

Introduction: Killing the 'Cotton Canard' and getting rid of the 'Great Game'. Rewriting the Russian conquest of Central Asia, 1814 – 1895

Alexander Morrison

Nazarbayev University

alexander.morrison@nu.edu.kz

‘Они забыли дни тоски,
Ночные возгласы: «К оружию»,
Унылые солончаки
И поступь мерную верблюжью’

‘They have forgotten days of melancholy,
Forgot the night-time call ‘To arms’!
Forgot the dismal salty steppe
And the camel’s measured tread.’

Nikolai Gumilev *Turkestanские Генералы* (1911)

Russia’s expansion southwards across the Kazakh steppe into the riverine oases of Turkestan was one of the nineteenth century’s most rapid and dramatic examples of imperial conquest. With its main phases sandwiched between the British annexation of the Indian subcontinent between 1757 and 1849, and the ‘Scramble for Africa’ initiated by the British occupation of Egypt in 1881-2, roughly contemporaneous with the French conquest of Algeria, it has never been granted the same degree of historical attention as any of these. In general, as Dominic Lieven has observed (2006 I, 3), studies of the foreign policy of the Russian empire are few and far between, and those which exist tend to take a rather grand, sweeping view of events rather than examining particular episodes in detail (Fuller 1998; LeDonne 1997 & 2004). Whilst there are both classic and recent explorations of the ‘Eastern Question’ and the Russian conquest of the Caucasus (Anderson 1966; Bitis 2006; Baddeley 1908; Gammer 1994), and detailed studies in English of Russian expansion in the Far East (Quested 1968; Bassin 1999; Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2001), the principal phases of the Russian conquest of Central Asia remain neglected and misunderstood. The only works in western languages which examine the conquest from a Russian perspective are brief and chronologically limited, and make little or no use of archival material.¹ There is no equivalent of the studies that exist of British and French conquests and annexations in Africa or British expansion in India (Robinson & Gallagher 1965; Kanya-Forstner 1969; Fisher 1997; Cooper 2003; Brower 2009), or of recent scholarship on the Qing conquest of the neighbouring regions of Inner Asia in the eighteenth century (Perdue 2005). The closest equivalent to an economic analysis as comprehensive as Cain & Hopkins’s ‘Gentlemanly Capitalism’ thesis for the British Empire is the pioneering work of

Dietrich Geyer, but unlike the former, which has sparked two decades of intense debate and revision amongst historians of the British empire, Geyer's arguments have produced little in the way of engagement or response (Geyer 1977/1987; Cain & Hopkins 1990; Darwin 1997). If there is no comprehensive account of the conquest of Central Asia in English, the situation with Russian-language work is only slightly better. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union much modern Russian writing on the history of the conquest has regressed into unapologetic jingoism, with no fewer than four hagiographies of the brutal General Mikhail Dmitrievich Skobelev having appeared since 2000, together with celebrations of Russian victories in the region which are often indistinguishable from the triumphalism of the Tsarist period (Glushchenko 2001, 2010). There are some exceptions to this pattern – O. V. Boronin's chapter on the Russian conquest in a recent collectively-authored work eschews Soviet-era shibboleths of *'prisoedinenie'* ('uniting'), although N. A. Bekmakhanova's contribution to the same publication inexplicably persists with this term to describe the Russian conquest of the Kazakh steppe (Abashin, Arapov & Bekmakhanova 2008, 31-85). A. V. Postnikov's study of Anglo-Russian rivalry on the Pamirs is a serious work of scholarship (Postnikov 2001), and Evgeny Sergeev's recent study of Anglo-Russian diplomacy is also a deeply-researched book, although the framework limits and distorts his viewpoint (Sergeev 2012; Morrison 2013). In Central Asia itself much post-independence historiography is fiercely nationalist, presenting the conquest as warfare divided along straightforwardly ethnic and religious lines, ignoring and over-simplifying the complex web of alliance and conflict which existed between Russia, the Kazakhs and the Central Asian khanates (Abdirov 2000; Bababekov 2006). The chief exceptions are found in Kazakhstan, where scholars have begun to produce sophisticated work which acknowledges that many Kazakhs were allied to and fought for Russia, even as others opposed the advance.² In Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, for political reasons, the outlook is bleaker, but some scholars (mostly in Oriental Studies rather than history) are producing outstanding work based on Islamic chronicles, poetry and other accounts in Persian and Turkic, which contain some material on the conquest (Erkinov 2004; Babadzhanov 2010; Pirumshoev 2010, 64-177).

The history of the Russian conquest of Central Asia is also cursed with a dominant narrative that refuses to go away. Works on the so-called 'Great Game' between Britain and Russia in Central Asia abound, but these invariably examine the conquest as part of the wider geopolitical competition between the two powers, or as a series of anecdotes of adventure and derring-do by British (and occasionally Russian) soldiers and explorers.³ Central Asian rulers, states and peoples are marginalised or ignored completely in this narrative, which (consciously or unconsciously) reproduces the 19th-century European assumption that they were savage, backward, barbarous, and unamenable to any form of diplomacy or negotiation.⁴ Ian Campbell's

paper demonstrates that British and Russian 'players' of the 'Great Game' had shared assumptions about the inferiority and exoticism of 'Asiatics', and the benefits of Europe's civilising mission. Where the 'Game' was played at all, it was as much in a spirit of cooperation as of competition, as travellers, envoys and spies on both sides recognised the same imperial spirit in their opposite numbers.

The 'Great Game' will doubtless continue to fascinate British historians, but its glamour always exceeded its practical importance, and its long-term consequences even for the security of British India turned out to be fairly negligible.⁵ For Russia herself the rivalry with Britain was important primarily in ideological terms: Britain was the leading 'Great Power' against which she measured her own imperial and diplomatic achievements, and whose global reach and clout she sought to emulate. As David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye's paper shows, it was this resentment of and desire to 'get even' with Britain, rather than any rational calculation of strategic advantage, which led to the one authorised attempt by the Russians to invade India, Paul I's despatch of 20,000 Cossacks in 1801. Significantly enough this was launched by a Tsar of doubtful sanity, and it was fortunate for the Cossacks sent on this hare-brained enterprise that they were halted near Saratov, before they had penetrated the steppes of Emba and the Ust-Yurt plateau, which would prove the doom of V. A. Perovskii's expedition to Khiva forty years later. In practical, strategic terms though, attempts to play on British fears of Russian expansion towards India, and Russia's own fear of British expansion in Central Asia only really came to prominence at the time of the First and Second Afghan Wars (Zagorodnikova 2005; Morrison 2014). Otherwise it is remarkable how seldom British India featured in the calculations of the Russian soldiers and statesmen who planned and undertook the conquest of Central Asia. Any study of this period requires a more profound understanding of Russian intentions, motivations and actions than is possible when viewing them through the lens of 'The Defence of India'. After all, the fundamental fact about the 'Great Game', if this is understood as some sort of contest for the control of Central Asia, is that British influence in the region was negligible. Accordingly the energetic explorers and paranoid proconsuls of British India need to be pushed back to the margins of the story, where they belong.

The importance of the conquest of Central Asia for the course of Russian history did not lie in any overwhelming strategic or economic benefits, but because it presented the empire with a vast, alien and almost exclusively Muslim territory, which unlike earlier Asian conquests in Siberia, turned out to be permanently unassimilable to the Russian 'core'. More so even than the Caucasus, Central Asia would remain outside the main civic structures of the empire, and its very difference encouraged Russian statesmen to think of it as a colony analogous to French North Africa and British India, to be exploited accordingly (Sunderland 2010; Morrison 2012).

Central Asian Survey Vol.33 No.2 (2014) pp.131-142

In the Soviet period this creeping ‘colonialisation’ of the Empire’s Asiatic territories would be replaced by an extraordinary experiment in nation-building, in which Central Asia once again represented the greatest challenge because of its perceived ‘backwardness’ and distance from European civilisational norms (Martin 2001; Edgar 2004; Hirsch 2005; Bergne 2007). Both Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union would have been very different states without their Central Asian territories.

Regardless of its significance for Britain or for Russia, the conquest of Central Asia is something that deserves to be studied in its own right, not as an incidental outcome of Anglo-Russian rivalry. Its real significance is to be found in Central Asia itself, where its legacy was 130 years of Russian and Soviet rule, and an unequal political and cultural relationship which continues to this day: the consequences of the Russian conquest for those lands and peoples which were thus incorporated in the Russian Empire ought to be at the heart of any interpretation of this period. For this historians need to make more extensive use of Central Asian sources on the conquest and its aftermath, and these are more abundant than many realise.⁶ Khivan, Khoqandi and Bukharan writing on the Russian conquest is rich, albeit somewhat unbalanced, but text editions of the chronicles are still few and far between, and most are still only available in manuscript: recent studies based on this material have transformed our understanding of Central Asia during the supposedly ‘stagnant’ 18th and 19th centuries (von Kügelgen 2002/2004; Holzwarth 2005 & 2006; Bregel 2004/2012; Levi 2007 & 2012; Sela 2011; Wilde 2012; Wennberg 2013). In particular Timur Beisembiev has devoted a lifetime of research to studying the contents, composition, authorship and language of the largest group of chronicles, those from nineteenth-century Khoqand (Beisembiev 2008 & 2009). His monograph on Mullah Niyaz Muhammad Khoqandi’s *Ta’rikh-i Shabrukbi* (1871) has now been joined by a text edition and translation of Mullah Muhammad Yunus Jan Shighavul Dadkhwah Tashkandi’s *Ta’rikh-i ‘Aliquli, Amir-i Lashkar* (1903): both these chronicles contain vivid accounts of the Russian conquest (Pantusov 1885; Beisembiev 1987, 2003). Another outstanding example of recent scholarship is Bakhtiyar Babajanov’s use of the eyewitness account of the final Russian invasion of Ferghana in 1875-6 from Ishaq Khan ‘Ibrat’s *Ta’rikh-i Farghana* (1915) (Babadzhanov 2010, 281-296). Ron Sela has demonstrated that the account of the conquest of Khiva in Muhammad Yusuf Bek Bayani’s *Shajara-yi Khwarazmshahi* (1914) is partly based on an Ottoman translation of the American journalist J. A. Macgahan’s description of the massacre of the Yomud Turkmen (Sela 2006). Four of the best-known Bukharan histories containing descriptions of the Russian campaigns against the emirate in the 1860s – Ahmad Donish’s *Risala ya Mukhtasari az Ta’rikh-i Saltanat-i Khanadan-i Manghitiyya* (1878), Mirza ‘Abd al-‘Azim Sami’s *Tuhfa-i Shabi* (1901) & *Ta’rikh-i Salatin-i Manghitiyya* (ca.1906-7) and Mirza Muhammad Salim

Bek's *Ta'rikh-i Salimi* (1920) - are available in published editions, and have been used extensively by Azim Malikov in his article in this issue (Mirzoev 1960, Epifanova 1962; Norkulov 2009; Jalali 2010).⁷

It is true that, as Sergei Abashin demonstrates in his analysis of the *Ta'rikh-i Jadidab-yi Tashkand* (the longest of all the Khoqandi chronicles, composed ca.1866 – 1882), these materials often give only a very limited sense of the local reaction to the Russian invasion: they are by and large the product of an elite literary tradition, and most of them were written with the benefit of a great deal of hindsight. Most Central Asian chronicles are concerned with either praising or damning particular dynasties or lineages, and far more concerned with the internal politics of the khanates than with the looming threat from Russia, even in the mid-19th century (though this in itself is an extremely important point). Nevertheless, even for those (like myself) who are restricted to using the few that have been published, they offer invaluable insights into the high politics of the sedentary states of Central Asia and the mentality of their ruling elites, and a powerful narrative counterpoint to the military memoir literature which dominates accounts of the Russian conquest. Local documentary (as opposed to narrative) evidence on the conquest is rarer, but can still be found in Central Asian archives, usually in the form of appeals from the rulers of Khiva and Khoqand to neighbouring nomadic peoples to resist the Russian advance.⁸ There is also a legacy of poetry, folklore and oral history relating to the Russian conquest among the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and Turkmen which, while it was usually only written down much later, also has much to offer (Babataiuli 2013, 28-30; Prior 2013, 335).

One central question that remains unanswered in the existing historiography is simply this: why did the Russians conquer Central Asia? It brought them a long Asian frontier that proved as difficult and expensive to defend as India was for the British, but without the same economic and military advantages which the control of the subcontinent conferred.⁹ The 'Great Game' perspective – that it was designed either as a real or imaginary threat to India – may be part of the story, (that consideration was occasionally put forward when official battles had to be won in St Petersburg),¹⁰ but still tells us more about how the British perceived it than it does either about Russian intentions or local interpretations of the conquest. The historiography in Russian provides alternatives to this perspective, but is not without its own problems. The officers who took part in the conquest of Central Asia began writing its history even as the military campaign was still unwinding, a predictably triumphalist narrative which they exploited to good effect to climb the military hierarchies of the empire. This culminated in the appointment as War Minister from 1898 - 1904 of that quintessential *Turkestaniskii General*, Alexei Kuropatkin, a participant in the campaigns in the Zarafshan and Ferghana valleys and the conquest of Transcaspia, himself the author of one of the more important histories of the

Central Asian Survey Vol.33 No.2 (2014) pp.131-142

conquest (Marshall 2006, 44-5; Kuropatkin 1899). It is no surprise that it was under his patronage that the historiography of the conquest took on canonical form, as he used state funds to sponsor the publication of M. A. Terent'ev's official history, and A. G. Serebrennikov's monumental, incomplete publication of documents relating to the conquest (Terent'ev 1906; Serebrennikov 1908 – 1915; Bartol'd 1973 IX, 558-9; Mirzaeva 1963).¹¹ Taken together with the vast literature of campaign memoirs (Levtteva 1986), these works are rich in detail and remain vital and under-used sources, but their accounts have little explanatory power. The starting-point of the Tsarist narrative was General Perovskii's disastrous winter expedition to Khiva in 1839, as the lessons learnt from this initial debacle were applied to a conquest which, as Serebrennikov put it 'offers a shining example of how, with negligible resources it is possible to attain great results' (Serebrennikov 1908 I, i). The various shifts, turns, catastrophic mistakes and dead ends of Russian policy in Central Asia were thus retrospectively smoothed out into a coherent strategy, which led to the creation of a new frontier in the steppe, based on a line of forts along the Syr-Darya and another along the Tian-shan range on the Chinese border, the uniting of these two lines and the fall of Tashkent in 1865. Military success and heroic sieges and skirmishes were presented as ends in themselves. In so far as the question of motivation was addressed at all, it was given either as the need to contain British ambitions in the region, or to punish the insolence of Central Asian rulers.

Soviet historiography had a neat and predictable motive for the conquest (or 'uniting' – *prisoedinenie* – as it was officially known from the 1940s):¹² as Lenin had written, the annexation of Turkestan was carried out at the behest of big capitalists, specifically the textile manufacturers of Moscow, panicked by the cotton drought of the 1860s caused by the American Civil War and desirous of obtaining both a secure domestic supply of raw materials and a captive market for shoddy Russian industrial goods (Khal'fin 1960 & 1965; Kastel'skaia 1980). The Moscow textile 'barons' thus played the same Machiavellian role in provoking the conquest of Central Asia as J. A. Hobson's Jewish financiers in South Africa did in engineering the Boer War, an argument which fitted snugly into official Marxism-Leninism, unsurprising given Lenin's considerable debt to Hobson (Eckstein 1991, 306-7). Historians who rely on Soviet-era literature still frequently give primacy to economic motives for the conquest of Turkestan in the 1860s, with the chief role being played by cotton hunger (Buttino 2007, 18; Beckert 2004; Bregel 2009, 405-11; Dempsey 2010, 2-3, 36-8). However, this cannot have provided the spur for a conquest which began in earnest in 1853 with the siege of the Khoqandi fortress of Aq Masjid, and which would probably have come to an end much sooner had the Crimean War not intervened: for this and other reasons some historians had already rejected it over fifty years ago, and it is high time this Soviet-era canard was laid to rest (Whitman 1956, Becker 1968). As I explain in my

own paper, the notion that Russia's fledgling industrial capitalists were somehow pulling the strings of Russian foreign policy behind the scenes in the 1860s is inherently implausible, and no solid evidence has ever been found to corroborate it.

The only alternative to the dominant 'Great Game' and 'Cotton Canard' interpretations of the conquest in existing western historiography is that of accident, disobedience and aggression by 'men on the spot', a form of the 'imperialism as atavism' advanced by Joseph Schumpeter as a key motive for imperial expansion in conservative, aristocratic societies (Schumpeter 1951, 65-98). It could also be seen as something akin to the 'prancing proconsuls' who, according to some accounts, were instrumental in bringing about the British annexation of Egypt in 1882-3 (Schölch 1976). The key event in this interpretation is the fall of Tashkent, which has frequently been seen as an episode of disobedience and deceit by Russia's 'man on the spot', General M. G. Cherniaev, in defiance of St Petersburg's orders (Mackenzie 1969). As my paper explains, Cherniaev's disobedience, if any, was minor – the Governors of Orenburg had been advocating Tashkent's annexation since the late 1850s, tacitly supported by the War Ministry. Instead, the real questions were whether, and on what terms, the Russian presence in Tashkent would become permanent, and whether or not the advance would continue thereafter.

The excessive focus on the fall of Tashkent has also tended to obscure earlier and later phases of the Russian advance, which were at once more crucial and more baffling.¹³ One question is why, when their steppe frontier had remained relatively stable for a hundred years, the Russians began a renewed advance into Central Asia in the 1840s. On the eastern frontier with China, Russian settlement along the Siberian line of fortresses through Ayaguz, Zaisan, Lepsinsk, Kapal and Vernoe in the relatively gentle climate of Semirechie was quite successful. From Orenburg in the West, however, the construction of Fort Raim near the Aral Sea in 1847, and the capture of the Khoqandi fortress of Aq Masjid in 1853 led to a doomed attempt to build a stable frontier with a line of fortresses along the Syr Darya, in the heart of some of the most barren territory of the steppe, a trap from which, by the early 1860s, the conquest of the fertile lands around Tashkent seemed the only way out. In neither case can this be attributed to 'men on the spot' getting out of control: spontaneous advances on local initiative along the steppe frontier were impossible for the simple reason that every military expedition required months of planning to accumulate the necessary supplies and, above all, the necessary camels, without which even the most modern weaponry and well-drilled troops were completely useless. These had to be raised from the local Kazakh population (who also acted as drivers), and cost a great deal of money: Perovsky's 1839 expedition to Khiva required over 10,000 camels, and the process of collecting them at Orenburg began 18 months before the expedition set off (Morrison 2014, 288-90). Every stage of the Russian advance up to the fall of Tashkent was

negotiated, vetted and costed down to the last kopek by St Petersburg, and did not proceed without the personal authorisation of the Tsar himself. What becomes clear is that almost everyone in the Russian military hierarchy up to and including the Tsar shared certain assumptions about the primacy of military over commercial or diplomatic interests, and considered that the first priority on the steppe frontier was upholding imperial prestige and claims to 'sovereignty', however these were defined. The ethos and culture of the military interest ('paradomania') permeated and controlled the very highest echelons of government during the reign of Nicholas I, and this persisted under Alexander II. Whilst the War Ministry was frequently opposed by the Ministries of Finance and Foreign affairs, this was almost always unsuccessful in the face of unwavering support from the Tsar (LeDonne 2004, 219, 227).

The renewal of the Russian advance after the fall of Tashkent is also puzzling. By 1865 the Russians had apparently succeeded in their main strategic aim in Central Asia, which was to create a new frontier running through a settled, grain-producing region. There were no plans for a further advance beyond Tashkent, and indeed they hoped that they would be able to turn the city into the centre of a puppet khanate, withdrawing most of their garrisons to the steppe fortresses. Had they succeeded then the political geography of Central Asia would have remained very different, with Russian rule limited to the steppe region, and Khoqand, Khiva and Bukhara surviving, like Afghanistan, as buffer states between Russian and British territory. Instead this strategy unravelled almost immediately, as war with Bukhara erupted in 1866, leading to the annexation of further territory and the creation of the Turkestan Governor-Generalship, with the creation of a Russian protectorate over Bukhara. Territorial expansion continued throughout the 1870s as Khiva and Khoqand were swallowed up, the 1880s, with the conquest of Transcaspia, and the 1890s with the annexation of the Pamirs and the demarcation of the Russo-Afghan Boundary. There is no single explanation for any of these episodes. As Azim Malikov explains in his paper, Bukhara in part fell victim to its own intransigence in the face of a Russian threat which the emirate's leaders underestimated, while the Russian advance produced chronic internal unrest and instability, but the campaigns of 1866, far more than those of 1864-5, do also reveal the importance of local, unauthorised initiative (made possible because the Russians were finally fighting in a settled region with adequate food supplies). Inomjon Mamadaliev's micro-study of the siege of Khujand in 1866 further reinforces the point about the importance of local initiative by Russian officers during the three years after the capture of Tashkent, but also emphasises that the people of Khujand resisted the Russians out of local patriotism and a strong sense of urban identity, rather than through any loyalty to the Bukharan and Khoqandi states which had for so long contested the control of this strategic city, or indeed because of Islam.

The annexation of Khiva in 1873 had much to do with righting perceived slights and humiliations to Russian dignity in the past (the massacre of Bekovich-Cherkasskii's force in 1717, and Perovskii's debacle in 1839), and with the desire of the new Governor-General, K. P. von Kaufman, for a set of newly-burnished laurels which he would not have to share with anyone else - although this campaign did have full authorisation from St Petersburg (Zaionchkovskii 1947 I, 88-90). Shioya Akifumi's paper demonstrates that the military conquest of Khiva was followed by considerable interference in the internal affairs of the supposedly autonomous protectorate, as well as by Russian commercial and technological penetration, although the latter took a long time to manifest itself. His study of the construction of the New Lawzan Canal underlines the central importance of irrigation to Central Asian statecraft, and the long-delayed ability of the Russians to grasp this. It also shows that the key role played by the Yomud Turkmen in the internal affairs of the Khanate did not end with their massacre by Russian forces in 1873, as has often been assumed.

The rump of the Khanate of Khoqand was brought down in 1875-6 by internal strife and instability, in part fostered by the Russian presence, but also with deeper roots in the Khanate's past. The subsequent Russian invasion of Ferghana is often treated as a mere afterthought in histories of the Russian conquest, but Sergei Abashin's paper demonstrates clearly just how far Khoqand's political fabric was rent by the Russian presence, and also the alarming brutality of the Russian campaign of 'pacification'. For the *'ulama* who produced the narrative chronicles of the Khanate's history it was a tragic final act, and one which definitively destroyed Khoqand's place in the *Dar al-Islam*. At the most local level of all, however, in a single village, a traumatising defeat has been re-imagined and re-narrated as a triumph against the odds.

As Robinson & Gallagher (1965) showed for Africa, peripheral instability, ambitious individuals, economic interests, and the destabilising influence of European power and trade can all play a role in triggering imperial expansion. Each time there may be a unique interplay of factors, but one constant always remains: the nature of the 'official mind' (or minds), either on the spot, or in the metropole, when confronted with the possibility or perceived desirability of expanding claims to sovereignty and the need to maintain 'prestige'. Paul Kennedy argued thirty years ago that there is a certain remorseless logic to 'Great Power' status, the maintenance of which becomes an end in itself, requiring ever-greater military resources as competition increases, which in many cases eventually leads to growing economic weakness (Kennedy 1988). Beyond this, I would argue, that it also prompted states into annexations that often made little sense in either economic or strategic terms. This was partly because territorial size was also seen as a measure of power, but also because the very consciousness of 'Great Power' status brought

Central Asian Survey Vol.33 No.2 (2014) pp.131-142

about a sometimes neurotic obsession amongst ruling elites with the maintenance of 'prestige' in the face of challenges from weaker or more 'backward' states. As a 'Great Power', the default option for Russia (with one intriguing and revealing exception in Kulja)¹⁴ was always to advance and expand, and once a claim to sovereignty had been made, it had to be permanent.

The final two papers, by Svetlana Gorshenina and Bakhtiyar Babajanov, remind us that the Russian conquest of Central Asia did not end with the military campaigns. We still understand too little about the economic relationship between Russia and Central Asia in the Tsarist period to be able to say anything definitive about it (though the evidence presented in Penati 2013 suggests that it was not always wholly exploitative). There is little doubt however that the military conquest of Central Asia was followed by a gradual and sustained process of cultural and ideological subordination. The Svetlana Gorshenina demonstrates how the Russians set about appropriating the architectural monuments of Samarkand as 'cultural patrimony' almost as soon as the city fell to them in 1868. K.P. von Kaufman was well aware of the city's status as the capital of Timur, and sought to associate Russian rule with that earlier imperial legacy. The neglect of buildings such as the Gur-i Amir or Bibi-Khanym by the local population could be contrasted with Russian attempts to restore these monuments (almost always described as Timurid, regardless of who actually constructed them), and demonstrate that they took greater care of the legacy of the past. In the process, these buildings also became re-inscribed into a Russian narrative of conquest and subjugation. Bakhtiyar Babajanov's intensive study of the writings (and rantings) of the prominent Orientalist-Administrator Nikolai Ostroumov reveal an uneasier side to Russian rule. Ostroumov was one of the chief ideologues of the Russian presence in Turkestan, a devout Orthodox Christian who proclaimed Russia's civilizing mission in the region, whilst simultaneously acting as censor on local publications and editor of the only Turkic-language newspaper. He produced several pioneering works on the ethnography of the 'Sarts', and was a consultant on Islamic affairs to every Governor-General of Turkestan from the 1870s to the revolution. However his private papers reveal a much greater uncertainty about the permanence and stability of the Russian conquest. Ostroumov had an obsession, amounting almost to paranoia, that Russian civilization, and in particular Russian Orthodoxy, were under constant threat from cultural backsliding, 'native' insolence, and a failure to maintain Christian values in Turkestan. He focused much of his criticism on the second Governor-General of Turkestan, Mikhail Grigor'evich Cherniaev, whom he considered to be lowering Russian prestige in the eyes of the local population. In the 1880s, twenty years after the fall of Tashkent, Ostroumov still considered the Russian presence in Central Asia to be deeply vulnerable.

The papers in this issue of *Central Asian Survey* offer a comprehensive reinterpretation of the Russian conquest of Central Asia – it was not a side-show of 19th-century Great Power competition, nor was it the inevitable outcome of the development of Russian industrial capitalism, nor was it accidental. Instead the different episodes of the conquest can only be understood through a series of microhistories, which foreground Russian motives and ideologies (contradictory and unclear as these often were) and, above all, the meaning and experience of the conquest for Central Asia and its peoples, who are still living with the consequences.

Acknowledgements

This special issue of *Central Asian Survey* is based on the papers delivered at an international workshop on the Russian Conquest of Central Asia held in the Department of History of the University of Liverpool on the 23rd November 2012. The workshop was made possible by a research grant from the British Academy, and I would like to thank that body for continuing to provide funding of a type and scale appropriate to research in the Humanities. I would also like to thank Ulfatbek Abdurasulov, Paolo Sartori and Thomas Welsford for the valuable contributions they made at the original workshop. I thank Ian Campbell for translating Svetlana Gorshenina's paper, Gabriel McGuire for the reference to Dulat Babataiuli's poetry, the anonymous reviewers for *Central Asian Survey* for their comments and suggestions, and Deniz Kandiyoti and Raphael Jacquet for agreeing to a special issue on the Russian conquest.

Notes

¹ These are Carrère d'Encausse 1967, a short essay which ignores the period before the fall of Tashkent; MacKenzie 1969 & 1974, which concentrate on the campaigns in which M. G. Cherniaev was involved, and Bauman 1993, which has a rather narrow focus on military tactics. By far the best accounts and interpretations currently available are in Becker 1968, 1-45 & Becker 1988, although he writes little about the period before 1865, and Palat 1988, which offers a sweeping, striking and often very perceptive interpretation of Russian expansion in the region, albeit without very substantial evidence to back it up. See also the brief overview in Abashin & Gorshenina 2009, 7-14.

² Strangely the new collectively-authored official history of Kazakhstan (Kozybaev 2010, III, 362-90) showcases both these tendencies; the account of the establishment of the Syr-Darya line by M. U. Shalekenov (362-8) is highly polemical, but the description of the conquest of Semirechie and the uniting of the two lines by I. V. Erofeeva (368-90) is a model of balanced, careful research.

³ The classic popular account is Hopkirk 1990, but the most important scholarly study of the foreign policy of British India in Central Asia is Yapp 1980, whose level of detail and analysis has never been matched in the historiography of the Russian Empire.

⁴ A recent attempt to apply International Relations theory to Central Asia in this period (Mackay 2013) compounds these prejudices with a total absence of primary research. For an excellent critique of the whole concept of the 'Great Game' see Hopkins 2008, 34-47.

⁵ Something acknowledged in Yapp 2001.

⁶ Mackay (2013, 2) opens his article with the jaw-dropping statement that 'Primary historical sources on Central Asia are limited' – something true neither of Russian nor of Central Asian material for those who are actually prepared to do some research.

⁷ For a discussion of Sami and his text, see Gross 1997.

⁸ There are some interesting examples in the Kazakhstan state archives in Almaty, notably an appeal by Allah Quli Khan of Khiva to Turkmen and Kazakh *Babadurs* and *Biis* to resist Perovskii's expedition in 1839 (TsGARKaz F.4 Op.1 D.2182 l.160b), and a letter from the Khoqandi leader 'Alimqul to a Kyrgyz *Bii* called Janata Atai Batur Dadkhwah in 1864 calling on him to resist the Russians (TsGARKaz F.3 Op.1 D.167 l.140).

⁹ I have expanded on this argument more fully elsewhere (Morrison 2008); Alex Marshall suggests that fears for the security of the Empire's Asiatic frontiers in the last years of the Tsarist regime distracted the 'myopic guard' of the Russian General Staff from the much more serious German threat (Marshall 2006, 176-193).

¹⁰ For instance, it was used by War Minister D. A. Miliutin in 1863 to convince the more cautious Foreign Minister A. M. Gorchakov that the uniting of the Siberian and Syr-Darya lines of fortresses was absolutely necessary: Miliutin to A. M. Gorchakov 01/?/1863 RGVIA F.483 Op.1 D.62 ll.198ob-199ob

¹¹ 'Min. Voen. Doklad po Glavnomu Shtabu. Kantseliarii Voenno-Uchenogo Komiteta' 09/11/1901 RGVIA F.483 Op.1 D.150 l.2 The remaining volumes of Serebrennikov's *Sbornik* (covering the period 1853 – 63 and 1866 – 76) remained unpublished, despite pleas by V. V. Barthold, although the drafts are held in a special fond (I-715) in the Uzbek archives and have been used by Sergei Abashin for his paper in this volume.

¹² On the enforcement of this orthodoxy, which still finds many adherents in Russia today, see Tillet 1969 32-4, 174-190; those historians who deviated from this line – notably Erumkhan Bekmakhanov (1947), were forced to recant.

¹³ LeDonne, indeed, writes that the conquest of Central Asia began in 1864 (2004, 235)

¹⁴ On the annexation and subsequent return of Kulja to China between 1871 and 1881 see Hsü 1965, Gorshenina 2012, 95-132.

Abbreviations

RGVIA - Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voenno-Istoricheskii Arkhiv - Russian State Military Historical Archive

TsGARKaz - Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Respubliki Kazakhstan – Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan

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