

## Daily Life of the People of Kashgaria at the End of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: Evidence of Russian Traveler M.V. Pevtsov

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The province of the People's Republic of China, the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region has historically been known under various names – Eastern Turkestan, Chinese Turkestan, Kashgaria, etc. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century this region was one of the least explored in Western scholarship and for the influence over which the so-called ‘Great Game’, geopolitical rivalry between Great Britain and the Russian Empire, gradually unfolded. This rivalry was one of the significant factors stimulating increased interest in an in-depth and comprehensive study of the geography, nature, and population of Kashgaria. Accordingly, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, several expeditions were organized that pursued serious academic goals alongside military, diplomatic, and commercial purposes. One of these expeditions, organized by the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, was the so-called ‘Tibetan expedition’ led by a talented scientist and military figure M.V. Pevtsov in 1889-90. The expedition followed the routes of Eastern Turkestan, the northern outskirts of the Tibetan Plateau, and Dzungaria studying this vast region's geography, topography, nature, climate, and population. The results of this investigation were presented by M.V. Pevtsov in a detailed and comprehensive report published in St. Petersburg in 1895. An important part of this narrative is the so-called “Ethnographic Essay of Kashgaria,” which reflects the author's observations and thoughts on this region's ethnic composition, religious beliefs, language, customs, and rituals. This article offers insights and analysis of the content of Pevtsov's report, which provides valuable information about the daily life of the population of Kashgaria at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to an English-speaking audience.

**Keywords:** Kashgaria, Eastern Turkestan, China, Central Asia, Inner Asia, Pevtsov, everyday life, 'Great Game', Yakub Bek

## Introduction

The prominent Kazakh enlightener, scientist, and Russian officer Captain Chokan Valikhanov, who was sent to Kashgar for reconnaissance purposes in 1858, described the vast region of Central or Inner Asia in the west of modern China, historically called Eastern Turkestan, Chinese Turkestan, or less often Kashgaria in the following way:

Eastern Turkestan is enclosed by mountains on three sides: by the Tien-Shan on the Northern, the Bolor on the Western, and Kuen-Lun on the Southern. These mountains belong to the highest ranges of Central Asia, and form the natural limits of the Western portion of the Chinese Empire... To the eastward, Eastern Turkestan is bounded by the uninhabited sandy deserts of the Makhai and Kamul Gobi. It occupies consequently a plain between 36° and 43° North latitude, and 70° and 90° West longitude, from the meridian of Paris.<sup>1</sup>

The complex and winding history of the region is replete with periods of economic and cultural upsurge, usually associated with the heyday of the Silk Road, the trade routes which crossed these lands, and periods of decline and degradation caused by prolonged internal strife and external challenges. By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century this region, which was once the abode of prosperous cities with an extensive infrastructure of trade routes and handicraft production, a pluralistic culture that embodies the monuments of Buddhism, Manicheism, Nestorian Christianity, Islam, had emerged as one of the underdeveloped regions of the world and was little-explored in Western scholarship. So much so that Europeans considered it as a kind of thing in itself, 'terra incognita' in the very depths of Asia.

But it was from this time that geopolitical rivalry between two empires – the 'land force', Russia and the 'sea power', Great Britain – began to unfold in these remote regions of Central Asia. According to G. Morgan, there was an important difference between the goals and objectives of the two empires in striving for Asia. While Russia viewed its eastward movement as a natural expansion of its own territory, Britain prioritized protection against anything it considered as a threat to its dominion in India.<sup>2</sup> Received with the light hand of the English captain, Arthur Conolly, this confrontation largely determined the historical fate

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<sup>1</sup> Capt. Valikhanov, M. Veniukov, and other Russian travellers, *The Russians in Central Asia: Their occupation of the Kirghiz Steppe and the line of Syr-Daria: Their political relations with Khiva, Bokhara, and Kokan: Also descriptions of Chinese Turkestan and Dzungaria*, trans. John and Robert Michell (London: Edward Stanford, 6 Charing Cross, 1865), 109-110.

<sup>2</sup> Gerald Morgan, *Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Central Asia: 1810-1895. Epilogue by Geoffrey Wheeler* (London: Frank Cass and Co., Ltd., 1981), 10.

of many Asian countries in the 19<sup>th</sup>– early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>3</sup>

The flip side and more productive consequences of the ‘Great Game’ was the feverish desire of Western players to acquire more reliable scientific information about the previously unknown or little-known regions of Central and Inner Asia, for which they entered into a long and stubborn struggle with each other. Numerous expeditions organized along the ancient routes of the Silk Road, abandoned and forgotten by that time, although undertaken primarily for military and intelligence purposes, nevertheless, made a significant contribution to the scientific study of this region. One of the main reasons for that was the fact that these expeditions were often led by talented researchers, travelers, and true enthusiasts. And today, their reports, travel notes, and diaries are often the primary sources for our knowledge of the geography of many regions of Central Asia and the ethnography of the local people. Perhaps, without these sources, modern science could hardly judge fairly the history of these lands.

One of such attempts at field research in Inner or Central Asia, undertaken at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the decision of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, was the so-called Tibetan expedition led by M.V. Pevtsov. Pevtsov’s comprehensive report on the expedition covers a wide array of scientific information about the geography, climate, flora and fauna, and population of vast territories of Kashgaria, the northern outskirts of the Tibetan plateau and Dzungaria. Perhaps, one of the most interesting parts of this report for historians and anthropologists is a brief “ethnographic” essay, which provides valuable information about the number, social and daily life, customs, and beliefs of the population of Kashgaria at the end of the 19th century. The main objective of this article is to give, as far as possible, a general overview for an English-speaking audience of the rich anthropological material that was accumulated during the expedition and described by Pevtsov in his report.

### **Study of Kashgaria in Russia and the role of M.V. Pevtsov**

Russia’s interest in Eastern Turkestan or Kashgaria first manifested itself under Peter I, who seriously nurtured the idea of finding a land route to India through Central Asia. This country was viewed as a natural continuation, in the geographical and ethnocultural respect, of West or later Russian Turkestan. Partly for this reason, at that time this country was called in Russia ‘Little Bukharia’. Peter the Great was so interested in the golden sand mined in Kashgaria that he had the idea to get to Yarkand, from where the merchants exported this sand.<sup>4</sup>

Serious academic research of the inner regions of Asia, including Eastern Turkestan, however, began in Russia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. So, in 1829 a work by the Russian Orthodox priest and sinologist Iakinf Bichurin “Description of Dzungaria and Eastern Turkestan”

<sup>3</sup> Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia* (London: John Murray, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> N.L.Zeland, *Kashgariya i perevaly Tyan-Shanya. Putevyye zapiski. (Zapiski Zapadno-Sibirskogo otdela Imperatorskogo Russkogo geograficheskogo obshchestva. Knizhka IX)* (Omsk: Tipografiya Okruzhnogo Shtaba, 1887) (in Russian), 127-128.

was published in St. Petersburg.<sup>5</sup> A significant contribution to the study of the history of the Uighur people based on written sources was made by Mirza Alexander Kazem-Bek, an outstanding Russian orientalist of Azerbaijani origin, who in 1841 published his “Studies on the Uighurs”.<sup>6</sup>

From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, a new, higher stage in the study of Kashgaria began in Russia. A number of reasons contributed to this. First, Russian science as a whole, including such areas as geography and ethnography, had by this time reached a significant level of development, becoming on a par with European science. Secondly, the steady and consistent movement of the Russian Empire to the east, the conquest of vast regions in Central Asia, and the aggravation of rivalry with Great Britain, another colonial empire, caused an urgent need to explore new lands with the prospect of their further subordination.

It is indicative that during this period an increased interest in the region of Central Asia is also observed in Russian social thought. Both academic and geopolitical aspects of this problem were vividly discussed on the pages of the Russian media. For instance, one of the authors expressed the attitude of Russian society towards the success of its empire in the Central Asian region in the following way:

For historical reasons, the authority of the Russian government over the past 30 years has swept the entire Central Asia or, more correctly, the entire Russian Turkestan in a wide wave. It is hard to say where this wave will stop and to what extent its powerful influence will reach. There is no doubt only that it is growing, not decreasing, and perhaps the bloody events taking place now in the Far East will create conditions under which it will cover most of the Asian continent, or at least those countries where the Mohammedan religion is professed.<sup>7</sup>

The striving of Russia to the east, to the depths of Asia, was justified in Russian public opinion for several reasons. First of all, as noted on the pages of the ‘Russkoye Delo’ newspaper of 1886, the Russian Empire pursued its own commercial and economic interests. The author of the article, Sokolov believed that Russian goods could not be competitive with Western ones in European markets, which were already overflowing with products of the local industry. Therefore, it was necessary to seize the markets of the Eastern countries. The second reason was substantiated by the ‘civilizational’ mission of Russia, which was directly bordered on the East and therefore, in the author’s opinion, had direct contacts with the ‘uncivilized’ nations of Asia. Due to this, the latter naturally not only succumbed to the civilizing influence of Russia but even sought her patronage. Thus, “the aspirations of Russia in the East were completely legal, moral and had an enlightening goal”, in contrast to the

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<sup>5</sup> *Opisaniye Chzhungarii i Vostochnogo Turkistana v drevnem i nyneshnem sostoyanii*. Perevedeno s kitayskogo monakhom Iakinom. Chast’ I (Sankt-Petersburg: v Tipografii Karla Krayya, 1829) (in Russian).

<sup>6</sup> A.K. Kazem-Bek, *Issledovaniya ob uygurakh* // Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniya. CH. XXXI (Sankt-Petersburg: ), 37-122 (in Russian).

<sup>7</sup> V. Sokolov, *Moskva-Samarkand* // Russkaya mysl’. 1894, № 10 (154-177), № 12 (ss. 159-186) (in Russian), 182.

intentions of Great Britain, which was far from the East, but acquired several large colonies there just for a predatory purpose. These colonies became the source of the power for England, which treated them only in terms of economic exploitation, and had a demoralizing effect on their population. The author concludes his thought with the following words:

The aspiration of the two states to Central Asia, of course, should have caused hostile relations between them and a struggle, and indeed, relations that cannot be called friendly have arisen for a long time, and a non-stop struggle not allowing any truce has been waged between the two powers for a long time. This is an economic war, more persistent, more inexorable than a bloody war.<sup>8</sup>

It is no coincidence that in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century both Russia and Great Britain organized a number of expeditions to the region of Eastern Turkestan for diplomatic, military intelligence, commercial, and scientific purposes. The Imperial Russian Geographical Society played a substantial role in the study of Central Asia in Russia. Vice-president of this society since 1873, P.P. Semyonov-Tien-Shansky was an outstanding geographer, traveler, and statesman who received a postscript to his surname for his exploration of the Tien Shan Mountains. An extremely significant contribution to the study of many regions of Central Asia, including Eastern Chinese Turkestan, was made by such Russian travelers, scientists, soldiers, and diplomats as Ch.Ch. Valikhanov, G.N. Potanin, N.M. Przhevalsky, A.N. Kuropatkin, G.E. Grumm-Grzhimailo and others.

In the same row is the name of Mikhail Vasilyevich Pevtsov (1843-1902). Under his leadership, with the support of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, the so-called Tibetan scientific expedition to Kashgaria, the northern outskirts of the Tibetan plateau and Dzungaria in 1889-1890, made a notable contribution to the discovery of vast regions of Central Asia for European science. Pevtsov's journey took place shortly after the collapse of the state of Yakub Bek and the short independent existence of Eastern Turkestan in the 1860s-70s, when the power of the Qing Empire was re-established there.

Mikhail Pevtsov was born in 1843. He was orphaned early and his childhood years were not easy. But in the military cadet school, where he was educated, he showed an extensive knowledge of history, geography, and mathematics. This uncommon combination of interest in the social and the exact sciences has contributed to the fact that his subsequent research and travel reports to Central Asia contained both accurate astronomical and gravimetric measurements as well as varied historical and ethnographic descriptions.

Pevtsov did military service in Tomsk, Siberia. After that, he entered the Academy of the General Staff in St. Petersburg, where he seriously prepared himself for the future career of a traveler. In 1867, he became a member of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society. Later, Pevtsov served in the Semipalatinsk region in the territory of modern Kazakhstan and in Omsk, in Siberia, where he became one of the most active members of the West Siberian branch of the Geographical Society. He made a trip to the mountainous Dzungaria,

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<sup>8</sup> V. Sokolov, *Nashi uspekhi na Vostoke* // Russkoye delo. 1886, № 27, 30 (in Russian).

a detailed account of which was published in 1879. Pevtsov's next trip took place in Mongolia and the northern provinces of Inner China in 1878-79. The report of this expedition was published in 1883.

Having such a rich experience of scientific expeditions and accumulated knowledge about many regions of Central Asia, Pevtsov, on the recommendation of the Geographical Society, led the Tibetan expedition, planned, shortly before his death, by the outstanding researcher and traveler N.M. Przhevalsky. This was Pevtsov's third and last trip to Central Asia. The report published by him in 1895 describes all the details of the expedition, which also included specialists in the geology, topography, mining, flora, and fauna of the region.<sup>9</sup> Pevtsov's group started their trip from the southern coast of Lake Issyk-Kul, then traveled through Yarkand, Khotan, the western end of the Taklamakan desert, the northern foothills of Tibet, and up to Urumqi, from where, crossing the Tarbagatai ridge, they reached Zaisan in the territory of the Russian Empire.

Among the substantial academic achievements of Pevtsov's expedition was the 'ethnographic' study of the population of Kashgaria. A short essay is devoted to this topic in the report of the Russian traveler.<sup>10</sup> In general, the essay very vividly and with knowledge of the matter describes many issues of ethnocultural and economic life along with the ethnographic features of the Muslim population of the region at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Pevtsov was quite modest in his assessment of the part of his work that deals with ethnographic issues. He notes that he was only able to briefly describe the everyday life of the local population ('*tužemtsy*' – natives) of Kashgaria based on fragmentary information that he managed to collect during his stay in the country. Therefore, he assumes, this work could not claim the merits of a special 'ethnographic' study. But it could be valuable as additional material to the scarce information on the ethnography of little-studied Eastern Turkestan that was available at that time.

Perhaps, Pevtsov had some grounds for making such a statement. It should not be forgotten that Pevtsov was, first of all, a military man, and a certain part of the research tasks facing his expedition also had military content. This factor could not but affect the scientific content of the expedition's results. It is no coincidence that the well-known Russian geologist, historian, and science fiction writer V.A. Obruchev noted that Przhevalsky and Pevtsov were officers who traveled with, more or less, numerous military escorts, which made them bolder, more independent of the local population and authorities, but on the other hand, prevented them from close and trusting contact and communication with the natives, often inspiring the latter with distrust or fear.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> M.V. Pevtsov, *Puteshestviye po Vostochnomu Turkestanu, Kun-Lunyu, severnoy okraine Tibetskogo nagor'ya i Chzhungarii v 1889-m i 1890-m godakh*. Otchet byvshego nachal'nika Tibetskoy ekspeditsii M.V. Pevtsova (Sankt-Peterburg: , 1895) (in Russian).

<sup>10</sup> Further, all references to Pevtsov's Report will be made for the following edition: M.V. Pevtsov, *Puteshestviye v Kashgariyu i Kun-Lun'* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoye izdatel'stvo geograficheskoy literatury, 1949) (in Russian). "Ethnographic essay of Kashgaria" covers pages 111-147.

<sup>11</sup> V.A. Obruchev, *Grigorii Nikolayevich Potanin. Zhizn' i deyatel'nost'* (Moscow – Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR,

However, despite Pevtsov's such modest assessment, it should be admitted that his work is a valuable eyewitness account and scholar's testimony about Kashgaria at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the article we refer mainly to the information that was obtained by Pevtsov, as they say, first-hand, as a result of his direct observations or communication with the local population. It should also be emphasized that in the second edition of his work from 1949, the first chapter of the report, devoted to a brief overview of the history of Kashgaria, was completely omitted, since, in the opinion of the editorial board, it contained some outdated material and not always correct data.<sup>12</sup>

### **Ethno-Demographic Composition of the Population of Kashgaria**

Pevtsov estimated the total population of Kashgaria at about 2 million, of which up to 90 percent was sedentary and only about 10 percent led a nomadic or pastoral lifestyle. These figures were, of course, rather approximate and were based only on information received from the local population and Chinese provincial officials. As reported by another Russian traveler doctor N.L. Zeland, who visited this country around the same years, statistics of marriages, mortality, births, and others did not exist in Kashgaria at that time.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, these figures are very different from those given by other travelers during this period. Thus, Sir Thomas Douglas Forsyth, an English colonial administrator and diplomat in India, sent in 1873 with trade and diplomatic mission to Kashgaria, reported that the country's population did not exceed 1.015 million people.<sup>14</sup> In 1877, Kuropatkin assumed that the total population of Kashgaria was about 1.200 million people, which testified to the sparse population of the country, since there were about 65 people per 1 square mile.<sup>15</sup> Przhevalsky in 1884 wrote that about 2 million people lived in Kashgaria.<sup>16</sup> The Russian consul in Kashgar, N.F. Petrovsky, according to Zeland, believed that no more than 1 million people lived in Kashgaria by the end of the 1880s.<sup>17</sup>

The sedentary population of the country consisted of a Muslim Turkic majority and a certain number of newcomers – Chinese, Dungans, residents of Western (Russian) Turkestan, mainly immigrants from the Fergana Valley or otherwise 'Andijanis', and a small number of Indians and Tibetans. Also, there was a small number of Romani (Gypsies), who by that time

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1947) (in Russian), 270.

<sup>12</sup> Pevtsov, *Puteshestviye v Kashgariyu i Kun-Lun*, 35.

<sup>13</sup> Zeland, *Kashgariya i perevaly Tyan-Shanya*, 138.

<sup>14</sup> Sir T.D. Forsyth, *Report of a Mission to Yarkand in 1873 under command of Sir T.D. Forsyth with historical and geographical information regarding the possessions of Ameer of Yarkand* (Calcutta: Printed at the Foreign Department Press, 1875), 62.

<sup>15</sup> A.N. Kuropatkin, *Kashgaria: Eastern or Chinese Turkistan. Historical and geographical sketch of the country; its military strength, industries and trade*, trans. from Russian by Walter E. Gowan (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1882), 34.

<sup>16</sup> L.G. Kornilov, *Kashgariya ili Vostochniy Turkestan. Opyt voyenno-statisticheskogo opisaniya* (Tashkent: Tipografiya Shtaba Turkestanskogo voyennogo okruga, 1903) (in Russian), 226.

<sup>17</sup> Zeland, *Kashgariya i perevaly Tyan-Shanya*, 135-136.

numbered only about 300 families and lived mainly in the Kashgar, and in small numbers in the Yarkand oases. The Chinese were second in number in the region, although they were “in an insignificant minority against the Kashgarian Sarts”.<sup>18</sup> Pevtsov assumed that there were about 6 thousand Dungans, Chinese Muslims, who moved to Kashgaria from Inner China during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and settled, mainly in the Aksu oases. According to Zeland, they mostly appeared in these parts after the defeat and destruction of the Dzungar Khanate.<sup>19</sup> Pevtsov considered them to be a people of Turkic origin but assimilated linguistically and culturally over time by the Chinese. Therefore, Dungans differed from the Chinese not only in their Muslim religion, but also in their anthropological type and, despite long-term communication with the Chinese, had an acute dislike for them.

Zeland gives another version of the origin of the Dungans. He connects their ethnic roots with that part of the Yuezhi people who lived in the present western provinces of China, in the vicinity of the city of Xining-Fu, and later, under the influx of Chinese, mixed with them and underwent assimilation. Islam penetrated their milieu from Kashgar, under the influence of which their antagonism with the Chinese intensified. But Dungans themselves narrated their ethnic history differently. They considered themselves the descendants of Tamerlane’s warriors, who supposedly remained in China and mixed with the Chinese. According to Zeland, Dungans who settled in the Russian Empire experienced irreconcilable antagonism towards China.<sup>20</sup>

Pevtsov reports that the sedentary population of the region spoke mainly their own dialect of the Turkic language which, by that time, was considerably integrated. Thus, despite the significant remoteness of many oases of Kashgaria from each other, their spoken language had few dialectal differences and people from remote oases could communicate with each other completely freely. This opinion is confirmed also by Kuropatkin’s observations: “The language of Kashgaria is almost everywhere Turkish, and throughout entire country all speak one and the same dialect”.<sup>21</sup> Zeland also noted that there were certain differences in the language of various oases, but not so much that their inhabitants could not understand each other.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time, according to Pevtsov, a lot of words of Persian and Arabic origin penetrated into the literary and spoken language, which was associated both with the long-term ethnocultural contacts of the local population with the Iranian-speaking people of Central Asia and the strong influence of the Islamic religion. However, as Kornilov testified at the very beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, “the roots and forms of the pure Turkic language have been preserved in Kashgaria incomparably better than in the dialect spoken by the Uzbeks of Russian Turkestan”.<sup>23</sup> Fortunately, we can judge the Turkic language of the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 136-138.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>21</sup> Kuropatkin, *Kashgaria: Eastern or Chinese Turkistan*, 37.

<sup>22</sup> Zeland, *Kashgariya i perevaly Tyan-Shanyam*, 136.

<sup>23</sup> Kornilov, *Kashgariya ili Vostochniy Turkestan*, 232.

Kashgarian people thanks to a two-volume study and a dictionary, which was published in 1878-80 in Calcutta by Robert Berkeley Shaw.<sup>24</sup> The rich information about the Kashgarian Turkic population's language at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century can also be gleaned from the work of N. Katanov, "Signs and beliefs of the Turks of Chinese Turkestan concerning natural phenomena", published in St. Petersburg in 1897.<sup>25</sup>

The nomadic or pastoral population of Kashgaria consisted of the Kirghizes or Kara-Kirghizes, who inhabited the southern slope of the main ridge of the Tien Shan system – Kok-Shala and the marginal ridge of the Pamir Highlands – Sary-Kol. Outwardly, as well as in language and everyday traditions, these Kara-Kirghizes were somewhat different from their relatives who lived in the Siberian steppes within the Russian Empire. According to Zeland, a small number of Kalmyks, who lived in the vicinity of Karashar and the Khaidin-Kua valley, belonged to the nomads as well.<sup>26</sup> A semi-nomadic way of life was also led by a small number of the Tajik population who moved to Kashgaria at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century from Wakhan and continued to speak their own language.

Pevtsov notes that until recently, slavery also persisted in Kashgaria. Before the rule of Yakub Bek, the main cities of the country, Kashgar, Khotan, and especially Yarkand, were real slave markets. *Hakims* and wealthy merchants there could acquire slaves captured in the surrounding regions. Yakub Bek decisively forbade the buying and selling of captured people but allowed the owners of the slaves, acquired before this ban, to leave them in their service. These slaves (men and women), called *kul* or *khyzmetkar*, lived with their owners, but their number, according to Pevtsov, was small – only about 1000 people.

The Russian traveler provided credible information about the ethnic origin of the local sedentary Turkic population as well as its physical type. According to the author, the people of Kashgaria formed as a result of cross-breeding, mixing of the Iranian and Turkic-Mongolian elements, as evidenced by both the physical type of people and their language, which contained a significant layer of ancient Iranian words. It is interesting to learn how the Russian researcher perceived and described the external physical features of the Kashgarian population and its characteristic psychological and moral qualities. In his opinion, the average Kashgarian was a man of short stature, no higher than average, with a lean figure, an oblong face narrowed to the chin, prominent cheekbones, a flat nape, with the nose being wide at the root and slightly pointed towards the tip, brown or dark brown eyes, black hair and a beard of medium thickness, light brown skin, and a calm, pensive expression on the face. However, as Pevtsov points out, deviations from this general type were not uncommon, which is quite typical for a mixed population. So, in Yarkand and partly in Kagarlik, there were usually people who had many similarities to the Tajiks, tall, with a thick, bushy beard and thick arched eyebrows, with an aquiline nose. And in the southern regions of Kashgaria, in particular, in

<sup>24</sup> Robert Barkley Shaw, *A Sketch of the Turki Language as spoken in Eastern Turkestan (Kashghar and Yarkand)*, Part I-II (Calcutta: Printed by J.W. Thomas, at the Baptist Mission Press, 1878-1880).

<sup>25</sup> N. Katanov, *Primety i pover'ya tyurkov Kitayskogo Turkestana, kasayushchiyesya javleniy prirody* (Sankt Petersburg: Tipografiya Imperatorskoy Akademii Nauk, 1897) (in Russian).

<sup>26</sup> Zeland, *Kashgariya i perevaly Tyan-Shanya*, 136.

the Khotan and Keria districts, there were also typical Caucasians with a light brown beard and gray eyes, which, by external signs, represented a sharp contrast with the rest of the country's population.

Of course, it should be borne in mind that some terms used by Pevtsov in his work concerning the so-called 'anthropology' or 'race' of the population of Eastern Turkestan should be taken in the context of ideas practiced in European and Russian science at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Similarly, when characterizing the psychological characteristics of the local population, he largely proceeded from the same racial approach generally accepted in Western scholarship and social thought in those years. Today, these terms and ideas, in the light of the changed paradigm of modern anthropology, look like an anachronism.

And, naturally, the superiority of the white (or Aryan) race over all the others was articulated in the works of Russian researchers of Central and Inner Asia. For instance, Zeland, like Pevtsov, wrote about the predominantly Aryan roots of the local population of Eastern Turkestan. At the same time, trying to clarify the reasons for the so-called 'cultural backwardness' of the Kashgarians, he argued this phenomenon with the same racial identity. In his view, despite 'the Aryan roots' of the Kashgarians, they could be considered more Turks than Aryans. In any case, they had 'more Mongol features' than the population of Western (Russian) Turkestan, where the Mongols penetrated much less. The Turks and Mongols, as the author noted, did not yet belong to the 'advanced peoples'.<sup>27</sup>

At the same time, the Muslim population of Kashgaria differed little from their co-religionists in Russian Turkestan in terms of self-awareness and the definition of their own ethnic identity. Religious consciousness still prevailed over ethnicity, people, in general, identified themselves by religious affiliation, calling themselves 'Muslims', and in a narrower sense – by geography, by place of residence, defining themselves as *Kashgarlik* (resident of Kashgar), *Yarkandlik* (resident of Yarkand), *Khotanlik* (resident of Khotan), etc.

Religiously, the local population of Kashgaria, for the most part, professed Sunni Islam and followed the Hanafi *madhhab*.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, according to Pevtsov, they were far from zealous adherents to the requirements of religion, were tolerant of people of other faiths, including Christians, and did not feel any hostility towards the Russians but, rather, even treated them with some sympathy. The main reason for this was the positive information they received from the subjects of the Russian Empire – Fergana *Sarts*, who were actively involved in trade in Kashgaria in large numbers.

The members of the British mission in Yarkand in 1873 got the same impression from communication with the residents of Kashgar. Sir Thomas Douglas Forsyth noted the friendliness of the city's population and emphasized the following:

Everywhere the people treated us quite as of themselves, though of course they

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<sup>27</sup> Zeland, *Kashgariya i perevaly Tian-Shanya*, 81.

<sup>28</sup> Sochineniya Chokana Chingisovicha Valikhanova. Izdany pod redaktsiyey d.ch. N.I.Veselovskogo. Zapiski Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo Obshchestva po otdeleniyu etnografii. Tom XXIX (S.-Petersburg: Tipografiya glavnogo Upravleniya Udelov, Mokhovaya, 40, 1904) (in Russian), 374.

collected round us in good humoured curiosity to examine closely the first Europeans they had ever seen. On no single occasion throughout our whole stay in the country did we ever meet with the slightest rudeness or incivility; no scowling looks nor angry taunts we levelled at us; on the contrary, wherever we went we always found people please to meet and converse with us.<sup>29</sup>

## **Cultural Characteristics of the Population**

Curious are Pevtsov's observations about the moral qualities and the psychological characteristics of the sedentary Muslim population of Kashgaria. The author believed that the people of Kashgaria in general were distinguished by a rather meek character, honesty, hospitality, and helpfulness and these positive qualities prevailed over negative character traits. For instance, emphasized politeness in mutual relations between people among the sedentary population of Kashgaria was the norm. When they met, people always called each other 'You' (in the plural). Such an appeal was obligatory among the spouses, at least in the presence of guests. All greetings at the meeting were usually accompanied by a polite bow, the application of the right hand to the heart, and a mutual shaking of both hands. Farewells were accompanied by good wishes expressed in Quranic phrases.

Since the main criterium of the moral health of society is the indicator of the level of crime, as Pevtsov argued, then, it was extremely low in Kashgaria. Such serious criminal offenses as murder, robbery, arson, etc. were observed so rarely that they were perceived by the local population with sorrow and popular rumor spoke of them as something extraordinary and terrifying to the local people. Moreover, even ordinary theft was much less common in comparison with European countries, excluding, perhaps, the Scandinavian ones. So, as a rule, houses there did not have locks, shops in bazaars were often left open when the owners were away for a while on business, and no one was afraid of thieves. According to the Russian traveler, the above facts undoubtedly testified to 'the moral purity of the residents of Kashgaria', who were morally much higher than 'many civilized peoples of our part of the world'.<sup>30</sup>

Many researchers of Eastern Turkestan were unanimous in such an assessment of the moral and ethical qualities of the local sedentary Turkic population. For instance, the British missionary and traveler Henry Lansdell reports on the hard work and honesty of the Kashgarian people. He argued that the sedentary population of Chinese Turkestan was beyond doubt hard-working and gained their daily bread literally by the sweat of their brow; also they were honest, notwithstanding their poverty. Theft was comparatively rare and throughout the villages, the doors were without locks. Lansdell emphasized the probity of the carriers, who often transported merchandise and money abroad of ten times the value of

<sup>29</sup> Forsyth, *Report of a Mission to Yarkand in 1873*, 6.

<sup>30</sup> Pevtsov, *Puteshestviye v Kashgariyu i Kun-Lun*, 125.

their own possessions, yet nothing confided to them was lost.<sup>31</sup>

At the same time, the local population was not devoid of some negative traits in the character and way of life, caused, according to Pevtsov, primarily by the influence of the unparalleled and tragic vicissitudes of its historical fate and the prolonged oppression that this unfortunate people experienced during its history. It must be said that Russian researchers of Eastern Turkestan, as a rule, were committed to the theory of geographical determinism in describing the ethnocultural type and temperament of the local population. For instance, Zeland wrote that there was “a lot of truth in the theory that deduces the spiritual qualities and historical destinies of peoples from the conditions of nature, which a person is surrounded by”.<sup>32</sup> He compared Kashgaria in its physical geography with a deep box, the walls of which were high and barren mountain ranges, and the very bottom was a dull desert, characterized by the rare monotony and poverty of nature. Clay, sand, salt licks, swamps, and reeds – that was what met the eyes of the Kashgharians for hundreds of miles and, in the distance, gray chains of rocks loomed on the horizon. Thus, he deduced those negative qualities that, in Zeland’s view, were inherent in the sedentary population of Kashgaria, namely, a lack of courage and fighting tenacity, a tendency to voluptuousness, alcoholic beverages, drugs, etc., largely from the monotony of the country’s landscape, low soil fertility, fragmentation of the country into separate, little connected oases as well as from the general poverty of the population along with social and political lawlessness, etc. These qualities, according to author, were especially striking among urban residents, who made up a significant percentage of the population of Kashgaria. “Cities with their stench and dust, with the poverty of the proletariat, with sexual debauchery and drug addiction lead to physical degeneration,” – he wrote.<sup>33</sup>

### **Administrative System and Local Elite**

As indicated, a short time after the death in 1877 of the ruler (Amir) of Kashgaria, Yakub Bek, the country was reincorporated into the Qing Empire and in 1884 the Chinese authorities established Xinjiang province there, which was ruled by the governor-general from his residences in the city of Urumqi. Administratively, the province was divided into two regions – Aksu and Kashgar – headed by Chinese governors (*Tao-tai*). The provinces, in turn, were divided into districts, entrusted to the Chinese district chiefs. The districts were subdivided into lower administrative units, which were ruled by officials from the local population – *beks*, elected by district chiefs and approved in positions by governors. The elders of the villages

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<sup>31</sup> Henry Lansdell, *Chinese Central Asia: A Ride to Little Tibet* (London: S. Low, Marston, & Co, 1893), 408.

<sup>32</sup> Zeland, *Kashgariya i perevaly Tyan-Shanya*, 173.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 166-180. As Kuropatkin assumed, the use of opium was common to men and women in Kashgaria (Kuropatkin, *Kashgaria: Eastern or Chinese Turkistan*, 39). Henry Lansdell wrote about the same topic and noted that “among the weak points of urban character in Chinese Turkistan must be mentioned lack of cleanliness, a tendency to the abuse of narcotics, and sexual depravity” (Lansdell, *Chinese Central Asia*, 408).

– *aksakals*, or their smaller units – *minbashi*, *yuzbashi*, *onbashi*<sup>34</sup> were subordinate to the *beks*.

The social system of Kashgaria, described by Pevtsov, has changed little since medieval times. The top of the society was made up of representatives of secular and clerical estates – *Hakims*, *Sayyids*, and *Khojas*. The first belonged to the former local sovereign dynasties, descended mainly from six eminent clans, and enjoyed respect and influence among the local population. Although under the new Chinese government, representatives of this noble class were renamed *Shan-ye*, nevertheless, they continued to call themselves by the old Muslim title of *Hakim*, as did the rest of the people. *Hakims* lived in cities or villages and owned their ancestral estates and lands, which were cultivated by their slaves. Thus, they were exclusively engaged in agriculture, neglecting trade.

The spiritual class consisted of *Sayyids*, who were recognized as the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, they enjoyed special honor and respect among the people and occupied mainly spiritual posts as well as *Khojas*, who were the descendants of local saints. The latter, like some of the *Sayyids*, owned land plots they almost never dealt with but, rather, preferred to lease them. They spent most of their time in prayer and pilgrimage to *mazars* – tombs of saints, martyrs who fell in the struggle for the faith – *shabeeds*, or revered clergy (*Ulama*). These *mazars* were highly respected by the people. For instance, Chokan Valikhanov described the sandy steppe Kum-Shaidan, located between Kashgar and Yarkand, which was considered sacred, since a battle for the faith took place there, and there was the *mazar* of the leader of the Muslims Arslan Khan-Gazi, who fell as a martyr.<sup>35</sup>

According to Pevtsov, mausoleums with domes and hailstones, furnished with poles on all sides, were usually built above the *mazars* of clay and baked bricks. Flags along with horse and yak tails were tied to the tops of these poles and skulls with horns of wild rams were placed on the cornices and fences of the mausoleums themselves. These *mazars* were named after the saints buried in them. On the established days, prayers were performed with them and pious Muslims often came to them to worship.

Almost all the *Khojas* in Kashgaria were clergymen and usually did not engage in secular affairs. Local residents considered it their duty to visit the famous *khoja* before important events – building a house, trading, or going on a long journey, and receive his blessing, of course, not for free. Offerings from parishioners in the form of money, clothing, or food were an important part of the well-being of the *Khoja*. It is interesting to note that, according to Pevtsov's observations, the *Khojas* were held in higher esteem in the local milieu than the *Sayyids*. And this is quite understandable if we take into account the role of the *Khojas* in the spiritual life and political history of Kashgaria. They were the initiators and leaders of anti-Chinese protests and uprisings in this region. As Chokan Valikhanov noted:

The people of Eastern Turkestan, who had suffered so patiently under the oppression

<sup>34</sup> Pevtsov here confused the terms (titles), noting the *Onbashi* as the centurion and the *Yuzbashi* as the foreman (Pevtsov, *Puteshestviye v Kashgariyu i Kun-Lun*, 146).

<sup>35</sup> Sochineniya Chokana Chingisovicha Valikhanova, 375. This place is also mentioned in the Report of the expedition by T.D. Forsyth (*Report of a Mission to Yarkand in 1873*, 38).

of the Chinese officials and of their own Begs, looked up to the Hodjas as their protectors, ever ready with arms in their hands to defend them against the infidels.<sup>36</sup>

*Khojas*, who were in opposition to the Chinese government, often found refuge in the Kokand Khanate in Western Turkestan, from where they planned and prepared armed actions of the local population. Only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century several armed uprisings led by *Khojas* gained wide scope in Kashgaria – the rebellion of Khoja Jahangir in 1826, who arrived with his troops from Kokand; the performance of the *Khoja* emigrants in 1847, which ended in another defeat and the tragic death of tens of thousands of Muslims; an armed uprising led by Khoja Valikhan-tyura in 1857, which also ended in defeat by the Chinese, etc.

### Clergy, Education, and Judicial Practice

The Muslim clergy in Kashgaria during this period was quite numerous. At the head of the spiritual hierarchy was the Yarkand *Hukum-Kazı*, to whom all the district *Hukum-Kazıs*, the highest clergy in a particular area, were subordinate. They, in turn, supervised the activities of urban and rural *Mullabs*. Usually, one of the rural *Mullabs* bore the clerical title of *Akbun* and was considered the oldest among the rest. In general, there were several *mullabs* with their own parishes in each village of Kashgaria. They owned their land plots, which they cultivated independently or rented out. The *Mullabs* also received donations from the parishioners, but this income usually was very small due to the general poverty of the population.

At that time, the Muslim clergy in Kashgaria also had other functions apart from the administration of religious worship and meeting the religious needs of the population. First of all, the entire education system in the country was in the hands of the clergy. According to Pevtsov, there were quite a large number of schools in Kashgaria at that time. So, in each village, according to its population, there were two or more primary schools for boys and girls separately. Parish *Mullabs* taught in boys' schools and secular lady teachers in girls' schools. Children usually started attending school at the age of 5-6 and went until the age of 11-12. In elementary school, they learned to read and write in their native language but the main subject was the study of the Holy Quran by heart even though the students and many of the local teachers did not understand the Arabic language. After graduating from primary school, graduates could continue their education in the secondary religious schools of *madrasabs* that existed only in cities or higher *madrasabs* located in large cities – such as Kashgar, Yarkand, Khotan, or Aksu. These educational institutions were located at the main mosques and trained only clergy. They taught mainly Muslim theology, philosophy and law, Arabic, arithmetic, and geometry for beginners. In general, teaching in schools was distinguished by a traditional scholastic character, which did little to develop the mental abilities of students and receive

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<sup>36</sup> Valikhanof, *The Russians in Central Asia*, 208.

positive knowledge. Meanwhile, local Muslims, as the Russian traveler testifies, were endowed by nature with such noticeable mental gifts as quick thinking and intelligence.

Another very important and traditional function of the Muslim clergy in Kashgaria was the administration of justice. Only serious criminal offenses such as murder, robbery, arson, or actions against local authorities and other crimes of a political nature fell within the purview of the Chinese provincial judiciary. Investigative cases, as a rule, were carried out by local officials – *Beks*, but under the supervision of Chinese officials. Then they went for consideration to the districts and from there to the provincial judicial authorities (*Yamin*) where they also sent those under investigation. Pevtsov notes that the accused defendants were often severely tortured there and then, along with the investigative cases, they were sent to the Governor-General of Xinjiang province in Urumqi to approve the verdict. This was the last instance that had the right to approve death sentences in the entire province. The rest, less serious crimes and misdemeanors, as well as all civil cases, were in the jurisdiction of local judges – *Kazis*, elected among the most respected *Akbuns*. These *Kazis* performed their duties in the judicial sectors, into which the districts were divided. They were confirmed in their positions by the district *Hukum-Kazis*. Unimportant matters were decided by the local parish *Mullahs*. At the same time, all the judges – *Kazis*, as well as the *Mullahs* during the administration of justice were guided by the prescriptions of the *Sharia*.

Pevtsov cites several interesting examples from judicial practice in Kashgaria, reported to him in conversations with local *Kazis* and characterizing the casuistry of criminal and civil processes based on *Sharia*. So, if a person was first suspected of committing theft, but there was not enough evidence against him, then he was admitted to a cleansing oath and, upon acceptance, he was released without punishment. But if he refused to take the oath, then he was punished with 40-50 cane strikes and was arrested for 5-10 days with his hands tied. The suspect for a second time in committing theft was not allowed to take the oath of cleansing and, in case of lack of evidence and refusal to voluntarily confess guilt, he was tortured. Usually, the torture consisted of squeezing the fingers of his hands in a wooden block and after that, he was additionally punished with cane strikes and released. If he confessed to committing a crime, then he was punished with 70 to 100 cane strikes and imprisoned for a month to a year. For committing theft for a third time, he was sentenced to a punishment of 100 to 500 cane strikes and imprisoned for 6 months to two years. In addition, the offender had to work and reimburse the expenses that were spent on him by society during his stay in prison.

In addition to the relatively structured clergy in Kashgar, there were also the so-called *Sheikh-ul-Islams* – the guardians of public morality. They were elected by the people and were confirmed in rank by the district *Hukum-Kazis*. These persons were in charge of monitoring the morality of people, i.e. so that women walk in public places with their faces covered and men regularly attend mosques, etc. They also supervised the correctness of trading operations in the markets, namely, the correctness of the weights and measures used, the good quality of the commodities sold, and so on. Meanwhile, according to the Russian traveler's observations, the *Sheikh-ul-Islams* were rather lenient about the fulfillment of their

religious duties by devout Muslims and showed more zeal for observing market operations. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that they did not receive any remuneration for the performance of their position, which was considered only honorary.

### **Marital Relations amongst the Population of Kashgaria**

Ethnographic data and information about the daily life of the residents of Kashgaria, obtained as a result of Pevtsov's own observations and field study, are extremely interesting. First of all, we are talking about the institution of marriage and family life of the Kashgharian people at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Russian traveler reports that by the age of 10, children in families began to help parents with easy family work. And when the boys reached the age of 14 and the girls were 12 years old, they could get married. Of course, the parents agreed on marriage even before the children reached marriageable age and often immediately after their birth.

In matters of marriage, devout Muslims strictly followed the precepts of the Holy Koran. Like any Muslim, a Kashgharian could have no more than four wives at the same time, while women, widowed or after a divorce, could remarry an unlimited number of times. But as Pevtsov testifies, the overwhelming number of villagers avoided polygamy and had one wife each. Only a few wealthy merchants, artisans, and other financially wealthy persons could afford a larger number of wives. Representatives of the commercial stratum, who often visited other cities or regions for business purposes, had more wives, sometimes up to 10, permanently residing in those places. Kuropatkin also writes that although a plurality of wives in Kashgaria, as in other Muslim countries, was open to all, in practice it was a custom that was within the reach of the opulent alone.<sup>37</sup>

At the same time, according to Valikhanov, there was an immutable law in Kashgar, according to which all visiting foreigners were obliged to enter into a temporary marriage with local women during their stay in the city. Although the local Muslims were, as mentioned above, followers of the Hanafi teaching in Islam, according to which temporary marriages were not allowed, nevertheless, this custom was widespread in Kashgar. As a rule, marriage deals were negotiated between women wishing to make a temporary marriage and foreigners in the city market, where women went for this purpose. Such a marriage imposed on a man only the obligation to feed and clothe his temporary spouse.<sup>38</sup>

Those Kashgharians who had several wives in the same city placed them in different houses, usually located in the same courtyard and, in the absence of several houses, in the same house but in different rooms. According to tradition, the first wife was considered the eldest in the house and the rest were her assistants, obliged to honor and obey her in everything. But in practice, everything went wrong and peace and harmony rarely reigned

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<sup>37</sup> Kuropatkin, *Kashgaria: Eastern or Chinese Turkistan*, 39.

<sup>38</sup> Sochineniya Chokana Chingisovicha Valikhanova, 352-353, 374.

in the house of a polygamist. Mutual hostility and even hatred grew and, as a result, chaos and disorder in the house usually prevailed between wives. According to the Russian traveler, those Kashgarians with whom he spoke admitted that polygamy destroyed the foundations of family harmony and the well-being of people and did not contribute to the strengthening of the institution of marriage in society.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, the most prudent of them, even those who had wealth and the necessary financial means, avoided polygamy and preferred to have one wife each. Remarriage was considered appropriate only in the case of infertility of the wife or the birth of only girls.

Kashgarians usually remarried widows or divorced women. Girls were rarely married since they were very demanding of gifts and the wedding was more expensive. At the same time, matchmaking and the marriage ceremony took place in the same way as the first time, but the weddings were handled more modestly. As a rule, with the intention of a man to enter into a second marriage, an impartial conversation took place between him and the father of his first wife. The father-in-law reproached his son-in-law for this venture, while the son-in-law pointed out the shortcomings of his first wife, and such skirmishes sometimes reached legal proceedings.

Meanwhile, divorce issues were resolved much faster and easier. With mutual consent, the spouses could divorce at any time freely and separate the children among themselves. Divorce at the insistence of one of the spouses was associated with a number of serious reasons, namely, constant quarrels, the inability of one of the spouses to fulfill their duties, adultery of the wife or husband, the madness of one of the spouses, the husband's remarriage without the consent of the first wife, etc. But, sometimes there were divorces for less valid reasons among the Kashgarians – because of the stinginess of the husband, squandering his wife's dowry, etc.

Polygamy was almost not observed among the villagers of Kashgaria, as Pevtsov testifies. As a rule, the spouses lived in harmony and divorces were less frequent than among the townspeople. It is interesting that although according to Muslim traditions the wife's status was lower than the husband's, in practice the situation was different in Kashgaria. Usually, the husband did not take any serious steps without the advice and consent of his wife. She was not only a full-fledged mistress of the house but often enjoyed unlimited influence over her husband. The Russian traveler writes: "In general, a woman in Kashgaria enjoys considerable independence and does not serve her husband as a slave, as in some other Muslim countries".<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> It would be appropriate to recall here that the Azerbaijani philosopher of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century M.F. Akhundov also considered polygamy, sanctioned by Islam, as an unconditional evil and believed that it contributed to the degradation of the family institution in Muslim society (See: Sh.M. M.F. Mustafayev, *Akhundov i Frantsuzskoye prosveshcheniye: dukhovnyy most cherez stoletiya* // Kul'turniy transfer na perekrestkakh Tsentral'noy Azii: do, vo vremya i posle Velikogo Shelkovogo puti (Paris-Samarkand: Izdaniye MITSAL, 2013, pp. 219-235) (in Russian), 232).

<sup>40</sup> Pevtsov, *Puteshestviye v Kashgariyu i Kun-Lun'*, 131.

## Entertainment and Religious Festivities

A favorite pastime of the Kashgharian people after the end of fieldwork was visiting the nearest bazaars, often unnecessarily. The bazaars were a place of entertainment, meetings, and receiving information about important events, and they, in fact, replaced clubs and newspapers that were absent at that time in the country. Pevtsov emphasizes that the ‘natives’ were great hunters for entertainment and frequently in the homes of wealthy people, special parties, called *tomasba*, were organized. Close relatives and friends were invited to them and these parties were accompanied by music and dancing. The musicians sang their favorite folk songs ‘Altynjan’ (‘Golden Soul’) and ‘Nazyr-gum’ (‘My dear’) and the guests present – men and women – danced in pairs or singly. According to Pevtsov’s perception, the dances of the Kashgharians were distinguished by grace but some monotony, since the movements of the dancers were slow and smooth. Fast dances to the faster pace of music were not welcomed among them and were not popular. In the intervals between dances, guests were treated to tea, fruits, cold meat, pilaf, etc.

In general, the local population was very fond of music, songs, and dances. In contrast to the seriousness and concentration that they distinguished in everyday life, they were incredibly animated by the sound of music and enthusiastically indulged in fun and entertainment. Therefore, they used any pretext and everyday occasions, for example, circumcision, engagement, wedding ceremonies, for arranging parties, despite the general poverty and strained material conditions of the bulk of the population.

At the same time, not so many holidays were celebrated in Kashgaria and the main ones were of a religious nature such as *Uraza-bait*, *Kurban-bait* and the secular one – *Yangi Yil* (New Year). The first was carried out after a 30-day fast and lasted for three days. *Kurban-bait* or *Eid al-Adha* was celebrated in honor of Abraham’s sacrifice and also for 3 days. On this holiday, sacrificial rams were slaughtered in wealthy houses, men gathered in the mosque for collective prayers, and after that everybody went to visit friends and relatives with congratulations. In bazaars and public places, music sounded and dances were arranged, in which both men and women took part. *Yangi Yil* was celebrated in Kashgaria on the February new moon and also for three days. But unlike the two previous holidays, on these days there were no festive services in mosques, rather people went to visit each other, festive feasts (*dastarkhans*) were opened in houses, and swings were installed for women in the bazaars, around which people constantly crowded, music sounded, and dances were performed.

According to the Russian traveler, in addition to the festive divine services, public prayers for the harvest and forgiveness of sins were held among the Kashgharian people twice a year. The first prayer took place in early spring. On this day, the villagers gathered at the tombs of a local saint (*mazar*) or a mosque. Men gathered in a circle around the *Mullah*, who recited a prayer for rain and a rich harvest, and women cooked food near the fires that were kindled near this place. At the end of the prayer, the men had an ordinary conversation about everyday affairs, then the women served food, some of which went to the *Mullah* and the *Dervishes* present. After dinner, everyone went home.

Public prayer for absolution usually happened 16 days before the *Kurban-hait*. Towards evening, local residents gathered again at *mazars* or mosques and men sat on felt in a circle. An interesting religious ceremony was performed when a group of Koranic readers, the *hafizes*, recited a Koranic *Surah* and after them the Sufi *Dervishes* gathered nearby, kneeling in a circle and holding hands, finished reading with a loud exclamation 'Allah-Hu', making a bow with each exclamation. Further, this was repeated when reading each subsequent *Surah*. So, the prayer lasted almost until midnight, after which the pilgrims broke off to eat the food prepared for them, and then the ceremony continued until dawn. All night long people asked the Almighty for absolution and help in the troubles that befell them and for solving life problems. These night vigils and prayers, accompanied by the mournful exclamations of the *Dervishes*, often led people into exaltation, so that the groans, cries, or sobs of ordinary worshippers were heard. The entire ceremony ended at dawn and the people peacefully went home. On this night, women also gathered in groups in houses and listened to the Koran recited by pious and knowledgeable old women.<sup>41</sup>

## Beliefs and Superstitions

The faith of the sedentary population of Kashgaria and their zeal for the Islamic religion went hand in hand with their folk beliefs and superstitions, a significant part of which was inherited from the pre-Islamic period of their history. Pevtsov emphasizes the high degree of the superstition of the Kashgarian people. Belief in all kinds of witchcraft, enchantment, damage, talismans, witches, etc., was a substantial part of the everyday life of the local population. The plight of medicine contributed to the fact that sorcerers or shamans, popularly called *pyrkhons*, were mainly involved in the treatment of patients. Since ordinary Kashgarians attributed all diseases to the introduction of evil spirits (*jeens*) into people, the main function of the *pyrkhons* was considered to be the expulsion of spirits.

Pevtsov describes a typical example of such a session. Usually, musicians were invited to the patient along with the shaman. Under the first sounds of music, all the neighbors came to the patient's house and sometimes there were so many of them that not all could fit into the house so most of the visitors remained in the yard. At the beginning of the session, the patient, if he had enough strength, was seated on a bunk and he was given a rope in his hands, the upper end of which was firmly tied to the ceiling. Grasping it, the patient got up a little from his place and began to circle around the rope. At this time, the shaman placed his idol dolls in the corners and, taking in his hands a cane to which scraps of cloth were tied, sat down in the corner of the room. When the patient was exhausted from spinning, the shaman jumped up with a cry and energetically moved around him, hitting him with a cane and pronouncing special spells. The meaning of the spell was to banish creatures, long and thin as a snake, with coral eyes and pearl teeth. These creatures allegedly flew in heavenly space,

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<sup>41</sup> Pevtsov, *Puteshestviye v Kashgariyu i Kun-Lun'*, 134-135.

rode on the clouds, climbed lonely trees, and lived in empty houses and mills. This is how the Kashgarian people imagined the mythical *jeens* that infested people and caused diseases.

After pronouncing the spell, the shaman threw the cane aside, took a knife in his hands and swung at the patient, repeating the same words, and retreated into a corner. After a while, he took dolls in his hands, beat them on the patient's head, repeating the incantation and calling upon the *jeens* to move into dolls. Then he opened the 'magic' book, looking for indications of the places in the patient's body, which were captured by evil spirits. Finally, he got up and left the house, while spinning in a frantic rhythm. The musicians followed him and the whole procession lined up, carrying the patient in its arms. The shaman headed for a mill, an empty house, a lonely tree, or a crossroads. When he reached the chosen place, he asked to put the patient in place and drew a circle around him along which he put and lit torches. After that, he began to run around the patient, hitting him at the place where the evil spirits were, with a cane, dolls, burning torches, and then with a live rooster or hen, repeating the spell. This ended the session. If after this the patient recovered, it was believed that the shaman managed to expel evil spirits from him. If the patient continued to get sick or died, then everyone believed that the *jeens* were too strong and beyond the control of the shaman and that in order to drive them out, it would be necessary to turn to the saint. These sessions usually lasted from one to three days.

At the same time, the healing of the sick was not a monopoly of the *pyrbons* only. Often the local population turned to healers, whose arsenal of treatment was also not very diverse. They offered their patients such methods as incantations, infusions of dried lizards, snakes, and frogs, often wrote sayings from the Holy Koran on paper, and then washed off the ink with water and gave it to the sick to drink. In addition, they provided everyone with talismans that protect them from diseases and all kinds of troubles. Obviously, there was no need to talk about scientific medicine in Kashgaria under these conditions.

Pevtsov testified that superstitions concerned almost all aspects of the life of the Kashgarians. In general, the local population had so many superstitions and all sorts of beliefs that it was possible to write a whole book about them. However, in his essay, the Russian traveler limited himself to describing only a few of them. For instance, upon seeing the new moon, some devout Kashgarians began to jump to shake off the sins that had accumulated over the past month. Or in the evening on the day of the *Barat*, bonfires were made in the streets, through which women jumped to cleanse themselves from sins and protect themselves from diseases. Then the boys and young men that evening lit pumpkin flasks, with which they climbed to the roofs of houses and read the verse *Charamazan-barat*. It was believed that by this the houses were protected from the infiltration of evil spirits.

Many people tried to maintain an unquenchable fire in their hearths, which, according to their belief, brings good luck and happiness to the house. Ashes from the fire were taken out of the house at dusk or in the morning before dawn, but never into daylight since this could bring misfortune to the household. Also, the residents of Kashgaria were terribly afraid of thunderstorms, during which they earnestly prayed for deliverance from the danger that threatened them. Of course, all these beliefs had a syncretic character and went back to

many cults and religious traditions that replaced each other in this country over a long history.

### **Relations with the Authorities**

How did the local population feel about the radical changes in their historical destiny associated with the loss of political independence after the fall of the Yakub Bek's state and the incorporation of Kashgaria into the Qing Empire? What was the attitude towards the new Chinese authorities? As indicated, General Kuropatkin described the situation in the last years of Yakub Bek's rule quite accurately and in detail and reported on people's dissatisfaction with the strict rules established by the Amir of Kashgar such as high taxes imposed on the taxable population. From Pevtsov's report, we receive information about the situation that developed under the Chinese government and this information allows us to clarify and more clearly understand some of Kuropatkin's observations. Pevtsov notes that the established Chinese regime was extremely unpleasant for the people of Kashgaria due to the heavy extortion, specifically the arrogance and contemptuous attitude of the Chinese officials, who not only fed themselves most shamefully at the expense of the local population during frequent business trips, mistreated it, misappropriated its valuable things, but also encroached on their honor, taking away their wives and daughters as concubines.

It should be noted, that three decades before the establishment of Yakub Bek's state, another Russian officer Chokan Valikhanov also noted the severity of the Chinese power over the local population. He wrote:

The hatred of the natives towards the Chinese is irreconcilable, and no wonder – the Chinese officials rob and insult the people, take away goods for free; every Chinese considers himself to have the right to beat a Kashgarian who upon meeting him on the street will not get off his horse.<sup>42</sup>

Apparently, little has changed in the practice of the Chinese authorities after the defeat of the of Yakub Bek's state, since there are numerous testimonies about the careless and inept management of Kashgarians by the Chinese authorities from both Russian and English authors who traveled to the country in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. For instance, the British missionary and traveler Henry Lansdell reported that the government of the Qing Empire “acted in a most foolish manner towards the reconquered country, sending thither, not its best mandarins”, but those who for some disgrace were “thus banished as to a Botany Bay” and the officials in Kashgar and neighboring towns were “mandarins decidedly below par, educationally and otherwise”.<sup>43</sup> Another English traveler, Henry Deasy gave the same unpleasant assessment of Chinese administrative practice in Kashgaria, testifying to the whole governmental system as

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<sup>42</sup> Sochineniya Chokana Chingisovicha Valikhanova, 353.

<sup>43</sup> Lansdell, *Chinese Central Asia*, 412.

being rotten to the core and every official, from top to bottom, living by systematic fraud. The officials were altogether unpaid otherwise than by plunder but, since their right to ‘squeeze’ was recognized, the amount of their income was limited “only by their own discretion and the resources of their district”.<sup>44</sup>

Pevtsov also testified in his report that, according to the ‘natives’, Chinese officials took bribes from merchants, preferably in money or, in its absence, in goods then sent these goods to local *Beks*, forcing them to sell them at a high price. *Beks* were forced to carry out these delicate assignments, replenishing their proceeds with extortions. According to Pevtsov, most of the *Beks* were dexterous people, nosy, and able to please their superiors. It was precisely such people that the Chinese administration needed to govern the province, since, through them, their henchmen, district chiefs, and other officials levied unspoken extortions from the people, the lion’s share of which went to the Chinese and the rest to the *Beks*. For this, the people quietly hated the *Beks*, calling them traitors behind their backs.

However, at about the same time, another Russian traveler, Zeland, pointed out that there were not many *Beks* left in their posts, since they were gradually being replaced by Chinese. This caused new displeasure among the people. These *Beks*, although they were mostly bribe-takers and oppressors, nevertheless, being Muslims, belonging to wealthy aristocratic strata, and knowing the local language, often stood up for the interests of their relatives before the Chinese administration. The Chinese officials, who replaced them, having no connection with the local milieu, were mostly engaged in extortion and stuffing their own pockets. For the most part, these were immigrants from the Dungans and the Chinese, who were converted to Islam under Yakub Bek and, under the new government, they were converted again.<sup>45</sup>

Moreover, the local Chinese authorities received expensive offerings from rich ‘native’ traders and gold miners and turned a blind eye to the atrocities of the latter against the poor people, who were thus subjected to double exploitation. That is why the rich *Bays* were quite pleased with their position and praised the Chinese authorities, while the rest of the people grumbled and recalled Yakub Bek with regret. According to the local people, he was cruel and extremely demanding in observance of traditions and religious laws, but fair and lenient towards the poor people. Under him, rich *Bays* paid high taxes, due to which Yakub Bek maintained the army, bought weapons, and paid salaries to foreign, mainly Turkish, officers who served in his army. He strictly forbade his *Hakims* to burden the poor people with extortions and therefore the majority of the population lived much better under him than under the new Chinese government. Pevtsov concludes his passage:

“This is how the Kashgarian people speak of their Badaulet (Yakub Bek – Sh.M.), who died untimely from the perfidious Chinese”.<sup>46</sup>

Thus, when Kuropatkin wrote that by the time of their arrival in Kashgaria, “Yakoob

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<sup>44</sup> Captain H.H.P. Deasy, *In Tibet and Chinese Turkestan being the record of three years’ exploration* (London: T.Fisher Unwin, Paternoster Square, 1901), 329.

<sup>45</sup> Zeland, *Kashgariya i perevaly Tyan-Shanya*, 132.

<sup>46</sup> Pevtsov, *Puteshestviye v Kashgariyu i Kun-Lun*, 147.

Bek's position was a very difficult one; that he did not possess strong sympathies either in the part of the army or amongst the people",<sup>47</sup> it is obvious that disgrace was manifested mainly among a wealthy and privileged stratum of the country, displeased with the strict tax obligations imposed on it by Yakub Bek. At the same time, Pevtsov concluded from his own observations, that these complaints of the native population about the new Chinese administration contained a certain amount of exaggeration. Without denying a significant share of justice in them, however, the Russian traveler had reason to believe that the Chinese rule over Kashgaria was still not as painful as the locals usually described it to foreigners.

Meanwhile, in relation to the nomadic population, especially the Kirghizes, the policy of the Chinese authorities was incomparably softer and more diplomatic. The reason for this phenomenon is disclosed in detail by Zeland, who admitted that the civil freedom of the Kirghiz nomads was never embarrassed by the Chinese officials to the extent that it happened with the sedentary Muslim population. For example, the Chinese did not impose taxes on their Kirghiz subjects, apparently wanting to assure them that Chinese citizenship was more profitable than a Russian one, coupled with taxes, thereby creating a strip of the population dissatisfied with the Russian government in the border regions. But to a large extent, this was because the Chinese authorities, even if they wanted to, could not do anything with the nomadic Kirghizes, 'these mountain birds'.<sup>48</sup>

## Conclusion

According to V.A. Obruchev, the real scientific study of Inner Asia began precisely with the travels of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. How much painstaking work had to be used by Abel-Rémusat, Klaproth, Ritter, Humboldt, and other scientists of the first half of the same century to extract scarce geographical data from the ancient Chinese authors' writings and date them to a geographical map compiled on the basis of information from medieval European travelers – Marco Polo, Plano Carpini, William of Rubruck and others who penetrated deep into Asia. But despite the many years of work of these scientists, maps of Inner Asia contained a lot of blank spots and errors, which are easy to detect in even the best of them when, for instance, Humboldt's map, attached to his classic work "Asie Centrale", is compared with modern maps. Only as a result of the expeditions of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Western and Russian scholarship had the opportunity to deeply study the geography, nature, and population of this region. V.A. Obruchev assumed that the journey reports of these travelers, including Pevtsov, have long been the reference books of researchers studying the nature and population of Inner Asia, not only for geographers and anthropologists but also for geologists, zoologists, botanists, climatologists, and archaeologists.<sup>49</sup>

It is certain, that the main objectives of Pevtsov's expedition were not so much to conduct

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<sup>47</sup> Kuropatkin, *Kashgaria: Eastern or Chinese Turkistan*, 18.

<sup>48</sup> Zeland, *Kashgariya i perevaly Tyan-Shanya*, 171-172.

<sup>49</sup> Obruchev, *Grigorii Nikolayevich Potanin*, 268-270.

anthropological research but to study the geography, geodesy, topography, and climate of Kashgaria, and most importantly, to find routes for penetrating into the inner highlands of Tibet, which, perhaps, was of military-strategic interest for Russia in the conditions of the “Great Game”, unfolding in Asia in the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, new factual information about the daily life, beliefs, and rituals of the Kashgarian people can greatly enrich our knowledge of the history of this region. Indeed, in addition to everyday sketches, Pevtsov’s report also contains often unique material about social life, economic activities of people, handicraft production, forms of agricultural activity, methods of cultivating the land, and various crops grown here, the size of crops, etc.

Pevtsov’s studies in the field of ethnography and his observations of the daily life of the sedentary Muslim population of Kashgaria, in many respects, confirm and significantly supplement the information of previous Russian and British academicians, soldiers, and diplomats who made long journeys to this country in the middle and second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Pevtsov’s information is all the more valuable and interesting since it was obtained by the author in the course of field study, as a result of direct contacts and communication with the local population, i.e. first hand. It is also important to remember that Pevtsov, despite his military rank of general and many years of service in the Russian army, was a real academician and researcher who received a fundamental education in the field of exact and humanitarian sciences and had solid practical training as a result of several previous expeditions in various regions of Central and Inner Asia.

First of all, Pevtsov’s information on the linguistic situation in Kashgaria in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is of great importance. The prevailing Muslim population in the country, despite its concentration in remote and economically weakly connected oases, spoke a single Turkic language, without experiencing difficulties in communication, which indicates a substantial degree of linguistic integration in the region. In the same way, the population of the country had a common tangible and spiritual culture, observing the same customs, norms of family life, religious practice, funeral rites, and celebrating the same festivities. At the same time, a common national identity was still not formed, religious identity prevailed over ethnicity, and residents of various cities and oases, in most cases, identified themselves by geographical characteristics, place of birth, or residence.

It becomes obvious from the information of the Russian researcher that in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Muslim clergy played a largely regulatory role in the functioning of various social institutions in Kashgaria and had a predominant influence on the spiritual and often social life of the country’s population. The education system, represented by numerous elementary schools – *maktabs*, as well as secondary and higher educational institutions – *madrasabs*, was entirely under the jurisdiction of the clergy. The latter also occupied important positions in the judicial system, since the Chinese administration of the province delegated the authority to resolve minor issues of civil and criminal law to the Muslim clergy. Muslim judges – *Kazis*, of various levels made all decisions of a procedural nature on the basis of Sharia, which corresponded to the centuries-old historical and religious tradition of Kashgaria.

At the same time, numerous everyday rituals, beliefs, and superstitions of the local population testified to strong remnants of pre-Islamic cults and shamanic practices interspersed into the daily life and ideas of the Muslims of Kashgaria. Thus, descriptions of various syncretic rituals associated with the healing of the sick do not fit into classical Islamic norms in any way and translations of excerpts from the folk poetry of the Kashgarians, which reflect the demonological and occult ideas of people, etc., provide valuable information of an observant ethnographer, giving the opportunity to study from primary sources the daily life of the Turkic and Muslim population of Kashgaria in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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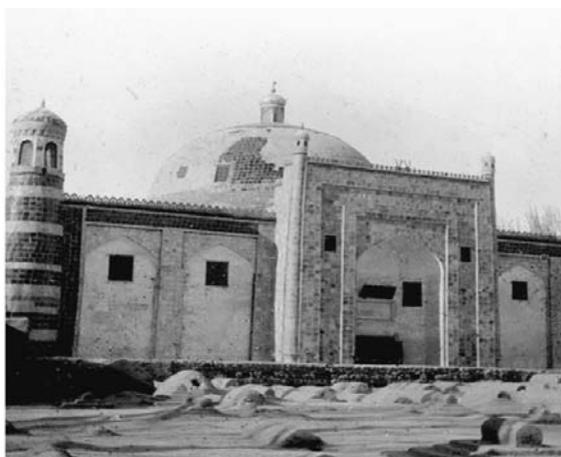
Kashgarian men from Yarkand. 1868  
(Drawing by Vasily Vereshchagin)



New Year's (Yangi Yil) Festivities in Yarkand.  
1898-1899 (Photo by Henry Deasy)



Bazaar square in Kashgar. 1899  
(Photo by Henry Deasy)



Tomb (mazar) of Hazrat-Afak near Kashgar.  
Late 19th century. (Photo by David Hanbury)

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