have played in the dramatically altered post-1755 political situation in Central Eurasia, however, his death from smallpox outside of Tobolsk in September 1757 foreclosed it. It also nullified a contemplated Qing invasion of Russia, though it did produce a simmering dispute over the fate of the noyan's remains.[42]

Amursana would never be a catspaw, but the Qing did not appear to show much interest in the territories that so concerned the Russians. Russian authorities were therefore left to greet the Qing conquest of Jungharia with a mixed sense of relief, trepidation, and opportunity. As a 1763 set of instructions to Lieutenant General Shpringer, assigned to manage the region's fortresses, put it,

> Before, Junghar rulers from time to time made claims on this country's outlying Siberian regions, without having any real right to them, and although the Qing have taken possession of the Junghar lands, yet they have not renewed these claims; perhaps, being satisfied with their possession of the Junghar interior, they will not take any notice of our establishing a fortress in a place that remained empty when the Junghars were in power. These circumstances give us reason to hope that we may with time acquire for ourselves those lands stretching all the way to Lake Zaisan, which are quite valued, in hopes of procuring their rich mines … the Qing state, which believes itself all-powerful because it has not encountered any resistance, especially since their conquest of the Junghars, which previously had been such a threat to them, has grown ever more haughty, especially in relation to us … therefore we must act in a rather covert and artful fashion [*is podovol' i neskol'ko iskusnym obrazom*], so as not to alarm the already suspicious Qing with great preparations.

Shpringer was thus ordered to send a "reliable officer, especially an engineer," under the pretext of searching for fugitives or stray horses, to investigate the state of any

[41] "Istoricheskaia spravka," l53.

[42] See Perdue, *China Marches West*, 288–289.

Qing fortifications around Lake Zaisan and take any required measurements, "but do not equip him with any geodesic instruments so as not to arouse suspicion." If the officer was successful, then "in the future you should under various pretexts send missions there from time to time, using officers and sometimes local peoples, so that the repetition of these missions will in some fashion accustom the Qing to the idea that all these lands up to their new settlements belong to us." Shpringer's new outpost of Bukhtarminsk, downstream from the earlier frontier marked by Ust'-Kamenogorsk, appears to have succeeded in fixing Russian claims to a new slice of formerly Junghar territory.[43]



Figure 10: Jungharia after 1764 (map does not show summer and winter borders described by Levey)

[43] RGADA, f. 24, n. 40, l8-11. Sources on this outpost are practically nonexistent for the late eighteenth century, but it was definitely Russian territory in the early nineteenth, before the later annexations.

Covert action was also the order of the day for dealing with the remnants of the Junghars themselves, who began asking for Russian asylum in individual groups in 1755. Consulting with local officials, the College of Foreign Affairs concluded that accepting the refugees was dangerous but unavoidable. They could not be trusted near the border or near any poorly defended region of Siberia, they could not pasture their animals in the colder parts, and they did not want to settle with the Torghuts (Kalmyks) on the Volga; on the other hand, if they were refused they might attack the forts of the Siberian Line or, worse, "be forced to surrender themselves to the protection of their relatives the Kazakhs, who have already grown arrogant due to the advantage they have acquired over the Junghars and by this increase will obtain ever more power and daring to commit insolent acts."[44] The solution was that the Junghar refugees would be divided into small groups under the pretext of winter quarters, disarmed, and duped into joining the Volga Torghuts. At least five thousand of them, led by the zaisang Shereng, appear to have undergone this treatment by 1758.[45] Such a course of action demanded careful handling with the Qing, as the Treaty of Kiakhta strictly prescribed the handover of all fugitives on demand. Russian policy settled on two arguments: first, that the refugee Junghars were in fact the same Torghuts that had been Russian subjects since the early seventeenth century (in response to which the Lifanyuan asked facetiously what they were doing fighting the Qing in Jungharia); second, that in 1731 the Qing ambassador to St. Petersburg had explicitly promised that his side would make

[44] "Istoricheskaia spravka," 23-25.

[45] SPbII, koll. 115, op. 1, d. 1136, l373ff; RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 874, l3-4.

no claims on Junghar refugees if Russia stayed out of the war with Galdan Tsereng.[46] No coherent response was ever offered to the second claim, perhaps because the 1729-31 embassies had been scrubbed from Qing records.[47]

The case of the *dvoedantsy*, residents of the Altai and Saian Mountains who historically were allowed to pay tribute to both Russia and the Junghars, was less straightforward to resolve, although intelligence ultimately decided the issue. (In the wake of the conquest, the southwest portion of the Altai became Russian, while the Uriangkhai in the northeast became Qing territory; the latter has been a part of Russia's Tuvan Republic since its 1921 annexation by the Soviets.) In 1764, a Saian woman, who had "escaped from Mongol captivity" and encountered a Russian envoy in the borderland, reported her discovery that Mamut, a senior leader of the *dvoedantsy*, had "a concealed grudge against Russia" and had secretly gone to Beijing asking for troops to annex them to the Qing. Iakobii's sources repeatedly insisted that a Manchu and Mongol army was indeed on its way to the mountains to retrieve them.[48] As a result of this information, Shpringer ordered that Mamut's children and other *dvoedantsy* be relocated to the vicinity of Biisk fortress. Although his report stated that "he did not observe any desire to defect to Qing subjecthood," some degree of coercion can perhaps be safely assumed. Shpringer's quick response decided the issue: Qianlong decided not

[46] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1551, l1-30ff.

[47] See Stary, *Chinas erste Gesandte in Russland.*

[48] E.g., RGADA, f. 15, d. 150.

to risk withdrawing the *dvoedantsy* from the Russian interior by force, though this was now apparently no great loss as they were "worthless vagabonds" anyway.[49]

The Kazakhs posed an even thornier problem. Historians, especially Russian and Soviet ones, tend to regard the Kazakhs of the Lesser and Middle Hordes as at least nominal Russian subjects starting from the 1740s.[50] Yet Nurali Khan of the Lesser Horde, Abulmamet Khan of the Middle Horde, and Ablai Sultan, the Middle Horde's foremost chief and later khan, all swore allegiance to the Qing in the wake of the conquest of Jungharia even as they assured Russia of their continued loyalty—and it was far from clear that this was merely a false front.[51] Thus, in 1757 Ablai sent Qianlong a letter declaring, "Since the time of my grandfather and father, Eshim Khan and Janggir Khan, your edict has not reached to me. Now, hearing your edict, I am glad always to know [that you] have regard for us. I, that is Abulay, [my] sons and all the Kazakhs have become your *albatu* [slaves, subordinates]."[52] The Russians occasionally took Kazakh assurances at face value, but a "Description of the Kazakhs" composed at the College of Foreign Affairs around 1760 had a remarkably clear-sighted view of the matter:

> By the condition of the Kazakh people, there is almost no doubt that in the case of war between the Russian and Qing states, they will join the side that is strongest, in hopes of plunder; but despite this, the fact that they are in some way considered our subjects currently brings some benefit …

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[49] Fu, *Documentary Chronicle*, 237–238.

[50] E.g., Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 161ff.

[51] Valikhanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, IV:111–117.

[52] Noda Jin and Onuma Takahiro, *A Collection of Documents from the Kazakh Sultans to the Qing Dynasty* (Tokyo: Dept. of Islamic Area Studies, University of Tokyo, 2010), 11–13. (Translation theirs.)

> At the same time, it must be admitted that the Kazakhs appear to have a better opinion of the Qing side than of ours … [O]ur side has never had encounters with the Kazakhs that would give them a useful view of our strength, and although some of them are not entirely ignorant due to their stay [in St. Petersburg], they know even better how few troops there are at the frontiers of Siberia, barely sufficient to close our own borders.[53]

The Lifanyuan even mocked the traditional Russian approach to the "vassalization" of steppe peoples, which it had followed religiously in the Kazakh case: "We have no such custom as some other countries to demand binding oaths and hostages from those lords who come to submit to us."[54] In 1758, to prevent the Kazakh defection from proceeding any further, the College of Foreign Affairs ordered Orenburg officials to deflect Ablai from the Qing at all costs, while proclaiming to the Qing that letting Ablai send embassies to Beijing was a mark of Russia's mercy.[55]

Local translators from the Siberian Line forts, who also served as envoys and spies, were vital for this effort. In 1758, the Russian translator Arapov arrived just as Ablai and his chieftains were debating whether to accept the Qing offer to decamp to pastures in Jungharia. and managed to persuade them to stay.[56] 1760, a "Bukharan" named Alim Shukhov was sent in the guise of a trader to investigate conditions in Ablai's camp. Shortly afterwards, he was followed by the translator Filat Gordeev. "On July 22, he wanted to send me off," Gordeev wrote, "but I, having learned that a Qing envoy from the emperor himself was coming with an entourage of 100 and was not far away, pretended to be ill and did not leave; Ablai stopped the envoy a day's ride from

[53] "Svedeniia o stepnykh kochuiushchikh narodakh," SPbII, f. 36, op. 1, d. 439.

[54] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1551, l3ff.

[55] "Istoricheskaia spravka," l69-70, 90.

[56] "Istoricheskaia spravka," l70.

his camp and told him to delay [on the pretext that] he was having a wedding, but the envoy ignored him and on the 23rd came straight to the camp." It became evident that the Qing envoy's poor translator impeded his communication with the Kazakhs, but Gordeev met with both groups and determined that the Kazakhs were above all terrified of a Qing attack—despite the fact that Kazakh leaders had assured the Russians of their cooperation in case of anti-Qing hostilities.[57] Information of this kind featured prominently in Catherine's 1763 instructions to Shpringer, who was ordered to use gifts (including swords and handsome salaries) and persuasion to drive home to the Kazakhs the dangers of Qing vassalage and the security to be gained under Russian protection. [58] In the end, although Ablai and the other Kazakh leaders continued to flirt with the Qing, they never migrated as far as Ili, and their dependence on Russian trade at Orenburg and the Siberian Line fortresses pushed them towards increasing subjection.

Traders like Shukhov were an equally important source of intelligence, because as long as they did not openly claim Russian subjecthood they possessed a virtually uncontested right to cross borders. A 1744 order from the College of Foreign Affairs specifically authorized petty traders to be sent using government funds as "spies" [*shpiony*] with a "small amount of goods, because with a heavy load they could not make haste themselves nor deliver a report promptly." By the end of the century, complaints had emerged that this provision was being exploited by actual traders spending thousands of rubles of their own money and having no real intelligence ends

[57] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 864, l14-19.

[58] RGADA, f. 24, n. 40, l11ff.

in mind; when these merchants were robbed by Kazakhs or encountered other difficulties in the steppe, it fell to local authorities to rescue them.[59]

Even when they were not setting out to spy, traders could have firsthand knowledge of events far from the border. In 1759, Qing troops began occupying the Tarim Basin, the southern, Muslim portion of what would become Xinjiang.[60] In the process, they captured the Russian merchant Ivan Evseev and his partner, who told the whole story when he was returned to Orenburg. As a merchant from Tobolsk, he had done business in one of the Little Bukharan towns for fourteen years until it was captured by the Khoja Burhan ad-Din, who kept him in chains for a five-year period. When Qing troops arrived to crush Burhan ad-Din's rebellion, Evseev managed to escape from his custody, only to be captured by a Qing general and sent to Beijing for a threatening interrogation. Evseev concluded by saying that the Qing army "are the weakest, slowest, and most frantic people (except the Mongols, who are a little quicker) … they have rifles which are heavy and poor and wield them inexpertly, while their use of cannon is also inexpert, for they always place them in specially dug pits, while the people who fire them stand far away and turn their faces to the side, which was all confirmed by his partner, the Tara *raznochinets* Mikhaila Pelymskoi."[61] No Mongol and almost no other Russian could have had the opportunity to observe the Qing army firsthand and report on it in this way, though Evseev confirmed widespread Russian impressions.

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[59] SPbII, f. 36, op. 1, d. 554, l556-9.

[60] See Perdue, *China Marches West*, 289–292.

[61] "Istoricheskaia spravka," l106-113.

On the Irtysh frontier, the mobile middlemen that maintained contact between Russia and the Qing as well as a whole series of frontier peoples necessarily played multiple roles. An envoy was a spy as well as a diplomat; a fugitive was a crucial source of information as well as a convenient tool. Intelligence and deception as practiced by such actors, often in a provisional and opportunistic fashion, gave Russian officials the freedom to maneuver in a rapidly changing situation they could not hope to control militarily or politically and where its size and power counted for little. At the empire's southeastern border, the situation was rather different. Here, intelligence cut across and undermined what seemed to be permanent lines of political and ethnic division. From his fortress at Selenginsk, Varfolomei Iakobii cultivated intelligence agents and informants whose careers would span many decades and who took potentially much greater risks.

3. Espionage and Defection in Transbaikalia

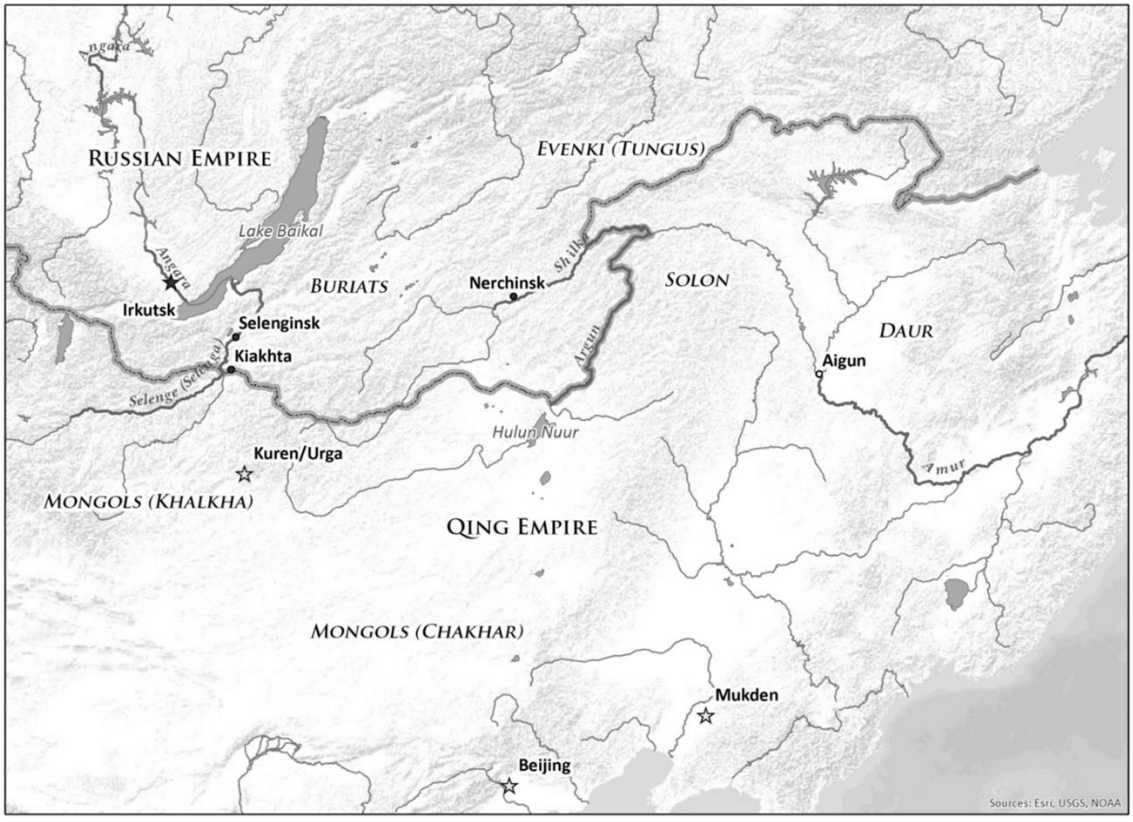


Figure 11: Mongolia, Manchuria, and Eastern Siberia in the 18th century

The intelligence network in Transbaikalia originated with Savva Vladislavich, the Russian ambassador responsible for signing the 1727 Treaty of Kiakhta with the Qing—and a onetime intelligence agent in Istanbul and other parts of the Ottoman empire.[62] His embassy to Beijing (and status as plenipotentiary) also gave him the power and responsibility to reform Transbaikalia's political institutions to fit the new policies being established around the border, especially the management of Russo-Qing trade and the mutual tracking and return of fugitives and criminals. He did not hesitate to put his intelligence expertise to work in the process. Point 26 of his 1728 instructions to

[62] See, e.g., N. I. Pavlenko, *Soratniki Petra* (Moskva: Molodaia gvardiia, 2001), 231ff.

Colonel Ivan Bukholts, who had once led the Russian gold-seeking mission into Jungharia and was now appointed to manage the border, regulated the gathering of intelligence about Mongolia:

> Keep a secret correspondence through Aleksei Tretiakov and through the interpreter Riazanov with the Mongol colonel Galdan, who is a very good man and one very dutiful in the service of His Imperial Majesty; he gave me much help in my commission and promised to continue helping in the future, for which I rewarded him from His Imperial Majesty's treasury and promised to pay him annually and in secret a salary of twenty rubles from His Majesty every year for as long as he lives. And you receive this money from the commandant at Selenginsk and through the above men satisfy him, because through him you can learn about the whole condition of the border, for he is a man of good condition and intelligence and is quite respected in the land of the Mongols.[63]

Similar instructions were reiterated in 1731 to incoming Irkutsk vice-governor Zholobov. They included an added provision that he focus on "dangers to the Russian side, that is, preparations for war…and in all border places he should take firm precautions against the Qing, who are an inconstant people despite their cordiality [*laskovoe obkhozhdenie*]." They also enjoined him to be wary of anyone sent to the Russian side by the Qing, "artfully watch over them and see if they are not spies, and in such a case take precautions to cut short their schemes through good escorting officers and so on."[64]

All such intelligence efforts would naturally flow through the small town of Selenginsk and Troitsko-Savsk Fortress near the border, since Irkutsk was cut off by Lake Baikal (where couriers still drowned on a regular basis) from any direct interaction with Qing Manchuria and Mongolia. Selenginsk had been specially rebuilt

[63] SPbII, koll. 115, op. 1, d. 353, l28-41.

[64] RGADA, f, 199, p. 349, ch. 1, n. 20.

for that purpose with the help, in part, of the engineer Abram Gannibal, Aleksandr Pushkin's Ethiopian great-grandfather.[65] As a result of these administrative changes, the Russian intelligence network came to be concentrated in the hands first of Bukholts (who was made commandant of Selenginsk in 1731) and then his successor Varfolomei Iakobii, a Polish-born veteran of Russian campaigns in Persia and the Ottoman Empire, who occupied the post from 1740 to 1769. It was Iakobii who, taking advantage of his position and the unique features of the frontier, made the post into an office with empire-wide significance.

The most important sites for intelligence gathering in Transbaikalia were the border posts established by the treaty, where soldiers from the two empires routinely fraternized and exchanged information. Much of this must have been common knowledge, but as Iakobii's later reports show, this was far from always the case. Thus, in 1758, a Mongol lama named Luvan traveled to a border post for a conversation with the translator Pavel Gantimurov; when asked about military affairs, he "became afraid and said that if he reveals state secrets he risks execution"— but still told him that fifty thousand men were being gathered, possibly for an attack on Russia.[66] These conversations generally took place in Mongolian, since translators formed the core of Iakobii's cadres.

[65] OR BAN (Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Manuscript Department), 1.5.90, l15ff.

[66] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 885, l1-6.

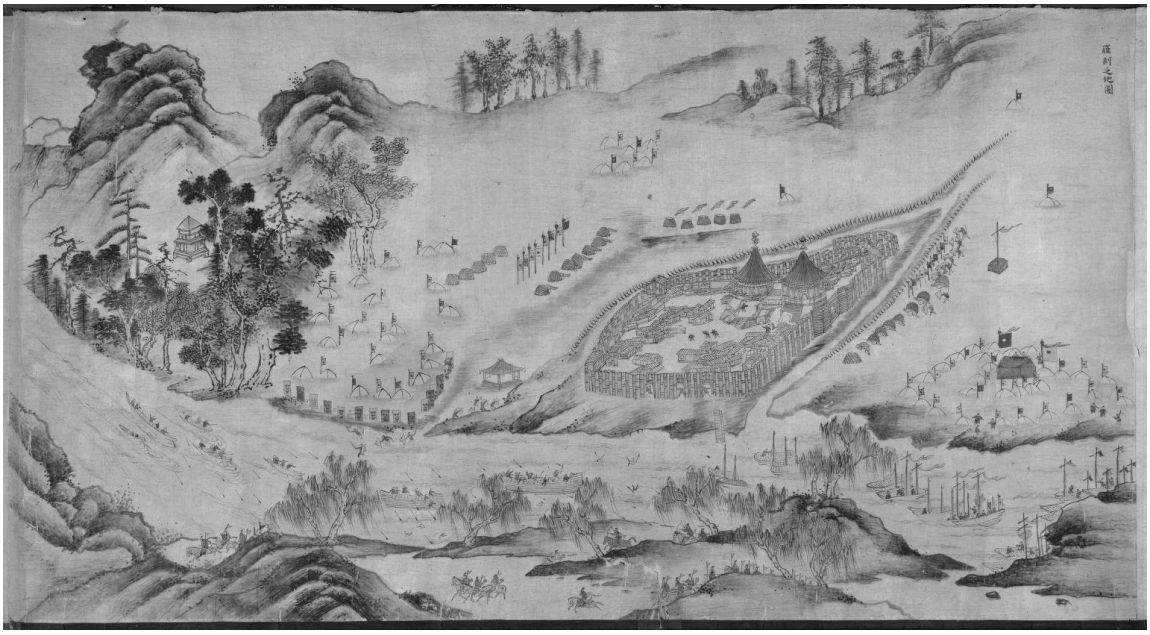


Figure 12: Qing depiction of a Russian camp in Eastern Siberia (Library of Congress)

The Manchus were not strangers to this type of source either. In 1728, the Manchu official responsible for affairs on the Amur memorialized that a Russian named Danila had come to a Solon officer named Buju and, being questioned minutely about the news of his homeland, said that "after our khan [i.e. Peter the Great] died, his grandson [Peter II] being too small, his wife [Catherine I] took the throne, the grandson being raised by his uncle, [but] our high officials [*meni ambasa*], having said that a female khan would be greatly shameful before neighboring countries [*adaki gurun labdu, hehe han bici gicuke*], and the grandson having grown, made him khan, and he became khan in the seventh month of this year."[67] Such a framing, if Buju did not distort what Danila said, would have likely been punishable as lèse-majesté in the Russian Empire. Later that year, another Russian named Iakov (*yakub*) reported on

[67] OR IVR, C 33 Mss [Pang 89], l100. (This is a collection of 18th century Manchu memorials, many relating to Russo-Qing relations, from Qiqihar in northern Manchuria.)

famine conditions obtaining in the Nerchinsk region as well as troop movements.[68] Yet Manchu and Mongol officers do not seem to have cultivated their informers in the same way that Iakobii did, and knowledge of Russian was not always a given.[69]

The reliability of border institutions, and the way they could be exploited for intelligence purposes, is powerfully illustrated by the story of Mikhail Shulgin. In August 1754, Shulgin, a convict who had lost both feet to frostbite and walked around "on bits of wood tied to his legs," stole a canoe, escaped from Nerchinsk, and "floated thievishly past all the border posts" established on the Amur and its tributaries. When he reached the Qing town of Aigun, he surrendered himself to its commander and announced that he had important news: four Russian regiments equipped with artillery and led by Fedor Soimonov were assembling in Nerchinsk in preparation for an invasion of Manchuria the next summer. The Qing authorities questioned him about Nerchinsk, told him that they had more than enough soldiers to resist an invasion, then finally had him caned three times until he confessed that he was lying and handed him back across the border. Thereupon the Russian authorities, after three rounds of judicial torture, agreed that there was no conspiracy, only a desire to "live without want" in a foreign land. Though his treason carried a death sentence, it was later commuted to further exile in Nerchinsk. Local officials used Shulgin's attempted defection to interrogate him for information about the condition of Qing forces in northern

[68] OR IVR, C 33 Mss, l102-104.

[69] OR IVR, C 33 Mss, l142.

Manchuria, while other intelligence agents determined that no preparations for war had been made in response to the threat.[70]



Figure 13: Aigun in the 18th century (Library of Congress)

The decisive turn for the development of the Russian intelligence network did not occur until the Qing conquest of 1755-1757. The Khalkha Mongols, already immiserated by Qing policies, had provided most of the supplies and a substantial portion of the soldiers for the Qing campaigns in Jungharia; a smallpox epidemic in 1755-56 brought them to the breaking point. When Qianlong executed Erinchindorj (the elder brother of the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu, the most important Khalkha Buddhist religious leader) for failing to prevent Amursana's escape, the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu's loyalties began to waver: not only was the executed man his brother, but his descent from Chinggis Khan had been thought to guarantee him a certain amount of

[70] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 485a, l779-783; RKO VI:136-137.

immunity. The execution was also the last straw for the Mongol prince Chingünjav. In league with the still at-large Amursana, he rose up in revolt against Qing rule.[71]

Iakobii kept a close watch on events in Qing Mongolia and Jungharia, concatenating information from border posts and from interpreter/envoys like Sava Frolov, who had received "secret orders to investigate and report," into "extracts" that were sent to the Senate on an approximately bimonthly basis starting at the latest from August 1754.[72] In the process, Frolov and his colleagues recruited informants among the Mongols. One day in March 1755, when Frolov was visiting the Tüsiyetü-Khan in Urga, he lingered on the pretext of obtaining Mongol medicines for the khan of the Volga Torghuts. He used the opportunity to give one of his frequent informants, a Mongol named Sharga, "a yellow fox pelt worth no more than a ruble" "because he, Sharga, always gives information to the interpreter about events in Mongolia and so he would be more eager to give such news in the future." Sharga accepted the pelt "happily" and promised to "always report all news related to Russia." Both Sharga and his father, taking care to meet with Frolov in private, reported on such matters as Mongol unhappiness with Qing demands and the fact that a shamanic vision showed a black dog baring its teeth at the Qing from Jungharia, for which they were rewarded with pelts three rubles in value.[73] By 1756, Iakobii had authorized his agents to give furs worth up to eight rubles, because of a new focus on information about Solon and

[71] Bergholz, *The Partition of the Steppe*, 387–394; Perdue, *China Marches West*, 276–280.

[72] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1551, l1047-48.

[73] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1551, l1050-1058.

Mongol troop movements in Mongolia.[74] For higher-ranking sources, like the general Batur Belei, more sophisticated gifts were needed: he asked for a high-quality hunting rifle (which constituted contraband) as well as a fox pelt from his Russian contact.[75]

As Chingünjav was beginning his rebellion and collecting allies—according to Batur Belei, his co-conspirators had agreed that Russia would be their next destination after their revolt—news of other defectors began to reach Iakobii. An enormous group of 10,000 yurts demanded asylum in late 1755. In the spring of 1756, the interpreter Vasilii Sharin spoke with a *shabinar* (religious serf) of the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu who suggested that other shabinars may want to defect as well.[76] Semën Surgutskii reported a more suggestive conversation that summer. Amid news of Qing setbacks in the West, he described the smallpox epidemic and the execution of Erinchindorj; he also said he had met with an old acquaintance—an elderly lama who had once been close to the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu—who told him that "with further oppression the Mongols will certainly defect to the Russian side," and although Mongol leaders were not yet discussing this, commoners were confirming it to Surgutskii on a frequent basis.[77] Although Chingünjav's revolt, which never reached critical mass, was crushed by Qing forces in January 1757, plans for defection continued to develop. In July 1757, the border commissar Vasilii Igumnov (of whom more below) reported that he had met with one Dorji Noin Tsulai, who listed five Mongol notables with 23 *sumuns* (4-7,000

[74] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1551, l1082-1088.

[75] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1527, l58.

[76] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1527, l1-4, l22-27.

[77] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1223, l24-32.

people) who were ready to defect. The crucial missing piece of the puzzle was the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu; if he joined, Mongol informants agreed that even 49 Chakhar *jasaks* (banner chiefs) from Inner Mongolia would come over to the Russian side—and by the end of that summer it became clear that the other leaders were delaying any plans until the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu's opinion was known.[78]

The collapse of the Mongol defection was not a "comedy of errors," as it has been characterized, but the result of a carefully weighed cost-benefit analysis.[79] Iakobii had been ordered to prepare a memorandum on the Mongol issue as early as November 1755, because accepting the defectors would be a clear violation of the Treaty of Kiakhta, which could not be explained away like the Junghar refugee issue. In February 1756, he set out the basic problem with the requests for asylum that had hitherto come in: "they are currently all common people, while their leaders have not evinced such a desire."[80] He reiterated the point at the end of that year in a lengthier document: accepting the Mongols' defection would be likely only if the Mongol leaders, especially the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu, were willing to defect but remain in place as Russian vassals, with the Russian army reinforcing them for the inevitable Qing attack. Any other solution would be a dramatic liability, as Russia was not just too weak militarily to hold off a Qing attack on Siberia, but did not even have the power to keep a "flighty people" like the Mongols in line if they were invited into its borders. Even under the

[78] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1527, l76-83.

[79] E.g., LeDonne, "Proconsular ambitions on the Chinese border," 38–40; Bergholz, *The Partition of the Steppe*, 390–391.

[80] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1527, l1-4.

more favorable scenario, Iakobii recommended that 30,000 regular troops be sent to the Nerchinsk and Selenginsk border and two fortresses built on the Onon in Mongolia, with all the required artillery—something he must have known would be both utterly inconceivable for the Senate and impractical from a logistical point of view. Russia's involvement in the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) made this all the more impossible. When the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu first refused to defect and then died under suspicious circumstances in 1758 (with the Qing ordering that his successor incarnation be found outside of Khalkha territory) there was no further benefit for Russia in pursuing the matter.[81]

Despite the failure of this attempt, the events of 1755-57 had long-term consequences for the Russian intelligence network as the relationship between Russia and the Qing grew frostier. When Iakobii's agents cultivated cross-border ties, both new and preexisting, with Northern Mongolia, they forged lasting intelligence relationships. The most important of these involved a Mongol *jakirughci* (a banner rank below chief) named Ciwang (Chuvan or Chugan in Russian). He was apparently related to the Mongol *jasak* Chebak, who had declared his intent to defect, but he provided independent intelligence even before the crisis. In August 1759, long after any immediate possibility of defection had receded, the Russian agent Vasilii Sharin sent along a letter from Chugan (translated from Mongolian):

> I hereby inform you that I have received Her Great Majesty's salary from your *zaisang* Vasilii on the 16th of the first autumn month consisting of two sables and five red-black foxes with tails and paws; and I performed obeisance for the health of Her Majesty in a hidden place while standing

[81] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1527, l1-75; "Istoricheskaia spravka," l14-15.

> on my knees, three times to God, and nine times in the direction of Her Majesty, and once to God and thrice towards you for your health, Brigadier [Iakobii], in thanks. Moreover, I sincerely wish and ask God that he would place all of the peoples under the sky in these lands [Mongolia] under Her Majesty's hand and under her great and fortunate care, and this I desire and ask in the most sincere spirit. In the year of Enthroned by Heaven [i.e. Qianlong] 24, the 16th of the first autumn month.

Such a statement was of course openly treasonous, and Chugan was already under suspicion: in the same meeting he reported that during a council discussing the possibility of war with Russia, a Mongol *tushegun* had said, "as if jokingly," that "[Chugan] knows [Russian] places well" and that it would be best to "keep to the better side, except they are unused to living in hot places and should not move there."[82] (This was probably a reference to the Torghuts on the Volga.)

Nonetheless, over the course of the next decade, Chugan was Iakobii's single most vital intelligence informant, meeting with Russian contacts on a nearly monthly basis and sometimes providing written accounts. His services did not come for free. In August 1760, after a particularly fruitful meeting, he complained that his trips to Kiakhta were causing him financial expenses, pointed out that he was risking his own life and health, and said that even his father had once received two hundred rubles as a reward from Vladislavich. (This may suggest that Chugan was in fact the son of the Galdan mentioned in Bukholts's instructions.) After receiving permission from the Senate, Iakobii authorized his salary, and the rewards given to others, to be raised to one hundred rubles in pelts. Thus, over the course of five years, the budget allotted to one informant had risen fifteenfold.[83] For the most part, however, Russian informants

[82] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1551, l1123-1129.

[83] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 865.

were much lowlier (and less well-rewarded). They included such figures as the petty trader "Deaf Baian" and the "gardener Namtui."[84]

Another vital intelligence resource were Buriat and Mongol lamas, whose religious duties allowed them regular cross-border contacts.[85] One lama, Khanba-Bandida Zaiagiava, composed a travelogue and description of the monasteries in Tibet for Vasilii Igumnov during his pilgrimage there in the early 1770s, after having been a delegate to Catherine's doomed Legislative Commission.[86] Earlier, a Tibetan lama named Namjal had been a key source on Chingünjav's rebellion and a Mongol lama named Choinzhun had travelled to a border post to inform Igumnov of commercial developments in Mongolia.[87] The most consistently useful information—and the most striking report—was provided by a Buriat lama named Tsorzhi Sodbo Zasaev, who had family ties to the entourage of the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu which he cultivated for intelligence purposes.[88] He happened to be at Urga in 1765, visiting a senior lama named Kanfa, when the general (*jiyanggiyūn*) in charge of Mongolia, Sanzai Dorji, was found to be smuggling and illegally trading with Russia with the help of one of Kanfa's assistants (possibly a Russian informant himself). Soldiers were sent to fetch Kanfa and Zasaev for interrogation, but Kanfa said they would find horses from the steppe and follow them later:

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[84] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1214; RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 464, l24-30.

[85] See N. V. Tsyrempilov, "'Chuzhie' lamy. Rossiiskaia politika v otnoshenii zagranichnogo buddiiskogo dukhovenstva v XVIII— nachale XX v.," *Vestnik SPbGU* 13, no. 4 (2010): 9–18.

[86] OR RNB (Russian National Library Manuscript Department), f. 487, n. F-219.

[87] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1551, l1098-99; RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 610.

[88] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1214, l53-56.

> When the soldiers left, Kanfa turned to him and said that our doom has arrived, but we have no choice, we must come up with some excuse to tell the ambans. They agreed that he, Tsorzhi, would say that he had come to Urga because he and one hundred of his relatives and other lamas in Russia … fear that there will be a war, and if there is one then they wish to join the Qing, and therefore because they share a common faith Zasaev had notified Kanfa and he invited him to come through Sharin … which is also what Kanfa would say … but the officials did not believe his speeches, and threatened to send him to the emperor in Beijing where he would assuredly tell the truth, and said with grave threats to tell the truth because he Tsorzhi is utterly at their mercy, even if he dies, there will be no one to find him, and to these questions Tsorzhi replied that even if they torture him or put him to death, he has nothing else to say.

Zasaev was then interrogated about Russian affairs, to which he either pleaded ignorance or "not having anything else to say said false things that he had made up." Though the officials did not believe him, he insisted, and at length managed to persuade them that he would be missed in Russia and therefore should not be sent to Beijing. Finally he was remanded to Kanfa's custody. The Mongol provided him with detailed information about the size and composition of Qing forces in Jungharia and Mongolia and explained that the emperor was being advised on the military situation in Russia by a renegade Russian Kalmyk named Badashan.[89] News of Zasaev's supposed desire to defect even made it into the Qing *Shilu*, the official court record of the Qing Dynasty, although Qianlong never found out that the Buriat was lying.[90]

Often, the reports Iakobii's informants provided were less useful as facts than as illustrations of prevailing rumors. In 1765, Sodbo Zasaev transcribed a conversation with an Urga acquaintance, who said that "two years ago the Qing khan had an embassy of thirty people from the [Turkish] khan … and those envoys arrived riding

[89] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1212, l23-51. On the assistant Garma, see RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 864, l2-7.

[90] Fu, *Documentary Chronicle*, 242–243.

elephants, and it was heard that they brought as gifts one dog, one folding knife, and one whip … and in all of Mongolia these gifts are being talked about, that they presage a disagreement." A few months earlier, a Mongol defector named Munkui Tungusov said that the khan had received from Russia "a black camel, a black stallion, and a black dog, although he said that the khan did not accept these gifts and sent them back saying they mean that there will be disagreement and war, and if there wouldn't, then they would have sent a white horse, a white camel, and a white dog."[91] No Turkish embassy or Russian dispatch of gifts had taken place, although it is hard to ignore the similarity in the two reports. In fact, the likely referent of both is a threatening 1762 letter apparently sent by the Afghan Ahmed Shah to Qianlong's court, although the significance of the supposed three gifts is unclear.[92]

Iakobii's agents were the link that connected these informants to his office in Selenginsk. As regular state servitors who happened (like Frolov) to be issued secret orders to collect and investigate, they formed a miscellaneous crew. One, Pavel Gantimurov, was a descendant of the Evenki Prince Gantimur who had caused a diplomatic rupture by defecting to Russia in the seventeenth century. Some, like a Captain Tarskii, headed border posts; others, like Surgutskii or Sharin, were translators used routinely as go-betweens between Urga, Kiakhta, and Selenginsk. (They typically knew Mongolian, but not Manchu or Chinese.) Agents both cultivated local sources and collected their own observations on the spot, as when Sharin reported seeing "a dead

[91] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1214, l41-45v, 57-60.

[92] See Mosca, *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy*, 80–81.

Mongol body in all his clothes, and the Mongols said he had died of famine."[93] Such activities were apparently no mystery to the Qing authorities; in August 1765, at the height of the smuggling scandal, the courier Luka Ostrovskikh reported that "he could discover nothing as upon his arrival in Urga he was lodged in a yurt walled in with a palisade and they were not allowed to leave or receive visitors."[94]

Among these agents, the standout figure was Vasilii Igumnov. His service career lasted from 1744 to 1804, and for at least fifty of those years he was entrusted with intelligence duties, making him perhaps Russia's most successful spy ever (if not in a career sense). Although he was primarily in charge of Russian border posts—and hence had plenty of clandestine meetings on the border—he was also assigned to escort replacement missionaries to Beijing in 1771, 1781, and 1794. He used these opportunities to visit Mongols he was friends with (he was evidently a fluent speaker of Mongolian, and the word "friendship" occurs frequently in his reports) and keep secret journals of events in the Qing empire.[95] He even won the favor of the Jesuit missionary Joseph Amiot, who referred to him as "un fort aimable officier russe."[96] His near-total absence from historical accounts has to do with the fact that for five decades, until 1792, he never once received an increase in rank—perhaps because he was too valuable in his

[93] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1551, l1100.

[94] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1212, l25ff.

[95] E.g., RGADA, f. 15, n. 237.

[96] Amiot to Bignon, 29 April 1772, Archives Jésuites – Vanves, Fonds Henri Bernard-Maitre 69, l40.

role. Though his intelligence is represented in many of Iakobii's reports and extracts, his name, like those of other agents, was omitted in printed collections.[97]

Instead, all such reports are subsumed under the name of Iakobii himself, who had unquestionably succeeded in making himself visible and invaluable to the imperial government. The network the commandant created meant that his subordination to the Siberian governors he served under was nominal at best: in practice he routinely communicated with the Senate directly. His indispensable role is perhaps best represented by the fact that after 1764, when Catherine decided to comply with repeated Qing ultimatums that he be relieved from his border-oversight responsibilities, he continued to send his reports as usual until his death despite theoretically having no official position.[98] He was not expected merely to aggregate intelligence reports, but also to analyze and compare them and offer his opinion of their credibility. Thus, when the lama Luvan told Gantimurov that an army was assembling to march on Russia, Iakobii decided this was "doubtful" since other agents had not confirmed any such preparations and sufficient time had already passed to discount the news. (He recommended vigilance anyway.)[99] Iakobii's extracts and reports therefore represent the documentary output and material trace of a wide-ranging, well-honed system for sourcing, gathering, collating, and analyzing frontier intelligence. His reports reached a number of addressees. The Senate, the College of Foreign Affairs, and the governor of Siberia were typically mandatory recipients, but often the official in charge of the

[97] A thorough, though rather biased, summary of Igumnov's background and career is in RGIA (Russian State Historical Archive), f. 1643, op. 1, d. 27.

[98] Valikhanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, IV:212–214.

[99] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 885, l1-6.

Siberian Line fortresses and the College of War also received copies. (Although the Siberian Line had its own intelligence resources, none were as consistent or intimately informed as Iakobii's sources.) To the extent that the imperial administration had a mental picture of events on the other side of the border, it was largely painted through Iakobii's efforts.

In the middle of the 1760s, signs of change began to emerge. The bellwether was Russia's most trusted agent, Chugan. In 1766, although Russian sources initially reported that he had been sent to Urga for questioning in a smuggling case, it emerged that he was in fact going to be elevated in rank, either to *meiren i janggin* (lieutenant general) or even higher. He was in fact made a colonel (*jalan i janggin*).[100] In 1767, Chugan came to visit Major Kopylov in Kiakhta "for no apparent reason, but most likely because he was sent from the amban Soli [i.e. Suo Lin] to gather intelligence." The major asked "if, once he leaves and if he visits the amban, whether he would not tell him everything, and [Chugan] replied that if he asks then he will not forbear."[101] As recently as 1766, Mongol leaders told Russians they still intended to defect in the event of war.[102] Chugan's promotion and his new role as a double agent indicate that the Qing policies that had once alienated the Mongols and driven them to seek Russian protection were beginning to be accepted by the population, especially after the removal of the unpopular *jiyanggiyūn* Sanzai Dorji (though he was later reinstated with less authority). To the extent that Russian strategy relied on maintaining the spark of

[100] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 610, l9-12; RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 662, l10-14.

[101] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 612, l2-5.

[102] RGADA, f, 248, op. 113, d. 610, l1-4.

potential defection in the hope that it would be kindled by some later crisis, it was increasingly becoming obsolete.[103]

More broadly, the smuggling crackdown in the wake of Sanzai Dorji's dismissal drove Mongolia and Russia further apart. Qing officials had always been leery of the cross-border ties the Kiakhta trade had encouraged: one of them had complained about illegal Russo-Qing trade in 1762, "facilitated by the fact that their Qing people live at Kiakhta for ten or twenty years or more, fraternize with the Russians, and moreover due to this long residency come to live in sin with [Russian] women, from which some of their merchants have lost their livelihoods and become poor."[104] When Qing authorities stopped the Kiakhta trade in 1764, arguing that Russians had been illegally enclosing border territories and charging tariffs in violation of the treaty, the College of Foreign Affairs specifically encouraged Iakobii to promote border smuggling.[105] Soli, however, by means of aggressive clearing and monitoring of border areas, appears to have succeeded in minimizing this.[106] By 1767, Iakobii confessed that very few goods were being brought in illegally, which he saw as a deliberate plot on the part of Soli to pressure Russia into petitioning for trade to be reopened.[107]

[103] Fu, *Documentary Chronicle*, 231–242.

[104] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1215, l3.

[105] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 488, l1-7. For more on Russo-Mongol frontier trade, see Dear, "Marginal Revolutions."

[106] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 662.

[107] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 612, l2-5.

The test of Iakobii's network in the wake of changes in cross-border ties would have to come with the signing of a new addendum to the Treaty of Kiakhta.[108] In 1767, weary of the trade interruption and the apparent escalation of inter-imperial animosity, Catherine sent Colonel Ivan Kropotov to the border to negotiate a resolution to the Lifanyuan's complaints. He had been an envoy in Beijing four years earlier, albeit to little substantive effect.[109] With him Kropotov brought Aleksei Leontiev, the most successful of the surviving students of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing, who was to serve for a handsome salary as secretary as well as translator of Manchu and Chinese. Although his instructions did not contain any intelligence-specific provisions, he was instructed to consult regularly with Iakobii and given wide discretion to resolve matters in such a way that trade could be reopened while maintaining Russian dignity. The issues facing Kropotov were the alleged Russian appropriation of Qing lands through enclosure with fences; the annulment of old cases and claims related to cross-border raiding by Buriats, Evenki, and Mongols, which would have entailed a heavy restitution be paid by Mongol authorities; and the practice of charging duties on trade goods, which Russia had no intention of abandoning and which therefore required special finesse.[110]

Soon after the commencement of negotiations in May 1768, it became clear to Leontiev that underlying the disagreement about tariffs and fences were differences in the Manchu and Russian texts of the treaty: the latter did not specify duty-free trade

[108] See Yanagisawa Akira, "Some Remarks on the 'Addendum to the Treaty of Kiakhta' in 1768."

[109] See RKO VI:235ff.

[110] RGADA, f. 1261, op. 1, d. 440.

and adopted a different formulation of the border line. At the same time, he and Kropotov began receiving secret visits from the Mongol Tüsiyetü-Khan, one of the four most important Khalkha leaders and a party to the negotiations alongside the Manchu ambans. He also obtained copies of the Lifanyuan's instructions to its ambans and other documents, passed along by the Mongol *jalan* [*i janggin*] Bandzar through the Russian merchant Petr Volkov. Bandzar received merchandise (including a watch) worth nearly one hundred rubles as a reward. Eventually, the Tüsiyetü-Khan sent a letter through Bandzar offering his "friendship" to Kropotov. The letter left little doubt what this implied: "But since no one can be suspicious of the officials of two great states having a friendship with one another, so we can also henceforth send messages to each other with gifts and with information [*s vest'mi*] as good friendship demands." Kropotov got the hint and sent the khan a rifle and a brace of pistols. By mid-October, Kropotov wrote in the official journal that "the Tüsiyetü-Khan, having become great friends with the commissar [Kropotov] through mutual gifts and correspondence, secretly sent a man to the commissar to tell him that the conclusion of the treaty had gone to a vote," three to one in favor of the Russian proposal.[111]

Yet in the end, this extraordinary intelligence coup changed nothing whatsoever for the Russians, who still had no leverage to exert against the Qing. Although Russia had a plausible claim that the Russian text of the treaty was just as binding as the Manchu one, Kropotov ultimately surrendered on all three of his major points, with the exception of a small amount of fenced-in territory and some concessions related to the mission in Beijing: the fences were torn down, old cases were annulled, and duties were

[111] IVR, R. I, op. 1, d. 12, l47-131.

declared illegal (in practice the customs office was merely moved slightly deeper into the Russian interior). His unprecedented access to the deliberations of the Qing side had yielded no advantage in the negotiations: Russia remained too weak military and too unconvincing diplomatically to present a serious alternative.

This was the central paradox of Russian intelligence on the Mongol border. Although it was intended as a kind of moral equivalent of war, advancing imperial goals in the absence of credible military or diplomatic force, by the end of fifteen years of increasingly intensive penetration of Qing Mongolia Russia was no closer to achieving these goals than it had been at the outset. In the meantime, the forces that had once so threatened Qing rule in Mongolia now foreclosed the possibility of a Russian takeover. As Qianlong put it, rejecting the prospect of an invasion of Russia: "If the Russians wished to cause trouble they would have done so long ago, when Chingünjav and the Khalkhas were in confusion and wavering … Since they did not move in the past, they certainly will not cause trouble now."[112] It would be nearly a century before Russian ships sailed down the Amur—which would require a brazen annexation during the Second Opium War—and Mongolia would remain firmly in Qing hands until the twentieth century. Indeed, perhaps the most valuable information Russia received from its spies was the constant reassurance that the Qing were not plotting an offensive, and that it was therefore free to concentrate its attention on military events in Europe and on its southern frontier.

Iakobii and Kropotov—who had been expected to use his plenipotentiary powers to continue reforming matters on the frontier—both died in 1769. Iakobii was

[112] Fu, *Documentary Chronicle*, 238.

succeeded by Major Semën Vlasov, who had experience serving in Kiakhta under his predecessor. His 1770 instructions to his border patrols made clear that he meant to continue expanding his intelligence network. Point 12 specified that "important defectors, if they report substantively about hostile Qing intentions towards the Russian empire … should be sent in all haste and with extreme secrecy and care to this chancellery, and in case of demands for them from the Qing side excuses should be made in a concealed fashion." Point 13 demanded that couriers should be sent immediately in case of "secret and important matters," while less important ones would be reported by extract monthly. Anything said by Qing personnel stationed at the border should be written down and likewise sent in monthly.[113] But neither Vlasov nor his successors ever had as much success as Iakobii. One reason was yet another paradox. Pursuant to reforms intended to strengthen Siberia in the face of the Qing threat, Irkutsk and the eastern part of the vast province became its own province. In the process, and after demands from the Qing side, the governor in Irkutsk became responsible for interactions with the authorities in Urga. The problem of Baikal remained, however, and because governors rarely ventured east of the lake and had many more pressing duties, it was no longer possible for them to have close contact with agents. The Russian intelligence network was now fully subordinate to the governor and had virtually no influence or access to resources beyond the province. The few post-1769 intelligence reports in the Secret Expedition's collections (a period

[113] IVR, R. I, op. 1, d. 12, l138-140.

admittedly outside of their primary chronological scope) are much shorter, less substantive, and further between than anything sent in by Iakobii.[114]

For Russian plans on the Irtysh, the paradox was much more bitter. In 1771, most of the Torghut/Kalmyk nomads from the lower Volga plains migrated en masse to Ili in Qing Jungharia, at the cost of extreme suffering and loss of life (in part because they were pursued and massacred by Kazakhs, their traditional enemies). Some of them had been Russian subjects since the early seventeenth century, while others had only recently joined them from the former Junghar domains. The flight, however radical a measure it seemed at the time—and still seems today—was substantially overdetermined. Pressure from Russian colonists and land enclosures, excessive demands for military service, and blatantly disrespectful manipulation of the Torghut political system have all been cited as contributing factors to their decision to leave; in letters to Qianlong Torghut leaders cited religious issues as a further motivation.[115] Yet the presence of Shereng among the most vocal supporters of exodus cannot be ignored, even if reliable documentation is lacking. After all, he had been the leader of the group of 5,000 Junghar refugees who had been deported from the Siberian Line to the Volga, apparently against their will, in 1757-58. In other words, it is likely that in some measure the Torghut exodus was the long-simmering blowback to the Russian strategy of covert action on the border. Even beyond the Torghuts, however, the results of so much covert manipulation on the Irtysh were ambiguous at best. Russia did acquire a

[114] RGADA, f. 248, op. 113, d. 1214, l111ff.

[115] Khodarkovsky, *Where Two Worlds Met*, 207–235. See also Perdue, *China Marches West*, 292–299. For a contemporary Russian account, see Petr Rychkov, "Kratkoe izvestie o pobege torgoutskikh kalmyk," RGADA, f. 199, p. 150, ch. 9, n. 5.

few shreds of land, but its inability to carry on trade with Qing forts in Xinjiang directly left the region less useful economically than it had been before. Russians were forced to rely on Kazakhs as middlemen, who charged hefty fees and made the most of their crucial status.[116]

The unsuccessful Russian intelligence campaign in Mongolia and Jungharia demonstrates two crucial and seemingly incompatible features of the Russo-Qing encounter. The first is that it was sustained and accompanied by cutting-edge information gathering practices directly descended from the institutional reforms of Peter the Great, something most clearly noticeable in the way Varfolomei Iakobii first collected secret intelligence data, then reassembled and recirculated it to a whole hierarchy of responsible authorities. The second is that Russians did not encounter their borderland neighbors as a European explorer might have seen Pacific islanders, as an alien culture defined by alterity. Russia's local actors were friends and compatriots with the populations Russians sought to recruit, and when necessary they could speak the language of the steppe both literally and figuratively. In fact, it was the cultural proximity of the borderlands that made both espionage and secret diplomacy possible. With the definitive entrenchment of the Qing in Mongolia and Jungharia after the 1760s, these commonalities began to fray, and the power that gazed at the Russians from beyond the border began to seem more threatening, more foreign, and more tempting as a target for plots than it ever had before.

[116] See Noda Jin, "Russo-Chinese Trade through Central Asia: Regulations and Reality," in *Asiatic Russia: Imperial Power in Regional and International Contexts* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 153–73.

Chapter V

Ships in the Night: Imperial Encounters in the North Pacific

Unlike Christopher Columbus, Vasco da Gama, and Ermak Timofeevich—early modern "discoverers" known to ourselves as well as many of their contemporaries primarily for their avarice and bloodthirst—the great explorers of the eighteenth century have entered our histories as men of science. The Pacific Ocean was their laboratory. Without Captain Cook, there would have been no botanical gardens at Kew; without Bougainville, the myth of the noble savage would never have been ethnographically pinned on the natives of Tahiti. Even the many recent treatments which aim to expose the link between science and empire in the eighteenth century serve ultimately to place even more emphasis on the role of knowledge.[1] In fact, one of the paradigmatic attempts to structurally differentiate modern science from other forms of knowledge-making takes as its central example La Pérouse's landing on Sakhalin in 1787.[2] Few historical claims can be less in doubt, it seems, than the argument that European imperialism in the eighteenth-century Pacific was in large part an intellectual project, supported by Enlightenment science and fueling it in turn.

[1] Sujit Sivasundaram, "Science," in *Pacific Histories: Ocean, Land, People*, ed. David Armitage and Alison Bashford (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 237–61; Tony Ballantyne, ed., *Science, Empire and the European Exploration of the Pacific* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004); Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the "Improvement" of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); John Gascoigne, *Science in the Service of Empire: Joseph Banks, the British State and the Uses of Science in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[2] Latour, *Science in Action*, 215–257.

Yet perhaps something obvious has been overlooked. The successes of European science and exploration were notable not because of how much people in London and Paris knew about the Pacific, but how little. A vast zone of imperial ignorance stretched between Australia and the North Pole, only rarely permeated by expeditionary vessels. When it came to geopolitical rivalries, above all insofar as they concerned the supreme Pacific prize—access to the trade networks of the Qing empire—this ignorance was consequential in a way we have hitherto failed to appreciate. The Russian Empire, like Britain and France, blundered about the North Pacific in a haze of inadequate information, paranoia, and self-flattery, which only reinforced the blundering of its competitors; the resulting confusion determined the era's most important events, from the failed Macartney Embassy to Beijing to Ivan Kruzenshtern's round-the-world expedition of 1803-1806.

Recent work by historians as well as social scientists and philosophers has made agnotology (the study of ignorance, as opposed to epistemology, or the study of knowledge) into a major new direction of study in a number of fields. Although agnotology emphasizes the positive content of ignorance—that is, its existence as a presence rather than a lack—it has generally fixated on various forms of intentionality as the central axis, sorting "known" from "unknown unknowns" and privileging deliberate rather than accidental obfuscation.[3] The ignorance at work in the late-eighteenth-century North Pacific was more complex: like many of the intelligence regimes of the

[3] Jennifer L. Croissant, "Agnotology: Ignorance and Absence or Towards a Sociology of Things That Aren't There," *Social Epistemology* 28, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 4–25, doi:10.1080/02691728.2013.862880; Casey High et al., eds., *The Anthropology of Ignorance: An Ethnographic Approach* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Matthias Gross, "The Unknown in Process Dynamic Connections of Ignorance, Non-Knowledge and Related Concepts," *Current Sociology* 55, no. 5 (September 1, 2007): 742–59, doi:10.1177/0011392107079928; Proctor and Schiebinger, *Agnotology*.

early modern era, bedeviled by "spies lost, plans spoiled, and intelligence misread," it was characterized by the blurring of intentionality, a mixture of secrecy, untimely information, lies, and simple inaccessibility.[4] These practices' natural propensity for generating untrustworthiness was amplified in the Pacific context by the absence of reliable or speedy communications, the lack of agents on the ground, and the difficulties of (literal or metaphorical) intercultural translation. If geographical and scientific knowledge could be aggregated and iteratively improved in "centers of calculation," political intelligence—such as data about who was at war with whom—rarely could be.[5] Even a well-prepared explorer or diplomat venturing into East or Northeast Asia operated on the basis of intelligence that was outdated at best and wholly imaginary at worst.

If information on Russia's seventeenth-century meeting with the Qing was privileged by default, and its eighteenth-century espionage activities were explicitly classified, a kind of conspiratorial mystique defined the flurry of geopolitical schemes that it pursued starting in the 1770s. As a result, the true dimensions of Russian entanglement with the geopolitical contest in the North Pacific have remained almost entirely obscured. I will show here how uncovering these conspiracies helps us to revise our most apparently up-to-date models of the failure of Europe's attempted diplomatic rapprochement with the Qing, against the background of the emerging maritime Pacific fur trade and the integration of the Pacific into worldwide intellectual, colonial, and

[4] Alan Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage in the Reign of Charles II, 1660-1685* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 61.

[5] See Latour, *Science in Action*.

economic networks.[6] I will begin with Russia's abandonment of its Inner Asian-oriented intelligence policy after 1770, then follow Russia, France, and Britain as they all come to realize the increasing importance of the unassuming peninsula of Kamchatka—and the North Pacific China trade as a whole—during the same period. I will then offer a new account of the Macartney Embassy of 1792-4, restoring to it its Russian context, and conclude with an analysis of the contribution made by each of the above factors to the failed Golovkin Embassy of 1805.



Figure 14: Northeast Asia in the 18th-19th centuries

[6] See, especially, James Louis Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

1. Local Power and the End of Intelligence on the Inner Asian Frontier, 1770-1813

After the Qing conquest of Xinjiang, the Russian Empire's strategy in Mongolia and the former Junghar territories was based on covert action, espionage, and the recruitment of agents from among Qing subjects, with one major goal being to persuade Mongol leaders to defect to Russia. We have also seen that although the strategy succeeded in its means, by the time the Russian spymaster and Selenginsk commandant Varfolomei Iakobii died in 1769 the ends could not have been farther from view. In addition, a new addendum to the Treaty of Kiakhta had been signed in 1768, largely resolving the military and political uncertainty and interrupted trade that had followed the Qing conquest of the Junghar Khanate in 1755-57. This new confirmation of the two countries' commitment to mutual détente, together with Russian administrative reforms that placed frontier officials like Iakobii outside of immediate communication with central authorities, meant that the latter steadily lost touch with, and interest in, intelligence-gathering and other covert action on the Qing border. Despite an apparent revival of such plots in the 1780s, the increasing weakness of Russian intelligence meant that the two countries nearly went to war—and by the early nineteenth century, no intelligence-gathering network to speak of existed in the region at all. As the College of Foreign Affairs put it in Archimandrite Shishkovskii's 1779 instructions, his information "cannot but be curious, given the increasingly few means we have for reliable information about events there."[7]

[7] RGIA, f. 796, op. 59, d. 328, l. 110-113.

Iakobii's successors in Transbaikalia, who now took orders directly from the governor in Irkutsk, continued the Kiakhta (Troitsko-Savsk) Chancellery's commitment to intelligence gathering. In the new environment they were notably less effective. In 1778, trade was briefly interrupted when a Russian student of Mongolian named Grigorii Sharin was caught sneaking across the border from Kiakhta into the Qing trading settlement (maimaicheng). Although he claimed he was merely drunk, the Mongol authorities accused him of plotting with several of their soldiers to smuggle horses. They kept him in chains and refused to surrender him for several months, during which tensions continued to escalate. The whole episode was in marked contrast to the 1750s and '60s, when Mongol interpreters like Sharin's relative Vasilii crossed the border seemingly at will and negotiated with Qing subjects over matters much weightier than horse-smuggling, including outright espionage. The kinds of cross-border contacts that had allowed Russian intelligence connections in Mongolia to flourish were now being much more rigidly policed, which was reflected in both the reduced number and variety of reports filtering through to the center.[8]

In 1783, a further administrative reform seemed to portend major changes for the Russian Empire's approach to its Qing neighbor.[9] Catherine II created the governor-generalships of Irkutsk and Kolyvan—covering the entire southeastern frontier zone—and placed them both under the leadership of a Potemkin protégé named Ivan Iakobii, who had extensive governing experience already. Few men could have been better suited

[8] On the Sharin case, see RGADA (Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts), f. 248, op. 113, d. 1214, l167ff.

[9] On the significance of governor-generalships (namestnichestva), see John P. Ledonne, "Russian Governors General, 1775-1825: Territorial or Functional Administration?," *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 42, no. 1 (January 1, 2001): 5–30, doi:10.2307/20171210.

for the job: Ivan Iakobii was not only the son of Varfolomei, but had also been in Beijing several times as a courier. Yet the empress seems to have given little thought to how a single man might effectively rule two provinces cut off from each other by endless mountains and thousands of miles of almost unpeopled and ungoverned space, and Iakobii complained about not being able to deal with the problems of both provinces at once. Clearly, the desire to have the whole Qing frontier under unified control superseded any considerations of efficiency.

Iakobii's major test came almost immediately. In 1784, a gang led by a Russian Buriat named Uladzai robbed and murdered a Chinese merchant. They were captured by Russian authorities, caned, fined, branded, and sentenced to hard labor, without any consultation with the Qing official in charge of frontier matters. The Qing protested that Uladzai should have been executed per the 1768 treaty. Yet the Russian authorities replied that this was impossible, because capital punishment had been abolished in the Russian Empire during the reign of Elizabeth. The two sides were unable to reach agreement: the Russians not only refused to execute Uladzai but even insisted that hard labor was in fact a more severe punishment than death. Catherine's prestige as an enlightened monarch was, of course, a major consideration. In March 1785, the trade at Kiakhta was once more shut down by the Qing side, which marked the closing by firing a cannon. The interruption would last for over six years, the most grueling such episode in the history of the Kiakhta trade.[10]

Catherine and her officials were so perplexed and alarmed at the outcome of the Uladzai incident that some contemporaries concluded that she was formulating and

[10] Foust, *Muscovite and Mandarin*, 307–309.

implementing a plan for an offensive war against the Qing, one which was derailed only by a new Russo-Turkish war that erupted in 1787.[11] In fact Russian military preparations were defensive in nature, the result of a radical uncertainty induced by the decay of Russian intelligence capabilities on the Mongolian border. In June 1785, Catherine sent a series of decrees to Potemkin and other high officials, all beginning with a variation on the same sentence: "We have received word from Lieutenant General Iakobii that the Qing have closed their trade and marked this by firing a cannon. Although it is difficult to assume for many reasons that they will start a real war with us, prudence and care demand that we take measures to prevent against a sudden attack."[12] Just before the trade closed, Iakobii had passed along a report from the Kiakhta commissioner Ladyzhenskii that allegedly "revealed the fiendish plans of the Qing [to attack]." Before long, another letter revealed that the informant had been lying in hopes of a reward.[13] That same summer, Iakobii attempted to "maintain unceasing vigilance against these neighbors and find any appropriate measures to determine their further plans" by sending a merchant accompanied by two translators, in reality intelligence-gathering agents, across the border. The merchant's contact failed to show, and the enterprise resulted in almost no useful information, except the predictable news that reinforcements had been sent to Qing border posts. The Russian state no longer possessed any effective way of determining the significance or goals of Qing military movements.[14]

[11] See, for example, OPI GIM (Department of Written Sources, State Historical Museum, Moscow), f. 450, d. 206, l37.

[12] RGADA, f. 1261, op. 1, d. 1404-1406.

[13] RGADA, f. 24, n. 62, part 1, l247-249, 295.

[14] RGADA, f. 24, n. 62, part 1, l314-316v.

Iakobii's manifestly inadequate intelligence network did not stop him from making grand schemes against the Qing state. In February 1785, he composed the initial version of a plan for an invasion. He intended this to substitute for defensive preparations, which his list of troops revealed to be utterly futile: nearly every border post under his command was less well-staffed in 1785 than it had been in 1763, at the height of the previous crisis. Instead, he hoped for a massive infusion of troops from European Russia, with whose help he would take Manchuria and push the Mongols into open defection.[15] In 1787, he augmented this plan with an ethnographic component. In 1782, he wrote, he had been ordered to "accept into Your Majesty's subjecthood those [peoples] of the Qing state who wish to enter into it," and "in the event of an open rupture … I conducted matters in such a way that this would end with a whole [piece of territory] rather than small and unimportant pieces, and this would be followed by an agreement with the Beijing court." He then listed a range of frontier Qing subject peoples, from the Nivkh (Giliaks) of northeast Manchuria to the *dvoedantsy* of the Altai Mountains, claiming that he had conducted extensive investigations into the willingness of each of them to defect. Since no actual intelligence documents were included, this claim is difficult to evaluate. At any rate, there is no sign that Catherine ever intended to act on Iakobii's wildly optimistic proposal, and the 1787-1792 Russo-Turkish War put an end to any such possibility.[16] The end of the immediate crisis did not prevent Iakobii from continuing to

[15] RGADA, f. 24, n. 62, part 1, l247-255.

[16] RGADA, f. 24, n. 62, part 3, l1-17.

develop the plan, and eventually he produced a much lengthier and more ambitious document, which remained ignored just like the previous ones had.[17]

He had the leisure to do so, because in 1788 he was ordered to return to St. Petersburg for an investigation of his conduct as governor; although he was eventually cleared, he would never return to Siberia. The indictment, which included some sixty separate accusations, overwhelmingly reflected Iakobii's failure to successfully deal with local elites in Irkutsk. But one of the charges he took most seriously, and which subsequent historians have seen as especially crucial, suggested that he had attempted to initiate war with the Qing with the expectation of profiting from the resulting military procurement. Iakobii's response to this allegation indicates that he was far less sanguine about the prospect than his strategic scheming suggests. "I shudder at the very thought of such a thing," Iakobii wrote in his letter of appeal, "But thankfully the circumstances … clear me of such a woeful suspicion ... which has almost brought me to my grave, and my very innocence could hardly lift my spirits, brought low by this horrible accusation."[18] Besides, he wrote later, who would even want to be part of such a war, with only 4799 men,

> …most of them elderly, removed from their regiments for insubordination and repeatedly punished, as well as those Buriat heathens who are border guards in name only and who share a faith with the Mongols? If someone objected that I could have flattered myself with the prospect of receiving new reinforcements; then while this aid would have reached me across such a wide distance, what sort of horrible disasters would I have subjected the country to, and not just the two provinces under my command, Irkutsk and Kolyvan, but also Tobolsk, not a single one of which I could defend? Would I not have to bear the responsibility for the thousands of my

[17] LeDonne, "Proconsular ambitions on the Chinese border."

[18] RGADA, f. 24, n. 62, part 4, l164.

> countrymen who would have become the victims of my madness or shameful self-interest, before God, my monarch, and my fatherland?[19]

Iakobii's answer goes on to make clear that the tangled set of circumstances leading to this accusation in reality represented yet another failure of intelligence. In August of 1785, after the merchant-espionage scheme had failed, Iakobii tried to sneak an agent named Iusupov across the border south of Lake Baikal. Iusupov was equipped with an open-ended set of instructions to "collect intelligence … wherever you find it most convenient," but which especially encouraged him to recruit local Mongol informants in the time-honored fashion of the 1750s. Unlike Varfolomei Iakobii's agents, there is no indication that Iusupov spoke Mongolian or had any contacts across the border, and in the event he was recalled before he even crossed into Qing-controlled lands. In the interval between the dispatch and the recall, two of Iakobii's subordinates hatched a plan to provoke a small Mongol raiding party to attack into Russian territory and have Iusupov intercept them, thus generating a *casus belli* and triggering a response from St. Petersburg. (As Iakobii pointed out, this plan was absurd, since the Mongols would simply be tried by Qing authorities as bandits and executed as so many had before them.) Their letter was copied and sent as part of an anonymous accusation against Iakobii. In the governor-general's telling, when he dismissed his subordinate for this highly incriminating proposal, the latter committed suicide and apologized for his transgression with his dying breath. Even if this was just gilding the lily, the episode stands as a monument to Russia's growing inability to successfully pursue covert action against the Qing.[20]

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[19] RGADA, f. 24, n. 62, part 4, l232-4.

[20] RGADA, f. 24, n. 62, part 4, l322-329.

Iakobii's more circumspect successor Ivan Pil' dedicated himself to piloting the Uladzai crisis to a successfully negotiated conclusion, which he completed—returning basically to the status quo ante—in February 1792. Yet Pil' was also involved in an intrigue, one which had substantially more serious implications than the abortive Iusupov mission. In the spring of 1791, as preparations for a diplomatic resolution were drawing to a close, he received a report from Major General Shtrandman of the Siberian Line. A merchant named Kurbanov, sent to spy "in the guise of a trader" to the Kazakh steppe, had met with the Torghut noble Khabun (or Gabun), who informed him that the Torghuts (or Kalmyks, the same group who had escaped to Jungharia from the Volga in 1771) planned to return once more to Russia and were ready to bring with them a number of Mongols and former Junghars. In confirmation of this news, Khabun delivered a formal request to the Siberian Line commander soon after. By mid-April, with tacit authorization from the empress, Pil' had ordered preparations to begin in earnest to receive the Torghuts as soon as the weather became suitable for a mass migration. On April 30, however, he reported that the Qing authorities had captured Khabun and learned about the Russian plans from a letter the lama was carrying; if they learned the true extent of the Russian role, all the progress made in the Uladzai negotiations would collapse. But Khabun's letter was sealed with a Russian ruble coin instead of a proper seal. It was this circumstance which allowed the Senate to claim plausible deniability when the Lifanyuan demanded a response. Under torture, Khabun "confessed" that the letter and the entire plot was a forgery; the Qing, in a rare case of

insufficient paranoia, accepted this explanation, and the negotiations were allowed to proceed.[21]

This was not the last time the Torghuts would try to return to Russia, but whereas Catherine had been deeply committed to this goal—after all, the migration had been an embarrassment for her in the eyes of Europe as well as Beijing—her successors were decidedly lukewarm. In 1806, another attempt was delayed because it would conflict with the Golovkin embassy; subsequent orders demanded that no formal offers or promises of any kind be made to the Torghut leaders, but that "if they themselves come to us without aid on our part, do not oppose them." Due to this total official inaction, the matter died. Finally, in 1820, yet another Siberian Line commander heard from Torghut leaders about the potential for a return. He sent copies of the 1806 documents back to St. Petersburg as a pointed reminder that they had missed one opportunity, but now had the chance to make use of another. He was apparently entirely ignored. The Russian government's refusal to facilitate the return of its own former subjects was a measure of its increasing unwillingness even to contemplate the covert action of the eighteenth century.[22]

Even espionage became actively neglected by central authorities under Alexander I. On the Siberian Line, local officials apparently controlled all the initiative for intelligence-gathering projects in Jungharia and the Kazakh steppe; although they

[21] RGADA, f. 24, n. 64, part 2, l8-14. Gabun is almost certainly identical to the "Sa-mai-lin" mentioned in the Qing Shilu, although it is not clear where the difference in names comes from. See Fu, *Documentary Chronicle*, I:309–316.

[22] RGIA, f. 1264, op. 1, d. 314.

sent in lengthy reports, it is not clear if many of these were ever read or responded to.[23] In 1809, Grigorii Glazenap, commander of the Siberian Line, reported to Foreign Minister Nikolai Rumiantsev about an unprecedented undercover expedition undertaken by the merchant Nerpin into the Kazakh steppe and Qing Jungharia, which appears to have successfully probed the possibilities for indirect cross-border trade between the Kazakhs, Qing, and Russians. Glazenap attempted to procure a reward for Nerpin, but it took over a year of repeated requests before Rumiantsev consented to give him more than token encouragement—despite the fact that trade with the Qing at the Irtysh border was an earnestly sought goal of Russian foreign policy.[24] At Kiakhta, Alexander's neglect reinforced the immense power of the head of the customs office, Petr Vanifant'ev, who seems to have occupied his post for at least two decades starting in 1790. As the Russian ambassador Iurii Golovkin would learn, this would have grave consequences for any centrally directed intelligence policy that had the potential to damage his interests. Meanwhile, any remaining Russian intelligence informants within the Qing state had apparently disappeared. In the journals of the Committee of Ministers, Alexander's supreme cabinet body, the reports on the Eight Trigrams Rebellion of 1813 are entirely derived from the conversations and correspondence of merchants rather than agents and are significantly out of date.[25]

Russian covert policy on the Qing frontier had fallen into a spiral of uncertainty, failure, and neglect amounting to an institutionalized avowal of ignorance. By the

[23] See, e.g., RGIA (Russian State Historical Archive), f. 13, op. 2, d. 781.

[24] RGIA, f. 13, op. 2, d. 1547. For more on trade in this region, see Noda Jin, "Russo-Chinese Trade through Central Asia: Regulations and Reality."

[25] RGIA, f. 1263, op. 1, d. 69, l248-250, 550-553.

middle of Alexander I's reign, Russians were likely less well-informed about events across the Mongolian border than they had been since the 1720s. But as the land frontier receded in the minds of St. Petersburg officials, another zone of encounter emerged to take its place: the Pacific coast, the rich maritime zone that bordered it to the south, and the vast North American landmass that faced it across the Bering Strait. The sparsely settled backwater of Kamchatka was suddenly at the epicenter of a whole new set of geopolitical calculations.

2. The New Ohio: Kamchatka and Pacific Geopolitics, 1771-1791

Between its conquest in the second half of the seventeenth century and Vitus Bering's Great Northern (or Second Kamchatka) Expedition of 1733-43, the peninsula of Kamchatka remained a sleepy and remote backwater where small groups of Cossacks living in isolated outposts extracted furs from the native Koriak and Itelmen population. In 1740, the members of the expedition founded the port of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskii on the peninsula's southeastern edge, thus opening a naval connection through Okhotsk that avoided the strenuous overland trek up the Siberian coast. Bolsheretsk, on the opposite edge of the peninsula, soon became equally important.

The Russian government took steps to ensure all cartographic material pertaining to Kamchatka and the territories to the east was kept secret, fearing an attack on the poorly defended settlements by European powers. Thanks to the espionage conducted by Joseph-Nicolas Delisle, who was working for Comte Maurepas of the French Marine Department even as he headed the Russian geographic service, the French government managed to get its hands on copies anyway. In 1752, several years after he left Russia for good, Delisle published a map of the North Pacific that

included a relatively accurate depiction of Kamchatka alongside a grotesquely distorted Hokkaido ("Yeço") and western North America. Although it may or may not be true that he had been deliberately fed bad information, in addition to taking as genuine several demonstrably fraudulent travelogues, no Western powers took advantage of the new data for several decades.[26]

When Kamchatka finally obtruded on the consciousness of policymakers in Paris, it was from a wholly unexpected direction. In 1768, the Hungarian nobleman Móric Benyovszky (also spelled Maurice Benyowsky) was captured in Poland while fighting the Russian army as part of the Confederation of Bar.[27] He was released on the condition that he no longer bear arms against Russia, but soon was captured again and imprisoned in Kazan. He escaped and made his way to St. Petersburg, where a ship captain turned him in to the authorities. Finally, Catherine's government decided to exile him to Kamchatka, where he could assuredly make no trouble. Together with a party of other exiles, Benyovszky arrived at the fort of Bolsheretsk (west of Petropavlovsk) in 1770. He soon proved that he was far wilier than the Russians could have imagined. He enrolled all the local exiles into a conspiracy to escape—telling the Russians he was a partisan of Prince Paul's claim to the throne—then murdered Kamchatka's commandant, overpowered the small garrison, and took control of the peninsula. On April 30, 1771, he and his co-conspirators boarded the galiot (corvette) *St. Peter* and set sail for points south. He arrived in Macao on September 12, after having

[26] Black, "The Question of Maps: Exploration of the Bering Sea in the Eighteenth Century."

[27] For Benyovszky's reception in Japan, see Robert Liss [Lissa Roberts, pseud.], "Frontier Tales: Tokugawa Japan in Translation," in *The Brokered World: Go-Betweens and Global Intelligence, 1770-1820*, ed. Simon Schaffer (Sagamore Beach, Mass.: Science History Publications, 2009), 1–47.

made a whirlwind voyage around Japan (where he claimed to have met with a "King Ulikamhy") and Taiwan. There, he procured two French ships to take him to Port-Louis in Mauritius, where he left most of his crew, and proceeded onward to Paris and an audience with Louis XV. The experience made him one of Europe's most celebrated adventurers, but his extraordinary career did not end there. After playing a bit part in the American Revolution, he founded the first European colony on Madagascar. He died there in 1786, at the age of 39—still accompanied by two Russians from Kamchatka. He was commemorated in a number of literary works, most famously August von Kotzebue's 1793 play *Count Benyowsky or the Conspiracy of Kamchatka.*[28]

What had made the French so eager to escort Benyovszky and his bedraggled company to an audience with the king? The letters sent by French supercargoes at Canton to the Naval Ministry suggest that they had come to believe that returning the escapees to France was an "indispensable necessity for the French nation," even though none of them were French.[29] He had clearly told them that he was in possession of strategically important information and was believed. On August 9, 1772, the foreign minister the Duc D'Aiguillon wrote to François Durand de Distroff, the French plenipotentiary in St. Petersburg, that "Monsieur Benjowski, whom the newspapers

[28] Maurice Auguste Benyowsky, *Memoirs and Travels of Mauritius Augustus Count de Benyowsky ...* (London, Printed for G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1790); August von Kotzebue, *Graf Benjowsky; oder, Die Verschwörung auf Kamtschatka. Ein Schauspiel in fünf Aufzügen.* (Leipzig: P.G. Kummer, 1795); A. S. Sgibnev, "Istoricheskii ocherk glavneishikh sobytii v Kamchatke, 1650-1855," *Morskoi sbornik*, no. 4–8 (1869).

[29] BIF (Bibliothéque de l'Institut de France, Paris) , MS 5404, folder 11.

have talked so much about, has given me a document, whose translation I feel obligated to send you." [30]

The document that followed, dated September 5, 1770, was deeply troubling. It was a letter, marked "top secret," from the Okhotsk chancellery to the main Kamchatka chancellery at Bolsheretsk, containing copies of orders issued by the Senate to the governor of Irkutsk. Fifteen thousand soldiers had been ordered to assemble in Kamchatka for a vast naval expedition against an unknown enemy. Worse, the expedition was to be closely coordinated with British vessels; the Russian troops were to "obey the British commanders as if they were their own officers"; if the British brought any prisoners, they were to be held under guard in various parts of Siberia. D'Aiguillon's immediate assumption was that the Russians and the British aimed to attack the Spanish territories in North America—although "the situation of Kamchatka seems suited to be the *point d'appui* or the meeting point for various equally dangerous expeditions. They might indeed have views either on China or Manila and the other Spanish islands." Because "this Hungarian could not give us a satisfactory idea," the minister instructed Durand that "the King desires, Monsieur, that you find any possible means of obtaining clarification on this subject."[31]

Over the course of the ensuing six months, Durand devoted much of his energy to ferreting out the Anglo-Russian conspiracy Benyovszky had unearthed—even though

[30] D'Aigullon to Durand de Distroff, 9 August 1772, AAE (Archives Diplomatiques du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris), Correspondance Politique-Russie, t. 90, f. 69.

[31] D'Aigullon to Durand de Distroff, 9 August 1772, AAE (Archives Diplomatiques du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris), Correspondance Politique-Russie, t. 90, f. 69ff . For Durand's espionage activities, see Alexandre Stroev, "Les espions français en Russie durant la guerre entre la Russie et la Turquie (1768-1774)," in *L'influence française en Russie au XVIIIe siècle*, ed. Jean-Pierre Poussou, Anne Mézin, and Yves Perret-Gentil (Paris: Institut d'etudes slaves, 2004), 581–98.

Russia was then in the midst of trouncing the Ottomans in a war whose consequences would reverberate throughout the world. In a coded letter, he revealed that something possibly even more earth-shaking had happened:

> Commerce, like empire, has its revolutions. For several years, one has been silently in preparation, which cannot be an indifferent fact for Europe, which is ignorant of the fact that Russia now knows how to navigate the Northeast Passage to America and even has settlements on the coast of this continent; but because it has published its discoveries at various times enveloped with affected obscurities and because it is silent about this new establishment, I will give you an exact sense of its attempts in these two respects on the basis of research in archives. I ask for secrecy for this exposition … Russia will not delay extending its sphere of claims and connections. It will enter into everything that passes in America and in the Indies and in enlarging the theatre of the world it will increase the number of stages for intrigues, quarrels, and wars.[32]

Durand even found a young "Kamchadal" officer named "Popow" who confirmed the existence of the Northeast Passage, although he also clarified the geopolitical concerns involved: Russia was clashing not with the Spanish, as Durand thought, but with the Hudson's Bay Company on the other side of the passage.[33]

Even more importantly, Durand identified the background of the coming Russo-British campaign against China (untroubled, evidently, by the conflict in Hudson's Bay). His survey of Russo-Qing relations combined true grievances (like the Torghut exodus) with false ones (the supposed execution of Kropotov by the Qing) to argue that "[Russia] is preparing in silence the means of a vengeance as useful as it would be stunning."[34] This was nothing short of a secret plan to attack China. The academic

[32] Durand to D'Aiguillon, 12 March 1773, AAE, CP-Russie, t. 91, f. 241-252.

[33] Durand to D'Aiguillon, 10 April 1773, AAE, CP-Russie, t. 91, f. 348-353.

[34] Durand to D'Aiguillon, 10 April 1773, AAE, CP-Russie, t. 91, f. 353-356.

Peter Pallas would travel there to produce a pretext for war, at which point Russia would attack, "enrich itself from the spoils of China, and put them to use in extinguishing the debts of the Crown."[35] (Pallas had, in fact, been close to the Qing border and even planned to travel to Beijing as a kind of diplomatic attaché, but was too uncomfortable with taking on a formal role and ultimately refused to go at all.)[36]

D'Aiguillon forwarded these documents, starting from the one provided by Benyovszky, to Secretary of State Henri Bertin—a man whose deep preoccupation with China and extensive corresponde with China Jesuits made him especially well-suited for resolving the situation. The information provided by Benyovszky and Durand filled Bertin with dread—all the more so as the number of Russian troops became steadily inflated as the document wound its way through the French bureaucracy. Bertin also seems to have concluded that the British merchant James Flint, who had provoked a scandal with the Qing when he sailed to Tianjin in 1759, had ended up in St. Petersburg and was working for the Russians as a navigator.[37] This mounting evidence made it clear to him that the Russian armies on Kamchatka were being gathered for a pincer attack on the Qing, and he could anticipate what would happen next:

> As the Turkish war has shown, 12,000 Russians, because of how well-disciplined they are, are worth 30,000 Turkish troops, who are themselves no weaklings as soldiers; impressive in their height, their power, and their equipment, they proved unable to resist battalions bristling with artillery, resembling more walking fortresses than groups of soldiers (this story, I assure you, is not at all exaggerated) in a rage, aiming to exterminate

[35] Gerault (in the absence of Durand) to D'Aiguillon, 14 March 1773, AAE, CP-Russie, t. 91, f. 263-266.

[36] E.g., Pallas to Euler, 5 Dec 1772, in ARAN (Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg Branch), f. 1, op. 3, t. 58, n. 64.

[37] See Hosea Ballou Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company, Trading to China 1635-1834* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), I:295ff.

> humans in as large a quantity and with as much rapidity as possible, all of which is reduced to a principle whose execution is so precise that nothing can resist the violence and the continuity of their rolling fire, which is certainly unknown in China. I understand that an expedition of 24,000 men would seem to the eyes of the court of Beijing as a vain effort by a power incapable of giving it any sort of concern with such petty means; but one should not doubt that the armies of China could be annihilated by this formidable artillery if they remain exposed to its fire for a few hours.

There are numerous such panic-stricken passages in his January 1774 missive to Ko and Yang, two Chinese-born Jesuits who had toured France and then returned to Canton. Bertin's desperate solution was to send along copies of Europe's most current strategy manuals, including books by Puységur (presumably the 1747 *Art de la guerre par principes et par regles*) and Guibert (the just-published 1772 *Essai général de tactique*), as well as special mémoires dealing with French military ordnance, castramentation, and organization. If Ko and Yang could only make Qianlong listen and persuade him to rapidly reorganize his army on the French model, the Qing would have a chance at resisting the Russian onslaught.[38] In December 1775, Yang replied. He was deeply concerned about the contents of Bertin's letter, but all his attempts to persuade someone to report to the emperor had failed. He could only hope that "the Russians in Beijing, informed about the victory [we] have achieved over Great and Little Tibet, will persuade their compatriots to desist from the plan they have formed against a country which has begun to be warlike."[39]

[38] Bertin to Ko and Yang, 1 January 1774, BIF, MS 1522, f. 3-39. In fact most of the letter was written by Bertin's secretary Parent. For more on this correspondence, see Gwynne Lewis, "Henri-Léonard Bertin and the Fate of the Bourbon Monarchy," in *Enlightenment and Revolution: Essays in Honour of Norman Hampson*, ed. Malcolm Crook, William Doyle, and Alan Forrest (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2004), 69–90.

[39] Yang to Bertin, 8 December 1775, BIF, MS 1520, f. 228-229.

In the midst of this apocalyptic reasoning, it did not occur to anyone from Louis XV on down that neither Benyovszky nor Durand's information was credible. We know as they did not that no Northwest or Northeast Passage existed, still less one under Russian control. Although the alleged Kamchatka document is a plausible imitation, both internal and external evidence leave no doubt that it was a forgery pasted together from fragments of real documents. One paragraph, for instance, refers to the "Governor of Siberia," a post which had not existed since 1764 (and could not coexist with the "Governor of Irkutsk" mentioned elsewhere), while another mentions an "Irkutsk Voevoda Chancellery" which could not have existed at the time.[40] Moreover, as someone who had captured the peninsula with a few dozen ragtag convicts, Benyovszky must have been well aware that it had neither the supplies nor the facilities for an army of fifteen thousand—even if such a thing could be scraped together in Siberia, which was impossible. He was, on top of everything else, known to be an inveterate fabulist.[41] None of this dented the plan's perceived credibility. By 1776, the document resurfaced in a new context: d'Aiguillon had apparently come to believe that Russia and Britain were targeting Japan, not the Qing.[42]

The story of Benyovszky's purloined letter encapsulates two important aspects of the late eighteenth-century geopolitical contest in the North Pacific. First, Russians had largely succeeded in creating an informational airgap between their Siberian

[40] AAE, CP-Russie, t. 90, f. 191-195.

[41] Miklós Molnár, "Héros ou imposteur? Un aventurier au XVIIIe siècle," *Revue européenne des sciences sociales* 27, no. 85 (January 1, 1989): 75–91.

[42] George Verne Blue, "A Rumor of an Anglo-Russian Raid on Japan, 1776," *Pacific Historical Review* 8, no. 4 (December 1, 1939): 453–63, doi:10.2307/3634162.

frontiers and the stalking-grounds of Western spies in St. Petersburg, creating ample room for the wildest forms of conjecture and speculation. Second, lack of access to reliable intelligence did not tamp down this speculation—it only encouraged it. On the say-so of a chance adventurer, and driven by catastrophic thinking, the French court was willing to intervene diplomatically if not militarily in a territory in which it had barely been involved.

Benyovszky had adroitly used the British to stoke French fears, but in fact it took until 1779 for the first British (indeed, the first Western) ships to arrive on Russia's Pacific coast—and they were not carrying any prisoners. After James Cook's death in Hawaii in February of that year, his remaining crew aboard the ships *Resolution* and *Discovery* limped north to Petropavlovsk under his lieutenant Charles Clerke. When he died of tuberculosis in August, he was buried near the port. Bem (Behm), the commandant of Petropavlovsk, was immediately suspicious of the foreigners' goals, scientific or not: Kamchatka had never before seen a foreign vessel, and the settlement was in unusually bad shape, having suffered through a fire and a smallpox epidemic in the previous decade (in addition to Benyovszky's revolt). He provided the explorers with free tea and sugar, but when they asked for a more substantial set of supplies, both Bem and his successor Shmalev dithered. In the meantime, the Kamchatka officials asked Irkutsk for an urgent shipment of cannon and arms to reinforce the settlement's defenses, which consisted of a total of 398 soldiers throughout the entire peninsula, most of them lacking even basic firearms. By the end of the year, the Irkutsk governor Klichka had received official word from Senate Procurator-General Viazemskii that Kamchatka needed to be "brought into defensible shape without fail, because the way

there has become known to foreigners."[43] On board the British ships, the 17-year-old Edward Riou took the opportunity to draw a detailed map of Avacha Bay. It was the first direct trace of Russo-British competition in the North Pacific.

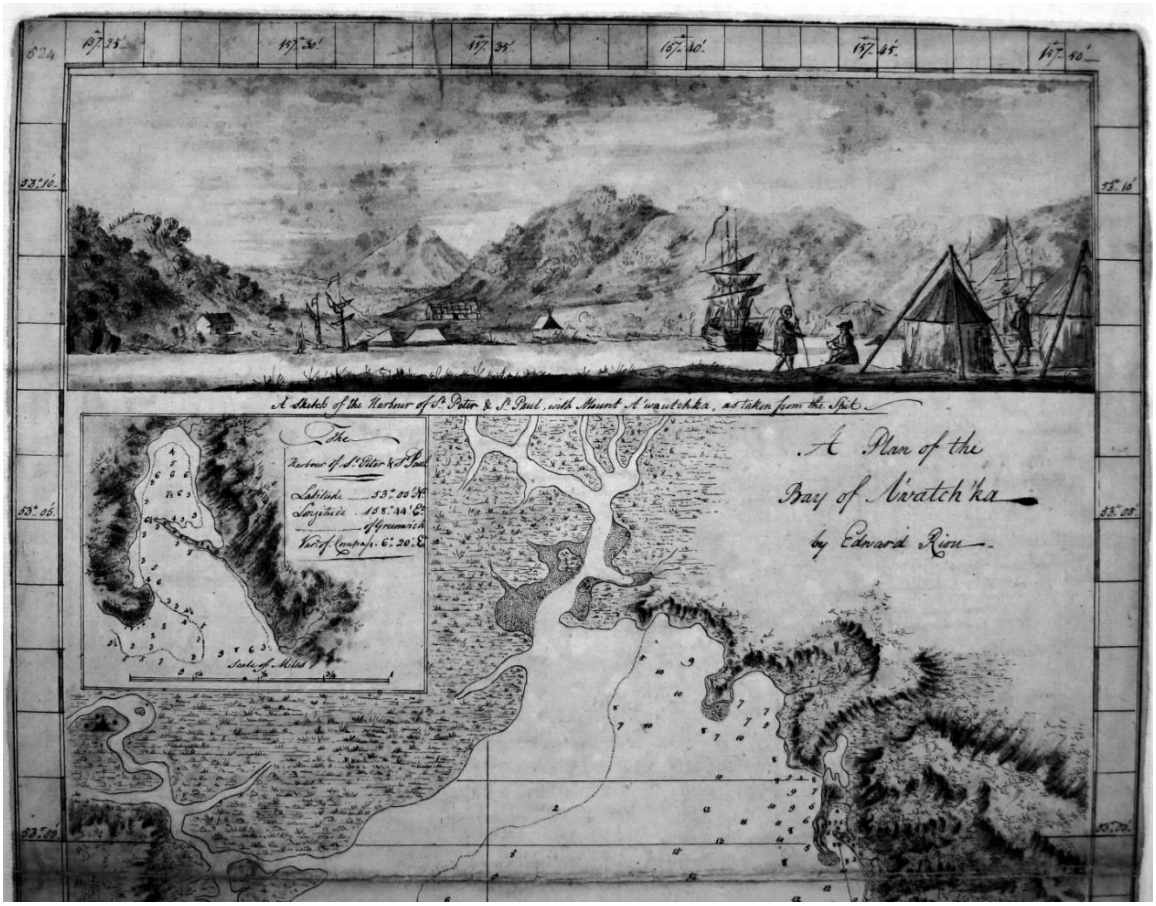


Figure 15: Edward Riou's map of Avatcha Bay (National Archives)

Despite its obviously indefensible state, Kamchatka was spared any further foreign encroachment until the mid-1780s, although the prospect never ceased to worry Russian authorities; in his memoirs, Benyovszky himself pointed out how weak Russia's

[43] "S. N. Sh," "Anglichane v Kamchatke v 1779 godu," *Istoricheskii vestnik* 19 (1885), 394-401.

hold in the North Pacific would be if it were challenged by a competitor.[44] In 1786, however, a small vessel (snow) called the *Lark*, under the command of a Captain Peters, called at Petropavlovsk with a selection of trade goods. It had sailed from Macao and carried with it a letter signed by the British East India Company supercargoes there. Explicitly invoking the precedent of the Cook voyage, the letter proposed "to form a Commercial Intercourse between India & China & Kamschatka" and pointed out that goods shipped via India would be much cheaper than the "tedious Route" they currently required. Peters's attempt came to nothing, as he was shipwrecked soon after, but Irkutsk Governor-General Iakobii thought the proposal was worth considering even as he recognized the "mobility and precision" of British commerce.[45] For the Russian imperial court, which had already felt threatened enough by British fur trading vessels that it issued orders to dispatch a naval expedition to Alaska, the *Lark*'s voyage was likely yet another piece of evidence that the British aimed to seize control of the fur trade with the Qing. Worse, when Sweden declared war on Russia in 1787, the British brig *Mercury* began assaulting Russian-subject Aleuts while flying the Swedish flag. Along with the temporary closing of the Kiakhta trade, the incursions of European fur traders in Alaska portended the end of the Russian fur monopoly and monopsony in the North Pacific.[46] In 1790, the British trader John Meares—instigator of an armed Anglo-Spanish standoff at Nootka Sound the previous year—published *Voyages Made in the*

[44] Benyowsky, *Memoirs and Travels of Mauritius Augustus Count de Benyowsky ...*, I:272–273, 312–314.

[45] RGADA, f. 24, n. 62, part 3, l20ff.

[46] See Lydia T. Black, *Russians in Alaska, 1732–1867* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2004), 92–95.

Years 1788 and 1789. It argued explicitly that Britain could and needed to challenge Russia for control of the China trade in the Pacific.[47]

Meanwhile, Russia's North Pacific was seeing more and more visitors. The expedition of La Pérouse landed at Petropavlovsk in 1786, disgorging Barthélemy de Lesseps, who carried a cache of documents overland to St. Petersburg and eventually turned out to be the expedition's only survivor. The most troubling visitor—the American John Ledyard, who traveled the world out of curiosity and a desire to satisfy his pet ethnographic theories—was never allowed to get as far as Kamchatka. Using false documents claiming authorization from Catherine, Ledyard had made it all the way to Irkutsk in late 1787. When Iakobii met with him, he decided immediately that he was probably looking at a British spy: he displayed "avid curiosity" about islands in the North Pacific and "using his elaborate means of questioning attempted as quickly as possible to discover when they were occupied by the Russian Empire, the numbers of our people living there for fur trapping, and what sorts of establishments exist on these islands." At the end of their conversation, Ledyard was incautious enough to announce that "[the power] whose strength will be the greatest will certainly have the most right to occupy those islands." Iakobii decided to send him to the remote town of Iakutsk, where he would be unlikely to obtain any useful information, and when Ledyard returned to Irkutsk he was arrested and escorted all the way back to the Polish border.[48]

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[47] John Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789, from China to the North West Coast of America...* (London: Logographic Press, 1790), lxvii–xcv.

[48] RGADA, f. 24, n. 62, part 2, l419-422. See Edward G Gray, *The Making of John Ledyard: Empire and Ambition in the Life of an Early American Traveler* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); John Ledyard, *Journey through Russia and Siberia, 1787-1788: The Journal and Selected Letters.*, ed. Stephen D Watrous (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966).

By the end of the 1780s, the geopolitical situation in the North Pacific had altered dramatically, and Russian officials seemed to have a clear pattern before them. The first foreign vessel in Kamchatka was a British ship; the British were sending spies to investigate the poorly defended Russian territories; the British East India Company had a clear design on the Qing fur trade; British vessels were capturing North American territory and privateering. All this was soon augmented by a diplomatic crisis in Europe, when the British prime minister William Pitt the Younger threatened hostile action if Russia did not return the captured Ottoman fortress of Ochakov. (He was soon forced to back down due to the absence of parliamentary support.) Yet in its way, the seemingly obvious conclusion that Britain was Russia's main enemy in the Pacific was just as misleading as the dramatic errors made by the French court in the 1770s. After all, Ledyard had no connection to Britain and the *Lark* was so minor that it does not even appear in the East India Company's Canton factory records.[49] Over the next few decades, it would be the Americans, not the British, who would take the leading role in the emerging maritime fur trade between Canton and northwestern North America.[50]

3. Russia and the Macartney Embassy, 1791-1795

The late 1780s, in the face of the manifest British threat, inaugurated an era of Pacific projects for Russia. In 1787, a plan was laid to send Captain Grigorii Mulovskii on an

[49] See, e.g., British Library, India Records Office, R/10/14-15.

[50] Louis Dermigny, *La Chine et l'Occident: le commerce à Canton au XVIIIe siècle, 1719-1833* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1964), 1161–1198.

around-the-world expedition to reinforce Russian claims to Alaska; this was cancelled, and in 1785-1793 the Billings Expedition sailed from Okhotsk and made surveys of Chukotka, Alaska, and the Aleutians. Afterwards, Grigorii Shelikhov's Russian-American Company colonized Alaska and inaugurated the new era of Russia's Pacific trade in the nineteenth century. But other projects existed as well. In 1789, the Russian crown approved a quixotic circumnavigation project proposed by one Pierre Torckler, a Russian subject living at the French port of Lorient. Torckler wanted to equip a ship for trade between Kamchatka and Nanjing, with the goal of establishing an enduring trade route—apparently unaware that foreigners were not allowed to trade outside of Canton, and no Russian ship had gone even there.[51] In 1793, Torckler appears to have successfully arrived in Kamchatka flying a revolutionary French flag and wearing a cockade; "the greater part of the cargo consisted of spirituous liquors."[52] By 1803, he had ended up in Calcutta, where he proposed yet another project, this time to establish Russian consulates throughout the East Indies; while there, he inspired Kruzenshtern to launch his own more famous expedition.[53] More consequentially, the crown supported a project proposed in 1791 by Erik Laksman, a Swedish-born botanist and priest. His son Adam would command an expedition to Japan carrying a Japanese shipwreck survivor, the merchant Kōdayū, whose repatriation would hopefully provide a convenient excuse to establish stable commercial relations with the Japanese. Laksman

[51] SPbII (St. Petersburg Institute of History), f. 36, op. 1, d. 554, l535-540.

[52] RGADA, f. 24, n. 64, part 2, l195-196; Martin Sauer, *An Account of a Geographical and Astronomical Expedition to the Northern Parts of Russia...* (T. Cadell, 1802), 287–288.

[53] A. A. Guber, *Politika evropeiskikh derzhav v Iugo-Vostochnoi Azii : 60-e gody XVIII--60-e gody XIX v. : dokumenty i materialy* (Moskva: Izd-vo vostochnoi lit-ry, 1962), 428–432.

intended the expedition to secretly sail down the Amur and establish a harbor, without any regard for Qing approval or the feasibility of such an enterprise.[54]

Laksman warned that the British and Dutch, too, were trying to get their hands on Kōdayū. The latter were obviously trying to curry favor with their longtime trading partners, but the involvement of the former bespoke a more serious threat: a new embassy to Beijing and Japan which promised to cement British dominance in Pacific trade. It was to be led by Lord Macartney, the former British ambassador in St. Petersburg. The Russian resident at the Court of St. James, Semën Vorontsov, knew of the plans for the Macartney embassy almost as soon as they were hatched—likely as early as October 1791, but certainly by January 1792. He and his brother Aleksandr, who was the head of the College of Commerce, corresponded in detail about the British scheme. As Semën put it, echoing the sentiments of Catherine and her high officials, "I would be very angry if it this matter were to be regarded with indifference. If the English succeed, we will see, but too late, what sort of harm this will do to our commerce."[55] In fact, though Macartney's embassy might have had entailed some indirect effects on the Russian trade, there is no evidence that the British were deliberately aiming to supplant it or were even aware of the possible implications for Kiakhta. They did contemplate the possibility that "in case of a rupture, the aid of Great Britain might be of essential use to the Chinese against Russia; but it is a point of too

[54] SPbII, f. 36, op. 1, d. 553, l520-526. See also J. L. Cranmer-Byng, "Russian and British Interests in the Far East 1791-1793," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 10, no. 3 (October 1, 1968): 357–75.

[55] Semën Vorontsov to Aleksandr Vorontsov, 5 October 1792, in P. I Bartenev, ed., *Arkhiv kniazia Vorontsova* (Moskva: Tip. A.I. Mamontova, 1870), IX:261–264.

great delicacy and intricacy to be insinuated to the Court of Pekin, without the utmost caution and circumspection."[56]

Seized by the fear of the British threat, by the end of 1791 either Semën or Aleksandr Vorontsov had developed a secret, conspiratorial plan to derail the Macartney embassy by poisoning the well in Beijing. A secret early 19th century memorandum describes the potential options as follows:

> 1. To send to Beijing, under the pretext of border disputes, a smart, humble, and resourceful man; to send with him some scholars, to disabuse the Chinese of the idea that we are all Kropotovs, who unfortunately gave them a very poor sense of our degree of enlightenment. Beyond this, a few Jesuits, in their ordinary civil capacity [*v obyknovennom grazhdanskom zvanii*], who by means of their brethren located in Beijing, may be quite useful. Through them, he must secretly persuade the Chinese Government of the danger to which it will be subject if it once allows the English into their ports, by depicting their behavior in India, the destruction of the most beautiful domains of the Great Mogul, and that they have equal aims in mind for China, and so on.
> The 2nd means consisted in this, that before dispatching the minister, two Jesuits should be sent with news of this enterprise, who can meanwhile preemptively discover who in the Chinese ministry supports the English, and can underhandedly give them to know of the hostile plans of the English against their state as a matter known full well in Europe.[57]

In both cases, this would mean that, as Semën Vorontsov wrote from London in January of 1792, Laksman's plan to sail down the Amur would have to be scuttled: the border conquest it required risked "making us lose all hope of reestablishing that commerce which we can conduct with them to the great advantage of our country."[58] (The Laksman expedition, whose results were promising even if they did not lead to an

[56] Macartney to Dundas. 1792, British Library, IOR/G/12/91, p. 83.

[57] OPI GIM, f. 450, d. 206, l. 35ff.

[58] Semën Vorontsov to Aleksandr Vorontsov, 13 January 1792, in Bartenev, *Arkhiv kniazia Vorontsova*, IX:229.

immediate opening of trade, set sail from Okhotsk instead.) To defeat Macartney, the Qing would have to be conciliated first.

The Vorontsovs turned to the Jesuits because of a highly unusual constellation of historical events. In 1773, after decades of increasing pressure from Catholic governments, Pope Clement XIV formally dissolved the Society of Jesus with the breve *Dominus ac Redemptor*. Russia had just annexed the Livonian and Belarussian portion of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the First Partition of Poland. These areas had a substantial Jesuit presence, and the order was central to the educational system. Hoping to render them beholden to the Russian crown, Catherine forbade *Dominus ac Redemptor* from taking effect on her territory. Thus the Society of Jesus survived only thanks to the protection of an Orthodox monarch.[59] Gradually, over the next two decades, the Belarussian Jesuits reenrolled many of their former brethren abroad, including a number of Beijing missionaries. In 1777, the Beijing ex-Jesuit and naturalist Pierre-Martial Cibot wrote to the Academy of Sciences to register his profound gratitude to the empress:

> If I have abandoned all my literary connections and apply myself more than ever to cultivate the ones I have with you and with the Academy, it is because I owe it to the joy I've had of being a Jesuit, and … I will do the impossible in order to be able to offer your Triumphant and Generous Empress some sort of work which may be an eternal Monument of my recognition of the kindnesses with which she honors the Jesuits of her lands.[60]

[59] See Marek Inglot, *La Compagnia di Gesù nell'Impero Russo (1772-1820) e la sua parte nella restaurazione generale della Compagnia* (Gregorian Biblical BookShop, 1997); Marek Inglot, ed., *Rossiia i iezuity, 1772-1820* (Moskva: Nauka, 2006).

[60] Cibot to Euler, 10 October 1777, ARAN, f. 1, op. 3, d. 61, l87-88.

Because of series like the *Mémoires … concernant les Chinois,* published by Joseph Amiot, and Jean-Baptiste Du Halde's *Description de la Chine*, Russian elites were convinced that Jesuit missionaries had the ear of the Qing emperors and wielded massive influence at court; in reality, there is little reason to believe that the few missionaries who remained had any substantial input on matters of state. For the Vorontsovs, they seemed an ideal vector for the anti-Macartney conspiracy.

The empress endorsed the second option, in which the way for the Russian ambassador would be prepared by a Jesuit vanguard sent overland to Kiakhta. "As far as the Jesuits are concerned," Semën Vorontsov wrote, "it is necessary first of all to send a trusted person [*homme de confiance*] to the provincial in White Russia, to tell them that there is need of three subjects of his society, capable and healthy, to send them to China, so that he can send them immediately to Petersburg, of whom two would be sent right away as couriers to Beijing so as not to lose time, while the third would go with the ambassador." They were to receive the same compensation as academicians, which amounted to a handsome sum.[61] In the spring of 1792 two, not three, Jesuits were sent to St. Petersburg from the Jesuit college at Polotsk: Gabriel Gruber (an Austrian engineer who would soon become Superior General of the Society) and Manswet Skokowski.[62] The Jesuits supposedly brought with them an epic poem dedicated to Catherine the Great and were duly rewarded for it. After their audience at court, they were shuttled to Tsarskoe Selo, where Grand Chancellor Aleksandr Bezborodko

[61] Semën Vorontsov to Aleksandr Vorontsov, 13 January 1792, in Bartenev, *Arkhiv kniazia Vorontsova*, IX:229–231.

[62] OPI GIM, f. 450, d. 206, l37; see Joseph Dehergne, *Répertoire des jésuites de Chine de 1552 à 1800.* (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1973).

explained to them the nature of the secret task that awaited them. Gruber declared that he could not go to Beijing without the permission of the Pope, because the Society of Jesus had been formally suppressed in China; it was also necessary first to achieve some sort of understanding with the former Beijing Jesuits from a distance, so as not to provoke suspicion at the Qing court. Bezborodko accepted this reasoning and promised that papal permission would be granted.[63]

On June 3, 1792, Aleksandr Vorontsov composed a detailed draft of the letter he wanted the Jesuits to write to their brethren in Beijing. (In a reply written on June 8th, Catherine approved Vorontsov's proposal, as long as the Jesuits composed a project for a Latin letter before leaving the capital.)[64] Gruber and Skokowski were to begin with an invocation of their loyalty to Catherine, "making here a greeting [*sic*] to the Chinese, that despite the various persecutions in other countries, they at least have the consolation of living in peace and prosperity in the two greatest empires … and that this protection [*pokrov*] gives their order a means to obtain its pleasure and consolation through its love of science." The emphasis on science was to be the linchpin of the missive, for the next stage was to ask "if their colleagues need any sort of physical or astronomical instruments, which they could easily deliver to them in Beijing."

The scientific language merely provided the pretext to ask about the British embassy and the devices it would be bringing. Now the "authors" could finally introduce the damning evidence about the British role in India: "This nation, being so quick in its commercial and political enterprises, has, in the same part of the world as

[63] P. Stanislas Zalenski, *Les Jésuites de la Russie-Blanche* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1886), I:226–7.

[64] Bartenev, *Arkhiv kniazia Vorontsova*, XIII:259.

the Chinese state, begun by opening commerce and trading posts in the East Indies and finally has ended by capturing the best Indian possessions, so that many provinces have abandoned the lawful rule of the Indian Sovereign and are already ruled by Englishmen." Having laid this groundwork, the way lay open for an inquiry, "purely out of curiosity," about the embassy's likely future prospects. At the end, Vorontsov made sure to provide for some flexibility:

> To this they might add in their letter, something about their order, and of its present condition, as well as about the sciences, whatever they themselves find appropriate, and it seems to be not a bad idea to expand this, so that the material about the English does not seem to be the main topic of the letter but rather to be mentioned in passing.[65]

This supposedly fraternal letter from one college of Jesuits to another, in other words, was an entirely constructed document in which every phrase and sentence was dictated by Russian geopolitical ends and shaped by Russian stereotypes about Jesuit values and beliefs. Not a word of Vorontsov's note mentioned missionary activity or made reference to Christianity at all.

Finding a way to deliver the letter, once written, was not high on Vorontsov's list of priorities. His plan suggested groundlessly that "it will be easy to send it from here to the acting governor of Irkutsk [Pil'], instructing him to transfer it, without using his name, to the border commissioner, and for the latter to give it to the Chinese one, telling him that it was addressed to him from the Jesuits in Polotsk with a request to send it along to Beijing."[66] Much more pressing was the need to come up with the

[65] RGADA, f. 1261, op. 1, d. 968, l13-24.

[66] RGADA, f. 1261, op. 1, d. 968, l24.

appropriate gifts with which to equip the future ambassador, once the Jesuits had succeeded in their mission, as he had no doubt they would. His brother wrote from London, also on June 3, that "there should be no more consideration of [scientific] instruments, because they will be contemptible [*méprisables*] compared to those which are being sent from here. For four months the most celebrated artists have done nothing else but work for my lord Macartney."[67] Yet in fact at that point there was not even any guarantee that a Russian embassy would be accepted, still less one equal in grandeur to Macartney's. Catherine and her ministers had built a precarious house of cards: the ambassador was to be preceded by Gruber and Skokowski, who first needed to receive a response from Beijing to a letter that itself had yet to be written and delivered (in addition to a writ of permission from the pontiff). Meanwhile, by September 11, Macartney—whose preliminaries had already been taken care of—was already sailing to Canton, and time to undermine him was running short.

One of the problems with Vorontsov's postal scenario—as he would have discovered had he consulted anyone familiar with the Jesuit correspondence—was that the missionaries had always specifically instructed their correspondents to avoid Qing-subject middlemen, because of the risk of exposure to charges of espionage. A letter was written and sent by express courier to Irkutsk, where it was successfully received on August 13. Pil' reported secretly that he had ordered the letter to be sent on to Kiakhta and given into the hands of Vasilii Igumnov, the longtime local intelligence agent we met in Chapter IV.[68] Igumnov himself was to tell the Qing officials at Kuren

[67] Bartenev, *Arkhiv kniazia Vorontsova*, IX:238–9.

[68] RGADA, f. 24, d. 64, l132-3.

that the British were sending an embassy and that their plans for the Qing were as nefarious as their history in India. For some reason, however, when another decree from Catherine reached Pil's desk on November 28, the letter was still in Kiakhta.[69] There, the project hit a decisive snag. As it turned out, it was not just the Jesuits who were suspicious of receiving correspondence through middlemen: the middlemen themselves were wary of getting involved. "To my regret," Pil' reported on January 30, 1793, "the border officer Lieutenant Tiutrin … could not persuade the jargūci [the border secretary] to give anything except a refusal." Tiutrin noted the jargūci's "embarrassed expression," his "politic smile," and his announcement that this request was "novel and unprecedented, with which he does not dare to importune the ambans … and that his, the jargūci's, request would seem strange to the ambans, and it is unknown how they could receive it, unless he sends to Beijing individually, which his government would know about and from which he would not escape the most dangerous consequences." No Jesuit letter would reach Beijing in time for Macartney's arrival.[70]

Igumnov's trip to Kuren in the fall of 1792 may have had a little more success. The author of the secret nineteenth-century memorandum believed that the reference to the British in India "made such a strong impression on the Ambans that the next day after their conversation they sent a clerk with the protocol and asked him to correct the names of the lands conquered by the English and the name of their ambassador."[71] In

[69] RGADA, f. 24, d. 64, l180.

[70] RGADA, f. 24, d. 64, l182.

[71] GIM, f. 450, d. 206, l37v-38.

1802, Igumnov was given a promotion (his first in decades) on the basis of his alleged role in undermining Macartney; in 1805, the Russian ambassador Count Golovkin seems to have been under the impression that the attempt to use India to discredit the British had achieved its goal. "Because this expedient was already resorted to successfully by our court in 1793," Golovkin wrote, "it should now be used with moderation, so as not to let the Chinese suspect that we blacken [the reputation] of others out of envy or greed."[72] Yet the Qing court learned of Igumnov's visit only on March 1, 1793, and the official record says only that "Captain Wasili" came out of courtesy to inform the ambans that England was sending an embassy—with no overtones of danger or alarm.[73] One recent scholar has pointed to Macartney's sense that he was being treated with suspicion due to British activities in India—indeed, he felt this was the main reason for the embassy's lack of success—and perhaps the Russian conspiracy was one of the sources of Qing distrust.[74] But British anxiety about the Qing reaction to their role in India was deeply rooted. The instructions to Lord Cathcart, who was supposed to go to Beijing in 1788 but died prematurely before he could land at Canton, enjoined him to find a way of dissolving any Qing concerns about these events; this point was reiterated in the instructions to Macartney, who perhaps convinced himself that India lay at the root of his setback.[75]

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[72] RGIA, f. 1643, op. 1, d. 27; *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XIX v.* (Moskva: Institut Dal'nego vostoka, 1995), ed. S. L. Tikhvinskii, 372.

[73] Fu, *Documentary Chronicle*, I:331.

[74] Mosca, *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy*, 147–156.

[75] British Library, IOR/G/12/90, p. 110ff; IOR/G/12/91, p. 188-189.

Macartney's failure (from the British point of view) was surely overdetermined—but what made the British so confident an embassy would succeed in the first place? The answer lies in part in the documents Macartney, along with British Foreign Office and East India Company officials, were reading to prepare for this major project. These were not merely examples of "China lore" manifesting a generic British interest in *chinoiserie*.[76] Instead, they were highly detailed accounts of previous European diplomatic interactions with China. Although these numbered only a handful since the seventeenth century, a substantial travel literature had emerged around them. Each of the existing accounts had its problems for a mission of the kind Cathcart and Macartney were facing. Nieuhof's 1665 account was old and, because it described a Dutch East India Company embassy, was not quite suited to British goals.[77] Mezzabarba's 1720 legation was unsuccessful and involved religious matters.[78] As for the 1753 Portuguese embassy led by Pacheco, "no public account … has come to my knowledge, nor did I ever hear that any further relation of that Embassy was published than what appeared in a Newspaper."[79]

This left one embassy, and one account: John Bell's 1763 journal of his overland voyage to Beijing with the 1720 Izmailov Embassy and the Lorents Lang journal that was published with it. Here was a lushly detailed eyewitness report that paid full

[76] Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar*, 58n4.

[77] Johannes Nieuhof, *L'ambassade de la Compagnie orientale des Provinces Unies vers l'empereur de la Chine, ou grand cam de Tartarie, faite par les Srs. Pierre de Goyer, & Jacob de Keyser* (Leyde : Pour J. de Meurs, 1665).

[78] Sostegno Viani and Giovanni Ambrogio Mezzabarba, *Istoria delle cose operate nella China da Monsignor Gio. Ambrogio Mezzabarba … Vescovo di Lodi* (appresso Monsù Briasson, 1739).

[79] British Library, IOR/G/12/91, p. 5 ff.

attention to ceremonial minutiae, provided information on the nature of trade at Beijing, and described an embassy by a state that, like the British, was deeply concerned with maintaining its honor in the face of Qing claims to universal kingship.[80] In James Cobb's "Sketches Respecting China and the Embassies sent thither," prepared for Macartney in 1792, Bell and Lang's accounts were summarized at length ("none are deserving of more attention") and provided with context on the Russo-Qing trade drawn from the Abbé Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes*.[81] Cathcart and Macartney's expectations and horizons were deeply shaped by the Russian experience. Russia was cited as evidence against the idea that "the Chinese in general are studious to avoid any intimate connection or intercourse with Europeans."[82] Among the documents assembled by Macartney during his preparations was a (context-free) copy of a diplomatic letter sent to Russia by the Qing court in 1789, containing bitter recriminations about the Uladzai affair.[83] In formulating the list of people who would travel to Beijing in Macartney's entourage, Russian precedent proved dispositive.[84] Already in Beijing, when Macartney requested that a British agent be allowed to remain in the city, along with students, he referred to the precedent set by Lang and to the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission.[85]

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[80] Bell, *Travels from St. Petersburg in Russia to Diverse Parts of Asi.*

[81] British Library, IOR/G/12/91, p. 257-273.

[82] British Library, IOR/G/12/91, p. 181-182.

[83] British Library, IOR/G/12/91, l12-13. This document was sent by Captain Alexander; internal evidence indicates it was copied from the Russian translation.

[84] British Library, IOR/G/12/91, p. 43, 57.

[85] British Library, IOR/G/12/92, p. 289.

Above all, it was Russia that determined Macartney's response to the supreme ceremonial question: whether or not he could kowtow to the Qianlong emperor, which would have been politically unacceptable but without which he could not expect to succeed. The initial letter composed by Thomas Fitzhugh for Cathcart's benefit in 1787 (which was later passed on to Macartney) seemed to suggest a way out. Fitzhugh said that Izmailov "was informed, in mitigation of so humiliating a custom, that whenever the Emperor sent an Embassador to Russia, his orders would be to conform to their forms and regulations."[86] In other words, the Qing court was willing to accept the possibility of a reciprocity of ritual rather than unilateral submission. It was to this that Macartney turned when the kowtow issue finally arose:

> I did not so much as propose to avoid in the least complying with the Ceremony of Prostration, but offered at once readily to go thro' the whole, on a condition which did not render it the less personally respectful of the Emperor, but took away every thing objectionable from it, except the trouble to myself - this condition was that a subject of His Imperial Majesty of rank equal to my own, should perform before the Picture I had with me of His Majesty dressed in his Robes of State, the same Ceremonies I should be directed to do before the Chinese Throne.

Macartney's account of this episode makes clear that he desperately wanted and expected this proposal to succeed and was crestfallen when it first accepted, then rejected without explanation.[87] Although another compromise was apparently later found, in which Macartney bent to one knee nine times rather than performing a full

[86] British Library, IOR/G/12/91, p. 5-7.

[87] British Library, IOR/G/12/92, p. 54ff.

kowtow, one of the envoy's own Jesuit translators believed that failure to kowtow had caused the embassy's failure.[88]

The problem with Macartney's reliance on the precedent of the Izmailov embassy was that it took place during an anomalous period. Before the 1750s, the need to keep Russia out of the Qing-Junghar conflict led to unprecedented concessions on the part of the Qing state, including the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission and the principle of reciprocity—articulated by Kangxi explicitly in conversation with Izmailov—that would bring two Qing ambassadors to Russia in 1728-1731. Macartney's sources did not provide him with the Inner Asian political context he would have needed to reach this conclusion; instead, he and the British authorities simply assumed that Russia's greatness had been sufficient for recognition as a coequal empire. Without any information on subsequent diplomatic relations between Russia and the Qing, including the failed Bratishchev embassy of 1756 and the new Kiakhta treaty of 1768, Macartney and the clerks assisting him had no choice but to trust a long outdated account. Like the French, the British had been foiled by Russian secrecy—not in conjunction with lies this time but rather merely by "unknown unknowns." Their ignorance was much more consequential, as Macartney's failure was the precondition of the militarized British diplomacy of the Opium Wars.

Though the letter to the Beijing Jesuits that Gruber had written did not arrive in time to intercept the British ambassador, it was delivered in the end by Igumnov, who was assigned to escort a new shift of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission to Beijing in 1794-95. As he did throughout his four-decade intelligence career, Igumnov kept a

[88] RGADA, f. 15, n. 237, l. 8ff.

secret journal of his encounters and conversations, including numerous meetings with the Beijing ex-Jesuits and other Catholic missionaries (whom he seems to have known from prior visits to the capital). The entry for January 12 records that "I gave two sables of 2nd quality in the name of the [Russian] archimandrite to the Jesuit [José] Bernard[o de Almeida] (1728-1805) of the Southern Church, who was the translator for the English envoys and is familiar with all of the circumstances relating to them, in hopes of receiving a response to the secret letter that was sent."[89] The journal does not mention the receipt of any response.

Nonetheless, Igumnov's three-hour-long conversations with Almeida and the French/Italian ex-Jesuit Louis de Poirot (conducted through translators in Manchu and Latin), as well as his local Mongol informants (with whom he spoke Mongol directly) left nothing to the imagination with respect to the conduct, goals, and the eventual fate of the Macartney embassy. Over "tea and snacks," Almeida provided him with a four-point list of Macartney's requests, an account of the gifts he presented, and some sense of the surveillance to which the embassy was subjected in Beijing. Further, he also promised that "out of friendship with the captain" he would report on the upcoming Dutch embassy as well. Poirot (along with the Lazarist Nicholas Raux) remarked on the Dutch embassy, offered the lack of a kowtow as an explanation for Macartney's failure and appeared to agree with Igumnov that the Russian trade was more advantageous for the Qing than the British, because Russians imported cloth and other goods while the British exchanged their exports for gold and silver. Later, both Almeida and Raux provided Igumnov with inside information on the course of the Dutch embassy, which

[89] RGADA, f. 15, d. 237, l9.

left Beijing while the Russian agent was still there. All in all, Igumnov recorded six meetings with the ex-Jesuits over the course of five months.[90]

During Igumnov's visit, one of his party, the Irkutsk merchant Fedor Shchegorin, took part in a bizarre escapade. With the collusion of one of the court eunuchs, he disguised himself as a Chinese servant to spy on the just-arrived Dutch embassy of Isaac Titsingh. Although he learned nothing useful, and indeed his identity was revealed during the mission, the taste for skullduggery seems to have gone to his head.[91] After his return from Beijing, Shchegorin went to St. Petersburg, where he began to market himself at court as a secret agent with a treasure trove of highly valuable smuggled-out Qing court documents. One of the first texts he circulated was what purported to be a summary of the deliberations of the Qing Grand Council about the Macartney embassy. Shchegorin skillfully played on the anti-British anxiety in the Russian capital: the British, he claimed, had offered the Qing an equal supply of furs to that coming from Russia at half-price, on the condition that they receive a monopoly. After strenuous debate, in Shchegorin's telling, the Emperor himself rejected this proposal as giving the British too much power over the trade. (Macartney's records do not mention any such offer, and it is doubtful that Britain could have fulfilled such an undertaking.)[92]

In subsequent years, Shchegorin's mystifications became more and more preposterous and elaborate—very likely because he had abandoned his trading business

[90] RGADA, f. 15, d. 237, l7ff.

[91] RGADA, f. 15, d. 237, l18.

[92] RGIA, f. 1101, op. 1, d. 115, l. 36-38.

and began to rely on handouts from the court to survive. In 1798-99, he submitted a "secret" "Project on the China Trade." The first part, which may well have been genuine, consisted of the Lifanyuan's supposed instructions to its merchants at Kiakhta; Shchegorin wanted the Russian government to create a company or cartel that could effectively counter their joint bargaining strategy. The second, which was apparently meant to make the case for an even broader reform, claimed to be a comprehensive commercial regulation from the Yongle era (if it was in fact such, Chinese historians know nothing of it). The State Council agreed to hear the proposal, but its answer was unambiguous:

> This project, under the guise of commercial affairs, actually refers to a system of government, not at all resembling our own, and inconvenient to put into practice here; these are merely the compositions of an overheated imagination and appear not to have been thought up by him, Shchegorin, but by some bookworm who has read too many compositions containing only intellectual theory, but in reality impossible to put into practice.[93]

This did not deter Shchegorin. In December 1799, he made yet another proposal, this time offering some "Confucian" secrets with the help of which the entire Russian imperial government would be remodeled.[94] Incredibly, he continued to survive and work on this until at least 1826, by which point his proposal had accumulated several more "secret translations," including Confucius's "report to his emperor." Confucius, of course, did not serve an emperor, and in fact this was clearly an à clef rendering of contemporary European politics: "The *Han-yin* people have debauched our morals with false philosophy under the guise of Enlightenment; the *Nanjing* people have taken our

[93] *Arkhiv Gosudarstvennago Soveta* (Sanktpeterburg: Tip. Vtorago otd-niia Sobstvennoi E.I.V. kantseliarii, 1869), III:733ff.

[94] RGIA, f. 1409, op. 1, d. 53.

wealth through ruinous luxury under the guise of prosperity…"[95] Another component pitched this "Confucianism" as a solution to Masonic conspiracies; others offered technological solutions such as a telegraph and a hydrometer to protect against floods.[96]

Shchegorin's outlandish career encapsulates the intellectual climate surrounding Russia's relationship with the Qing Empire at the end of the eighteenth century. Although scheming in Inner Asia had been replaced with international conspiracies and grandiose projects on the Pacific, the availability of reliable information had failed to keep up. What Russian officials and elites thought they knew about their southeastern neighbor and their European rivals' plans against them was a muddled mixture of genuine intelligence, paranoid fantasy, and deeply Orientalist received wisdom. These contradictions would soon come to a head when Alexander I ascended the throne and decided to revive Catherine's project for a new embassy in Beijing. In 1805 it set out from St. Petersburg, the largest and most sumptuous entourage the Russian Empire had ever sent to the Qing capital.

4. Iurii Golovkin and the End of Russo-Qing Diplomacy, 1805-1855

The Russian ambassador, Count Iurii Golovkin, was not a native Russian speaker. He had grown up in Switzerland and Paris as the descendant of a family of exiles who had intermarried with European aristocrats. Once Catherine had persuaded him to return to Russian service, he ascended rapidly through the ranks. By the time he received the embassy assignment, he was already the president of the College of Commerce and one

[95] f. 1147, op. 1, d. 682, l. 41ff; see also OR RGB, f. 344, n. 256, l. 133-136.

[96] f. 1147, op. 1, d. 682, l. 1-43.

of the empire's most powerful nobles. Such a significant figure needed a large suite. In contrast to Savva Vladislavich's 120 or so attendants, Golovkin aimed to bring 242, among them soldiers, doctors, secretaries, and academics—including the future influential Sinologist Julius Klaproth. All in all it was to cost over half a million rubles.[97] The goals of the embassy were both familiar and new, grounded in an expansive vision of a unified Pacific and Inner Asian commercial landscape. Golovkin was to demand the right of navigation on the Amur, but also the opening of a new trade entrepôt on the Bukhtarma in Jungharia and (very optimistically) permission for a Russian trade expedition to go to India through Tibet. In addition, he would try to coordinate with Kruzenshtern's contemporaneous around-the-world voyage. He would obtain permission for Russians to trade at Canton, and Kruzenshtern would move in immediately afterwards. Finally, following the original anti-Macartney plan, three Jesuits—Giovanni Grassi, Norbert Korsak, and Jan Stürmer—would travel to Beijing by sea, conduct intelligence on Golovkin's behalf, and establish a Russian Jesuit college there on the French model.[98] (This last project lurched on for five years but eventually collapsed after a failure of negotiations with the Papacy; none of the Jesuits made it to China.[99])

Golovkin was not very popular, and the Europeanized aristocrats in his suite inspired further distrust. Grumblings about the embassy began before it even departed.

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[97] Davydova and Tikhvinskii, *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XIX veke*, 114–115. This massive collection contains over 500 documents related to the Golovkin embassy.

[98] Ibid., 5–10.

[99] For a more in-depth treatment, see Afinogenov, "Jesuit Conspirators and Russia's East Asian Fur Trade, 1791–1807."

Aleksandr Vorontsov called it a "gang," said Golovkin lacked "moral character," and expressed the wish that "the Qing emperor would decide it all for them and, becoming angry about the engineers they are bringing to make plans and profiles of their fortresses, would order them all to be flogged from the first to the last and then turned out of his domains."[100] But there were deeper issues at stake as well. The new trade post at Bukhtarma, which would be much closer to Moscow and more convenient for merchants, would destroy the Kiakhta trade and likely threaten the entire Eastern Siberian economy; the same might be true of Russian trade at Canton.[101] Navigation on the Amur was a far more complicated question than it seemed, because even if its mouth turned out to be suitable for a port, its effective exploitation would require the establishment of warehouses with armed Russian guards throughout the length of the Qing-controlled river; Golovkin was not optimistic about this point.[102] In short, the embassy had odds against it from the very beginning, even without considering the possible objections of the Qing. After all, the Kiakhta trade was economically significant for Khalkha Mongolia as well.

Potential difficulties were one reason the embassy was deeply concerned with intelligence. Several of its members had associated intelligence-gathering functions, including the academics, but it seems clear that the unofficial head of intelligence was 27-year-old Count Iakov Lambert, son of the French émigré Henri-Joseph de Lambert and the embassy's second secretary. In preparation for departure Lambert collected all

[100] Aleksandr Vorontsov to Arsen'ev, 23 June 1805, in Bartenev, *Arkhiv kniazia Vorontsova,* XXXVI:84-90.

[101] Davydova and Tikhvinskii, *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XIX veke*, 208–209.

[102] Ibid., 126–131.

the existing documents he could find in the central archives having to do with Russo-Qing relations. This included not only N. I. Bantysh-Kamenskii's 1803 compilation *Diplomaticheskoe sobranie del…*, still one of the principal sources for historians of the period, but also a wide range of secret materials, including a number of the documents cited here.[103] After consulting Igumnov's 1794-95 journal, either Lambert or one of his assistants wrote a contemptuous memorandum dismissing the information he had reported. "This brief note," he wrote, "clearly proves that aside from the countless advantages our scholarship could obtain from our mission in Beijing, we could also have the singular chance of learning much from the escorting officers we send, if only the government would deign to inquire into the advantages Russia has possessed for so long in obtaining knowledge about the Qing State versus other European powers."[104] In addition to Lambert, the embassy also employed the best Qing experts in the empire: the former Mission student Anton Vladykin, Vasilii Igumnov's son Aleksandr, and several others. Like Macartney, Golovkin took his intellectual preparation seriously; unlike him, he would not be caught unawares by Inner Asian politics.

For all his preparations, Golovkin's embassy was a failure. In January 1806, having just entered Mongolia after a humiliating series of reductions in his entourage demanded by the Kuren official Yundondorji, he was invited to a feast where the amban demanded he kowtow to an image of the emperor. Although Golovkin was ready to kowtow in Beijing, such a demand in Kuren was utterly unacceptable to him, and the embassy was at an end. A leading Russian scholar has suggested that the Qing

[103] RGIA, f. 1643, op. 1, d. 25.

[104] RGIA, f. 1643, op. 1, d. 33.

government had no use for the embassy and sought for any excuse to turn it away.[105] While this may or may not be true, Golovkin had also been misled by his intelligence service. In November 1805, the embassy's first secretary Baikov interviewed a Bukharan rhubarb supplier named Abdaraim at Kiakhta. Abdaraim informed the diplomat that both Yundondorji and the Tüsiyetü-Khan had recently been reprimanded by the emperor, and that both their reputations were on the line. According to Abdaraim, Yundondorji's demand for suite reductions were an attempt "to demonstrate his service to the emperor," but "if this embassy retreats from the border, then *all the fault will fall on [Yundondorji]* [emphasis in original] and he will suffer great wrath."[106] A misapprehension of the stakes involved for the Mongol had clearly contributed to Golovkin's miscalculation.

Another significant source of disruption was Vanifant'ev, the Kiakhta customs director who had gained so much power due to imperial neglect of the Mongolian frontier. He had a clear motive to disrupt Golovkin's progress: not only was the Kiakhta trade at risk from the ambassador's proposals, but Golovkin also technically had oversight of him due to his plenipotentiary powers. Golovkin's letters to Lambert make it clear that he regarded the director as a significant obstacle to his plans.[107] According to the memoirs of F. F. Vigel', one of the members of the entourage left behind after the reductions, Vanifant'ev had pulled him aside when the embassy crossed into Mongolia and whispered "Don't worry, brother, they won't get past Urga [Kuren]; they'll dance

[105] Davydova and Tikhvinskii, *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XIX veke*, 5–20.

[106] OPI GIM, f. 24, op. 1, d. 26, l. 113-127.

[107] RGIA, f. 1643, op. 1, d. 31.

in the cold for a month and a half or so, and what will they see? Almost the same things as here."[108] After the embassy returned to Irkutsk, Lambert seems to have planned some covert action of his own in an attempt to salvage matters: he aimed to spread rumors about Russian military reinforcements arriving in Transbaikalia with the hope of convincing the Mongol authorities that Russia planned an invasion if its embassy was not accepted.[109] In June 1806, Vanifant'ev indignantly reported to Commerce Minister N. P. Rumiantsev that he was being persecuted by members of the embassy—and that they were spreading rumors of war, which he was doing his best to dispel.[110] Deliberately or not, Vanifant'ev had repeatedly blocked any attempt to make good on the embassy's promises. Golovkin had found no way to tame this particular local authority.

One final threat was an imaginary one. Golovkin and his entourage believed that one reason the embassy failed was that the British were scheming against them. According to the jaded and skeptical P. N. Struve, the most accomplished diplomat in the suite, they even put forth the notion that Yundondorji had been bribed by the British.[111] Based on the records of the British factory at Canton, it is unlikely that the British knew anything concrete about the embassy or its future plans. But in fact they did the Russians a major service. In November 1805, Kruzenshtern's two ships arrived at Canton to trade, without making any effort to coordinate with Golovkin (who cited

[108] Davydova and Tikhvinskii, *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XIX veke*, 812–813.

[109] RGIA, f. 1643, op. 1, d. 23, l. 69-81.

[110] Davydova and Tikhvinskii, *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XIX veke*, 586–588.

[111] Ibid., 837–844.

this as yet another factor in his failure). Although they were able to exchange their goods, the local Qing officials were suspicious and ordered the vessels impounded until the receipt of a resolution from Beijing. Only with the wholehearted help of the local East India Company supercargoes was Kruzenshtern able to disentangle his ships—and when the edict finally arrived, it shocked both the Russians and the British with its severity. Russians were to trade only at Kiakhta, and their use of any other entrepôt was strictly prohibited.[112]

In the wake of the Golovkin debacle, Russia tried to use the next rotating shift of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission to gather intelligence—particularly about French and British attempts to deal with the Qing—and make contact with the former Beijing Jesuits. In 1807, the mission's escorting agent Semën Pervushin was issued a set of instructions which gave him detailed guidance for conversations with the missionaries. Beyond being merely cautious of possible British influence and bribery, in conversations with ex-Jesuits the agent would "observing exterior calm, subtly extract needed information, and not immediately or suddenly so that they may not guess at what you need." He was provided with a few sample conversational scenarios as illustration.[113] Though it is likely the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not know this, a register of all the Beijing ex-Jesuits would be brief indeed: by this point only Frs. Poirot, de Grammont, and Panzi remained among the living, and were unlikely to be of much use or influence. By the time the mission made its return journey in 1819, all of them

[112] British Library, IOR/G/12/150, p. 149-151; IOR/G/12/152, p. 33-78. For an explanation of this attitude on the part of the Qing, see Matthew W. Mosca, "The Qing State and Its Awareness of Eurasian Interconnections, 1789–1806," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 47, no. 2 (2014): 103–16.

[113]Davydova and Tikhvinskii, *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XIX veke*, 711.

were long dead.[114] Pervushin was accompanied by several other agents and military personnel, each of whom had their own missions. They were to observe strategically significant objects, produce clandestine paintings and sketches, and conduct some industrial espionage, though the results, if any, have not survived.[115]

The Golovkin embassy represented the Russian Empire's final attempt to negotiate with the Qing on Qing terms. In 1810, after British soldiers briefly occupied Macao, Qing officials tried to contact the Irkutsk civil governor Treskin with an offer encouraging the Russians to try again. Russia was adamant, however, that a return embassy from the Jiaqing emperor would have to be sent first, and the proposal was dropped.[116] The Golovkin embassy had longer-term consequences. In 1816, William Amherst's embassy failed in part because Qing officials imitated Yundondorji's precedent in demanding that he kowtow not just in Beijing, but in advance of his audience. Both sides explicitly invoked Golovkin in the process.[117] The most significant consequence in the long term, however, centered around the Amur. Golovkin had planned to offer the Qing a final demarcation of the Manchurian border in exchange for the right of navigation on the Amur. This would have meant setting the boundary line well to the north of the river. At the same time, an inter-ministerial dispute had erupted in St. Petersburg: the commerce minister N. P. Rumiantsev insisted on misreading the

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[114] See Pfister, *Notices biographiques et bibliographiques sur les Jésuites de l'ancienne mission de Chine: 1552-1773*, II:958ff.

[115] IVR (Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, St. Petersburg), f. 7, op. 1, d. 38, l. 22-38.

[116] IVR, f. 7, op. 1, l. 93ff.

[117] British Library, IOR/G/12/197, p. 63-64. For the scientific significance of Amherst's embassy, see Hao, "The Amherst Embassy and British Discoveries in China."

Treaty of Nerchinsk as granting Russia all of the territory starting on the Amur's left bank, while the Foreign Ministry attempted to disprove this reading.[118] Rumiantsev's willful ignorance of the true facts eventually won out in 1858, when Nikolai Murav'ev extorted the treaty of Aigun from the Qing. Murav'ev's formal excuse was that the territory had not been finally demarcated and that all the territory north of the Amur belonged to Russia. (No such justification existed for the maritime territories east of the Sungari.) In other words, Golovkin's failure had provided the grounds for Murav'ev's success: the current Manchurian border between Russia and the PRC runs along a line considerably south of the Nerchinsk boundary.[119]

After Golovkin's failure, Kamchatka did not long remain at the center of the Russian Empire's plans for the Pacific. In 1812, the American merchant Peter Dobell arrived in Petropavlovsk with a shipment of foodstuffs. In 1813-14, he submitted a detailed plan for the creation of a triangular trade between Kamchatka, Canton, and the Philippines. "Kamchatka," he wrote, "does not yield in its valleys, the beauty and richness of its products, to the places surrounding the great river Ohio in America … As soon as this trade begins, the Chinese will bring to Manila everything that they can sell to the Russians, so that Russia can make use of all the benefits of their trade without suffering from their caprice and insolence."[120] Alexander's government approved the plan, and Dobell was sent to Manila to serve as the Russian consul. Due to the Spanish government's refusal to allow a formal mission, however, he was able to serve only in

[118] Davydova and Tikhvinskii, *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XIX veke*, 407–411.

[119] On the Treaty of Aigun, see Paine, *Imperial Rivals*, 49–78.

[120] RGIA, f. 994, op. 2, d. 353. (This is mistakenly attributed to Admiral N. S. Mordvinov.) See also Bassin, *Imperial Visions*.

an unofficial capacity, and in practice Russian trade on the Philippines never reached significant proportions. The abortive Philippine consulate was terminated de facto in 1820 and de jure in 1826. The age of the great Pacific projects was definitively at an end.[121]

From the first inklings of the North Pacific's significance in the 1770s to the failure of Amherst and Dobell in 1816, the geopolitical environment of the region was shaped not by the scientific achievements of the explorers who traversed it, but by the mistaken assumptions, failures of knowledge, and outright deceptions on the basis of which European powers took action. It was an environment riddled with paradoxes. An age of intelligence failure became an age of conspiratorial obsession; Britain, so long represented as the spearpoint of European imperialism in China, depended on intelligence about Russia; Russia, despite its long history of intelligence–gathering in the Qing Empire, was just as susceptible to strategic ignorance as Britain and France. These paradoxes should reshape our understanding of the period. If an outsize personality like Benyovszky was able to keep the entire foreign-policy apparatus of France spellbound by false information, it was not because the events he revealed were marginal or unimportant, but because European ignorance was so profound. In the mid-1810s, recognizing the futility of intelligence, Russian elites attempted to redirect their pursuit of knowledge into a new arena: the academic study of the Qing Empire. The key site for the emergence of Russian Sinology out of the defunct framework of Russian intelligence would be the troubled Russian Ecclesiastical Mission.

[121] Guber, *Politika evropeĭskikh derzhav v Iugo-Vostochnoĭ Azii*, 428–436.

Chapter VI

From Intelligence to Sinology

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, the boundaries that shaped the production of knowledge about the Qing empire in Russia were fundamentally redrawn. For a century, Russian institutions had neglected and marginalized the dissemination of public sinological knowledge through academic publishing and learned correspondence. Instead, the people trained and employed as experts within the framework of Russia's Qing policy were expected to produce useful, actionable intelligence, generally anonymously and in secret, for the benefit of the institutions that housed them. By the time Alexander I died in 1825, this relationship had begun to change. The quality and quantity of intelligence declined, while increasing awareness of the intellectual inadequacies of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing led to growing pressure for reform. Most importantly, sinology was becoming an important site for the showcasing of Russian academic prestige as the Empire struggled for recognition as a leading European power.

Scholars of Oriental studies in Europe agree that something important happened around 1800 to initiate the emergence of what we would recognize as the traditional orientalist disciplines, even if "much of the stage set" of modern orientalism "seems recycled from earlier productions."[1] Unlike more biblically relevant branches of oriental

[1] Urs App, *The Birth of Orientalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 15; see also Suzanne L Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

studies, in the study of sinology and its cognate fields—including, for instance, manjuristics and Inner Asian studies—the shift from a "traditional" to a "modern" approach was in some ways much more obvious and distinct. This is because eighteenth-century scholarship on Chinese history and culture remained dependent on Jesuit sources, and by 1814 the Jesuit mission in Beijing had (as it turned out, temporarily) come to an end with the deaths of its last remaining members. After the turn of the century, the leading sinologists in the West were secular academics with research posts, particularly Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat, who was appointed to the first chair of "Chinese and Manchu languages and literatures" at the Collège de France in 1814, and eventually his Berlin colleague Julius von Klaproth. State-sponsored institutionalization was paralleled by the creation of academic societies (like the Société asiatique Abel-Rémusat founded in 1822) and scholarly journals.[2]

Similar contemporary developments in the Russian context have traditionally been labeled "the Bichurin period," owing to the allegedly towering role played in them by Iakinf Bichurin, erstwhile archimandrite of the 1807-1820 Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing.[3] In the view of generations of Soviet and Imperial Russian scholars, Bichurin nearly single-handedly transformed Russian sinology from an obscure and contemptible collection of clerkish translations to an internationally renowned body of original scholarship, not least by means of his own prodigious scholarly reputation. As

[2] Knud Lundbaek, "Notes on Abel Remusat and the Beginning of Academic Sinology in Europe," in *Actes du VIIe Colloque International de Sinologie de Chantilly* (San Francisco: Ricci Institute, 1992), 207–20.

[3] Skachkov, *Ocherki istorii russkogo kitaevedeniia*, 89–138; Huan Lilian, "O. Iakinf (N. Ia. Bichurin) - vydaiushchiisia russkii kitaeved (K 230-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia)," *Problemy Dal'nego Vostoka*, no. 5 (2007): 124–36; P. V. Denisov, *Slovo o monakhe Iakinfe Bichurine* (Cheboksary: Chuvash. kn. izd-vo, 2007).

a nearly defrocked monk, Bichurin also retained an aura of anticlerical rationalism that proved particularly appealing to Soviet researchers eager to distance themselves from the religious goals and vocabulary of Russian missionaries. In the absence (until recently) of countervailing narratives based on primary sources, the hagiographical approach has been adopted by Western scholars as well.[4]

The Bichurin-centric model of Russian sinology suffers from a number of serious flaws, among them the fact that it has whitewashed its hero by deliberately misrepresenting historical documents. Above all, it is a symptom rather than a cause of the changes in the intellectual culture of sinology in the early nineteenth century. I will show here how it can be replaced, and why that replacement should matter. First, we will see just how the disastrous for Russian sinological ambitions were the roles played by Klaproth and Bichurin after the failed Golovkin embassy of 1805. This is essential for understanding how and why the Russian government and a former Beijing missionary developed a project to overhaul the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in the 1810s, both structurally and intellectually, and what kinds of forgetting that overhaul entailed. Finally, I will explore the long-term effects of this overhaul and trace its broader impact not just on Russian sinology but also the Empire's foreign policy in East Asia. It will become clear that despite its pronounced reorientation towards public-facing scholarship, the production of knowledge about the Qing in nineteenth-century Russia continued to be shaped by the imperatives of state policy.

[4] David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, "The Genesis of Russian Sinology," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1, no. 2 (2000): 355–64, doi:10.1353/kri.2008.0067; O. V. Shatalov, "Arkhimandrit Petr (Kamenskii) - nachalnik 10-i Rossiiskoi dukhovnoi missii v Pekine," *Pravoslavie na Dal'nem Vostoke* 3 (2001): 85–98.

1. Two Disasters

The 1805 Golovkin embassy—Alexander I's attempt to one-up Macartney by extracting commercial concessions like those the British envoy had failed to obtain during his 1793 embassy—was also envisioned as an unprecedented intellectual adventure. Among Count Golovkin's glittering noble entourage were five scholars whose primary purpose was research: the astronomer Shubert, the zoologist Adams, the mineralogist Pantsler, the botanist Redovskii, and, finally, the young orientalist Julius Klaproth, not yet entitled to a "von." Although every mission to Beijing, diplomatic or commercial, involved an intellectual component, never before had the Imperial Academy of Sciences been so thoroughly and deliberately engaged in the process. The last time one of its agents (Jellatschitsch in 1755) had gone to Beijing, it was as a caravan doctor, his responsibilities to the Academy being of little concern to the caravan director or the College of Foreign Affairs. For its part, the Academy showed little interest in sinological field research. In the 1770s, a plan to send the academic Peter Simon Pallas to Beijing in the guise of an envoy was quickly abandoned, in part because Pallas was unwilling to go.[5] Throughout the eighteenth century, though the Academy frequently employed graduates of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission, it was almost completely uninterested in giving them a path to academic recognition as orientalists and indeed frequently obstructed their careers.

Now, however, the Academy joined in with relish: in February 1805 its president Nikolai Novosil'tsev wrote to Foreign Minister Adam Czartoryski that "As far as Mr.

[5] E.g., Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg Branch (SPb ARAN), f. 1, op. 3, vol. 60, l. 21.

Shubert is concerned, the Academy, acknowledging the great benefit that this civil servant might bring for the sciences generally if he travels with the mission, not only can find no obstacle to sending him but will also take all possible measures to ensure his Academy posts will not interfere with his dispatch." The other scholars were judged equally valuable.[6] Novosil'tsev, appointed in 1803, was a personal friend of the emperor and shared his taste for enlightened scientific achievements. Combined with the enormous prestige of the embassy and Alexander's personal involvement with the preparations, this made the Academy's participation a foregone conclusion.

One of the Academy's faculty had in fact come to Russia in search of precisely this opportunity. In 1803, Julius Klaproth met the Polish aristocrat-literatus (and author of the legendary nesting-frame-tale novel *The Manuscript Found in Saragossa*) Count Jan Potocki in Berlin. Klaproth was then twenty years of age and had apparently taught himself Chinese using the St. Petersburg orientalist Gottlieb Bayer's 1730 *Museum Sinicum*, an abortive attempt at a Chinese grammar and lexicon by a scholar whose own knowledge of the language was deeply imperfect. This achievement, and a few 1803 publications, made Klaproth a minor academic celebrity in the German states; the fact that he was unencumbered by formal or familiar obligations made him an ideal candidate for recruitment to the St. Petersburg Academy. Potocki's ties to the Russian court made him a particularly well-placed patron to secure an adjunct position in oriental languages at the Academy for his protégé. Potocki, moreover, was appointed to supervise the academic activities of the Golovkin embassy and could therefore watch

[6] Novosil'tsev to Czartoryski, 27 Feb 1805, in Davydova and Tikhvinskii, *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XIX veke*, 106–107.

over his young charge directly. In 1804, Klaproth arrived in St. Petersburg with every expectation of being able to use Russia's special relationship with the Qing as a springboard to a successful sinological career—particularly as he would be the embassy's only liberal-arts academic.[7]

When the embassy arrived at the Qing border, however, Klaproth's hopes were dashed. The Qing authorities in Kuren, the Mongolian capital, had decreed that the embassy would need to reduce its personnel by nearly half, and in December 1805 Klaproth and Shubert both drew the short straw. (Eventually, Redovskii and Pansner would have to be cut as well.) A contemporary observer noted that all of the academics had grown to despise Golovkin by this stage of the journey, and while Shubert's hatred was obvious, Klaproth alone displayed "contemptuous outrage" at his dismissal.[8] Thereafter Klaproth would always claim that he had accompanied the embassy into Mongolia to its final dénouement at Kuren, which is attested in all his nineteenth-century biographies; this bit of prevarication was perhaps essential for his credentials, because it would have been the only chance of his lifetime to cross the Qing border (at least legally).[9] Eventually he retaliated with a German pamphlet excoriating most of the embassy's participants, not without reason, as vain and hapless fools.[10]

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[7] Hartmut Walravens, *Julius Klaproth (1783-1835) : Leben und Werk* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999).

[8] Davydova and Tikhvinskii, *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XIX veke*, 775.

[9] See, e.g., Louis Gabriel Michaud, ed., "Klaproth (Jules-Henri)," *Biographie universelle, ancienne et moderne* 68 (1841): 532–49.

[10] Klaproth (as "Vasilii Golovin"), *Die russische Gesandschaft nach China im Jahr 1805: nebst einer Nachricht von der letzten Christen-Verfolgung in Peking* (St. Petersburg: Ziemsen, 1809); See Wladyslaw Kotwicz and Hartmut Walravens, *Die russische Gesandtschaftsreise nach China 1805: zu Leben und Werk des Grafen Jan Potocki* (Berlin: Bell, 1991).

The Academy made the best of a bad situation. Redovskii and Adams were ordered to organize a spur-of-the-moment natural-historical expedition into Eastern Siberia, which was a qualified success.[11] Klaproth, for his part, turned his prematurely terminated journey into the foundation of his future scholarly career. In Irkutsk, he acquired Anton Vladykin's massive library of Qing-language manuscripts, from which he published translations for the rest of his life, and employed the services of a shipwrecked seaman from Japan to learn Japanese. Over the course of the next year, Klaproth traveled back and forth along nearly the entire length of the Russo-Qing border, studying Mongol, Buriat, and Kalmyk customs, visiting Buddhist temples, and collecting texts. He returned to St. Petersburg only at the beginning of 1807 and found that Potocki had procured him and his colleagues a lifetime 300-ruble pension and a jeweled ring in compensation for their exertions.[12] But soon Klaproth was off to the Caucasus, where he spent a year gathering material for what would become his highly influential publications on the region (of which the most important was the 1812 *Reise in den Kaukasus und nach Georgien*).[13] In short, despite the failure of the Golovkin embassy, Klaproth was hardly left in the lurch; indeed, it is likely that he would not have done much better for himself had the embassy succeeded.

[11] T. Iu. Feklova, "Ekspeditsii Akademii nauk i izuchenie Kitaia v pervoi polovine XIX v.," in *Rossiia i Kitai: aspekty vzaimodeistviia i vzaimovliianiia* (Blagoveshchensk, 2011), 26–34.

[12] Davydova and Tikhvinskii, *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XIX veke*, 732.

[13] See the biographical materials collected in Walravens, *Julius Klaproth (1783-1835) : Leben und Werk*; and the correspondence in Hartmut Walravens, ed., *Julius Klaproth (1783-1835) : Briefe und Dokumente* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999); Hartmut Walravens, ed., *Julius Klaproth (1783-1835) : Briefwechsel mit Gelehrten grossenteils aus dem Akademiearchiv in St. Petersburg* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002).

Nonetheless, the young orientalist remained unfulfilled. In 1810, having composed a Manchu grammar, he received permission to travel to Berlin in order to commission Manchu fonts for the printing. This, he saw, was his chance to escape the Academy. "I have no particular desire to return to Russia," he wrote to the Franco-German polymath Michel Friedländer, "largely because of the poor exchange rate [*schlechten Courses*], by which one loses 4/5 of one's income while in the government's service."[14] Though his objection was legitimate, Klaproth chose the most provocative way possible to burn his bridges. Having long overstayed his leave in Berlin, in June 1812 he wrote a letter to the Academy president in which he accused the institution of having cheated him out of his salary by paying him in (devalued) paper money instead of silver. "As long as the government defrauded its servants only by 20 percent, a civil servant could support such a loss while being employed at an institution as useless as the Academy," Klaproth wrote, "but it is impossible to serve the State for a salary that shrinks every year and to dedicate one's works to it for a quarter of the price received seven years ago." At the end of the letter, he twisted the knife even further: "What the Academy loses with my departure, neither it nor I can judge; may the learned world judge of that. Until then this matter will be unresolved, and the [Academy] Conference can comfort itself with the thought that it will thereby save 1400 paper rubles annually, which it can use to maintain a Gottorp Globe or run a tavern [*einer* харчевня] attached to it."[15]

[14] Klaproth to Friedländer, 9 Jul 1811, in *Julius Klaproth (1783-1835): Briefe und Dokumente*, 53–54.

[15] Klaproth to Academy, 25 Jun 1812, RGIA, f. 733, op. 12, d. 18, l. 42-45.

The Academy was furious. At a meeting in August, the Conference decided "not only to dismiss him, as he demanded in his reckless letter while making utterly baseless and absurd claims, but to issue him a dishonorable discharge from the Academy, as one unworthy of holding the post of Academician and the rank of Aulic Councillor that came with it ... and as relations with Berlin are now restored ... this exclusion can be made public everywhere."[16] (Since stripping him of his rank deprived him of hereditary nobility, formally Klaproth had lost the right to his "von.") But there was a more serious problem. Upon his departure from St. Petersburg in 1811, Klaproth had taken a number of valuable manuscripts from the Academy's library, and the librarian spent the next ten years fruitlessly trying to track them down all over Europe. At one point, the Russian consul in Florence informed him that Klaproth had left behind a safe deposit box as collateral for some unpaid debts after departing the city, but while this box did prove to contain some books, it was mostly a false lead. As of 1822, the new Academy president Sergei Uvarov (of later "autocracy, Orthodoxy, nationality" fame) was still complaining that "there can be no doubt that Klaproth looted the library of the Academy of Sciences in the most brazen possible way."[17]

Meanwhile, Klaproth continued to exploit his Russian experience to further his career in Europe. In 1814, he wrote to the famous German publisher Johann Friedrich von Cotta offering a collection of his travels in Siberia and Inner Asia. "As I traveled in the service of the Russian Crown," he wrote, "it was easy for me to assemble new and

[16] RGIA, f. 733, op. 12, d. 18, l. 40.

[17] RGIA, f. 733, op. 12, d. 18, l. 104ff.

authentic information. My language skills enabled me to create descriptions of Inner Asia, including Tibet, Little Bukhara, Jungharia, and of the Mongols and their steppe domains, which no other traveler was in a position to do."[18] Like Strahlenberg and Witsen before him, Julius von Klaproth parlayed his direct access to sources from the Russian Empire into professional success. On one occasion, as an 1869 article in *Notes and Queries on China and Japan* points out, he even invented a document—a map and travelogue of Kashmir—by claiming that he had obtained it from an official Russian source. He was obviously relying on the fact that no Westerner was in a position to challenge him on this score, and the gamble paid off: the fraud was not discovered until decades after his death.[19]

The Golovkin embassy, which had been intended to elevate Russia's standing within the European intellectual world by finally capitalizing on the empire's unique geographical and diplomatic position vis-à-vis the Qing, had instead given the Academy a well-connected and bilious opponent in Paris and Berlin. No intellectual renewal for Russian sinology could be expected from that quarter any longer. But the embassy also led to a second—and in some ways even more disastrous—failure in that field. In 1806, Count Golovkin persuaded the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Synod to replace the archimandrite (the Orthodox version of an abbot, in this case the head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission) scheduled to be sent to Beijing in 1807. This archimandrite, the 25-year-old Apollos, had fit in badly with the ambassador's suite and failed to impress

[18] Klaproth to Cotta, 24 Jan 1814, in Walravens, *Julius Klaproth (1783-1835): Briefe und Dokumente*, 59–60.

[19] "Literary Forgeries by Klaproth," *Notes and Queries on China and Japan* 3 (December 1869): 111–12.

him with his intellectual achievements. His future replacement, Iakinf Bichurin, was a French-speaking epicure who was much more appealing to the Western-educated envoy, and he provided the embassy with valuable information about Golovkin's 1720 predecessor Izmailov.[20] There was only one obstacle: Bichurin was being held under guard at a monastery in Tobolsk as punishment for his role in a riot that broke out during his previous appointment, as archimandrite of Voznesenskii Monastery in Irkutsk. Some younger monks had discovered that Bichurin was keeping a girlfriend in his suite disguised as a young acolyte, and the archimandrite barely escaped with his life.[21] Such a piquant detail would, if anything, have raised Bichurin's stature in Golovkin's eyes, and after several representations the ambassador finally managed to persuade the Synod to set aside Bichurin's penalty.

It took a few years for troubling reports to begin filtering in. In 1813, the Siberian governor-general Pavel Pestel' forwarded to Synod Procurator A. N. Golitsyn a denunciation signed by three of the Mission's students. This lengthy text contained upwards of twenty distinct accusations against Bichurin, both individually and together with his hieromonks. Some of these would hardly be calculated to inspire outrage either for contemporary readers or for the libertines in Alexandrian officialdom: Bichurin was charged with hunting birds with a rifle, attacking the mission's escorting officer, and calling him a "son of a bitch." But the majority were much more disturbing. The

[20] Davydova and Tikhvinskii, *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XIX veke*, 238.

[21] The relevant documents are in AV IVR, f. 7, op. 1, d. 37-9.

archimandrite had become a connoisseur of the local sex trade, including both young girls and boys:

> 9. On October 13, 1810, in the evening, the father archimandrite put on a wool cap of a kind only commoners wear and together with hieromonk Seraphim went to a brothel, where he spent the night. The father archimandrite returned at 8 in the morning in his cart, while Seraphim came on foot around noon; they had paid 10 taels for the night, which is our 30 rubles. The watchman stopped the cart and told our leader that we should all be home at night, especially him … After this the archimandrite suffered from fever for 20 days and the hieromonk Seraphim from venereal disease for two weeks. 10. On December 15 the father archimandrite at 4 in the afternoon brought home a boy from a suburban barbershop, which is much more blameworthy than girls, and the boy spent the night…

One night in January, two boys arrived, while "three baptized [Qing subjects] of Orthodox faith and one Catholic were staying with us in the students' section; seeing these boys, they recognized these unfortunates as being of the most desperate class, and were astonished, saying that they remembered the arrival of three missions but never had they seen one with a leader like this." The denouncing students went on to accuse the other missionaries of appropriating salary funds in order to pay for sex in Beijing.[22]

Golitsyn, who despite his position in the ecclesiastical hierarchy was a kind of libertine quasi-atheist himself, blithely responded that "if the Father Archimandrite's behavior were as outrageous as the students describe, and as openly known to the public … then the Qing Government would not have left this unnoticed and would have written to our Senate, but no complaints against Archimandrite Iakinf have come in." Pestel's rejoinder, that the Irkutsk incident raised justifiable concerns about Bichurin's

[22] RGIA, f. 796, op. 99, d. 877, l. 156-172.

future conduct, went without response. The matter seemed to have died there for the time being.

Six years later, this complaint finally arrived. In July 1819, the director of the Kiakhta customs office reported that over the past year he had met repeatedly with the Qing jargūci on the Mongolian border, who inquired several times when the mission was going to be replaced. This was not merely a routine request:

> In April 1817, trying to inquire in conversation about the lifestyle of the Archimandrite currently in Beijing and about the view in which he is held by the Qing Government and the public, to my great regret and shame, I received from the jargūci a highly unflattering report. Then our discussion turned to the others who made up the mission and he, making a general observation that when a leader is bad then there is no reason to expect subordinates to be better, referred quite negatively to the student Lev Zimailov and the verger Pal'movskii … The jargūci, speaking of their weak behavior, finally turned his speech to the following question: why are people who are unable to behave themselves sent to Beijing? Asking this question with a meaningful expression, he awaited my reply with a look that testified to his great curiosity.

In the rest of his memorandum, the director argued for the urgent need to reform the mission and to send better-behaved personnel if any advantages for both commercial intelligence and for better diplomatic relations were to be expected out of the Beijing missionaries. But the report from the jargūci spoke for itself. Bichurin had conducted himself so badly that he had developed a reputation as far away as northern Mongolia, effectively damaging Russian policy in the region.[23] At the same time, Bichurin's replacement, the new archimandrite Pavel Kamenskii, was issued with specific instructions to investigate and report on Bichurin's activities and to determine as best

[23] RGIA, f. 797, op. 2, d. 6352, l. 114-124.

he could if the charges contained in the students' denunciation were accurate. Kamenskii, though he could be an impulsive and critical judge, was a relatively impartial observer. He was not inclined to moralizing and, having been a student in the mission prior to Bichurin's, had some sense of how bad the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission could get. Still, in one of his notebooks he wrote, "The 1817 news report that out of the mission currently in Beijing Hierodeacon Nektarii and Verger Pal'movskii have gone back to Russia. This is not very good."[24]

When he arrived in Beijing in 1821, Kamenskii was horrified by what he found. "Regarding the previous reports sent in by … Pestel, I cannot disagree; but I have discovered much else that is serious that was not mentioned there, especially things in which the denouncers themselves took part. To describe everything in detail would be, in my opinion, to befoul my very pen; I will only say that Arch. [Bichurin] in his person combines the qualities and properties of Cicero's Antony and Seneca's Hostius and Latro."[25] The ambiguity of this encoded classical description encapsulates Kamenskii's attitude to his colleague. Like (Mark) Antony, he is utterly amoral and unprincipled; like Hostius (Quadra), his sexual appetites have driven him to shocking and criminal extremes; like Latro, he is justly renowned for both eloquence and dissolution. Kamenskii never once cast doubt on Bichurin's sinological achievements: what he saw was a failure of morality combined with a profound failure of leadership.

[24] Pushkinskii dom, Peretts collection, n. 568, l. 229v. This notebook is not identified as being Kamenskii's work but the handwriting and contents leave no doubt.

[25] RGIA, f. 796, op. 99, d. 877, l. 145-146.

The new archimandrite did not, in the end, shrink from "befouling his pen." In sixteen large pages of tiny handwriting, he catalogued Bichurin's countless transgressions, from the sexual (sleeping with rent boys in the church altar) to the murderous (torturing or causing students to be tortured to death) to the merely ecclesiastical (not holding church services for years at a time) and administrative (destroying a belltower because it offered an unobstructed view of the garden in which his festivities took place). Kamenskii also made it clear that this was all common knowledge in the Qing capital. On one occasion, a rent boy of Hieromonk Serafim's was lured off the property and returned to the Lifanyuan, whereupon the child was sent into exile and "the whole capital roared with laughter." The most concrete manifestation of the Bichurin mission's obviously toxic renown were "inscriptions, insulting and dishonorable to the name of Russians, hung above the gates [of the mission compound]." Bichurin, then, was not simply an archimandrite like any other, content to drink himself into oblivion and descend into sporadic violence and illness. He had taken the absolute power of the head of a Beijing mission, effectively restrained neither by Russian nor by Qing law, to the furthest possible extreme.[26]

Most of the specific charges contained in the students' and Kamenskii's reports never made it into the final indictment announced against Bichurin in January 1823. Church regulations had strong protections against hearsay, and as no material evidence or witnesses could be presented in St. Petersburg to support many of them, the worst accusations were never investigated. Bichurin, however, amply confirmed Kamenskii's

[26] RGIA, f. 796, op. 99, d. 877, l. 147-154.

view of his character on his way home, before he knew that he was under suspicion. He seems to have abducted (or at least taken under false pretenses) the twelve-year-old son of an Irkutsk merchant, traveled with him in his carriage all the way west, then kept him in his cell up until the very moment investigators arrived. All of this was, if nothing else, a violation of ecclesiastical regulations, and was not difficult to confirm with the boy himself. In the end, although Bichurin was found guilty on eight separate points, his punishment was comparatively lenient; just as in the case of Platkovskii in the 1730s, the Russian Orthodox Church took a lax view of sexual crimes, including sodomy and the sexual exploitation of children, if they were not proved by ironclad eyewitness testimony.[27] Iakinf Bichurin was stripped of his ecclesiastical rank and condemned to live for five years as a simple monk at a remote monastery, though Golitsyn made sure this would be the relatively hospitable Valaam in Karelia rather than the forbidding Solovki. In fact he would not serve even that long.[28]

How was it that this remarkable case of crime and punishment became, in the eyes of Russian historians, a case of someone better-fitted for the academy than the priesthood being unjustly prosecuted for his intellectual priorities by a reactionary inquisition? It was surely not a question of reasonable divergences in interpretation. Although the very luridness of Bichurin's depravity might have provided grounds for skepticism, there was no attempt to grapple with the information actually contained in the documents. Instead, Soviet historians went through the trial papers and surgically excised offending material in their presentation of their contents. This is how P. E.

[27] See Muravyeva, "Personalizing Homosexuality and Masculinity in Early Modern Russia."

[28] RGIA, f. 796, op. 99, d. 877, l. 207ff.

Skachkov, the most renowned Soviet historian of Russian sinology, presented the Bichurin case: "The substance of the indictment was [Bichurin's] refusal to attend church for 12 years, his sale of church property, total neglect of missionary obligations, poor oversight of subordinates, etc."[29] Even the most recent biography by the leading Bichurin expert P. V. Denisov, published in 2007, presents the sexual accusations in such a way that they seem to be completely ungrounded attempts to discredit the sinologist orchestrated by his enemies.[30] Conveniently, Russian historians' explanations of the mission's disastrous course tend to rest on the claim that in 1812 its salary was not sent from St. Petersburg because of Napoleon's invasion of Russia, leaving the missionaries to fend for themselves amid increasing poverty and despair. There is no real evidence for this and the students' denunciation in fact explains that the money was sent, put out for loan by Bichurin and the hieromonks, and then frittered away. Bichurin's letters from 1812-14, finally, never mention a missing shipment. The only reason this narrative seems to have survived is its usefulness in protecting Bichurin's status.[31]

The Academy's experience with Klaproth and the Synod and College of Foreign Affairs' experience with Bichurin both served to illustrate just how difficult it would be to renew Russian sinology as a public intellectual project. It was not enough to hire a

[29] Skachkov, *Ocherki istorii russkogo kitaevedeniia*, 97.

[30] Denisov, *Slovo o monakhe Iakinfe Bichurine*, 90–91.

[31] The citation for this claim is typically either to Nikolai Adoratskii, "Otets Iakinf Bichurin: biograficheskii etiud," *Pravoslavnyi sobesednik*, March 1886, 164–80; 245–78; or to N. S. Shchukin, "Iakinf Bichurin," *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnago prosveshcheniia*, September 1857, 111–26. Adoratskii cites an unpublished term paper from 1870 and Shchukin cites no sources at all. It seems unlikely that the students would invent a salary shipment if it did not actually arrive, since this could easily be verified by the reviewing authorities in Russia.

foreign expert, because Russia's strategy of acquiring young, unattached experts from the German lands had proven more risky than expected. It was also not enough to appoint an intellectual with strong language skills to head the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission: as Bichurin demonstrated, the Mission's century-old legacy of authoritarianism, violence, and drunkenness was alive and well, threatening to erode the very foundations of the special Russo-Qing relationship on which Russian sinology's claims to prominence rested. The Mission and the Academy would both be central to the reconstruction of intelligence as sinology, but each would have to undergo intellectual and structural transformations of their own.

2. Rebuilding the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission

By the first decade of the 1800s, even before Bichurin left for Beijing, it was becoming clear that the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission could not satisfy either the academic or the religious demands placed on it by state institutions. It consumed few enough funds and personnel that it could apparently stagger on indefinitely without reform, but aside from the training of a handful of translators it could do nothing else. In the long term it could not even expect to maintain the existence of the Beijing Albazinians—who supposedly constituted its flock—as a cultural, much less a religious, community, and hence it was in danger of losing even the pretext for its existence. To flourish, the mission would need comprehensive institutional reform; in 1806, even Klaproth

weighed in with a proposal to make the mission actively "useful for the sciences" as opposed to merely producing "mechanical translators."[32]

Nobody understood this more clearly than the missionaries themselves. In 1809, having just returned from Beijing, Archimandrite Sofronii submitted a lengthy reform proposal which listed four obstacles to "converting the Chinese by means of preaching to the Christian faith" and a possible solution for each. The first problem was that archimandrites were too old to learn the Qing languages or to assimilate into Beijing culture, and thus "by reason of their unenlightenment subject themselves to mockery and contempt from the pretended-wise Chinese, who consider it greatly shameful to have barbarous and uneducated people as their teachers." The second was the lack of institutions; the third was, bizarrely, the archimandrite's own inability to extract unquestioning obedience from his subordinates; the fourth was the Albazinians' tendency to revert to heathenism shortly after their nominal conversion, although Sofronii saw that Jesuits often had the same problem. Sofronii's solutions centered around increasing the Mission's footprint in Beijing culture. This meant requiring the missionaries to learn the local languages and for at least one of them to learn medicine; establishing a seminary (where Qing languages would have to be taught as well) to teach Orthodox religious and musical practices to indigent children; increasing the power and impunity of the archimandrite; and, finally, Sofronii's two hobby-horses, using Qing dress and no longer referring to missionaries as "lamas." Above all, the mission required money—10,000 taels a year (30,000 rubles) on top of salaries and other

[32] Klaproth to Fuß, 2 Jun 1806, in Walravens, *Julius Klaproth (1783-1835) : Briefwechsel mit Gelehrten*, 145ff.

regular costs. Considering that the total annual salaries of the missionaries then added up to about 1,700 rubles a year, this was a wildly optimistic proposal.[33]

In 1816, after having been in Beijing for a decade, Iakinf Bichurin himself submitted a reform proposal. His overriding goal (unlike every other missionary before him) was to obtain permission to stay in Beijing for another ten years, albeit with a rotation of the other staff. In contrast to Sofronii, who emphasized proselytization and whose sinological efforts were lackluster at best (for all his insistence on language skills, Sofronii himself never learned Chinese), Bichurin judged the Mission to be a primarily intellectual enterprise. He therefore encouraged student salaries to be raised and students to be sent to the Mission already trained in "Russian literacy and in part in many other sciences," among which would be knowledge of Tatar and Mongol. The hieromonks and hierodeacon would spend their time researching Chinese, art, and the material culture of the area. Since the central axis of Bichurin's plan was his own guiding role—he was to shepherd the arriving missionaries through their initial years of studying the basics of the language, and then act as academic director for the remainder of the decade—the reform made little sense without him. When the Synod decided not to leave the archimandrite in Beijing, no doubt in part as a result of the controversy already swirling around him, Bichurin's reform plan was shelved.[34]

The restructuring proposal that ultimately won favor with the state apparatus in 1818, including Emperor Alexander himself, combined features of Sofronii and

[33] RGIA, f. 796, op. 86, d. 167, l. 207-212. Salary information can be found in, e.g, OR RGB, f. 273, k. 27, n. 2, l. 160-163.

[34] RGIA, f. 796, op. 86, d. 167, l. 401-410.

Bichurin's plans with other, unexpected innovations. Although it was officially the work of Siberian Governor-General Pestel', in fact it was composed by the future archimandrite Kamenskii, then known by his secular first name Pavel. Kamenskii has recently emerged in Russian scholarship as an alternative to the monolithic role traditionally attributed to Bichurin. Taking note of Kamenskii's part in Bichurin's condemnation, Soviet scholars generally viewed Kamenskii as an obscurantist, doctrinaire religious conservative whose primary opposition to their hero was religious in nature. In reality, Kamenskii was a highly paradoxical figure, as much secular Enlightenment idealist as pious monastic, and his life and career are a powerful source of insight into the crossroads faced by Russian sinology in the first decades of the nineteenth century.[35]

Kamenskii was born in 1765 near the major Volga trade center of Nizhnii Novgorod, the son of a village priest. Although he graduated from the local seminary, there is no indication he wanted to follow his father into the clergy; instead, he tried to use its educational opportunities as a springboard to a university career. After a few years spent teaching in one of Catherine II's new schools for commoners, Kamenskii was finally able to go to Moscow, although he attended Moscow University for less than a year. After a brief stint as the overseer of an orphanage in St. Petersburg, Kamenskii learned that a new mission was going to China and asked to be attached to it

[35] Shatalov, "Arkhimandrit Petr (Kamenskii) - nachalnik 10-i Rossiiskoi dukhovnoi missii v Pekine"; A. B. Chegodaev, "Mongol'sko-man'chzhursko-kitaisko-russko-latinskii piatiiazychnyi slovar' P. I. Kamenskogo: voprosy ego sozdaniia i izdaniia," *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta* 1, no. 13 (2011): 8–10; The only book-length biography of Kamenskii is V. Datsyshen and A. B. Chegodaev, *Arkhimandrit Petr (Kamenskii)* (Hong Kong: Sts. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church, 2013).

as a student.[36] His resolve did not last long: when the mission was already in Irkutsk, Kamenskii tried to use the recent death of his brother as an excuse to be relieved of his duties, but by the time the request was received it was already too late.[37] For the next fourteen years, Kamenskii would be in Qing territory, "babysitting," as he would put it later, "Sofronii's childishness, God rest his soul."[38]

Although by all accounts Kamenskii was known in Beijing as an industrious, well-behaved student, the mission came close to destroying him psychologically. In one of his frank, unrestrained notebook scribblings, he described his experience as a colossal waste of human life:

> We all suffered for 14 years. For many reasons related to this service, we deserved attention and pity. We lost, one might say, our best years … There, we suffered contempt by the mores of that nation; having returned to our homeland, with the blunting of our abilities and with our inevitable ignorance of customs here, we must at the very least distance ourselves. Our marriageable years passed without estate, without skills in service, and therefore there is no hope to obtain the common happiness of humanity. This is what China has rewarded us with! … This mission costs so much, but bears so little fruit. We ourselves are embarrassed to look at our translations.[39]

According to this somewhat melodramatic account, Kamenskii's fourteen years in Beijing had robbed him of a chance to have a normal life by the standards of early nineteenth-century Russian society: in his mid-forties by the time he returned, without

[36] Datsyshen and Chegodaev, *Arkhimandrit Petr (Kamenskii)*, 1–37. Kamenskii's recommendation letters are in RGIA, f. 796, op. 73, d. 327, l. 4-10.

[37] RGIA, f. 796, op. 73, d. 327, l. 136-152.

[38] RGIA, f. 796, op. 99, d. 877, l. 147.

[39] OR RNB, f. 550, FXVIII-24/1, l. 62.

commensurate rank, achievements, or family connections, he could not have been a desirable match for a woman of his social class. His service record to some extent belies his own bleak assessment. In 1809 he was appointed translator for the College of Foreign Affairs (together with his fellow student Stepan Lipovtsov); in the next few years, he became part of high-profile organizations like the Russian Bible Society, the Free Economic Society, and the Imperial Benevolent Society, and in 1816 he finally earned hereditary nobility. Yet he clearly believed that his skills had been ill-spent in Russia.[40]

One reason for this was Kamenskii consistently found that the intelligence he compiled, much as Agafonov and Rossokhin had before him, inspired little interest in St. Petersburg. While still in Beijing, Kamenskii composed a series of notes and translations for the benefit of the Golovkin embassy, but these were never used or acknowledged in any way; neither were the miscellaneous strategic suggestions he continued to compile after his return.[41] In 1810, Kamenskii tried to present the Imperial Medico-Surgical Academy with a large collection of "Chinese drugs, seeds, and books related to natural history and medicine," hoping that it would be able to "appoint a skilled healer with whom he would be able to translate them." The seeds failed to sprout due to poor oversight by botanists. Moreover, owing to the "inadequate condition of medicine in China," the Medical Council concluded that translating the books "cannot bring any benefit." Although the books were ultimately deposited in the Academy of Sciences library, and Kamenskii was paid a handsome 1,500 ruble reward

[40] RGIA, f. 1341, op. 10, d. 2086, l. 5; RGIA, f. 796, op. 99, d. 877, l. 52-55.

[41] OR RNB, f. 550, FXVIII-24/3, l. 112ff; PD, Peretts coll., n. 568, 144-159, 208, and *passim*.

for his services, his hopes of making himself useful on a regular basis by collecting pragmatically beneficial intelligence had evaporated.[42]

If the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission was going to train experts with intellectual clout, this needed to be done in advance and in close consultation with state authorities. Over the course of his decade back in Russia, Kamenskii continuously drafted and evolved his reform plan for the Mission as both a religious and an intellectual organization. To do so, he needed to take inspiration from the only other approach he knew to have worked in the Qing empire: that of the Jesuits. "The Roman church," Kamenskii wrote "does not suffer expenses in vain. Its mission, also consisting of no more than 10 people, works enviably. It would be good if ours could imitate them at least in part. Their preachers are first trained so well in their faith that they not only sacrifice their leisure, abilities, and properties for it, but are also willing to sacrifice their lives … The Chinese are cunning, but they are no simpletons either." Specifically, Kamenskii cited the Jesuit practice of training young Chinese students in their seminary to use as translators or catechists, as well as the generally better material conditions of their mission. He believed that during the Adeodato persecution in 1805, he and the other Orthodox students saved the Jesuits from complete destruction by providing the Lifanyuan with a favorable translation of captured correspondence.[43]

Although Kamenskii's opinion of Jesuit learning was low, he admired them greatly as authors of liturgical texts. Matteo Ricci's *Tianzhu shiyi* was in his view "the

[42] RGIA, f. 733, op. 12, d. 59.

[43] OR RNB, f. 550, FXVIII-24/1, l. 64ff.

best book for the conversion of pagans. I translated it into Russian." He went on to list four other Jesuit texts he had translated for the use of the Russian mission, because "the Russian church in Beijing does not have any translations into Chinese at all." These included a children's scripture, Guilio Aleni's *Wanwu zhenyuan*, and other material especially adapted for the use of new converts. Kamenskii asked that these translations be "in time, looked over and ordered to be given to new and converting Christians." To the extent that Kamenskii's reformed mission would refocus its activities on spreading Orthodoxy among the Albazinian and other Beijing populations, it would be using materials and approaches borrowed from the Russians' Catholic rivals. [44] At the same time, Kamenskii's first draft of his instructions was careful to note that Jesuit privileges could not be replicated by missionaries who did not arrive to serve the Qing emperor directly.[45]

This convoluted revision history is important because the final version of the instructions omitted any reference to the Jesuits at all, effectively obscuring the inspiration for Kamenskii's reforms. Instead of referencing specific works like *Tianzhu shiyi* in which Jesuit writers had polemicized with local Qing religions, Kamenskii wrote that "All the clerics without exception … have the obligation to learn Chinese, without which no preaching can be conducted. They cannot be brought to true faith, if their former delusions are not studied and rejected first. Therefore the essence of the task requires that all the faiths of China must first be examined and refuted." Nonetheless, the other major components of Kamenskii's draft remained stable. This

[44] OR RNB, f. 550, FXVIII-24/3, l. 392-395.

[45] OR RNB, f. 550, FXVIII-24/2, l. 91-97.

was especially true of his oddest innovation, which he now called a "secret bureaucratic office [*prisutstvennoe mesto*] equal to eparchal consistories, which has as its sole task the glory of God, the good of the Sovereign and the fatherland." The office would hold votes and keep a journal, the ecclesiastics taking on roles as secretary and treasurer. With this new institution, in which the authority of the tsar's instructions would be vested, Kamenskii hoped to replace the authoritarian rule of the archimandrite by a bureaucratized collective government—a kind of constitutional revolution imagined for a tiny society of ten in the middle of the Qing empire.[46]

The most ambitious part of Kamenskii's proposal—aside from a dramatic rise in pay and honors at every level, from student to archimandrite—was the academic division of labor he envisioned for the missionaries. One of the vergers would study the Tibetan language as well as Buddhist practices. The four students would each study Manchu and Chinese as well as their own specialized research subject: medicine; philosophy; history and political economy; arts and crafts. Each student would be assigned an organization to affiliate to in St. Petersburg, from which they would be issued instructions—the Medico-Surgical Academy, the Academy of Sciences, and the Free Economic Society. (The medical student would also act as a mission doctor and endear himself to Beijing dignitaries by treating them with European methods.) Finally, a detailed structure would be put in place in advance to reward missionaries for diligent labor either in proselytization or research, so that they would not find themselves lagging behind their peers in terms of social advancement. At least one member of the

[46] OR RNB, f. 542, n. 661, l. 1-3.

mission would be persuaded to stay behind on a voluntary basis in order to guide each new rotation through its initial years in Beijing.[47]

Kamenskii seems to have envisioned all this at least in part as a response to Governor-General Pestel', who in 1817 had asked him to comment on a possible plan to secretly turn the entire mission into a secular, academic affair—one more suited to the Russian Empire's intelligence-gathering and diplomatic needs. The former missionary agreed that "It is very just and well-known, that the ecclesiastical missions, over the course of a whole century in nearly every single respect, have been if not entirely useless for our fatherland, then at least as damaging [as they were useful], which Your Excellency yourself knows from former as well as current affairs." But Kamenskii firmly believed, with reason, that the Qing government (with Jesuit help) would immediately see through any attempt to abolish the religious character of the mission, and besides, the qualities of a secular official were not well-suited to missionary work.[48] In fact, the real strength of Kamenskii's approach—which he only fully realized in the coming decade—was that the administrative, religious, and scholarly components of the mission reinforced each other. Studying Qing languages and books kept missionaries from boredom and idleness, which generations of commentators had identified as key causes of the drunkenness, violence, and melancholy that plagued each successive mission. Language skills enabled the missionaries to create and participate in an urban religious community, which broke down the walls of isolation around the mission, while successful proselytization provided them with native informants. Meanwhile, the

[47] OR RNB, f. 542, n. 661, l. 3ff.

[48] PD, f. 288, op. 2, d. 34.

"constitutional" reforms enabled accountability while also holding out the lure of reward after the mission's term ended.

A set of instructions reproducing Kamenskii's proposal in every meaningful sense, if not quite word-for-word, was approved by the emperor in July 1818. The search for an archimandrite had already begun. In the minds of Golitsyn and Foreign Minister Nesselrode, there could only be one possible candidate: Kamenskii himself. In September 1817, he accepted—but just as he did during his first departure for Beijing, he immediately developed second thoughts. In January 1818, Kamenskii wrote to Nesselrode that "Your Excellency, by insisting on my opinion, has forced me to declare that service in Beijing, in terms of private and personal good, compares to service in the depths of the fatherland as a long and unalterable period of suffering compares to a long period of pleasure. To voluntarily choose the worse is contrary to nature, and therefore I refuse to go." But in the absence of any other suitable candidates, over the course of a year, Kamenskii was finally prevailed upon to agree. (The promise of a second-degree Order of St. Anna, formally awarded to him in December 1819, no doubt played some part in his decision.) On May 3, 1819, less than two months after accepting the position, Collegiate Assessor Pavel Kamenskii became the monk Petr; on May 8, he was raised to hierodeacon; on May 9, to hieromonk; and finally, on May 15, he became an archimandrite and was awarded a diamond-studded pectoral cross. It took almost another year and a half for the mission to enter Qing territory.[49]

[49] RGIA, f. 797, op. 2, d. 6352, l. 1-26; RGIA, f. 796, op. 99, d. 877, l. 14-62.

The solidity of Kamenskii's institutional arrangements was put to the test almost immediately. In addition to the discovery of the true state of Bichurin's mission, which sent him into a panic, his handpicked hierodeacon Izrail turned out to be a conman who, "being still an untonsured commoner, hiding under the mask of impenetrable hypocrisy, insinuated himself into the staff of this Mission with the long-term plan of enriching himself and departing with the money for further improvements of fortune." A decision of the newly established council voted to dismiss Izrail from the mission's ranks.[50] In May 1821, the rattled Kamenskii proposed an even more radical political solution, in which the archimandrite would become a kind of ceremonial head of state, while active leadership would pass to his hieromonk Veniamin Morachevich. He wrote, "Through this, Iakinf's repressive system would be totally destroyed, for instance, a Student would submit his request to an Inspector, who would make his representation to the Director, who would either decide personally or submit it for decision to the Council." This liberal of a reform failed to receive imperial approbation—after all, Alexander and his officials had just spent time and money persuading the jittery sinologist to take up his leadership role—and the panic soon subsided. Thereafter Kamenskii's letters from Beijing report a uniformly flourishing mission whose material state, intellectual achievements, and conversion activities continually reached new heights. Though the archimandrite was clearly not an unbiased observer, the fact that no one in his mission died either a natural or unnatural death during that decade was a

[50] RGIA, f. 796, op. 99, d. 877, l. 145-146.

significant—and hitherto unparalleled—development in the history of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing.[51]

The religious and administrative components of Kamenskii's reform had thus proved to be a success. The impact of his intellectual framework, however, is more difficult to evaluate. After all, unlike the allegedly persecuted Bichurin, Kamenskii never became a public intellectual—instead, after his return from Beijing in 1830 he refused all honors, retreated to a remote monastery, and remained there until his death in 1845. Indeed, in a sense Kamenskii had failed to shape the intellectual agenda even of his own mission. As we will see in the next section, his ideas about the sort of knowledge a missionary sinologist were expected to generate were reframed by the Academy of Sciences and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' newly established Asiatic Department in ways that paralleled the emergence of professional sinology in Paris, London, and Berlin. Kamenskii's thinking belonged to the eighteenth century, but his superiors in St. Petersburg would make sure the mission's work belonged to the nineteenth.

3. Mission Reform and the Remaking of Sinology

Emperor Alexander's approval of Kamenskii's wide-ranging project for the Mission forced individuals and institutions beyond the Synod to collaborate on setting an intellectual agenda for the new rotation. Through the book collection purchased on behalf of the missionaries and the research agenda set forth for them by academics, the

[51] RGIA, f. 797, op. 2, d. 7012, l. 1-2; RGIA, f. 796, op. 99, d. 877, l. 299ff.

mission reform was given concrete intellectual form. Kamenskii's proposal, after all, specified only the kinds of research the students should pursue, in maximally broad strokes. It said nothing about research questions, methodology, or the form which the eventual scholarship would take.

On becoming archimandrite, however, Kamenskii immediately assembled a list of books he thought the mission would require. He was a prolific reader of both sinological and general literature; this is reflected in his many notebooks, which contain detailed commentaries on Bentham, Amiot, Raynal, Macartney, Müller, and Chulkov (author of a lengthy work on Russian commerce).[52] He was most vociferous, however, in rejecting Amiot's approach to sinology, which through the vast collection *Mémoires concernant les Chinois* had shaped the terms of China-related discussion in eighteenth-century Europe.[53] "It cannot be said that the work of the Jesuits in publishing their Chinese Memoirs does not deserve much public approbation," Kamenskii wrote, "But the truth demands an acknowledgment that in flattering Europe with news, and trying to be useful to it, they supported their conceptions with excessive decoration – these Memoirs are written eloquently, but cannot be relied upon except as similar to truth." In Kamenskii's view, the Jesuits had deliberately concealed how much they relied on direct adaptations of texts from native informants with their own biases, and then further exacerbated the problem by adding their own Christian bias. This both reflected and contributed to a dramatically mistaken sinophilia which had systematically exaggerated how enlightened the Qing empire really was: "Not knowing their holy

[52] See OR RNB, f. 550, FXVIII-24/1-3 and PD, Peretts, n. 568.

[53] See, e.g., Joseph Dehergne, "Une grande collection : Mémoires concernant les Chinois (1776-1814)," *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient* 72, no. 1 (1983): 267–98, doi:10.3406/befeo.1983.1461.

books, [a reader] would consider [their contents] a fairytale contrary to reason or a libel against this famous people. In China, reason never had the chance to work independently."[54] In this way, Kamenskii was taking part in a broader European reaction against *chinoiserie* which emerged in the second half of the eighteenth century.[55]

Kamenskii's selection of books revealed his expectation that the missionaries would, like himself, strive to be men of letters in the Catherinian vein: his original list included works by Adam Smith, Hugo Grotius, Francis Bacon, the abbé Mably, Cesare Beccaria, and Adam Ferguson, as well as a wide and generalist selection of less famous compositions, especially travel and historical literature. The Synod immediately regretted giving Kamenskii authority over the mission library. Assigned to evaluate his choices, Archbishop Filaret of Tver' concluded that

> Under the heading of Religious Books there is no full bible in Slavonic listed … Among the Latin books, the first place after the Bible is occupied by Goudar's [sic] *Lutheran Theology*, meanwhile there are no copies either of [Petro Mohyla's] *Orthodox Faith* or [Moscow Metropolitan] Platon's *Theology* … Among the commentaries there is Einhorn's Commentary on Revelation, a completely anti-Christian composition … by these examples one can judge what sort of selection has been made for the Mission in terms of religious books … the selection for other fields of knowledge is no better. This is so obvious it is unnecessary to give examples … what is needed is not to correct the list but to make it anew.

The new list was to be composed by the Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy in cooperation with the Asiatic Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but the latter

[54] OR RNB, f. 550, FXVIII-24/3, l. 298ff; f. 550, FXVIII-24/1, l. 59.

[55] See, e.g., Chi-ming Yang, *Performing China : Virtue, Commerce, and Orientalism in Eighteenth-Century England, 1660-1760* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 148ff.

institution—which had until recently employed Kamenskii himself and still employed his friend and colleague Lipovtsov—took the leading role.[56]

Paradoxically, the new library was both much larger, amounting to some three or four hundred distinct books, and much more specialized. With the help of Filaret and Foreign Minister Nesselrode, most traces of generalism were utterly expunged, including many works on recent Russian history and literature as well as guides to Russian-language style. On the other hand, Kamenskii had conspicuously omitted some of the most renowned recent sinological works, including books by Abel-Rémusat, Langlés, Klaproth, and Morrison. This omission was now decisively rectified, and the library fairly groaned under the weight of specialized Qing-related reference works and linguistic compositions. Philosophy and theology—the domain of the Ecclesiastical Academy—were well-represented, but the historical and natural-scientific portion overwhelmingly reflected the priorities of European orientalism. The only major group of sinological scholars not represented were Russians. Only a single work by Leont'ev—his collection of Qing laws—made it into the mission library, and on a supplementary list at that. The main list featured a book Klaproth published using Leont'ev's name as a pseudonym (*Lettres sur la littérature Mantchoue traduites du Russe du M. Leontiew*) and the deeply obsolete, century-old *Museum Sinicum*, but not a single work by anyone associated with the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission.[57]

The same process took shape in a more complex way at the Imperial Academy of Sciences. In December 1819, the President received an order to compose a "detailed

[56] RGIA, f. 797, op. 2, d. 6352, l. 126-140.

[57] RGIA, f. 797, op. 2, d. 6352, l. 174ff.

instruction" in academic matters for the mission's four students, which would require a committee of four academicians to be convened.[58] They were encouraged to use as a model the instructions the Academy had composed for the benefit of Golovkin's scientific entourage in 1805. Though the latter have not survived, it is likely that the 1819 instructions were longer, more substantial, and more focused on humanistic topics than anything the Academy had composed regarding Qing studies in the previous century (after all, Klaproth had been the only liberal-arts academic in Golovkin's entourage).

The 1819 instructions dealt with history, antiquities, astronomy, geography, zoology, political economy, and mineralogy; most were composed first in German, then translated into Russian. But although the exact sciences seemed to predominate, the page count was weighed disproportionately towards historical and source-critical questions. Even the astronomical section, written by Vikentii Vishnevskii, was primarily focused on the history of Chinese astronomy, a field pioneered by Antoine Gaubil in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Moreover, while the mineralogist Vasilii Severgin, for instance, presented his list in the form of thirty numbered queries, the antiquarian Christoph Frähn/Fren (a frequent correspondent of Klaproth's even after the latter's self-imposed exile from the Academy) composed a lengthy essay in which the actual questions were inserted nearly parenthetically as a kind of departure from the primary text. In contrast to the queries for the Jesuits issued to Lorents Lang by the academicians in 1734, which were composed off-the-cuff and

[58] SPb ARAN, f. 1, op. 1a, d. 29, l. 121.

without consulting any of the available published sources, the 1819 instructions relied on close and critical readings of the entire spectrum of printed scholarship about the Qing empire. Even the mineralogist's questions referenced specific reports and included phrases like "A notice from 1775 argues that Chinese saltpeter is purer than the European."[59] Running to nearly twenty thousand words, this new document was less a set of general queries than a massive programmatic statement about the state of Qing studies in the early nineteenth century.

The section on political economy, written by the Baltic German Genrikh fon Shtorkh (Heinrich von Storch) was the most obviously revealing part of the document. If in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries China was often considered by European philosophes to be an ideally well-governed commonwealth in which pacific emperors and literati arranged policies for the benefit of all, Shtorkh represented an emerging sinoskeptic tendency. "Information communicated to us by travelers to China contains many contradictions with respect to the political condition of this country," Shtorkh wrote. "If our travelers find occasion to resolve these contradictions or explain the essence, then they will not only enrich our information about the Qing Empire unknown to us in many respects, but will also serve to explain the theory of political economy with important examples." Shtorkh was far more interested in the latter than in the former: his very first question, "How widespread is the division of labor in China?", contained a basic explanation of Adam Smith, borrowing the famous pin factory example nearly word-for-word (though Shtorkh reduced Smith's 48,000-pin

[59] SPb ARAN, f. 2, op. 1, 1819.1, l. 103-109.

figure by an order of magnitude). He made it clear that what he expected was not an objective resolution of the assorted contradictions in existing accounts, but proof that China's agrarian economy was more primitive and inefficient that industrializing Europe: it "distances itself from its own goals and obstructs the activity that it aims to encourage." Jesuit observers, in Shtorkh's view, had blinded Europeans to the fatal defects of the Qing political and economic structure, and the Russian missionaries were well-placed to refute them.[60]

Rather than simply gathering texts and information, then, the Russian missionaries were expected to provide ammunition for intellectual quarrels between European academics. This was made equally clear in the instructions on history, written by Philipp Krug (with the help of N. N. Bantysh-Kamenskii, author of a large manuscript history of Russo-Qing relations). Krug's interest was above all in one task: confirming Joseph de Guignes's hypothesis of an identity between Buddhism (the religion of "Fo," the Chinese word for Buddha) and Christianity, which Krug believed to be "supported by well-founded reasons."[61] Not content to let the students learn from the historical material they found on the spot, Krug provided them with a strongly Guignesian capsule version of Chinese and Eurasian history incorporating references to classical European as well as Arabic sources. If nothing else, he wrote, "at least the young man for whom I have written [these instructions] will not complain like the Jesuit Amiot, who says: it is amazing, that Scholars, who are the most subtle Critics, sometimes send a poor Missionary five or six tasks, of which even the smallest would if

[60] SPb ARAN, f. 2, op. 1, 1819.1, l. 75-102.

[61] For an analysis of this remarkably ill-conceived argument, see App, *The Birth of Orientalism*, 188–253.

done well demand many years of labors and investigations of the Scholar himself. My desires are more modest."[62]

Frähn the antiquarian made this kind of preparation, in which European compositions were to be the point of departure for any new research to be conducted by the students, an explicit part of his instructions: "If I were to undertake a voyage to China, I would not only consult with the few learned men spread out through Europe who have dedicated themselves exclusively to Chinese literature and ask them to turn my attention to subjects hitherto considered doubtful or unworthy of respect; I would spend at least half a year carefully examining all the lengthy compositions related to China and its history." Like Krug, Frähn was focused on confirming or disconfirming the work of De Guignes, Gaubil, and de Mailla, prominent French writers who had taken an interest in Inner Asian history and the conquests of Chinggis Khan. This meant, above all, providing "a true and complete translation of a substantial and full work" about the Mongol Yuan dynasty and its Chingisid antecedents. The study of historical Chinese numismatics and inscriptions was to form an ancillary focus for this work, along with research into material culture like bronzes, weapons, and so on.[63]

These questions, especially Frähn's, may seem like obvious points of departure for young scholars who would, in all likelihood, have neither basic Qing language training nor any kind of specialized historical preparation. What better tool to guide research than questions about lively current debates? Yet what each of the academics

[62] SPb ARAN, f. 2, op. 1, 1819.1, l. 29-48.

[63] SPb ARAN, f. 2, op. 1, 1819.1, l. 49-66.

ignored was the entire previous century of Russian knowledge-production about the Qing empire. Making use of this would not have even required consulting the Academy's new ex officio corresponding member, Archimandrite Petr Kamenskii, who as Qing-language translator would have access to the papers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—or, indeed, Bantysh-Kamenskii (no relation to the monk), who had just assembled those papers into a substantial book.[64] All the Academy would have to do was to consult its own library and archives, which contained the whole surviving corpus of the works of Larion Rossokhin, Aleksei Leont'ev, and numerous other graduates of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission. The Academy had printed many volumes of Leont'ev work a few decades earlier. None of the existing Russian sinological material was even consulted in the process of assembling these instructions, though the academicians assembled citations to sometimes obscure Western publications. In the case of Frähn's attempts to procure Russian translations of historical works on Inner Asia, this was a particularly glaring omission: thanks to Rossokhin's immersion in the Manchu-inflected book culture of Yongzheng-era Beijing, the Academy had long possessed unique original and translated works of Inner Asian history.

As envisioned in the Academy's instructions and in the books with which the mission was now equipped, the rebirth of Russian sinology entailed the wholesale forgetting of its eighteenth-century past and a reorientation towards the debates felt by St. Petersburg academics to be the truly important ones—that is to say, those which

[64] SPb ARAN, f. 1, op. 1a, d. 30, l. 98, 118. For the Bantysh-Kamenskii book, see Bantysh-Kamenskii, *Diplomaticheskoe sobranīe del*.

academics like Klaproth carried on in Paris, London and Berlin. For the mission to become "useful to the arts and sciences," it needed to not only undergo massive structural reforms but to conform to an unexpectedly specific definition of usefulness. The dawn of Russian sinology had little to do with Kamenskii or Bichurin as individuals and everything to do with the collective decisions of state-linked, institutionalized official bodies.

4. Russian Sinology in the Nineteenth Century

It is unclear whether any of the research goals set forth in the Academy's instructions were actually realized. Graduates of Kamenskii's mission, like Kamenskii himself, published little; they went on to largely to minor careers teaching Manchu and Chinese at the new educational institutions, like the Kiakhta language school, that began to open in the reign of Nicholas I. In doing so they helped bring into being the most important long-term consequence of Kamenskii's reforms: the creation of a unified continuity between different mission rotations and between the Mission and its surrounding institutional landscape. Between Kamenskii's mission and 1917, every mission included at least one member who had taken part in the one before, while departing members were routinely channeled into established academic bodies as opposed to ad-hoc, short-lived pedagogical experiments (like the schools of Rossokhin, Leont'ev, and Vladykin). Although the missions did not remain free from scandal, they ceased to be a perennial embarrassment to Russia.[65] Sometime after 1825, an anonymous Siberian poet even composed a verse "On Meeting the Returning

[65] Veselovskii, *Materialy dlia istorii rossiiskoi dukhovnoi missii v Pekine*, 47ff.

Ecclesiastical Mission in Kiakhta," which congratulated the unnamed "venerable elder" who leads the mission for having served "with honor and benefit" and now proceeding to "certain reward" from a Tsar who recognizes "the fruits of mind/Of labors so immense."[66] Needless to say, such a poem hardly have been written about almost any of the missions before Kamenskii's, certainly not Iakinf Bichurin's.

The Synod and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs began preparing for the 1830 mission well in advance. Their new instructions displayed complete confidence in Kamenskii's arrangements, but with even more elaborate provisions for preliminary linguistic training. Ironically, this was one of the reasons Bichurin was able to reenter professional life as a sinologist: he was one of the only people judged capable of teaching the future missionaries Chinese. With Nicholas I's accession to the throne at the end of 1825, Bichurin's brief period of punishment was first lightened, then came to an end entirely. In 1829, he was appointed honorary librarian at the Imperial Public Library in St. Petersburg, his first salaried position post-Beijing.[67] State patronage proved equally crucial for Bichurin's early publications. The same year, Nesselrode wrote to the Ministry of Education to encourage the dissemination of Bichurin's *Opisanie Pekina* (*Description of Beijing*) and *Istoriia pervykh chetyrekh khanov iz doma Chingisova* (*The History of the First Four Chingisid Khans*) to schools and universities across the Russian Empire. The aggressive ministerial campaign provided relatively

[66] OR RNB, f. 775, n. 1098, l2-3.

[67] RGIA, f. 796, op. 104, d. 714; RGIA, f. 733, op. 15, d. 116

meager sales—less than fifty copies of each volume by the end of 1832—but a healthy thousand-ruble return.[68]

As of 1830, Russia's bid for world academic prominence seemed in danger of faltering. In 1824-27, Egor Timkovskii, the escorting officer for the 1822 Mission, published his travel journals along with a number of works by Bichurin, first in Russia and then in Germany, Britain, and France. The French publisher, from whom the British edition was sourced, hired Julius von Klaproth to act as consultant, and Klaproth proceeded to savage Bichurin's translation. The reviewer for the *Asiatic Journal* was not impressed, describing his remarks as "splenetic and illiberal" and noting that "in the present work he has displayed an unusual share of ill-humour." Yet he did not omit first to say that "As inaccuracies seem so abundant in this publication, while novelty and interest are so rare … we shall here take leave of the original author, expressing our disappointment and regret that his work contains so little to gratify curiosity."[69] Being the victim of a transparently unjust attack did not give either Bichurin or Timkovskii any more intellectual credibility in the eyes of western sinologists.[70]

It took until the second half of the century for the Russian Empire's investment in its new Mission to pay off in international academic prestige. Although Bichurin had

[68] RGIA, f. 733, op. 232, d. 10.

[69] Egor Fedorovich Timkovskii, *Puteshestvie v Kitai chrez Mongoliiu, v 1820 i 1821 godakh* (S. Peterburg: Tip. Meditsinskago departamenta, 1824); Egor Fedorovich Timkovskii, *Reise nach China Durch die Mongoley in den jahren 1820 und 1821* (Leipzig: Fleischer, 1825); Egor Fedorovich Timkovskii, *Voyage à Peking, à travers la Mongolie, en 1820 et 1821 ..* (Paris: Dondey-Dupré père et fils, 1827); Egor Fedorovich Timkovskii, *Travels of the Russian Mission: Through Mongolia to China, and Residence in Peking, in the Years 1820-1821* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1827).

[70] *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register,* Jan-Jun 1827, XXIII:822-824.

made a successful career in Russia, Klaproth helped make sure his work was sidelined in the West by emphasizing the supposedly slavish adherence to Qianlong-era editorial practices in the texts he published. It did not help that Bichurin defended demonstratively false hypotheses about Inner Asian history.[71] The first Russian sinologist (as opposed to Mongolist) whose international reputation was on a comparable level was I. I. Zakharov, member of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission from 1839-1850. In the 1870s, after having served as Russian consul in Kulja, he became a university professor and published a Manchu grammar and dictionary which proved superior to anything then available in any language other than Chinese, superseding existing references in Russian as well. These became standard tools for manjurists in Europe. "But why use the native [Chinese] works at all," asked the German manjurist Paul von Möllendorf in 1886, "since all of them have been condensed and placed in our hands in the form of Sacharoff's admirable complete lexicon? Of course you will say, it is in Russian! Now-a-days no excuse; for students of Manchu, Mongol, and other Asiatic subjects a knowledge of Russian has become a *conditio sine qua non*." Russian sinology had finally achieved the international recognition it had craved for so long.[72]

The Mission's entanglement with the Russian diplomatic bureaucracy proved, in the long run, to be far more durable and consequential. After the founding of the Asiatic Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1819, the Mission was formally subordinated to it. This meant that it was implicated in the Department's escapades

[71] Heinrich Julius von Klaproth, *Rapport sur les ouvrages du P.H. Bitchourinski: relatifs à l'histoire des Mongols*. ([Paris], 1830). See also David Brophy, "Tending to Unite? The Origins of Uyghur Nationalism" (Ph.D., Harvard University, 2011), chap. 1.

[72] P. G. von Möllendorf, "Ula Grass," *The China Review* 15, no. 3 (1886), 180-181.

abroad, which frequently tested the limits of official tsarist foreign policy. Notably, this included the stepwise 1850s annexation of the Amur region, a process in which the Asiatic Department was deeply implicated. Kodrat Krymskii, one of the students in Kamenskii's mission, was in fact a member of Nikolai Murav'ev's team during his annexation of the Amur in 1855-58; Archimandrite Palladii, head of the 1849-60 mission, was one of Murav'ev's most trusted advisors. By the time the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission's primary compound was targeted and destroyed by nativist Chinese rebels during the Boxer Rebellion of 1899-1901, it had long been a key point of intersection between Orthodox religious interests, sinological research agendas, and foreign-policy maneuvering, not to mention being the major training center for Russia's China hands.[73]

In 1825, the orientalist Aleksandr Rikhter published an article in Grigorii Spasskii's *Aziatskii vestnik*—a journal that, like Abel-Rémusat's *Journal asiatique*, exemplified Russia's emerging institutionalized orientalism—surveying the state of Oriental studies in the Russian Empire. "Russia's might in Asia," Rikhter wrote, "must encourage its sons to labor more than other Europeans in obtaining knowledge about the creations of this vast territory and the peoples that inhabit it." Up to that point, however, Russia had consistently disappointed Europe's expectations. Only recently had signs of hope begun to emerge. The founding of *Aziatskii vestnik*'s predecessor, the *Sibirskii vestnik*, in 1818 had been one of them; dictionaries by Bichurin and Kamenskii

[73] V. G. Volovnikov, "Vklad v izuchenie Vostoka Diplomaticheskogo vedomstva Rossiiskoi Imperii v XVIII-nachale XX veka" (Institut vostokovedeniia RAN, 2004); Galen Blaine Ritchie, "The Asiatic Department During the Reign of Alexander Ii, 1855-1881" (Ph.D., Columbia University, 1970); see also Bassin, *Imperial Visions*; Paine, *Imperial Rivals*.

were another. Yet Rikhter also listed, as legitimate achievements of Russian sinology, numerous works by Leont'ev and Agafonov. "The venerable Leont'ev, who had rendered so many services to his fatherland by means of his translations, is now almost forgotten," Rikhter lamented; he himself seems not to have known about Rossokhin at all. Their era was now clearly over. To equal the achievements of its Western colleagues, Russia needed to develop an "Oriental Society, such as those in Paris, London, and Calcutta." The way forward seemed unambiguously to point west.[74]

By 1830, then, Russian authorities had definitively reoriented the production of knowledge about China toward public scholarship buttressed by recognized, prestigious personalities and represented by publications, societies, and academic debates. As the first Russian sinologist to come of age as a scholar in that period, Bichurin was the first beneficiary of this new intellectual culture. Here, to a great extent, lies the explanation for his later prominence as an explanatory force in the "establishment" of Russian sinology. The system of academic authorship, unlike that in which Rossokhin and his colleagues had languished in the eighteenth century, dictated that the career of the scholar be given as much prominence as the texts that scholar produced. Bichurin, with his social graces and skill at networking, was better-positioned than anyone else to take advantage; Kamenskii, having retreated to a distant monastery, was hardly a real competitor. In a sense, it was the Bichurin era after all.

[74] [Aleksandr Rikhter], "O sostoianii vostochnoi slovesnosti v Rossii," *Aziatskii vestnik*, no. 8 (August 1825): 81–154.

Conclusion

Knowledge and Power, Ignorance and Weakness

Count Iakov Lambert, the man responsible for the intelligence-related aspects of the Golovkin Embassy, looked back on the century that preceded him with utter contempt. "The escorting officers that accompanied missions back and forth to Beijing," he wrote in a memorandum,

> sometimes received secret instructions from our Government, as for example the last officer [Vasilii] Igumnov, who escorted the mission in 1793, was ordered to discover the name and rank of the British ambassador … All of Europe already knew of the accomplishments of this embassy, but the officer *Igumnov* was ordered to find out *his name*! This would seem to be sufficient to know who it was who was giving these *secret instructions*, and who was to execute them!!! … It can be said almost definitively that they only read these instructions on the way back. …In addition to the numerous advantages our scholarship could have received from our mission in Beijing, there was also the possibility of learning much from the escorting officers, if only the government deigned even slightly to look into the advantages over other European States that Russia has enjoyed for over a century in acquiring knowledge about the Qing Empire.[1]

There were, of course, several ironies involved in Lambert's claim. The first was that he was reading the wrong documents, and that Igumnov had not only reported unique and useful intelligence in 1793 but had been doing so for over half a century. The second was that Lambert's embassy would, in part owing to bad intelligence, become the greatest diplomatic debacle in the history of Russo-Qing relations. The third was that Lambert was in fact contemplating not an age of benighted indifference to "acquiring

[1] RGIA, f. 1643, op. 1, d. 33. (The note is unsigned and may have been written by someone else, although it is in Lambert's personal papers.)

knowledge about the Qing Empire," as he thought, but a period of unparalleled interest and in certain respects even of success.

Such episodes of amnesia were not rare occurrences in the history of the Russo-Qing relationship: they were the rule. Even as eighteenth-century Westerners eagerly sought copies of Nicolaas Witsen's 1705 *Noord en Oost Tartarye*, the seventeenth-century Russian manuscripts on which Witsen had so extensively relied, and which had been compiled at the highest levels of Muscovite officialdom, were being consigned to dusty antiquarian collections and forgotten—with the sole exception of Nikolai Spafarii's translation of Martino Martini's *Novus Atlas Sinensis*, which lived a long and rich life as a circulating manuscript. In the 1750s, the officials drafting a caravan director's instructions for acquiring maps forgot that they had already received such maps less than two decades earlier. In the 1770s, the man who tried in vain to write Larion Rossokhin—one of Russia's most prolific translators and collectors of Chinese and Manchu texts—into Russian literary history forgot his first name, and his successors forgot he ever existed. The men who had conducted Russia's secret campaign of espionage and secret diplomacy against the Qing in the 1750s were consigned to oblivion even by the early nineteenth-century historians who had access to their first-person reports.

It is this last type of forgetting that is in some ways the least surprising. Scholars in nineteenth-century Russia, the Soviet Union, and the contemporary Western academic world all had good reasons to omit the phenomenon of Russian intelligence-gathering from their picture of Russo-Qing relations. The first wanted to emphasize the disciplinary modernity and intellectual credibility of Russian sinology and Inner Asian Studies; the second were driven by their own political calculations to portray Russia

and China as natural allies sharing a non-conflictual special relationship; and the last, lacking access to archives, have been forced to rely on the materials made public by the first two. Restoring the intelligence structure as it existed between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries into a coherent structure, bound together by individual personalities as well as documents and institutions, has been one of this project's central objectives.

Another goal, however, has been to make sense of the lack of knowledge on display both in the documentary record and in its reception elsewhere. It is no accident, after all, that intelligence-gathering has been unusually subject to forgetfulness on the part both of its practitioners and its chroniclers. If its materials were not explicitly secret, as many documents in fact were after the first quarter of the eighteenth century, they were never public documents. But all documents require archives, and Russian imperial archives in the eighteenth century were famously chaotic: tax records, for example, were kept in enormous stacked chests, of which the bottom strata remained for all practical purpsoes inaccessible.[2] Hence the production of limited-circulation texts with institutional audiences, no matter the actual investment of funds or effort on the part of people or bureaucracies, carried the permanent risk of forgetting. When secrecy was involved, knowledge-production was also the production of ignorance, contemporaneously and by design in the case of outside readers, unintentionally and in the future in the case of internal ones.

[2] E. S. Korchmina, "'Mnogie milliony gosudarstvennoi kazny v neizvestnosti nakhodiatsia': nedoimki po podushnoi podati 1720-kh - 1760-kh gg," *Rossiiskaia istoriia*, no. 5 (2013): 77–91.

Ignorance had real effects in the material world. The Russian intelligence structure never succeeded in creating a self-enclosed world of discourse, in which the terms as well as the objects of study were determined by the needs and categories of power. Indeed, the reason it was developed so assiduously was that Russians could not but confront the strength and regional influence of their competitor. Moreover, it was too frequently disturbed by the human lives of the people on which it relied. Mongols made for convenient informants, except when they knew how valuable they were and tried to make the most of their position; missionaries might have been well-placed sources, but the violent, liquor-soaked world they made for themselves turned them from a solution into a problem. It was only when the Russian state managed to sever nearly all the links connecting it informationally with the Qing that it began to indulge fantasies of global power centered on the North Pacific, listening far more closely to projectors in St. Petersburg than to its own officers in Eastern Siberia (who were themselves not above idle scheming). Russia's competitors, for their part, were seduced by the promises of privileged intelligence access contained in putatively secret documents and published sources, and pursued policies that were doomed to failure as a result.

Neither knowledge nor lack of knowledge, then, was enough to overcome the material disparities faced by Russia on its Eurasian frontier. Relative weakness remained a constant regardless of the intelligence policies it adopted or failed to adopt. No significant group of Qing subjects, whether Mongol, Turkic, or Manchurian, chose to defect to Russia, and no unexpected conflict gave Russian border officials the pretext to execute their ambitious strategic plans. Instead, the future of Russo-Qing relations would depend on the problems faced in the mid-nineteenth century by the Qing empire

itself, borne out of both internal and foreign conflict. The Opium Wars and the Taiping Rebellion provided the Russian Empire with the opportunity to negotiate from a position of strength; in the case of the Second Opium War, Russian gains—territorially the greatest of any imperialist power—were directly based on exploiting the Qing government's desperation. As a strategy for gaining power, knowledge had become a dead end.

The fact that knowledge was not power not only undermined the logic of the intelligence apparatus set up by Russia; it also represented a major shift for European observers. In the middle of the seventeenth century, statesmen and scholars all over Europe looked at China as a beacon of commercial, intellectual, and cultural potential, offering the promise of wealth as well as global civilizational convergence. Muscovy's earliest ventures eastward thus became interesting to a variety of audiences as an indication that this convergence was to be realized together with Europe's commercial ambitions. Just as merchants in London and Amsterdam made thousands from the trans-Muscovite rhubarb trade, so too did agents and diplomats exploit Muscovy's emerging potential as a source of sinological knowledge. Well into the eighteenth century, Western Europeans avidly sought out rumors and documents about the war they thought was coming between Catherine and Qianlong or the embassy they thought had established lasting alliance between Peter and Kangxi. By the nineteenth century this was no longer the case. British and American commercial vessels began to prove definitively that Russia's China trade was of regional rather than global significance, and the work of its agents and missionaries became objects of academic and not political curiosity (in contrast to Central Asia, where Russian advances gave the initial impetus to British fantasies about the "Great Game").

The production of public scholarship by academics in Russia—knowledge supposedly severed from the pursuit of power—thus came to displace intelligence in the early nineteenth century. This did not mean that state power had allowed individuals to step in where bureaucracies had failed. Scholars were supported and guided by state institutions from the very beginning of their careers, which were made possible by a reformed Russian Ecclesiastical Mission molded according to the priorities of the Ministry of Education and Spiritual Affairs. In an era when cultural prestige was becoming as important as military prestige (the latter of which Alexander I had established by bringing his army to Paris) publications and European intellectual prominence were important state concerns. Academic knowledge was thus not primarily differentiated from intelligence by its inspiration or even, frequently, its contents. It was the culture of authorship and audience that surrounded it. The foreign-policy establishment of the eighteenth-century Russian Empire was content to let authors be forgotten and their texts remain buried. No longer. Bichurin, who was known to a large number of Qing and Siberian subjects as the epitome of a corrupt and morally depraved administrator, became the first beneficiary of this new culture—one reason why he was so fondly remembered by later generations of Russians and Soviets as the founder of modern sinology in the Russian Empire.

The changes this narrative has traced are thus deeply bound up with changes in the nature and movement of knowledge. From a view of knowledge that saw a unique kind of authority in the pragmatic, the secret, and the anonymous—the defining characteristics of texts that were so powerful, at least in theory, that they could stand in for the bodies of soldiers—Russo-Qing relations shifted to prioritizing scholarly careers and abstract intellectual goods. But although the value of the latter hinged on Russia's

place in a European and worldwide literary marketplace, the former proved just as effective in creating and sustaining long-distance textual connections, albeit ones animated by real or delusional conspiratorial dreams. Both kinds of knowledge can teach us about Russian and Eurasian intellectual life in the long eighteenth century, a period whose scholars have yet rarely ventured far from capital and court. This work, I hope, has begun to remedy that.

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