

**SCTMG 2020****International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the  
Context of Modern Globalism»****"MAKHACHIN" AND CULTURE OF VIOLENCE AT THE QING  
BORDER IN DZUNGARIA**

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***Abstract***

At the beginning of the New Age, the interests of three state formations called "empires" clashed in Central Asia: Qing Empire, headed by the Manchu clan Aisin-Gyoro, the Russian Empire, ruled by the Romanov dynasty and the "last nomad empire," the Dzungarian empire led by Tsoros clan descendants of Hara-Hula. As a result of this confrontation, the Dzungar Khanate ultimately left the historical arena, marking the end of the history of nomadic empires in world history. In Central Asia, sedentary powers began to compete, forever interrupting the traditional opposition of sedentary and nomadic formations. The problems of the development of the territory of Central Asia by the Qing Empire, the formation of state borders here and the incorporation of the local population into the empire has recently received a new development, and has attracted attention due to actively researched with an emphasis on so-called "Dzungarian heritage". The Qing Empire was actively expanding towards Central Asia, until in the middle of the XVIII century, it stopped its conquests, finally destroying the Dzungar Khanate. The expansion of Qing in various directions, until this time, found expression in the intricate dance of diplomacy, coercion, and all kinds of exchanges. However, the implementation of the Qing expansion in Dzungaria at the last stage took place in conditions of violence and ruthless destruction of the Oirat population. The culture of violence against the Dzungars was reflected in the phenomenon called "Makhachin," information about which is full of Chinese and Manchu sources.

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**Keywords:** Oirats, punitive detachments, Xinjiang, the border.



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## 1. Introduction

In the middle of the XVIII century, it was a turning point in the history of one of the Oirat ethnopolitical, state formations – the Dzungarian Khanate. As a result of the confrontation with the Qing Empire, the Dzungar Khanate ultimately left the historical arena. The two-thousand-year history of nomadic empires in world history is over. The Qing empire, in turn, acquired vast territories, which in Chinese historical materials were called the term "Xi Yu" 西域, and the acquired possessions bordering Central Asia were subsequently transformed into the administrative-territorial unit of the empire, which became known as the phrase "Xinjiang" 新疆. Previously it was believed that the Qing empire (1644–1911), led by the Manchu clan Aisin Gyoro, in their relations with the northern and western peoples (where the Oirats belong) and states relied on a "Sinocentric" approach: "China" – "Barbaras." In the historical science of China, this approach still prevails, in which one of the main principles is the idea of Great Unity" 大统一. The idea of Great Unity" is the idea of the eternal union of many "nationalities," supposedly continuously existing from ancient times. However, this idea hides the real tension and internal contradictions inherent in the process of all empires in China, including the Qing Empire. Speaking of the Qing empire, a more scientific approach boils down to the fact that Qing is an empire in both China and Central Asia (Dmitriev & Kuzmin, 2014). With the destruction of the Dzungar Khanate and several years after that, the Qing authorities implemented the terrifying practice of total extermination of the Oirat population, which led to the frequent use of the new term "makhachin" in Chinese.

## 2. Problem Statement

The modern geographical structure of China was determined during the Qing Dynasty through the expansion and incorporation of territories, including in Central Asia. In this regard, the history of the Qing periphery can in no way be secondary to understanding the past of China. Cross-border experience makes the Qing story different from other eras of dynastic rule (Elliott, 2014). The remoteness of Dzungaria from China with vast distances, barren deserts, and low-yielding lands protected the nomads, blocking the plans of previous Chinese dynasties to design their expansion into the territory of the Western Territory of Siyuya. Nevertheless, the issue of remoteness was resolved precisely by the representatives of the Manchu Qing dynasty through the logistics arranged by them. In the Qing Empire, the problem of supplying supplies to its troops was successfully resolved in practice. Qing, during the reign of Emperor Hongli (1735–1796), in his border policy in the Dzungaria, began to lean toward the strategic pole "for war" (and not "for peace"). Such a course led to the classic bureaucratic solution to the problem of the naughty steppe: to destroy everything that was moving and create a clean board (Perdue, 2005). This process led to a Qing war of extermination against the Oirats, as reported by Russian sources about the mass destruction of the Dzungarian population (Zlatkin, 1961). The historical materials of the Qing Dynasty were replenished with a new term that did not previously exist in the sources, referred to as "makhachin" 瑪哈沁, and applied only to the Dzungarian population. Therefore, the author of this publication attempts to summarize the available information about this phenomenon, which had no previous precedents for nomads of the studied region.

### 3. Research Questions

Previously, we have already considered the features of the material heritage of the Dzungars in the Central Asian region (Ochirova, Kukeev, Dyakieva, & Ochirova, 2019). However, in this publication, I would like to mention the Makhachin phenomenon that took place in the Qing-Dzungar confrontation. The first information about the Makhachin began to appear in the reports of eminent officers, who became the primary materials of the Zou Jae 奏折 in Manchu. The Manchu language was the primary means of communication at the Qing court and was also a secret military and political means of communication with the Qing nobility (Crossley & Rawsky, 1993).

In addition to information from the Manchu-speaking "Zou zhe," one can find frequent references to "mahachin" in the Chinese-language compilation collections "Pingdin Zhungaer fanlue" 平定 準噶爾方略 ("The Highest Approved Description of Pacification of the Dzungars") and "Qing Shilu" 清 實錄 ("True dynasty] Qing"). Moreover, this term even falls into a work from the genre "Zhiguai Xiaoshuo" 說 小說 ("Tales of Miracles") in Chinese, which is characterized by a description of unusual cases and meetings with otherworldly forces. One of these works is Yuewei Tsaotang Biji 閱 微 草堂 筆記 (Record from the Hut. Great in the Small), authored by an exiled Xinjiang Qing official Ji Yun 紀 昀 (1724–1805) (Ji, 1974).

### 4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the article is to study the "makhachin" phenomenon associated with the borderlands of China and Russia in Central Asia, which are reflected in the written sources of the Qing Empire, and the works of modern foreign historiography.

### 5. Research Methods

The methodology is based on the principle of objectivity, which includes studying the essence of the object from different angles, methods of interpreting traditional texts and formal logical tools, a systematic analysis of the scientific works of representatives of the studied hypotheses. A comprehensive concept is applied, implying that the Qing Empire is not just a Far Eastern empire with a "Confucian" model of controlling the Han majority in ethnic terms. The Qing Empire is a multinational empire led by the Manchu nobility, actively applying Central Asian concepts, methods of war, and diplomacy on all its borders with the Russian Empire.

### 6. Findings

"Makhachin" is a tragic phenomenon with a contradictory nature. For Qing historiography, the Makhachin was a "predatory" rebellious element (Kukeev, 2018). Possibly, the Machans were refugees, which is still little known in Russian oriental studies. The genesis of the word "makhachin" is not entirely clarified, but comes from the Mongolian "meat" and means "meat-eater." In the above-described Qing sources, this word is used for denoting groups of people of Dzungarian origin who have gone to the mountains in search of saving lives or confronting Qing punitive forces. Undoubtedly, the theme of

"predation" is noticeable here. "Makhachin" is a nickname that was first used by Qing soldiers in their reports to their Oirat opponents. Then, the creators of Qing official historiography in their collective works began to use this term. Such a phenomenon with a bias toward "predation" in the mountains and border areas can be found in different parts of the Eurasian oikumene. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the highlanders fought against a centralized (and often colonial) state in Burma and Afghanistan, the Balkans and the Maghreb. In Western Europe, similar phenomena can be found in mountainous Scotland, Corsica and the Pyrenees. In the Russian Empire, similar phenomena are striking and have been noted more than once by pre-revolutionary researchers of the abbreviation (Bobrovnikov, 2002). Apparently, until 1757, Qing was called the "makhachin" of those Dzungars who did not recognize the Qing government. However, starting in 1757, the Qing punitive detachments launched a ruthless campaign to track down and kill almost all Dzungars by origin. From this time until 1762, the Dzungars were referred to as "makhachin." In such a situation, some of them managed to survive due to the small number of pets. Those people who did not have cattle were fed hunting. Still, others were engaged in banditry. The Qing of all of them called the Makhachin (Levey, 2014).

Qing authorities and the military deliberately used the term. By the term "makhachin" they meant fleeing the Dzungars, who allegedly eat the human flesh of their fellow tribesmen. It should be noted here that the Qing chroniclers have already applied this technique and, in precisely the same manner, described the story of the Cossacks under the leadership of Khabarov in Amur. Qing chronicles attributed cannibalism to Khabarov's subordinates, which was reflected even in high school textbooks on the history of China in our time. So, in a paragraph entitled "War for Yaksu" it is reported that "Tsarist Russia from the middle of the XVII century began to invade Chinese territory in the area of the river. Heilongjiang, in Yaks (Albazin) and Nibuchu (Nerchinsk), Russians built fortresses that served as strongholds for the expansion of aggression. In Chinese territory, [Russians] killed, burned, robbed, and even, like wild animals, ate human flesh. They were heroically opposed by Qing troops and representatives of different nations" (Ten, 2010, p. 128).

"Makhachin" were present in almost all the mountain forests of the former Dzungaria: Urumqi, Manas, Kur-Karassu, Ili, Yulduz, Irtysh and even on the easternmost outskirts of Dzungaria - Barkul. There was a "makhachin" in Kobuksar, which is referred to as "He-bo-ke" 博克 in Pinyin Zhungar fanlue: for example, according to a complaint from the Kazakhs in 1762, 20 Kazakhs were robbed by Oirat makhachin in the Kobuksar district during a hunt (Pinyin, 1983–1986). In the Kunger Ulyausutu area, north of the Kobuksar Mountains (here referred to as "Sali Shan" 薩里山), 50 "makhachin" attacked the Qing Mongols accompanying the Kazakhs. In 1761, one of the famous leaders of the Makhachin was a certain Sai-bu-ten 塞卜騰, i.e., Septen. A Qing commander Chengjujabu acted against him and his detachment, who sent 300 soldiers, as well as a certain Yizhu, who was trying to find Septen in the Altan-Tebshi area 阿勒坦特卜什 (Pinyin, 1983–1986).

The Qing punitive campaigns against the Makhachin turned out to be incredibly brutal. So, Wei Yuan 魏源 (1794–1857) in his history of Qing military campaigns, "Sheng-u-ji" 聖武記 ("Notes on the wars of the holy wise [emperors]") estimated the total number of the Dzungarian population at 200 thousand families. Wei Yuan stated that during this confrontation, forty percent of the Oirats died of smallpox, twenty percent migrated to Russia, the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, and thirty percent died in battles

with the Qing army (Chernyshev, 1990). Benjamin Levy refers to reports of Qing officers in the Manchu language that have not yet been put into the scientific circulation of Russian oriental studies. Benjamin Leviticus also notes that Qing commanders boasted in official reports to the throne about a considerable number of "makhachin," which they mercilessly killed during the military campaign. Awards and honors were given to those commanders who reported massacres, and those who pursued a policy of slaughter with insufficient zeal were censured. These massacres were not limited to those jungars who carried out cattle herding or carried out attacks on Qing detachments; women and children were also hunted and put to death.

An example is the following case. Thus, reports from the Qing military discussed the expedition of 1758 in the mountains near Ili against the Dzungars. These reports show the extreme cruelty of these campaigns. A company of Qing soldiers captured a jungar named Barang. Interrogating him under torture, they found out that a large group of his associates was hiding in the Cihir Hada mountains. They forced Barang to become their guide and lead them to where his friends and family were hiding. The report of the commander: "Thanks to the actions of Barang as a guide, after a two-day transition, we reached Chihir Hada. We noticed that the mountains were extremely massive, completely rocky, and also very high and steep. There was a single passage for access and exit to the mountains. We tied the warhorses together because they could not climb, and at night climbed on foot to a high mountain ... [Makhachin] were on foot and were not able to escape. We destroyed them all. Bataille and Balo captured one bandit alive; we killed all the other men, women and children. Having gone down from the mountains, we alternately interrogated the bandits named Barang and Temur. We asked them: is there any "makhachin"? They [Barang and Temur] said: "In the vicinity of the mountains where we lived, there were no other "makhachin" bandits. Since last year, and to this day, we have not seen a single "makhachin" in Chihir Daba. The snow was buried, and we were generally unable to catch any wild beast [for food]. In the face of death, we wanted to steal horses either from the post station or from the [herd of Qing] troops we encountered. Suddenly we ran into you [punitive squad]. We asked them under torture: "[You say] that you did not see other "makhachin" next to you, however, how did you not hear about all the bandits who are hiding here and there? Answer quickly, or we will cut off the flesh until we die." They replied: "We do not know anything else." One of the bandits died during torture. We repeatedly tortured another gangster, but since he no longer gave new answers, we killed him" (Levey, 2014, p. 1759)

Other reports to the court convey similar stories. For example, two Qing commanders, Sangtu and Koymadai, were instructed to eliminate any of the Makhachin they encountered at the head of the Manas River. These two officers, dividing one hundred soldiers among themselves, went in different directions and planned to connect in a few days at the appointed place. In materials dated to the 23rd day of the 4th month of the 22nd year of Qianlong's reign, Sangtu and their people searched the dense vegetation on the banks of the Manas River. However, they could not find any trace in the mud. The next day, when they headed downstream, they were more successful: in an area called Sira Dala, they encountered a group of Dzungars and killed 17 women and three men. Patrol Koymadai, "less fortunate." During patrolling, they stumbled upon a camp with ten tents hidden among the trees. When the Koimadai soldiers approached the camp, twenty Jungars fled into the forest, taking firearms with them. The Qing detachment rushed after

them in pursuit, but the horses began to get stuck in the mud, and those remained invulnerable. A volley of fire rang out from the forest, and three people from the Koimadai detachment fell dead. The next day, Koimadai teamed up with the Sangtu squad, and they chased and killed the Dzungars, who fled into the forest. The report brings the following information: "On the twenty-fifth day of the fourth month, we took our entire squad and officials to the forest, where the bandits fled. The area was swampy, log-dense with reeds. When it became impossible for the horses to move forward, we hurried the troops, rushed in pursuit, and attacked. We cut twenty-one bandits: ten men, six women, and five young children" (Levey, 2014, p. 1760). The Qing military tortured a wounded prisoner of the jungar and found that four of his associates had escaped their raid. They chased these four survivors for two days until they were left alone after it rained, which washed away their tracks.

## 7. Conclusion

From the above military reports, one can easily see the cruelty with which the Qing waged their campaigns against the Dzungarian "makhachin." The scenes described above, in which Qing soldiers enslaved, massacred women and children, and tortured unfortunate prisoners, were not isolated incidents. Qing troops made numerous sorties into the mountains between 1756 and 1762 for the specific purpose of cutting oirats. The aim of these campaigns was not just the destruction of the Dzungarian soldiers who actively resisted Qing. Instead, the goal was to destroy a large number of Dzungars, some of whom were not involved in military resistance.

Thus, the confrontation between the Qing and the Dzungars, the conquered territories development in the Dzungaria, and the new territories incorporation gave rise to the emergence of the new term in the official languages of the Qing empire, among which is "makhachin." These terms served as the criterion that excluded one or another object of description from the "civilized kingdom." Exclusion from the "civilized kingdom" and Qing resistance was punished by physical extermination, which fully corresponded to the brutal culture of violence on the Qing borderland concerning the Dzungars.

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