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## FEATURES OF THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE ILISKY REGION IN THE 1760S–1860S\*

This article attempts to analyse the legal status of the Ili region, a province of the Manchu Qing Empire formed on the territory of the former Dzungar Khanate in the late 1750s and early 1760s. Based on various sources and research works, the author characterises the legal status of the Ili region from the time of its formation in the early 1760s to the Muslim uprising in the early 1860s, as a result of which this region effectively seceded from the Qing Empire. The author analyses the system of administrative and local self-government bodies, the status of various population groups and foreign subjects who came to the Ili region for different purposes during the period under review, as well as the legal regulation of trade and the taxation system. A novel feature of the work is the extensive use of notes made by Russian diplomats and merchants who visited the Ili region in the 1770s–1860s in the study of the legal situation in the region. Analysis of these materials allows us to form an idea not only of the formally established legal status of the region, its population and foreigners, but also of the peculiarities of the implementation of legal regulations in practice, as well as the problems faced by the Qing authorities in their relations with both the population of the region and foreign states that had their own political and economic interests in the Ili region. The author concludes that in the 1760s–1860s, the Ili region was undergoing a "transitional stage," in connection with which not only the subjects of the Manchu emperors, but also foreigners enjoyed a special status that differed from their position in other regions of China. Later, this special status was legally enshrined, in particular in the form of Russian-Chinese agreements on the rights of Russian subjects in the Ili region.

**Key words:** Ili region; Kulja; Russian Empire; Xinjiang; Qing Empire; legal status of the region; travellers' notes; legal relations; Russian-Chinese relations.

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## **SPECIFIC FEATURES OF THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE ILI PROVINCE BETWEEN 1760 AND THE 1860s**

The author attempts to analyse the legal status of the Ili Province, a region of the Qing Empire that had been an independent Junggar Khanate conquered by the Manchu dynasty in the early 1760s. Referring to various sources and research works, the author characterises the legal status of the Ili Province from its foundation in the early 1760s to the Muslim rebellion of the early 1860s, which resulted in the region's separation from the Qing Empire. The author analyses the administrative system and local government, the status of specific population groups, the policy of Qing regional authorities towards foreigners (subjects of Central Asian khanates and the Russian Empire), and its regulations in the field of trade and taxation. The author refers to a wide range of notes from Russian diplomats and merchants who visited the Ili Province between 1770 and the 1860s, which makes the work innovative. The analysis of these materials allows the author to describe the formally fixed legal status of the region, its population and foreigners, but also the specific features of putting legal regulations into practice, and problems which the Manchu authorities faced in the Ili Province connected with the population and subjects of neighbouring states. The author concludes that the Ili Province in 1760–1860s had a “transitional character” which caused a specific legal status both Manchu subjects and foreigners had, and which was different from their status in other Chinese regions. Later, this specific status was fixed legally, specifically in the Russian-Chinese treaties on the rights of Russian subjects in the Ili Province.

Keywords: Ili Province; Kuldja; Russian Empire; Xinjiang; Qing Empire; legal status of a region; travellers' notes; legal relations; Russian–Chinese relations.

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In 1758, the Qing Empire defeated the Dzungar Khanate in western Mongolia and annexed its territory, transforming it in 1760 into the Ili

region, which together with neighbouring Eastern Turkestan (Kashgar) formed a new Chinese province — Xinjiang<sup>1</sup>.

The study of the early history of the Ili region is of considerable interest, since there is still no consensus among scholars as to what legal status this region had within the Qing Empire during its first century of existence (1760–1864), i.e. from the moment of its creation until the beginning of the Muslim uprising. Researchers have so far paid more attention to the history of Eastern Turkestan, while the history of the Ili region has been more often considered in the context of Russian-Chinese relations and the so-called "Ili Crisis" refers to the region's temporary inclusion in the Russian Empire (1871–1881).

This article attempts to analyse the peculiarities of the legal status of the Ili region. To this end, it draws on official documents of the Qing Empire and the results of previous studies of Chinese policy in the region, as well as the testimonies of contemporaries who personally visited the region and had the opportunity to see for themselves how effective the legal regulations of the Manchu administration were in practice. For the first time, a wide range of notes by Russian diplomats and merchants from the last third of the 18th century to the middle of the 19th century are used as a source of information about the legal situation in the Ili region. The combination of information from official documents and travellers' notes will allow us to form an objective picture of the status of the region.

Various researchers characterise the Ilian region as an imperial province [Newby, p. 113], a viceroyalty [Anufriev, p. 155; Sanin, p. 212], a protectorate [Myasnikov, Shepeleva, p. 59], and even a colony under indirect rule [Barmine, Dmitriev, Shmatov, p. 219]. The reason for such diversity is the ambiguous position of the Manchurian administration in the region and the demarcation of its powers with local authorities.

Initially, the Qing authorities viewed the Oliy region exclusively as a military district consisting of fortified settlements where Manchu and Chinese soldiers were to live [Chinese Documents..., p. 113; Millward, pp. 77–83]. The region was headed by a jiangjun, or military governor, residing in Yili (Kulja), who reported to the Lifanyuan, the Qing Empire's diplomatic department. He had command over garrison commanders and a small staff of officials [Potulov, pp. 19–20; Di Cosmo, pp. 297–298; Hsü, pp. 19, 21; Ning, p. 180].

However, Muslims from Eastern Turkestan (Taranchi) and the interior provinces of the Qing Empire (Dungans) were soon resettled in the region, and a similar

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<sup>1</sup> Plans to create the region had emerged among the Qing authorities somewhat earlier. Already in the summer of 1755, Dzungaria was occupied by Manchu troops under the pretext of providing assistance to Amursan, a pretender to the khan's throne, and on 19 July, an imperial decree was issued on its inclusion "in the map of our empire." In another imperial decree, dated October 1756, the Ili region already appears as the location of the Qing troops [Qing Empire..., part 1, pp. 118–119; Chimitdorzhiev, pp. 108–109].

This form of government proved ineffective, and 23 Muslim urban communities were granted broad self-government. They were headed by a khakim-bek ("civil governor"), whose position was usually hereditary, although he was approved by the Qing administration. The bek had at his disposal an *ishkaga* (assistant), a *shanbegi* (treasurer) and a *mirab* (official for errands), who were usually appointed by the khakim-bek from among his relatives [Hsü, pp. 20–21]. The Qing administration of the Ili region interacted exclusively with the khakim-bek, who were responsible for maintaining order and collecting taxes in their cities. At the same time, the khakim-bek themselves were not considered imperial dignitaries, and the terms of their service were not legally regulated, but in order to increase their authority, their status was equated with that of third-rank officials [Di Cosmo, p. 303; Brophy, Onuma, p. 7; Kim, p. 11, 13]. Outwardly, as noted by Russian eyewitnesses, this was expressed in the fact that the beks had the right to wear braids, similar to the Manchus [Putinsev, p. 109; Raspilyaev, pp. 38–39].

As a result, the powers of Jiangjun and his subordinate officials were reduced to a few functions: maintaining general order in the region, collecting taxes for the treasury, and foreign policy activities (receiving foreigners arriving in the region and monitoring political events in neighbouring regions<sup>2</sup>). All issues related to economic development, trade, and law enforcement were decided by representatives of local self-government [Suteeva, p. 14; Hsü, p. 20]. This division even resulted in the Manchu elite distancing themselves from the region's population: the Jiangjun's residence was a completely separate "Chinese" (or, as Russian travellers called it, "provincial") city, separated from the "Muslim" part by a fortress wall, and access to it was permitted only during daylight hours and only with the consent of the Manchu administration [Veselovsky, part 1, p. 178; Putinsev, p. 109]<sup>3</sup>.

The peculiarities of the "transitional" status of the Ili region determined the specific situation of the local population. First of all, it should be noted that the indigenous population of the region, the Oirats, was virtually exterminated by the Qing troops during the hostilities of 1756–1758. The remnants of the Oirats were resettled to other regions, and the question of their return was not even considered<sup>4</sup>. As noted, initially the Qing authorities saw little

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<sup>2</sup> In particular, the Ili Jiangjun collected information about Kazakhs living under Russian rule and developed proposals for Beijing on further interaction with them, conducted negotiations and concluded agreements with the Kokand Khanate [Qing Empire..., vol. 2, p. 128; Di Cosmo, p. 298; Kim, p. 28].

<sup>3</sup>The "Chinese" and "Muslim" parts of the administrative centre of the region even had different names: the former was called Huiyuan, and the latter was actually Kulja (Gulcha) [Noda, p. 166].

<sup>4</sup>Thus, when the Volga Kalmyks fled to China in 1771, they arrived in the Ili region, hoping to settle in the former habitats of their Oirat relatives (during the negotiations, the Kalmyk leader Ubashi and representatives of the nobility were held hostage in Kulja). However, according to an eyewitness, Ataman Voloshanin, the Qing authorities strongly opposed this option, intending to resettle the Kalmyks in other regions, and were even prepared to use troops if the fugitives resisted their plans [Voloshanin, pp. 47–55; Hostetler, p. 214].

The soldiers, who numbered up to 30,000, were not the only inhabitants of the region [Kim, p. 16]. However, it soon became clear that the central authorities were unable to provide them with sufficient provisions, so it was decided that the soldiers should engage in farming, crafts and even small-scale trade in order to support themselves. However, the military authorities of the Ili region soon began to bombard the Beijing court with reports that the soldiers were paying so much attention to economic matters that they had forgotten about their regular military training. Moreover, even the privileged Manchu "banner" troops adopted this practice, and the Qing authorities began to worry that the Manchus would soon "become like the Han," which was something the Manchu rulers of China had always feared [Millward, pp. 83–88].

As a result, in the early 1760s, representatives of various peoples began to be resettled in the region, including Chinese (Han), Mongols, Uyghurs (Dungans) and Turks from Eastern Turkestan (Taranches), whose numbers soon reached 60,000 [The Kazakhs of China, p. 19; Clarke, p. 490–491]. In this regard, one of the conquerors of Dzungaria, General Sukhede, wrote in 1772 that official Chinese legislation could not be effectively applied in the conditions of the Ili region and that special rules should be introduced, which determined the special status of the region and its various population groups [Millward, p. 64].

Thus, the Manchus, of whom there were 2–3 thousand in the region, held the highest administrative positions and formed the administrative apparatus: it was from among them that the jiangjun, their assistants and the main backbone of the garrison, who performed the functions of bodyguards for the administration and police, were appointed [Putinsev, p. 109]<sup>5</sup>. As noted by Ch. Ch. Valikhanov, who visited Kulja in 1856, the jiangjun was "a perfect three-bunch pasha," i.e., his actions resembled those of the corrupt Ottoman administration: he lived off the people, receiving food, fabrics, fuel, repairs to his residence, etc. from the local residents, while also taking a significant portion of state taxes, fees and duties for himself [Valikhanov, 1985a, p. 239].

The few Chinese in Kulja were also military personnel, but there were also a number of exiles and migrants engaged in agriculture and crafts [Vasilyev, p. 10; Putinsev, p. 91]. Granting them land plots that had become state property after the physical destruction of their former owners, the Oirats, led to the emergence of new forms of land ownership in the region. In particular, Chinese military settlements (bintun), settlements for exiles (jiangtun), land plots for Manchu soldiers (citun), Dungans (huituun) and Chinese (hutun) were organised [Duman, pp. 89–90; Khojaev, p. 174]. It is interesting to note that the authorities divided the Chinese of the Ili region into "farmers" and "traders," although both groups were engaged in agricultural labour and paid

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<sup>5</sup> Between 1760 and 1874, only five "possibly Chinese" people held senior administrative posts in Xinjiang, while the rest were Manchus [Kim, pp. 15–16].

taxes — in cash (5 fyns per mu of land per year) and in kind (part of the harvest was contributed to the administration and the army). The only difference was that the former were forcibly resettled to the region, while the latter moved voluntarily [Millward, p. 53, 102]. During the Muslim uprisings, the Chinese were slaughtered first, as they were seen by the rebels as representatives of the conquering nation and by the Manchu authorities as unprivileged subjects who were not worth protecting [The Kazakhs of China, p. 29].

Representatives of the Mongolian and Tungus-Manchu peoples (Chakhar, Solon, Sibo, Olet, Daur), numbering about 6,000 people, were a kind of irregular army, which Russian contemporaries compared to the Cossacks: they were responsible for guarding the region's borders [Valikhanov, 1985a, p. 198; Gens, p. 339; Putinsev, pp. 92, 110]. However, as Russian official A. T. Putinsev noted at the beginning of the 19th century, the Qing authorities did not fully trust them and each year sent up to 1,500 soldiers directly from Kulja to the border. Unlike Chinese soldiers, who were engaged in crafts and agriculture, the Mongols (like the Manchus) were cattle breeders outside the cities [Millward, p. 135]. At first, feeling like strangers among the large Muslim population, the Mongols were the most loyal soldiers to the authorities, but as their living conditions in the region deteriorated, they began to "show complete indifference" [Potulov, p. 31]<sup>6</sup>.

As for the Muslim Turks, who constituted the most numerous part of the region, they were mainly engaged in trade and crafts and supported soldiers by supplying them with everything they needed. As early as 1768, 80 trading enterprises were established in Kulja alone, each of which was assigned a military unit that had to be maintained by its owner [Millward, p. 103]. Later, as economic activity in the region grew and new enterprises were opened, this practice was abolished, and the maintenance of soldiers was reduced to the payment of monetary and in-kind taxes and levies by the population. Part of the Muslim population belonged to the category of serfs ("yanci"): these were families attached to the land holdings of the beks and workers in state-owned mines [Duman, pp. 90–91]. The special status of the Ili region as a border military district led to strict restrictions on the entry of foreigners into the region. However, soon the same reasons that necessitated the resettlement of Muslims from Eastern Turkestan (lack of funds to maintain the troops) forced the local administration to allow representatives of the Central Asian khanates to stay and conduct business in the region. First and foremost, these were merchants from Fergana and Andijan, i.e. the Kokand Khanate, which during the 1760s–1860s was most actively interacting with the Chinese in Xinjiang and, threatening

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<sup>6</sup> It is telling that the Kashgar hojas, initiating an anti-Chinese uprising in eastern Turkestan in 1815, sought support not only from the Muslims of the Ili region, but also from the Mongols [Newby, p. 82].

By uniting all Muslims in Central Asia against the "infidel" Qing authorities, they achieved numerous trade and tax privileges in Eastern Turkestan [Yakubov, pp. 66–67, 70; Kim, pp. 22–23; Newby; Onuma, Kawahara, Shioya, p. 404]. It was very profitable for merchants from Bukhara or Kokand to do business in the Ili region: after passing all border and customs procedures on the border with East Turkestan, they entered the Ili region without additional formalities, taxes, or fees.

Traders from other regions, in particular Tashkent, did not have such advantages, but the Ili border authorities managed to create a kind of "legal fiction" that allowed them to come to the region, trade and, accordingly, pay trade taxes and fees. To do this, it was sufficient to obtain special letters of recommendation from the Kazakh khans and sultans of the senior and middle zhuz, who were nominally considered subjects of the Qing emperors and, since 1761, had the right to trade with the authorities of the Ili region [Newby, p. 129]<sup>7</sup>. The Kazakhs did not need to act under the name of representatives of other countries: the Chinese authorities in Kulja willingly traded with them, exchanging the sheep they supplied for local goods [Vasilyev, p. 5; Voloshanin, pp. 48, 50; Putintsev, pp. 113–114].

This is how Russian subjects first began to penetrate the Ili region and its capital, Kulja. In 1811, the merchant Nerpin (whose caravan included the diplomatic official A.

T. Putin-Tsev) received a letter from the Kazakh Kambay Sultan in 1811. However, Russian merchants had to pretend to be from Tashkent, as the Qing authorities strictly prohibited

Russian subjects from entering Xinjiang, citing the fact that they had long been trading with China through Kyakhta [Newby, p. 129; Noda, p. 166]. However, by the 1830s and 1840s, the presence of Russians in the Ili region had become commonplace: in Kulja itself, the Semipalatinsk merchants Samsonov and Sannikov, who had annual turnovers

of tens of thousands of roubles and kept two or three clerks there permanently, conducted their business [Antonov, p. 153; Valikhanov, 1985b, p. 257; Veselovsky, 1908b, p. 316; Kositsyn, p. 12]. As a result, when in 1845 the deputy director of the

Asian Department, N. I. Lyubimov, visited the second most important trading city of Chuguchak<sup>8</sup>, he did not even consider it necessary to hide the fact that he was Russian (albeit under the name of the merchant Khoroshev): the local customs amban merely

recommended that he "come there in Asian dress" in future. From this, Lyubimov himself concluded that the Qing officials were prepared to ignore the special regime for foreigners.

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<sup>7</sup>It was no coincidence that it was to Kulja, the capital of the Ili region, that tribute (often purely nominal) collected by Chinese officials from the Kazakhs of the Senior Zhuz was delivered [Leschev, pp. 379–380]. At the same time, unlike Xinjiang, the Kazakh zhuz were never considered part of the Qing Empire in Qing imperial political practice [Sanin, p. 214].

<sup>8</sup>It is interesting to note that at the beginning of the 19th century, A. T. Putintsev reported that Chuguchak was many times smaller than Kul-dji [Putintsev, p. 91], while Ch. Ch. Valikhanov, following his trip to Kulja in 1856, noted that Chuguchak had already surpassed Kulja in terms of trade turnover [Valikhanov, 1985b, p. 274].

in the region and engage in illegal trade with them for their own benefit [Veselovsky, 1908a, p. 179].

In fact, the way trade with foreigners was organised in the region essentially led to arbitrariness and abuse by officials. The need for trade was dictated by the aforementioned shortcomings in supplying the troops from imperial resources. Therefore, as early as 1761–1762, state stores appeared in the Ili region, through which representatives of the authorities purchased foreign goods and then resold them to the local population at a mark-up, formally attributing the difference to the needs of the administration and the troops, but in fact often for their own benefit [Millward, pp. 46–48].

According to Russian travellers, immediately after crossing the Russian-Chinese border, the caravan was met by a picket of Chinese or Mongols, whose commander counted the people, horses, cattle and pack animals, after which some of the soldiers accompanied the caravan to the next post. The attitude towards the caravanners was very harsh: Chinese officers even allowed themselves to whip them [Kovalevsky, p. 17; Putintsev, pp. 93, 115]<sup>9</sup>. When the merchants arrived in Kulju, they had to stop at an inn and unload their goods at a special warehouse (*pakgaus*, i.e. a state store), where the *jiangjun* himself inspected them and then announced the price of the goods [Veselovsky, 1908a, p. 178; Gens, p. 340; Kovalevsky, p. 19]. If the merchants were not satisfied with the price, three or four representatives from the caravan were selected to begin bargaining, while the *jiangjun* threatened to have them beaten with sticks for violating the rules. However, as a rule, such negotiations ended peacefully and with mutual concessions, after which the Qing officials bought goods for the treasury, collecting duties from them (in the form of part of the goods), and then resold them to local residents, from whom they also collected duties (but in silver) [Kovalevsky, pp. 19–20]. The duty on foreigners amounted to 10% of the quantity of goods (from sheep — 1 head out of 5)<sup>10</sup>, and from the local population — up to 8% of the purchase price [Valikhanov, 1985b, p. 258; Veselovsky, 1908b, p. 319; Gens, pp. 340–341]. According to A. T. Putintsev, Muslim traders in Kulja were not charged duty because they paid it when crossing the border in eastern Turkestan — Yarkand, Khotan, Kashgar or Aksu [Putintsev, p. 114].

Naturally, trading at fixed prices was unprofitable for visiting merchants, and they resorted to all sorts of tricks to circumvent the formal requirements. The most common tactic was to offer bribes, which could reach 20 horses for *Jiangjun* personally and up to 50 for other officials.

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<sup>9</sup> The same order was preserved in Article 4 of the Kulja Treaty of 1851 [Russian-Chinese relations, No. 8, pp. 26–27].

<sup>10</sup> From the caravan, which included N. I. Lyubimov, the Qing administrators, upon learning that he was from Russia, demanded double customs duties, and he had to negotiate for about a month to prevent this, during which time the caravan was effectively under arrest, and the Chinese forbade the delivery of food and fodder for livestock [Veselovsky, 1908a, pp. 181–182].

In return, they agreed either to reduce customs duties (or abolish them altogether) or to allow foreigners to trade directly with Chinese and Muslim merchants [Valikhanov, 1985b, p. 258; Kovalevsky, p. 19]. Another way to circumvent the restrictions was to hide part of the goods: caravans tried to arrive in Kulja at night and, before the officials began inspecting the goods, hide part of them in order to trade with the local population later [Kovalevsky, pp. 18–19]. It is not surprising that the Kulja Treaty of 25 July 1851, by which China officially opened Kulja and the second most important city in the region, Chuguchak, for trade with Russia, provided for the option of trading directly with merchants [Veselovsky, 1908a, pp. 179–181].<sup>11</sup> In 1860, a new treaty was signed in Beijing, confirming the right of Russian merchants to trade directly with the Chinese and even visit their partners' homes [Russian-Chinese Relations, No. 11, p. 36]: Previously, the Qing administration required Russians to obtain special permission to visit Chinese merchants [Veselovsky, 1908a, p. 178; Gens, pp. 344–345; P. r., p. 153].

In Russian-Chinese trade, contracts were not practised: each side simply announced its price, and if it suited the counteragent, the transaction was carried out — in cash or in kind [Veselovsky, 1908b, p. 320]. Before the Treaty of Kulja, it was common practice to sell goods on credit, but now this was officially abolished. The fact is that both Russian and Chinese merchants often cheated their partners, and sometimes it took a lot of time to travel from Kulja to Chuguchak and back just to collect old debts [Valikhanov, 1985b, p. 257; Kovalevsky, p. 24]. According to Article 12 of the treaty, the sale of goods on credit was considered illegal, and consuls did not accept complaints about transactions of this kind for consideration [Russian-Chinese Relations, No. 8, p. 28].

Of course, trade was the most important stimulus for the development of relations between Russia and China, which is why so much attention was paid to the organisation of trade in the region through which goods were transported to Eastern Turkestan and areas of inland China not covered by Russian-Chinese trade via Kyakhta. However, the same treaty of 1851 already provided for the special status of Russian subjects in the region, in particular, the establishment of consular posts in Kulja and Chuguchak to protect the interests of compatriots before the Chinese authorities. The consuls, together with representatives of the Qing administration, could even settle minor disputes and quarrels between Russian and Chinese subjects [Chechelev, p. 640]. In addition, trading posts were established in both cities for Russian merchants to live and store goods.

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<sup>11</sup> Insisting on these conditions, Russian diplomats repeatedly referred to long-standing trade ties with Kulja, dating back to the period of the Dzungar Khanate [Myasnikov, Shepeleva, p. 60]. However, it was not only the Russians who insisted on opening Kulja and Chuguchak for trade: in the 1830s and early 1850s, the Ili authorities and influential representatives of Chinese trade also submitted repeated requests to the Lifanyuan to open trade with Russia in the Ili region [Karpenko, p. 75; Newby, pp. 168–170].

However, the powers of the consuls and the legal status of the trading posts were very limited. Under the terms of the 1851 treaty, the Chinese were not responsible for the safety of goods in the trading posts, and Russian subjects themselves had to ensure their protection (and, along the way, safety from raids by Kazakhs, who considered themselves subjects of the Qing dynasty). Moreover, the trading posts were not considered Russian territory, where Russian laws applied: their inhabitants enjoyed only religious freedom, which could not be infringed upon by representatives of the Qing administration [Russian-Chinese Relations, No. 8, pp. 27, 28].

At first, the consuls did not have significant powers even to resolve purely economic issues. Thus, when the Russian trading post in Chuguchak was looted and burned by local residents in 1855, the authorities of Western Siberia had to send a special authorised official to Kulja the following year to assist the consul — Lieutenant Colonel M. R. Peremyshlsky, a bailiff of the senior Kazakh tribe [Valikhanov, 1985a, pp. 171–172]. It was not until 1858 that the Kulja consul, I. I. Zakharov, managed to resolve the issue of monetary compensation for the losses incurred in the amount of 200,000 roubles with the Tsing authorities, for which he was promoted to the rank of consul general, which expanded his opportunities for interaction with the regional authorities [Vasilyev, 1885, p. 15].

The growing authority of Russian diplomats had a significant impact on the attitude of the local (non-Chinese) population towards Russian subjects, which representatives of the Qing authorities tried to exploit from time to time. Thus, P. Ya. Reintal, who visited Kulja in the summer of 1864, between two rounds of the Dungan uprising, noted that the Qing officials who received his mission tried in every way to keep the Russian emissaries in the city for as long as possible, since the rebellious Dungans did not attack the Chinese while the Russians were in their fortifications. In addition, the Chinese requested that a consul be sent to Kulja again "with a large detachment," hoping that the presence of Russians in the city would eliminate the danger of its capture by the rebels [P. r., pp. 147–148, 153, 156]<sup>12</sup>. Taking advantage of their special position in the region, Russian diplomats signed the so-called Chuguchak Protocol on 25 September 1864, which clearly established the border between the two empires and regulated the status of the population on both sides, eliminating the problem of dual allegiance among the nomads — the Kazakhs of the Senior Zhuz and the Kyrgyz [Russian-Chinese relations, No. 15, pp. 46–49; Moiseev, pp. 23, 44]. In fact, this treaty was the first step towards international recognition of the Ili region (and Xinjiang as a whole) as part of the Qing Empire. This process was completed with the conclusion of the Treaty of St. Petersburg in 1881 [Anufriev, pp. 156, 157].

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<sup>12</sup> At the same time, just a year earlier, in 1863, as a result of the deterioration of Russian-Chinese relations, which led to the suspension of discussions on the Chuguchak Protocol, the Russian border administration even lost contact with the consulate in Kulja, and only later did it become known that local residents had threatened to attack it, while the Manchu administration did not respond to requests from Russian diplomats to protect the consulate building [Moiseev, p. 56].

The study allows us to conclude that the Ili region in 1760–1864 had a special status, reflected in the preservation of national local self-government and the creation of a special legal regime for various categories of the local population and foreigners. At the same time, the local Manchu administration often bypassed the official legal regulations of the Beijing authorities, both due to economic circumstances and the specific nature of the region's relations with neighbouring countries and peoples (Russia, the khanates of Central Asia, the Kazakhs). All this suggests that the Ili region was in a kind of "transitional state" during the period under consideration, which was necessary for the Qing Empire to obtain international recognition of its rights to annex these territories. As is well known, after the suppression of the Muslim uprising in Xinjiang in 1877 and the return of the region to Russia in 1881, the Qing authorities carried out a reform, which resulted in the complete integration of the region into the Qing administrative-territorial system. Based on the above, it can be concluded that these actions were not so much a "response" to the actions of the rebels as a consequence of the international recognition of the region as part of the Qing Empire, which was enshrined in a series of international treaties in the 1850s and early 1880s.

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