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*Bondage on Qing China's Northwestern Frontier**

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Abstract

Despite the extensive literature on global slavery and servitude, human bondage in Xinjiang (Eastern Turkestan) during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been largely neglected. Here bondage did not discriminate between ethnic, racial or religious groups and fulfilled a wide range of social, economic, and political functions, reflecting both the region's geographical position at the edge of Central Asia and its political position—first as a dependency and then as a province of Qing China. This paper discusses the nature of the forms of bondage that emerged in this unique geopolitical setting and suggests that the emancipation of Xinjiang's 'British' slaves at the end of the nineteenth century and the gradual decline of bondage resulted from a convergence of local, regional, and global forces.

Introduction

The region of present-day Xinjiang, in China's far northwest, is rarely mentioned without reference to a pivot, a crossroads, a melting pot or some other metaphor for convergence and interchange. The inference is invariably positive: this is where, since earliest times, religions, sciences, and arts have met, cross-fertilized, and flourished. By contrast, the history of the region has frequently been tumultuous and violent, punctuated by wars, epidemics, forced migrations, and exile. Perhaps then, it should come as no surprise that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a significant portion of the population was held in various kinds of bondage, relationships of extreme power and

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powerlessness that blurred the boundaries between oppressed and oppressor, colonized and colonizer.

However, in the burgeoning field of Xinjiang studies, the subject of human bondage is still largely neglected and, if mentioned at all, is invariably subsumed in other categories of analysis, be it the economy, administration or exile. While this may be partially attributed to political sensitivity, it is to a great extent also symptomatic of the complexity of the forms of bondage that existed in the region and the failure of existing analytical typologies to accommodate them in all their guises.

This paper focuses on the social, economic, and political framework that underpinned the multiple forms of bondage that existed in the region from the conquest of the Mongol Junghar Khanate by Qing China in 1756–59 to the final years of the Qing dynasty in the early twentieth century. In an effort to explore how indigenous and non-indigenous forms of bondage coexisted and intermeshed with one another, the first two sections draw together the range of those exploited for their labour—from Tajik children, kidnapped by marauding tribesmen and sold into servitude, to Han Chinese criminals, sentenced to servitude in exile by the Qing courts. The final section of the paper examines how, at the end of the nineteenth century, the global drive for the abolition of slavery converged with shifting internal socio-political dynamics to affect, if not the eradication, at least a marked decrease in the practice and acceptability of human bondage in the region, while also suggesting that the practice of humane bondage has been misleadingly presented within a colonial discourse of 'barbaric' versus 'civilized'.

For the purposes of this discussion, bondage is defined broadly as a relationship characterized by a marked power differential in which an individual is subjected to the power of another individual or collective body with little or no recourse to law.[1] In Xinjiang there was no

[1] Definitions of slavery vary considerably, but because forced labour as a form of punishment for prisoners is rarely included, I prefer where possible to use the term 'bondage' instead of 'slave', 'serf', 'bondsman' or even 'servant', which are heavy with cultural connotations and imprecision in all languages. I am, however, guided by Drescher's definition of slavery: 'The most crucial and frequently utilized aspect of the condition is a communally recognized right by some individuals to possess, buy, sell, discipline, transport, liberate, or otherwise dispose of the bodies and behavior of other individuals': see Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A history of slavery and anti-slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 4–5. Unless explicitly stated, I do not include in this discussion women 'given away' as wives or concubines or young people 'given' as apprentices to craftsmen.

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dominant typology of bondage to equate with Atlantic slavery, rather it crisscrossed all social, ethnic, and religious groups, varying in nature from hereditary status to temporary punishment, and affording life prospects that ranged from the extremes of abject poverty, abuse, and premature death to privilege, wealth, and power.

Xinjiang and the Central Asian context

In 1794, some 35 years after the Qing conquest of Xinjiang, a group of five traders from Altishahr, as the region of southern Xinjiang was known, travelled to Shighnan (in present-day northern Afghanistan), where they traded ceramics, horses, and other goods with the ruler of Shighnan, Sultān Jalāl al-Dīn. They received in exchange 20 Ghalchas (Mountain Tajiks). On their return, journeying through deep snow in the midst of winter, four of the traders were murdered by four of their human merchandise, who then fled, together with the other 16.[2] The purchasing of slaves outside the *karun* for sale in Altishahr had been expressly forbidden some 15 years earlier following a similar incident, although, as will be seen, continuation of the practice was to persist openly until well into the late nineteenth century.[3] Consequently, when this incident was reported to the Qianlong emperor (reigned 1735–96), he did not fail to point out that the traders had only themselves to blame for their fate; but murder was murder and he instructed that the ruler of Shighnan must track down the culprits.

As requested, Sultān Jalāl al-Dīn duly captured two of the guilty men and, failing to find the remaining two, he substituted two others and—just to ensure that there were no hard feelings—he dispatched these four together with a further 16 of his own slaves to Yarkand. On the group's arrival in Yarkand, it transpired that the only two 'authentic' criminals had in fact died en route. When the Qing officials who took delivery of the remaining 18 reported on these developments to the emperor, his response was phlegmatic: Sultān Jalāl al-Dīn should be

[2] First Historical Archives, Beijing (hereafter FHA), *Manwen dang'an* 3495–041 159–3130 and 3495–042 159–3134, Qianlong 60.2.25 (15 March 1795). For further discussion of 'Ghalcha', see below.

[3] *Karun* was a Manchu term for guard posts. Located at strategic points in the border zone, they served as checkpoints and marked a notional frontier. For reference to the prohibition and the earlier incident in the forty-fourth year of Qianlong (1779/80), see Wu Fengpei 吳豐培 (comp.), *Songyun Xinjiang zougao* 松筠新疆奏稿, Mimeographed reproduction (Beijing: Zhongyang minzu tushuguan, 1980), 6a.

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informed of the error of his ways, but equally he should be praised and rewarded for his good intentions.[4] The Qianlong emperor's objection was not to slavery but to the slave trade and, in particular, the problem of policing it outside the *karun*.

The incident vividly illustrates the Central Asian backdrop against which human bondage was to endure and be tolerated by the Qing authorities in Xinjiang for at least another hundred years. Attacks on merchants and the taking of captives to trade as slaves was a well-established practice across the region but was particularly prevalent in the area of the Pamirs. For the people of Shighnan, Kunduz (in present-day northern Afghanistan), Hunza (or Kanjut, in present-day northern Pakistan), as well as many Kirghiz, Turkmens, and other peoples of Central Asia, the slave trade was an essential source of income. Already an irritation for the Qianlong emperor in the late eighteenth century, by the nineteenth century, the British presence in India, and the vulnerability of the caravan trade between Yarkand and India, ensured that the slave trade would also become a concern for the British.[5] Nevertheless, this was just one aspect of a much wider phenomenon.

Attacking caravans and taking traders captive could not compare with the bountiful rewards of conquest. The competition for resources among the khanates and smaller polities of Central Asia and the increasing pressure of Russian penetration throughout the nineteenth century accentuated the volatility and instability of the region. Repeated military campaigns were invariably followed by the enslavement of large numbers of prisoners, soldiers, and civilians.

By the early nineteenth century, as evidenced by numerous travellers and imperial agents, the slave markets of Central Asia, notably Bukhara and Khiva, were booming. One account speaks of 3,000 Russians and 30,000 Persians held in the Khivan capital alone, while another estimates that a similar number of Persian slaves lived in Bukhara in the 1870s.[6] The reason for the buoyant trade in human

[4] FHA *Manwen dang'an* 3495–042 159–3134, Qianlong 60.2.25 (15 March 1795); see also *Da Qing Gaozong huangdi shilu* 大清高宗(乾隆)皇帝實錄 (hereafter GZSL), 1473:19b–20a, 60.*run* 閏2.27 (16 April 1795).

[5] Lin Hsiao-ting, 'The Tribute System in China's Historical Imagination', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 19, 2009, p. 494.

[6] Nikolai Murav'ev, *Journey to Khiva Through the Turkoman Country, 1819–20* (1871; reprinted London: Oguz Press, 1977), p. 58; Eugene Schuyler, *Turkistan: Notes of a Journey in Russian Turkistan, Khokand, Bukhara, and Kuldja* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1876), Vol. 2, p. 354. Schuyler gives a vivid account

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merchandise at this time may be at least partly explained by the social, political, and economic shifts gradually playing out across the region as nomadic tribal entities gave way to more centralized sedentary states. Slaves were no longer just a traditional luxury and indicator of affluence but also an economic and political necessity, both for cultivating the land and building large armies.[7] Thus in nineteenth-century Central Asia, on the one hand, slaves were still a status symbol, acquired as wives, catamites or private servants and frequently sent as rewards to officials or as gifts to other rulers.[8] On the other, they provided a significant portion of agricultural labour,[9] as well as a means of replenishing military forces.

There was no one socio-economic condition or lifestyle associated with human bondage. If fortunate, those held in bondage might be educated and ultimately rise to a high and powerful administrative rank,[10] but whatever their fate, they shared an uncertain future at the hands of their masters. The many records of encounters by Russian travellers with their enslaved countrymen held in wretched and demeaning conditions were written for maximum emotional and political effect; nevertheless it is undeniable that inhumane treatment and abuse did occur and that even the most favoured frequently led a precarious and fragile existence.[11] As late as February 1895, for example, the British agent in Kabul reported in a chillingly matter-of-fact tone to the government of India that a few weeks earlier one of the slave boys of the amir had been flirting with the *begams* (female

of his visit to a slave market in Bukhara in the early 1870s where he endeavoured to purchase a young boy in order to convince the Russian authorities that the trade had not been halted, despite their assertions to the contrary. See Schuyler, *Turkistan*, pp. 100–09.

[7] There were no slave armies in Central Asia akin to the Mamluks of the Abbasid Caliphs or the Janissaries of the Ottoman empire, but the soldiers of conquered peoples were regularly absorbed into the victor's fighting force. For a brief discussion of military slavery in the Islamic world, see William Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery* (London: C. Hurst, 2003), pp. 86–88.

[8] See, for example, Arminius Vámbéry, *History of Bokhara (*London: Henry S. King, 1873), p. 221. For the dispatch of Chinese slaves together with an elephant as presents from the khan of Khoqand to the tsar in St Petersburg in the early nineteenth century, see W. H. Wathan, 'Memoir on the U'sbek State of Kokan, properly called Khokend (the ancient Ferghana) in Central Asia', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 3 (32), August 1834, p. 375.

[9] Alexander Morrison, *Russian Rule in Samarkand 1868–1910* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 43.

[10] Vámbéry, *History*, pp. 220–21.

[11] See, for example, Murav'ev's account of the Russian slave boy, called 'David' in the English translation: Murav'ev, *Journey to Khiva*, pp. 57–59.

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members of an official's family); on hearing of this, the amir had the boy poisoned and thrown into a well pit.[12]

The growing body of work on slavery in Islamic societies provides evidence that not only is the category of 'Islamic slavery' not an entirely helpful concept, but that in the fundamental matter of who could be enslaved, there was historically a dissonance between precepts and practice. Race (specifically darkness of skin colour) and religion are often cited as a condition or justification for enslavement in Islamic societies,[13] but in Central Asia opportunism had the last word.

By the nineteenth century, those held in bondage across Central Asia came from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds and included those of Persian and Turkic descent as well as large numbers of fair-skinned Russians and Chinese.[14] On the other hand, while the Mountain Tajiks of Badakhshan and Afghanistan and the natives of Gilgit and Chitral may have tended to have a darker skin colour than many of the Turkic elite in the major cities of the plains and oases who became their masters, significantly they were also deemed to be non-believers.

As is frequently noted, the Islamic injunction against enslaving co-religionists did not extend to Shi'ites, whom the Sunni majority did not consider to be God's people, and it is therefore no surprise that the largest ethnic group traded in the slave markets of Central Asia comprised Shi'ite Persians and Tajiks.[15] However, when it came to the spoils of battle, Sunnis were not necessarily spared enslavement. In eighteenth and nineteenth-century Xinjiang, for example, where the

[12] British Agent in Kabul to the Secretary to the Government of India, British Library, India Office, London (henceforth BLIO), L/P&S/7/78, 5 February 1895.

[13] John Azumah, *Islam and Slavery* (Northwood: London Bible College, 1999), p. 3. According to Hopkins, however, religion rather than race was the main criterion in Central Asia: see B. D Hopkins, 'Race, Sex and Slavery: "Forced labour" in Central Asia and Afghanistan in the early 19th century', *Modern Asian Studies*, 42 (4), 2008, p. 641.

[14] For the religious mythology surrounding the Islamic idea that the enslavement of dark-skinned people is natural, see David B. Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 32–51. Nineteenth-century travel accounts are peppered with references to Russian and Chinese slaves held in bondage throughout Central Asia. See, for example, note 11 above and Alexander Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara* (London: John Murray, 1834), Vol. 2, p. 274.

[15] For testimony of the trade in Tajik children, but also men from Kanjut and Chitral, for sale in the Bukhara market, see T. Douglas Forsyth (ed.), *Report of a Mission to Yarkund in 1873* (Calcutta: Foreign Department Press, 1875), p. 56. For evidence that Shi'ites were regarded as unbelievers (*kaffir*) rather than heretics, see Schuyler, *Turkistan*, p. 102.

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population was predominantly Sunni, the tendency of the Ishāqī sufi order to side with the Qing against the Khoqandi-backed Āfāqiyya resulted in scores of Ishāqī adherents, as well as other Turkic and Chinese Muslims (also Sunnis), being taken captive and enslaved in Khoqand and the surrounding polities. Accounts of their fate largely depended on their having escaped; one such case was that of Zuhūr al-Dīn whose family, originally from Turfan, had a long history of loyalty to the Qing.[16] In 1826, Zuhūr al-Dīn had taken part in the resistance against Khoja Jahāngīr[17] and was deported to Khoqand along with his Muslim house servants (*jianu* 家奴). He was enslaved for several months before escaping and making his way back to Xinjiang via Russia, where he became *hakim bek* (the highest ranking local official) of Kashgar in the 1830s.[18] Certainly, it would seem that people were not enslaved *because* they were outsiders,[19] but their 'difference'—whether marked by native place, ethnicity, political allegiance or religion—was a useful salve.

By comparison with much of Central Asia, the forms of bondage found in Xinjiang were relatively small scale and mild. However, as in the case of the murdered Altishahri merchants, in Xinjiang the buying and selling of Ghalcha (*galecha* 噶勒察)—a term for Mountain Tajiks which came to be used for any 'foreigner' who was sold into servitude—was a well-established practice.[20] The Ghalcha were by definition 'outsiders' and were considered to be distinct from the slaves born in Xinjiang who were 'no longer able to trace their descent to any particular tribe'.[21] Ghalchas, like those held in bondage in other parts

[16] Zuhūr al-Dīn was a descendent of Emīn Khoja of Turfan; see below.

[17] A descendant of the Turkic Muslim Khoja brothers, who claimed authority to rule southern Xinjiang and were displaced by Qing forces, Jahāngīr made several attempts to oust the Qing from the region in the early nineteenth century.

[18] Valikhanov notes erroneously that Zuhūr al-Dīn was removed to Khoqand in 1830. Ch. Ch. Valikhanov, '*O sostoianii Altyshara ili shesti vostochnïkh gorodov Kitayskoy provintsii Nan-lu (Maloy Bukharii) v 1858–9 godakh*', in *Sobranie sochineniĭ* (Alma-Ata: AN Kaz SSR, 1962), Vol. 2, p. 326. In fact, according to Chinese documentary sources, he was captured in 1826. See *Da Qing Xuanzong huangdi shilu* 大清宣宗(道光)皇帝實錄 (hereafter XZSL), 128: 2b–3b, 7.10.16 (4 December 1827); and Zuhūr al-Dīn's deposition made on his return, National Palace Museum Archive (Taipei), no. 058525. I am grateful to David Brophy for the latter reference.

[19] Clarence-Smith, *Islam*, p. 2.

[20] Robert B. Shaw, 'A Sketch of the Turki Language', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 47 (1), 1878, p.137; and Gunnar Jarring, *Materials to the Knowledge of Eastern Turki* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1946–1951), Vol. 1, p. 121, note 1.

[21] George Macartney, the British representative in Kashgar, referred to these people by the name 'Toghmak'. BLIO L/P&S/7/77, Macartney to the Government of

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of Central Asia, could be bought and sold but were not precluded from securing their freedom and raising their social status.[22] While their children may have inherited the label, there seems to have been no bar on a Ghalcha securing his or her freedom and attaining a respected position in local society, as is evident from the well-documented case of Ziyā'al-Dīn.[23]

In 1815, when conducting an investigation into an uprising led by Ziyā'al-Dīn, an *akhund* (Muslim cleric) from the village of Tashmaliq outside Kashgar, the Qing authorities discovered that Ziyā' al-Dīn's grandfather had been a Badakhshani who was sold into servitude to Kashgari Muslims. Despite having arrived in Altishahr as a slave, however, he had not only managed to acquire land and property, but had also become an *akhund*.[24] An adherent of the Ishāqiyya, he had resisted Khōja-Jahān[25] at the time of the Qing conquest and both he and his eldest son had been killed. His second son, however, had escaped to Andijan (beyond the Qing *karun*) from where, a few years later, he returned to Tashmaliq. This was Ziyā' al-Dīn's father and, having confirmed that his family had previously owned land there, the Qing authorities allowed him to settle. Ziyā' al-Dīn was, therefore, the second generation to have been born and raised in Altishahr; moreover, as a religious leader he was a respected member of the community. His ancestry, however, was not forgotten and as the enquiries made by Qing officials revealed, he—and presumably his children too—were still known among the local people as Ghalcha, marking them out from the rest of the community.[26] The term and

India (4 August 1894). I am grateful to Ilidkó Bellér-Hann for suggesting that this word appears to be '*tughmaq*', derived from 'to bear a child' (or '*tuğ*' to be born) and therefore possibly denoting someone who was born as a slave (*'qul*').

[22] Valikhanov notes that in the 1850s the outskirts of Yarkand were well known for the numbers of liberated Mountain Tajiks from Chitral and Wakhan who dwelled there; see Valikhanov, '*O sostoianii Altyshara*', p. 295.

[23] The freeing of individual slaves was considered an act of piety and is recognized as having been widespread in Islamic societies. See Ronald Segal, *Islam's Black Slaves*: *The history of Islam's other black diaspora* (London: Atlantic Books, 2001), p. 9.

[24] The role of *akhund* afforded considerable social standing within the local community and, as with other professions, tended to pass from father to son.

[25] Khōja-Jahān and his older brother, Burhān al-Dīn, assumed power in Altishahr after the fall of the Junghar Khanate, but after they failed to throw off the Qing mantle, they fled from the advancing Qing forces in 1759.

[26] *Songyun Xinjiang zougao*, 6a–b; FHA *Zhupi zouzhe*, *Minzu lei*, 635.1, Jiaqing 20.10.3 (3.11.1815). As a Badakhshani, Ziyā' al-Dīn's grandfather would almost undoubtedly have been a Mountain Tajik.

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its association with servitude was not, therefore, so much a marker of status as an indicator that someone was an outsider.

The purchase of outsiders was not, however, the only means by which the numbers of those in bondage was replenished. As in many societies, local men and women sold themselves, but more frequently their children, into servitude in order to avoid destitution. This practice still existed in Xinjiang in the 1890s when Fernand Grenard was approached in Khotan by a dealer who purportedly had 150 boys and girls available for purchase.[27] Many of the local children procured would probably not have been exported out of the region but were sold to local families, although after the Qing conquest—until at least 1827—some also found their way into the households of Manchus and Han Chinese.[28] Their fate would have varied: some would have been adopted as heirs, others kept for their labour, for marriage or entertainment, sexual or otherwise.[29] It is significant, however, that according to local lore, children sold into slavery would, on becoming an adult in their early teens, be expected to give their consent if they were to remain in servitude. In other circumstances, children were contracted to serve their owner for an agreed number of years. This may have been because, as Grenard notes, the selling of human beings was generally considered to be forbidden under Islamic law and so parents neatly avoided the prohibition by use of the phrase, 'I sell you the use of his/her services for X years.'[30] The consequence of this 'understanding', combined with the practice of those reaching

[27] The number of children cited here is so large and the cost of keeping them fed and housed would have been so great that, unless Grenard was mistaken, this must still have been a thriving trade. Alternatively, the seller may have functioned as a middleman, in which case it may be conjectured that these were local children whose parents had agreed to their 'sale' (temporary or otherwise) when and if a suitable purchaser was found. Fernand Grenard (J.-L. Detreuil de Rhins), *Mission scientifique dans la Haute Asie 1890–5* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1898), Vol. 2, p. 167.

[28] In 1827 Qing officials were prohibited from taking local children into their households. James Millward, *Beyond the Pass: Economy, ethnicity, and empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759–1864* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 305, note 28.

[29] Millward cites the case of the Manchu officer, De-hui, who in 1830 took a Turkic 'servant' back to the interior of China with him from Khotan. Although Millward refers to the boy as a servant, it is quite clear that he was not free to choose his own master and, possibly because it was forbidden for officers to purchase or take in local children after 1827, he had been raised as a Chinese. See Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, pp. 305–06, note 28.

[30] Grenard, *Mission scientifique*, p. 167. I know of no extant contract for the purchase of men, women or children in Xinjiang, but the fact that they existed, at least by the end of the nineteenth century, is clearly shown both by Grenard and Macartney (see below).

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adulthood consenting to remain with their masters, was significant in that many Sunni Muslims, who may have been considered to be held in bondage by outsiders, would, in the eyes of the local people, have been free.[31] A relaxed attitude to the 'adoption' of slave children into local families is also reflected in recent work by Ayxem Eli, which reveals that Han and Sino-Muslim (Hui) children were taken in by Turkic families in the eastern city of Hami (Komul), although it is still unclear exactly when this practice originated.[32]

However, despite—or perhaps because of—the long-practised trade in men, women, and children, in the 1890s George Macartney, the British representative in Kashgar, noted that the number of those born into hereditary bondage far outnumbered those of the first or second generation traded into the region.[33] Yet, those he denotes as 'hereditary slaves' probably included many who worked the land for the hereditary Turkic aristocracy and who arguably may be regarded as more akin to serfs than slaves. In the light of the lack of contemporary sources from the early seventeenth century to the mid-eighteenth, when the Turkic Muslims of the Xinjiang were ruled by the Junghar Khanate, further investigation of this group of people must depend on what may be gleaned from the later Qing sources for continuities and developments. Thus the following section looks not only at new relationships of bondage introduced under the Qing, but also endeavours to shed light on how pre-existing structures were adapted.

Xinjiang and the Qing context

Historically and culturally the notion of bondage was familiar to the Manchus who, in the late eighteenth century, still firmly held

[31] In theory, it would also have meant that children born to them while they were still in servitude were free. Writing in the 1920s, Roerich notes that children were still being sold to 'good families', but he gives no further details: see George N. Roerich, *Trails to Innermost Asia*: *Five years of exploration with the Roerich Central Asian expedition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931), p. 64.

[32] I am grateful to Ayxem Eli of the University of Tasmania for information about her current research on this practice, which persisted into the twentieth century. It is important to note that, despite the relatively smaller numbers involved, the trade in children extended to Mongols as well. See FHS *Manwen dang'an* 2677–042 108–2901, Qianlong 41.2.27 (15 April 1776).

[33] BLIO L/P&S/7/77, Macartney to the Government of India (9 August 1894). Generally speaking, serfs had rights to some land and could not be sold. See M. L. Bush (ed.), *Serfdom and Slavery*: *Studies in legal bondage* (London: Longman, 1996), p. 1.

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the reins of Qing power. The system of bondsmen who served elite families (Manchu: *aha*, *booi* or *booi aha*)—from the ruler down—predates the Manchu conquest of China and has its roots in Jurchen society.[34] By the seventeenth century, and on the eve of the Qing conquest of China, the number of *booi* had been greatly inflated by Han Chinese captives, many of whom were incorporated into *booi* companies in the Manchu banners.[35] By the 1640s, the *booi* are thought to have constituted 70 per cent of the banner population. As Mark Elliott points out 'bondservant', or indeed slave, are inadequate and misleading translations for a term that was used to refer to people of very differing status.[36]

Many early *booi* who fought for the Qing in the seventeenth century as they advanced into northern China were rewarded with their freedom (*kaihu ren* 開户人) and rose to high office. Some were eventually removed from the banners by the Qianlong emperor in 1756, while over the course of generations, others may have lost their *booi* status and 'become' bannermen.[37] For the vast number of Han Chinese who were placed in servitude (*wei nu* 爲奴) in the aftermath of the capture of Beijing in 1644 and were either put to work on confiscated land or were given to the Manchu bannermen as personal slaves, there was no idealized relationship of mutual responsibility and loyalty as was implicit in the *booi*–master relationship. This new influx of predominantly Han Chinese held in bondage were to pose a major problem for the Qing rulers in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries when many escaped and turned brigand rather than face a life of servitude.[38] This did not, however, dissuade the Qing court from adopting similar policies as they pushed back the frontiers of their empire.

[34] See Mark Elliott, *The Manchu Way*: *The Eight Banners and ethnic identity in late imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 51.

[35] Banners were the administrative and military divisions into which Manchus were divided.

[36] The Chinese terms *nupu* 奴僕, *jia ren* 家人 or *huxia ren* 户下人, etc. were similarly considered inadequate, hence the tendency to use a transliteration in Chinese: *baoyi* 包衣 *baoyi aha* 包衣啊哈 (*jia de nupu* 家的奴僕). See Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, p. 82.

[37] Liu Xiaomeng 刘小萌, *Qingdai Beijing qiren shehui* 清代北京旗人社会 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2008), pp. 450, 507–08, 642.

[38] See Li Zilong, who separates the various ways in which people were enslaved in the early Qing into four categories: those who had been taken captive, those who worked the land for Manchus and had lost their tenancies when land was distributed to the bannermen, those who were punished with servitude under the Qing criminal code, and those who were legally purchased. Li Zilong 李子龙, '*Qing chu taoren wenti chu tan*', 清初逃人问题初探 *Jiangsu shehui kexue*, 2, 1998, pp. 124–25.

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Placing in bondage those who had become involved in rebelling against or resisting a conquering force was a familiar practice in many societies. In the case of Xinjiang, distributing captured enemy soldiers to those who had assisted or fought for the Qing as a reward was coupled with the practice of mass deportations that characterized the building of the Qing empire.

One of the clearest examples of Qing policies underpinning and adapting earlier practices of bondage is seen in the eastern region of Xinjiang, in the areas of Turfan and Hami, where it is generally acknowledged practices akin to serfdom endured, notably under the rule of the prince of Hami, well into the twentieth century.[39] As Chinese historians are quick to stress, the Qing did much to protect and even bolster the power of the 'feudal' rule of the elite families in areas where support for the Qing predated the conquest.[40] For example, in 1757, as the Qing forces dealt the Junghar Khanate its final blows, around a hundred households of Turkic Muslims who had fled the upheavals in the 1720s and settled in Suzhou (Gansu) returned to the area of Turfan. Rather than allowing them to settle independently, the court instructed that they should be placed under the authority of Emīn Khoja, a loyal supporter of the Qing who had been granted an imperial title and was recognized as chief of the banner into which his followers had now been organized. The court added that Emīn Khoja should restrain these returnees and punish them if they attempted to flee.[41] The suggestion was not that they should be enslaved but rather that they should be settled under Emīn Khoja's jurisdiction, cultivate his lands, and forego their freedom to move elsewhere. Three years later, however, in 1760, when over 200 *beks* (the local secular elite) and common people of Kashgar were condemned to death for opposing the Qing advance, the instruction was more explicit: their wives and children were to be given in

[39] See, for example, Mildred Cable and Francesca French, *The Gobi Desert* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1942), pp. 132–45.

[40] Su Beihai 苏北海 and Huang Jianhua 黄建华, *Hami Tulufan Weiwuer wang lishi* 哈密,吐鲁番维吾尔王历史 (Urumqi: Xinjiang daxue chubanshe, 1993), pp. 117–20, 223–24. For Qing dependence on the elite families of Hami and Turfan, see also Laura Newby, 'The Begs of Xinjiang: Between two worlds', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 61 (2), 1998, pp. 286–87, 289.

[41] These were the people whom Toqtā Mahmud had led to safety within the pass of Jiayuguan in 1725. See Newby, 'The Begs of Xinjiang', p. 286; GZSL 544: 12b–13a, 22.8.4 (16 September 1757); Peter Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 331–33.

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servitude (*wei nu* 爲奴) to Emīn Khoja and his followers as a reward.[42] Clearly, therefore, there was a complex picture of bondage here that built on traditional local structures and into which Qing policies had direct input.

However, it was not only other Turkic Muslims who were placed in bondage to Emīn Khoja and his people by way of reward for their loyalty. In the aftermath of the conquest, the Turfanis were also given a number of Oirat Mongols, presumably from among those who had resisted the Qing advance. By 1762, however, there were already reports that a number of these enslaved Oirats had fled. Fearing that they would take to a life of crime, the court instructed that if the Turfani Muslims so wished they could hand over their Mongol slaves to the authorities and provision would be made for them to be settled in the Ili region.[43] Thus, the priority for the Qing authorities was, first and foremost, not to punish people by placing them in bondage to a local ruler, but rather to ensure the stability of the region.

This combination of rewarding loyalty and establishing stability by placing people in bondage, which often involved forced migrations, was particularly common in the immediate aftermath of the conquest and extended beyond Turfan and indeed Hami. Charles Bawden has noted, for example, that in 1764, 258 'slave' women and girls between the ages of 15 and 40 were purchased from the Chahar Mongols and sent to Ili to be resettled among the Oirats.[44] This was probably intended to provide wives rather than slaves for the Oirats, but once again the overriding aim was the stability of the region. Similarly, with a view to preventing a focus for further rebellion, in the early years after the conquest, a number of wives and children of those whose loyalties remained with the exiled Khojas were sent to Beijing and given as rewards to princes and high officials.[45]

Unlike in the eastern region where secular autocratic rule was reinforced by Qing policies, by the eighteenth century in Altishahr, religious leaders had already broken the rule of the *beks*, to a much greater extent. Nevertheless, the *beks* still retained a position of power and influence. At least part of their wealth was usually invested in

[42] GZSL 619: 7a, 25.8.3 (1 October 1760).
[43] GZSL 653: 2b–3a, 27.1.17 (10 February 1762).
[44] Another 162 women and girls apparently went 'voluntarily', which may of course have meant that their impoverished families 'donated' them. Charles Bawden, *The Modern History of Mongolia* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), pp. 138–39.
[45] GZSL 749: 10a, 30.11.23 (3 January 1766).

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land, which was worked by *inchu* (*yanqi* 燕齊).[46] Gerard Clauson notes that in the medieval period 'inçü' had much the same meaning as 'fief' in English, that is 'a piece of land granted by a ruler on the condition of the performance of certain services' and, by extension, 'the person(s) bound to perform such services'.[47] It may be surmised, therefore, that like the Muslim peasantry of Turfan and Hami, the *inchu* of Altishahr were more akin to tenant farmers or serfs, whose tenancies passed from father to son, rather than hereditary slaves.[48]

Most scholars are agreed that, post-conquest, the effect of the Qing collaboration with the *beks* and their official 'appointment' as *beks*, with imperial rank and seals that allowed them to continue to carry out the day-to-day running of the region under the Qing governorship, was to institutionalize a *bek* system. But it went further than that.[49] The title of *bek* was no longer hereditary and much of the *beks*' land became government property. Conversely, the office of *bek* was now invested with a new authority and formally sanctioned by the Qing court; this in turn had implications for the *inchu*.

After the conquest, the Qing authorities assigned a certain number of *inchu*, together with an allocation of land, to every *bek* according to his rank. Thus the *inchu* were now, in effect, on loan to the *beks* and constituted part of the rewards of office. According to official maximum allowances, third-ranking *beks* (i.e. the *hakim beks* at the top end of the scale) could receive 200 *batman*[50] of land and 100 *inchu*, while at the other end of the scale, *beks* of the seventh rank with responsibilities for tax collection in the bazaar (*bazar bek*), or who were among 'one thousand households' (*ming bek*), for example, received 30

[46] I have found no evidence that the term was ever applied to women.

[47] Gerard Clauson, *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-thirteenth-century Turkish* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 173.

[48] Xu Jianying suggests that the reason slavery existed in southern Xinjiang was because it was closely connected with the *bek* system and that those who tilled the *inchu* land were serfs (*nongnu* 农奴) who were 'dependent on their feudal masters'. Xu Jianying 许坚英, '*Qingmo Xinjiang Yingnu wenti ji qi jiejue*' 清末新疆英奴问题及其解决, *Xiyu yanjiu,* 3, 2003, pp. 54–55. However, most modern, and some Qing, Chinese sources refer to the *inchu* as agriculturalists (*zhong di ren* 種地人) or tenant farmers (*tian hu*佃户).

[49] Miao Pusheng苗普生 (ed.), *Boke zhidu* 伯克制度 (Urumqi: Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, 1995), p. 50. For an overview of the *bek* system and various functions of the *bek* under the Qing, see Saguchi Tōru, *18–19 seiki Higashi Torukisutan shakaishi kenkyū* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1963), pp. 103–92.

[50] 1 *batman* = 5 *dan* 石3 *dou*斗 = approximately 53 *mu* 畝 (100 *mu* is approximately 0.16 acre).

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batman and 8 *inchu*. In practice, these figures varied considerably.[51] It is probable that, post-conquest, most *inchu* continued to work the same land as they had pre-conquest, but many of their immediate landlords and masters, who were now accountable to the Qing authorities, would have been replaced, changes made to their rents, and other exactions placed upon them.[52]

In order to deter the *hakim beks* and other higher ranking *beks* from building local power bases, the Qing authorities applied the law of avoidance. In practice, few among the higher ranks remained in post for more than three to four years.[53] There is no suggestion, however, that the *inchu* accompanied them as they moved in and out of office, or from one location to another, nor could the *beks* sell their *inchu*, cast them off their land or affect their position in any way—this power lay *in theory* with the Qing authorities. Yet, as administration of the regulations went into decline and local elite families rebuilt their power bases, some *beks* clearly managed to acquire more *inchu* and, presumably, more land too. Consequently, by the nineteenth century the court found it necessary to stipulate that *beks* were not permitted to acquire *inchu* privately (*siyi yanqi* 私役燕齊) in excess of the allocation that had been afforded to their rank in the Qianlong period.[54] With or without the complicity of the local authorities, the *beks*' power was growing. Moreover, there was no shortage of labour.

With the Qing conquest a new and important source of forced labour was introduced into the region: criminals exiled from the interior of China. Just as bondage was no stranger to traditional Manchu society, similarly it was embedded in the social and legal fabric of

[51] Compare, for example, the figures given in Suerde 蘇爾德 et al. (comps), *Huijiang zhi* 回疆志, (1772; reprinted Taibei: Chengwen, 1968), pp. 178–99, and Fuheng 傅恒 et al. (comps), *Qinding huangyu Xiyu tuzhi* 欽定皇輿西域圖志 (1782; reprinted Beijing: Zhongyang minzu xueyuan tushuguan, 1986), 30: 35a. See Newby, 'The Begs of Xinjiang', p. 290. According to the *Huijiang zhi*, a rough estimate of the number of *inchu* in Altishahr allocated by the Qing authorities would suggest approximately 3,200.

[52] To date I have been unable to find any information on how the original process of allocating *inchu* to *beks* was carried out. See Duman for a useful introduction to the 'institution'. See L. I. Duman, '*Feodal'nyi iantsii v. Vostochnom Turkestane v XVIII veke*' in *Zapiski Instituta Vostokovedenia Akademii Nauk*, SSSR 3, 1935, pp. 87–89.

[53] For the difficulties that this regulation caused and its relaxation, see Newby, 'The Begs of Xinjiang', pp. 289–90. In the early years after the conquest, in particular, there was a rapid turnover among the higher ranking *inchu*.

[54] Tuojin 托津 et al. (comps), *Qinding Huijiang zeli* 欽定回疆則例, in Lü Yiran 呂一燃 et al. (eds), *Menggu lüli. Huijiang zeli*, 蒙古律例.回疆則例 (1842; reprinted Lanzhou: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 1988), 7: 20a–b.

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Chinese society. Servants and slaves traditionally enjoyed a legal status that placed them in special groups below the common people (*min* 民) and bondage was incorporated into the Qing penal code, as it had been into the preceding Ming (1368–1644) legal code,[55] not only as a punishment for resistance or political opposition but for all forms of serious crime. Yet, early in its rule, the Qing court had learned that even when enslaved, those convicted of rebellion or other serious crimes could continue to harm the social order in the heartland and were therefore best segregated. The extension of the empire under the Qing offered new opportunities for removing criminals from the heartland.

In 1758, Xinjiang became a place of criminal exile for those who had committed serious crimes. In many instances their families were exiled too;[56] the advantages of this arrangement to the Qing state were twofold: criminals were punished by being exiled to the hostile and pestilential fringes of the empire, and the frontier benefited from their productive labour. There were three categories of penal bondage: agriculture (*zhong di* 種地); other labour, including mining, irrigation, haulage, etc. (*dang chai* 當差); and serving soldiers (*gei bingding wei nu* 給兵丁爲奴),[57] although it was not unusual for convicts to be transferred to other duties (and thus effectively from one category of labour to another) in the course of their sentences.[58] Initially, most were sent to military agricultural colonies (*bingtun* 兵屯) or convict agricultural colonies (*fantun* 犯屯) in northern Xinjiang; only those in domestic service and a small number of those assigned to agricultural work were allocated to individuals. They were assigned first to Green Standard soldiers and then, as their numbers rose, to Manchu, Chahar, Sibo, and Solon bannermen. Most convicts were sentenced to a given period of service after which, depending on the severity of their crimes, they would either be required to settle in Xinjiang as 'freemen' working

[55] For the special status of servants and slaves in the Qing code, see Derk Bodde, *Law in Imperial China*: *Exemplified by 190 Ch'ing dynasty cases (translated from the Hsing-an hui-lan), with historical, social and juridical commentaries* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 172, 242.

[56] Family members could accompany convicts voluntarily but others were sentenced to servitude in exile because of their association with the criminal. For a discussion of collective responsibility under the Qing, see Joanna Waley-Cohen, *Exile in Mid-Qing China*: *Banishment to Xinjiang, 1758–1820* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 221–22.

[57] GZSL 1093: 7a, 44.10.19 (26 November 1779).

[58] See the examples given by Wei Qingyuan 魏庆远 et al., *Qingdai nubi zhidu* 清代奴婢制度 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1984), p. 71, note 1.

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the land or were allowed to return home. Moreover, they could not be bought and sold by their masters (whether individuals or collectives) and should therefore be deemed to be held in 'public' rather than 'private' bondage.[59]

By 1790, it was reported that there were almost 2,000 criminals in servitude (*wei nu* 爲奴) in Ili and Urumqi,[60] primarily Han but also Manchu and Mongol bannermen.[61] Numbers continued to rise rapidly and were further boosted after 1815 when it was determined that Jilin and Heilongjiang in the northeast already had more exiles than the authorities there were able to support. Consequently those who would previously have been sent to the northeast were now dispatched to Xinjiang.[62]

The harsh conditions of exile in the northwest only aggravated the criminals' grievances. As early as 1768, more than 200 convicts from the agricultural colony in Changji rose in revolt and attacked Urumqi. As Qi Qingshun has shown, their grievances were not induced by exile itself, but rather the desperate and untenable circumstances in which they were expected to pay their grain tax and eke out a living for themselves, and frequently their families who accompanied them, on a mere 5 *mu* of land (producing approximately 30 *jin* of grain).[63] So dire was the plight of the convicts in Urumqi that their children frequently sought to be taken into servitude (*xiaonu* 小奴).[64] Significantly, the court's response to the uprising at Changji was not to ease conditions but rather to insist on tighter control by the garrison soldiers. In desperation, many convicts fled and became involved in crime, just as they had done in the interior.

[59] Several commentators have drawn a distinction between 'public' or 'official' slavery and 'private' slavery under the Qing. See, for example, Marinus Meijer, 'Slavery at the End of the Ch'ing Dynasty', in Jerome Cohen et al. (eds), *Essays on China's Legal Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 328; Waley-Cohen, *Exile in Mid-Qing China*, p. 30; and Angela Schottenhammer, 'Slaves and Forms of Slavery in Late Imperial China (seventeenth to early twentieth centuries)', *Slavery and abolition*, 24 (2), 2003, p. 146.

[60] GZSL 1353: 40b, 55.4.29 (11 July 1790).

[61] Wei Qingyuan, *Qingdai nubi zhidu*, pp. 70–71.

[62] *Xing'an huilan* 刑案匯覽 (reprinted Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1968), 6: 12a–b (13 April 1813).

[63] Qi Qingshun demonstrates how severe their living conditions were in comparison to those in the military; see Qi Qingshun 齐清顺, '*Yiqiliuqinian Changji ji qianfan baodong bu ying kending*' 一七六七年昌及遣犯暴动不应肯定, *Xinjiang daxue xuebao*, 4, 1986, pp. 63–65. Note that Qi makes the common mistake of dating the rising to 1767 instead of 1768.

[64] Ji Yun 紀昀, 'Wulumuqi zaji' 烏魯木齊雜記 in Wang Yingqi (comp.), *Xiaofanghuzhai yudi congcha* (Shanghai: 1891–97), 2: 121b.

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As northern Xinjiang (where the Qing military presence was strongest) struggled to absorb more convict labour than it could employ and control, the numbers of those dispatched to Altishahr, which had not yet been opened to Han Chinese settlement, gradually rose. In the strongly Turkic Muslim south, where there was much less available land to develop than in the north and where the garrison was significantly smaller, criminals were allocated not only to military officials but also to the *beks*.

An estimate from the late eighteenth century puts the number of convicts enslaved to *beks* in Altishahr alone at 600.[65] The crimes of those sent to Altishahr ranged from opium dealing to murder, but the largest numbers were those accused of sedition and involvement in heterodox religions (*xiejiao* 邪教). Based on the rationale that Muslims did not believe in Buddhism and would therefore not be susceptible to their heresies, members of fraternal organizations such as the *Tiandi hui* (天地會 the Heaven and Earth Society) and the *Bagua jiao* (八卦教 the Eight Trigrams) were dispatched to the south to work for the *beks*.[66]

The duties of those assigned to *beks* for the duration of their sentence varied but undoubtedly included agricultural work. There is no indication that the criminals assigned to *beks* were ever termed or considered to be *inchu*. Like the *inchu*, however, if their master died or was transferred to another post, they were reassigned to another *bek*. Evidently the system did not always function smoothly: not only did many of those involved in secret societies continue to fraternize and propagate their beliefs,[67] but some took their lives into their own hands, as in the case of Wang Zichong, cited by Joanna Waley-Cohen. A member of the *bagua jiao* sect, Wang had been assigned to a *bek* in Kashgar. In 1791, much to the fury of the emperor, he was discovered not only to be in communication with other sect members, but also to have been running a business following the death of his master.[68]

In fact, this was just an early indicator of a growing problem. By the 1820s, the number of convicts assigned to *beks* had risen dramatically and they were posing a threat to social stability. The *beks* were losing control of their headstrong and uncooperative charges and clearly did not welcome the additional expense of supporting ever-increasing

[65] Waley-Cohen, *Exile in Mid-Qing China*, p. 31.

[66] See Qi Qingshun 齐清顺, '*Qingdai Xinjiang qianfan yanjiu*' 清代新疆遣犯研究, *Qingdai shi yanjiu*, 2, 1988, pp. 84–85; GZSL 1382: 23b–27b, 56.7.13 (12 August 1791).

[67] GZSL 1382: 23b–27b, 56.11.13 (8 December 1791).

[68] GZSL 1384: 14a–17b, 56.8.8 (5 September 1791); Waley-Cohen, *Exile in Mid-Qing China*, pp. 164–66.

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numbers, while for the convicts, for whom capture meant certain death, the numbers of those absconding was a reflection of their desperation.[69] It was not only the *beks*, though, who had difficulty controlling the convict labour from the interior.

The Oirat Mongols too encountered problems. As early as 1787, it was reported that it was proving impossible for the Oirat Mongols to control the Chinese convicts who had been assigned to them. This was attributed, surprisingly, to communication difficulties—but so serious was the problem that it was decided that convicts should no longer be allocated to the Oirat locals but instead to the Chahar Mongol and Manchu garrison troops.[70] Once again, the main concern for the Qing authorities was stability.

In the late 1820s, the Qing authorities in Kashgar noted that the *beks* were unable to cope with their unruly and violent 'slaves'. Ever concerned to avert signs of social unrest that could be exploited by those outside the region, the authorities requested that from then on the convicts be enslaved to the clerks in the seals offices. The clerks and translators (*zhangjing bitieshi* 章京筆帖式) were not accompanied by their families during their posting (usually of three to five years) and thus had no one to support them in carrying out their day-to-day chores. When they left office, the convicts would not accompany them back to their banners but would be handed over to their successors. It was hoped that this would both relieve the burden on the *beks* and assist the clerks. Thereafter, the court instructed that convicts were to be given in the first instance to clerks and translators, and only to the *beks* when there were sufficient numbers, but under no circumstances to ordinary Muslims (*xiao huizi* 小回子).[71]

Just as criminals and potential rebels from the interior were exiled to the frontier in order to remove them from their local communities, so within Xinjiang: Turkic Muslims who were sentenced to servitude as a result of involvement in rebellion or crime were 'exiled' from their homes. For those in Altishahr this invariably meant being sent to the north of the region.[72]

[69] Wei Qingyuan, *Qingdai nubi zhidu*, p. 63.

[70] Qi Qingshun, '*Qingdai Xinjiang qianfan yanjiu*', p. 88; GZSL 1276: 10b–11a, 52.3.6 (23 April 1787); Waley-Cohen, *Exile in Mid-Qing China*, p. 167.

[71] *Xing'an huilan*, 6: 20a–b, 30 October 1828; XZSL 143: 16b–17b, 8.9.22 (30 October 1828). See Qi Qingshun, '*Qingdai Xinjiang qianfan yanjiu*', p. 88.

[72] Although local law was still applied in Xinjiang for minor criminal cases, more serious crimes, or those involving Han and Manchu soldiers or civilians, were dealt with under Qing law.

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In 1828, when the father of a certain Adir from Yangi Hisar was condemned to death for participating in the Jahāngīr uprising, the latter was sent to Ili where he was enslaved to Dasangga, a Sibo bannerman. Adir's mother was already dead and as he is reported to have had no family of his own, he was presumably still a child or very young man at the time. Subsequently, Dasangga died and Adir worked in the household of Dasanbu, another Sibo, who frequently hired out Adir as a labourer, collecting the salary himself and causing Adir to grow increasingly resentful. In early 1841, while being hired out, he met Ismā'īl, a Turkic Muslim from Kasghar, who had been accused of repeated theft and sentenced to corvée (*dang chai* 當差) in Ili. When Adir became sick and unable to work, his temporary employer decided to send him back to Dasanbu. Anticipating that on his return he would suffer worse abuse for being sick, Adir persuaded Ismā'īl to assist him in killing Dasanbu and his family before escaping together. A date was fixed, Adir returned to Dasanbu's house, and five days later, under cover of darkness, Ismā'īl arrived. Adir let him into the house and one by one they clubbed to death Dasanbu, his mother, his wife, and her younger sister. The culprits then escaped but because Adir was still sick and exhausted, they took cover, planning to steal a horse the following night. During the day, they were both captured. So severe was their crime that they were sentenced to public quartering, with their heads to be strung up in public. Adir had no family, but enquiries were made as to whether or not Ismā'īl's wife was living and her whereabouts;[73] presumably if she was found, she too was destined for bondage or perhaps even death.

As is so often the case in Chinese sources, it is the serious criminal cases, while exceptional in themselves, that give an insight into the type of tensions that existed within and between the various communities. Ultimately, however, what emerges from the multi-layers of bondage that existed in Xinjiang under the Qing is not only that Qing policies frequently underpinned traditional practices but that bondage cut across both ethnic and social divides. For the Qing authorities, it was not merely an instrument of punishment but a tool to promote social and political stability. However, while it may have served the Qing body politic well, there is little evidence that it did the same for Xinjiang. The enslaved criminals, from the interior

[73] FHA *Minzu lufu* 655.15, Daoguang 21.3.26 (17 April 1841). The Turkic Muslim name Adir is a hypothetical reconstruction from the Chinese A-di-er. The other names in this account, Turkic and Manchu, are attested in non-Chinese sources.

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in particular, continued to pose a problem and by 1857 Jalafuntai, the governor-general at Ili, was petitioning the court to request that deportations to Xinjiang be halted for fear of insurrection.[74]

The decline of bondage in Xinjiang

In 1865, southern Xinjiang fell under the control of Ya'qūb bek (1820–77) and for the next 12 years Qing rule was erased from the region. As Ya'qūb bek gradually extended his control to most of northern Xinjiang, shari'a law was enforced and a severe penal system and harsh taxation came to characterize his administration.[75] Yet although traditional patterns of bondage persisted and surviving Manchus and Han Chinese were almost inevitably used as forced labour,[76] Islamic rule may have militated against the slave trade because, as several accounts suggest, human bondage appears to have been much reduced throughout this period.[77] More significantly, it is clear that this period formed a watershed in terms of how the region was administered, with a concomitant impact on patterns of bondage. The rupture in Qing rule resulting from Ya'qūb bek's victory severed the relationship of dependency between the local elite, notably those whose families had participated in the conquest of 1758, and their Qing overlords. Consequently, after the re-conquest, the way was open for a new relationship and new forms of social and political organization.

In early 1897, just 20 years after the forces of Qing General Zuo Zongtang had regained control of the region, and 13 years after

[74] D. J. MacGowan, 'On the Banishment of Criminals in China', *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3, December 1859, p. 295; *Peking Gazette*, 19 June 1857.

[75] Hodong Kim, *Holy War in China*: *The Muslim rebellion and state in Chinese Central Asia, 1864–1877* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 129–31, 133–34.

[76] For use of Chinese labour under Ya'qūb bek, see Henry Bellew, 'History of Kashgar' in Forsyth, *Report of a Mission to Yarkund*, pp. 209–10.

[77] Not only does Islam regard manumission as a pious act, but enslavement as a punishment for crime or as a result of debt contravenes Islamic law. See Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*, p. 39; and Clarence-Smith, 'The British "Official Mind" and Nineteenth-century Islamic Debates over the Abolition of Slavery', in Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon (eds), *Slavery, Diplomacy and the Empire* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2009), pp. 131–32. For indications that the slave trade and hard labour were curtailed under Ya'qūb bek, see Forsyth, *Report of a Mission to Yarkund*, p. 56; Robert B. Shaw, *Visit to High Tartary, Yarkand and Kashgar (formerly Chinese Tartary), and Return* (London: John Murray, 1871), p. 469.

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Xinjiang had been made a province of China, the Han Chinese district magistrate of Yarkand issued a proclamation in Chinese and Turkic (Uyghur):

> Be it known to all Chinese subjects, rich or poor, that I have found on enquiry that Mohammedans have no humanity in them and that they are not capable of distinguishing right and wrong. Not knowing what they are doing they buy and sell boys and girls as slaves. But this business is not to be treated as trade. The Mohammedans work such slaves like cows and donkeys; and however much the slaves labour for them, their masters are not satisfied. There are several who have beaten slaves to death. Many slaves have, owing to ill-treatment, committed suicide. After the death of a slave his children are kept in bondage from generation to generation. Several children have been forcibly taken away from their parents and sold much to the unhappiness of the latter. If I now find anyone dealing in slaves, I will punish him and release such slaves. This is the Chinese law and you should know it. People found dealing in slaves shall be severely punished. As slavery has been an old custom in this district, I have not thought fit to punish you, but you should remember well that in future you are not to deal in slaves.[78]

The proclamation, which resembled those that appeared in many of the major cities of Altishahr, is of interest for a number of reasons. Most notably, it reflects a new judgemental relationship between the colonized and colonizer based on assumptions of 'progress' and 'civilization'. As is frequently noted, the re-conquest brought a new administration to the region, one which was dominated by Han Chinese civil administrators rather than Manchu bannermen. While some scholars may dispute the specifically ethnic relevance of the shift, the new policies were undoubtedly characterized by a concerted effort to strengthen Chinese civil institutions, to promote Confucian education, to civilize the population, and to bring the region more firmly into the empire. In effect, the re-conquest and the new policies were justified by portraying the local people as uncivilized.

Shortly after the region was incorporated as a province in 1887, the *bek* system was abolished. Although many *beks* retained their authority unofficially, or officially as clerks and local elders (*shuli xiangyue* 書吏鄉約), their powers were significantly curtailed and the *inchu* system was abandoned. The slave trade and bondage had never been simply part-and-parcel of the *bek* system, and with the Qing authorities seeking to forge a new relationship with the local elite,

[78] BLIO L/P&S/7/98, Macartney to the Government of India enclosing a proclamation issued by the District Magistrate of Yarkand (April 1897).

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criminals who were again being sent to Xinjiang from the interior were no longer allocated to *beks* or indeed to soldiers as personal slaves.

In the late eighteenth century, the Qianlong emperor had already recognized the threat caused to social harmony in Xinjiang by human trafficking. As James Millward suggests, the 1827 prohibition against Qing officials retaining local children in their households may well have been aimed at preventing the trafficking of local Turkic Muslim and Oirat (Torghut) Mongol children, and thus prompted by the same concerns.[79] Until the early twentieth century, though, bondage of all sorts was still both ubiquitous and legal throughout China and, while the slave trade was frowned upon by many, it persisted not only on the frontiers but also in the interior.[80] Thus it is not surprising that the focus of the Yarkand proclamation is the slave trade, while relatively little is said about those held in the slave-like conditions of bondage. Yet, as witnessed in other parts of the globe, when the slave trade comes under attack, there are invariably implications for the practice of human bondage.

In fact, the instigator behind the Yarkand proclamation was not the Qing authorities but George Macartney, the British representative at Kashgar. In 1893, within a year of taking up his post in Kashgar, Macartney had ascertained that there were several hundred slaves from British India, Kashmir, Kanjut, and Gilgit held in Xinjiang. While the British government had managed to reach an unequivocal position with regard to Atlantic slavery and had finally outlawed slavery in Britain and the British empire with the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, in practice its position, and particularly that of its administrators and diplomats 'on the ground' in many parts of the world, was still one of caution and often little more than ambivalence.[81] In Central Asia, generally speaking, the British supported the Russians in their efforts to abolish slavery, not least because it was realized that the enslavement of Russians served as an excuse for the Russian

[79] Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, p. 305.

[80] The Shanghai riots of 1906, for example, were triggered as a result of a dispute over whether two women suspected of kidnapping and trafficking young girls should be held in the Mixed Court gaol or the Municipal gaol. See 'Report on incident at the mixed court Friday morning 8 December', Public Records Office (London) FO 228/2510 (December 1905).

[81] Clarence-Smith, 'The British "Official Mind"', p. 127; and Keith Hamilton and Farida Shaikh, 'Introduction', in Hamilton and Salmon, *Slavery, Diplomacy*, p. 4.

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advance.[82] In British-held north and northwest India, however, in regions where slavery was still prevalent such as Chitral, efforts to wipe out even the most inhumane forms of bondage were tentative for fear that it would undermine the social structure and alienate the ruling elite.[83]

In Xinjiang, the British had no such qualms. Macartney's campaign to secure the release of the British slaves held in Altishahr appears to have been a personal initiative. Whether he was motivated by humanitarian concerns or was making an astute manoeuvre in the game of political chess being played out between the British and Russians in Xinjiang, he received the full support of the government of India. Surprisingly, perhaps, he also met with little—if any—resistance from the Han Chinese local officials or the provincial governor, Tao Mo.[84] Where temporary problems were encountered, they pertained not to the principle but to the responsibility for financial reimbursement to the owners, and it was the *Zongli yamen* (總理衙門), the body responsible for China's foreign affairs, rather than the provincial governor that was reluctant to sanction the expense.[85] Not only were the local officials supportive, as reflected in the Yarkand proclamation, they were invariably quick to express their displeasure with a practice that, without exception, they asserted was a backward Muslim custom.[86]

As Macartney set about negotiating the release of the British slaves and the extent of Britain's financial contribution, it was evident that the release of the British slaves would be significant for the many others still held in servitude. By the 1890s, Grenard noted that 'since the progress of the Russians and the English in Central Asia' the number of those held in servitude had decreased considerably.[87] This

[82] Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game*: *On secret service in High Asia* (London: John Murray, 1990), p. 205.

[83] Significantly, Macartney did not take up the case of the slaves from Chitral. BLIO L/P&S/7/75 (1 February 1895).

[84] Xu Jianying suggests that the reason the Qing authorities were so willing to release the British slaves was because if there were no British residents in Xinjiang and no British trade, then there would be no need for a British consulate there. Xu Jianying 许建英, *Jindai Yingguo he Zhongguo Xinjiang (1840–1911)* 近代英国和中国新疆 (1840–1911) (Harbin: Heilongjiang chubanshe, 2004), p. 247.

[85] BLIO L/P&S/7/77, Macartney to the Government of India (9 August 1894 and September 1894).

[86] See, for example, BLIO L/P&S/7/98, Macartney to the Government of India (23 December 1897).

[87] Grenard, *Mission scientifique*, Vol. 2, p. 166.

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may well have been the case, but in Xinjiang after 1877 at least some of this reduction must be attributed to Ya'qūb bek's rule and the shifting social and political dynamics of the new Qing administration. Nonetheless, large numbers of people were still being traded and held in bondage. In Khotan, for example, as Grenard himself witnessed, children were still being sold into servitude,[88] while Macartney's figures show that in the same city 600 people (15 of whom were owned by the city's chief *akhund*) were freed in the 1890s.[89]

The process of securing the release of the British slaves in Xinjiang took Macartney four years, from 1893 to 1897, and followed a fairly set pattern. First, he would approach the local Chinese district magistrate (or, in the case of Kashgar, the circuit intendant, Daotai 道臺) and, having ascertained their agreement in principle, he would offer a contribution towards the payment of compensation to the owners for the release of all the British slaves. For the most part, the Chinese officials were eager to pay the compensation themselves and only where there were financial problems did Macartney have to make partial or entire payments. Proclamations were issued in Chinese and Turkic (Uyghur) and all those who originated from outside the region would be expected to register with the *yamen* (local governmental office) by a certain date. Compensation would then be paid to the owners, as agreed, by either the British or Chinese authorities, and the purchase bonds would be handed over. Those individuals with British status were then assisted to return home; only if they had dependents in Xinjiang could they choose to remain there, in which case the Chinese authorities insisted that they become Chinese citizens and forfeit their British status.[90] In total, by the summer of 1897, 2,050 men, women, and children had gained their freedom.

While the emancipation of the imported British slaves did not extend to those whose status had been inherited from their ancestors and who had 'long been living on the bounty of their master's family', it could not fail to have an effect on them.[91] Every district magistrate

[88] Grenard, *Mission scientifique*, Vol. 2, pp. 166–67.

[89] BLIO L/P&S/7/98, Macartney to the Government of India (23 December 1897); Xu Jianying, *Jindai Yingguo*, p. 257.

[90] Wu Fengpei吳豐培 (comp.), *Tao qinsu gong zouyi yigao* 陶勤肅公奏議遺稿 (Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 1987), 3: 22a–23a, 31 August 1897; BLIO L/P&S/7/75 Macartney to the Government of India (1 February 1894).

[91] BLIO L/P&S/7/75, Macartney to the Government of India citing a letter from the District Magistrate of Yarkand to the Circuit Intendant at Kashgar (1 February 1894).

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appears to have adopted his own position, but a sense of the wider impact of Macartney's initiative may be gleaned from advice given by the district magistrate of Yarkand to the circuit intendant at Kashgar. According to the former, hereditary slaves should not be released but the proclamation should make it clear that:

> ... henceforth the owners would not be allowed to sell their slaves; that children born after the date of the proclamation should no longer be slaves, nor their descendents; that slaves having private means and wishing to purchase their freedom would be at liberty to do so by paying a sum in accordance with these regulations; that those without means of furnishing their own ransom would be set at liberty after a number of years to be fixed in the proclamation; and lastly, that such owners as wished to show kindness to their slaves might please themselves in releasing them before the expiry of the period fixed.[92]

Although there are no figures for those released after 1897, it is clear that the manumission of the British and other 'foreign' slaves marked a significant juncture in the gradual process of challenging the practice of slavery and all forms of human bondage throughout the region.[93]

Conclusion

By looking at the entire spectrum of human bondage in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Xinjiang, rather than merely the slave trade, it has been possible to gain a better understanding of some of the social mechanisms and policies that underpinned the practice in all its guises. Patterns of bondage rarely evolve in isolation, and in Qing Xinjiang chattel slavery, penal slavery, and domestic slavery were all intertwined, crisscrossing social and ethnic borders. It was this network of private and public interests that ensured the survival and acceptability of bondage in the region for so long.

The extensive body of academic literature on slavery reveals that, whatever its form, the intimate relationship between human bondage and the society that shelters it invariably ensures that the abolition of the slave trade and manumission is a process rather than a single

[92] BLIO L/P&S/7/75, Macartney to the Government of India (1 February 1894).

[93] Interestingly, there is no mention of Xinjiang in the proposals for the abolition of slavery throughout China that culminated in the recommendations of the commissioner of Law Revision, Shen Jiaben, and their endorsement by the court in January 1910. See Meijer, 'Slavery', pp. 338–52.

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act, and that the decline, if not the eradication, of human bondage is affected most frequently by a coalescing of social, economic, and political factors from within and beyond the society in question. A range of individuals and institutions from inside and outside Xinjiang had a vested interest in retaining systems of bondage that were specific to the geographical position and socio-political conditions of the region. Yet viewing slavery as a practice that was 'a local problem' is not only a misrepresentation, but conceals the many and varied forms of bondage that were just as exploitative as those viewed by Western observers in the slave markets of Central Asia and so frowned upon by the Qianlong emperor.

Although by the end of the nineteenth century a convergence of local, regional, and global forces was driving some of the more visible forms of bondage into decline, fresh ones were already emerging. In the late 1920s, Roerich reported that in Khotan there were merchants who 'owned some 200 girls' whom they put to work in the silk and cotton factories.[94] Without an understanding of how social and political structures underpin evolving patterns of bondage within any given society, not only will history continue to ignore an entire underclass of largely hidden people, but contemporary policy-makers will struggle to prevent the reinvention of old patterns of human bondage and pre-empt the emergence of new forms.

[94] Roerich also notes that children were being transported to Turkestan to be sold and others became slaves through not being able to pay their debts. See Roerich, *Trails to Innermost Asia*, p. 64.

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