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Locations of Oirat Tribes in the 18th-century Jungar Khanate, according to Modern Chinese Historiography

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This article attempts to describe the location of Oirat ethnic groups in the Jungar Khanate (during the 18th century) according to the works of Orientalists from Russia and China. Understanding the locations of ethnic groups in Jungaria will, in combination with modern names for the relevant regions, facilitate future research.

Key words: Jungar Khanate, Xiyu Tuzhi, Chinese historiography, Oirat ethnic groups, 18th century, Russian historiography, Central Asia

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1. Introduction

The eighteenth century plays a special role in Asian and especially Oirat history. The first half of the century, when the Jungar Khanate was at the peak of its power, was very eventful for the Oirats; in fact, it is considered the most active period not only in Central Asian history but also in East Asian history. Despite the Jungar Khanate's defeat in 1697, when its ruler was Galdan Boshigtu Khan, the Oirat state remained the only major Central Asian polity able to slow the Qing's expansion into Central Asia. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Manchu Qing Dynasty in China was strengthening; it destroyed the Jungar Khanate, inflicted genocide on its population, and terminated the independence of all Mongol peoples in Asia. Most histories of the Jungar Khanate have focused on its foreign policy, seeing domestic issues as insignificant. This article attempts to examine internal components of Jungar Khanate: its

administrative and territorial divisions.

My aim is therefore to use modern Chinese historiography to disseminate and analyze new information about the administrative divisions and locations of Oirat ethnic groups under the last Mongolian-speaking sovereign state of the late Middle Ages: the Jungar Khanate of the 18th century.

2. Some features of Russian and Soviet historiography regarding the location of Oirat tribes in the Jungar Khanate

Russian literature contains similar information about the names of these groups and the numbers of their families, extracted from a Chinese source from the Qing period called *Xiyu tuzhi* (*Geographical Description of the Western Region with the Cards*).

The authors of these works were N. Y. Bichurin (Bichurin 1991), the “patriarch of Russian sinology,” and A. I. Chernyshev (Chernyshev 1990). However, their information about the location of Oirat groups was sketchy, with proper names (including place names) either given in Chinese transcriptions or distorted.

For example, Bichurin, referring to a Chinese source he calls “Zemleopisanie Jungarii” indicates the locations of only 7 Otok: “The Urut and the Horbos roamed on the river Gungis, the Keriet on the Yuldus, the Erketen on the river Hash-gol, the Bukus on the southern coast of the river Ili, the Tarbagtsin on the Altan-Tebshi Mount, the Ebit on the riverside of the Emil.” Then, citing Fisher, he mentions another 3 Otok: the Kyrgyz on the west side of lake Teletskoye, the Telenguts on the east side of the same lake, and the Mingat on the river Kemchik (Bichurin 1991: 73). When he refers to one of the 9 Khoit Angis belonging to Amursana, Bichurin calls it the “Chagan-Tun Amursana,” although the Chinese text refers to it as “Cha-han-tu-ke”—the Oirat word “tug” (“banner”) becoming the incomprehensible word “tun” (Bichurin 1991: 72). The same happens with the name “Otok,” which the *Xiyu tuzhi* calls “A-er-ta-chin” but which Bichurin calls “Ardatsin” (Bichurin 1991: 71): in reality, it is “Altachin”—from “Altyn” (“gold”)—who were responsible for the production of Buddhist statues (History 2003: 164, 168). A. I. Chernyshev uses the Chinese transcriptions of them (Chernyshev 1990: 116–117).

3. Some features of Chinese and Western historiography regarding administrative and territorial divisions of the Jungar Khanate

A review of relevant English works yields some information on administrative and territorial divisions, mostly in the “History of Civilization of Central Asia,” but nothing about the locations of Oirat tribes in the Jungar Khanate. Some information on handicrafts and socio-economic changes exists, including data on the Jisa, Otoqs, and Angi—but not their locations. It should be noted that part 2 of the 6th section of Volume IV is about Jungars of 18th century in this respectful publication, which was prepared by Bai Cuiqing, a representative of Chinese historiography (History 2003: 151–172). This is not surprising, because the structure of the Jungar Khanate became known from the Chinese source “*Xiyu tuzhi*” thanks to Qing historiography.

Consider the body of Chinese works on Oirat history and the location of Oirat tribes in

the Jungar Khanate. It should be noted that 20th-century Chinese historiography published a significant number of works on the northern and western regions of China, including Jungaria. The modern American Orientalist Peter Perdue said that Tibet, Mongolia, and Xinjiang together account for only 3.6% of the current population of China and that the publication of books per capita must thus be higher in these regions than in any other areas of China. A recent index lists 8,031 articles on the subject published between 1900 and 1988, and another lists over 7,500 books and articles on the Qing dynasty alone (Perdue 2005: 508).

A distinctive feature of Chinese and Soviet research is its variety of perspectives on the status of the Jungar Khanate's statehood. According to Soviet Orientalists, the historical science of the PRC from 1970 to 1980 was such that "the facts relating to the establishment and strengthening of Jungar Khanate [were] either concealed by Chinese historians, or declared 'shameless lies of the Soviet revisionists'" (Gurevich, Moiseyev 1979: 45). Gurevich and Moiseyev point out that the history of this region had political significance for the Chinese: "the important 'argument' of the question about the history of Russian-Chinese territorial delimitation of Central Asia for China's leadership is the attempt to present the Jungar Khanate as an integral part of China and, consequently, to make the Qing Empire a 'pravonaslednitsey'" (Gurevich, Moiseyev 1979: 45).

The interesting view of Peter Perdue, who believes that historians of the Qing, the Kuomintang, Taiwan, and the PRC used similar approaches, is that modern Chinese historiography regarding the Jungar Khanate is the direct heir of traditional imperial historiography in that it is based on the Han nationalist idea of "unity." Perdue points out that Chinese historians see Qianlong's victory as the natural incorporation of "our (Chinese) Mongols" into Chinese territory. They deny the existence of widespread anti-Qing sentiments among the Mongols and ignore the fact that Xinjiang was never controlled by a Chinese dynasty until the Qing. However, Perdue believes that Soviet and modern Mongolian historiography developed within a shared framework. For example, Soviet authors describe the Qing as an aggressive expansionist empire and look for signs of class struggle in the Mongolian nationalist resistance against the feudal Qing state. According to Perdue, "Russian scholars seem to be more Marxist, and the Chinese more nationalist, but Russian authors also justify the expansion of their empire, too, without trying to claim that Siberia 'always belonged to Russia'. Contemporary, modern Mongolian scholars assert the essential unity of the Mongolian people from earliest times, playing down their real divisiveness" (Perdue 2005: 509).

An important feature of modern (and traditional) Chinese historiography is its tendency to pass moral judgment using a "praise and blame" scheme, representing historical people as "very good or very bad": Galdan Boshigtu-Khan, the three Tserens, and Amursana, for example. Perdue finds this tendency in the historiography of the KMT as well, manifested in its belief in progressive evolution toward the unity of various nationalities within a single state, moralistic judgments of historical actors by the standard of this unity, and an assumption that the multiple nationalities comprising the modern Chinese nation have always shown loyalty to imperial regimes (Perdue 2005: 512).

At the beginning of the 21st century, however, changes occurred in some of the PRC's centers of historical research studying the Jungars. One of these, the University of the Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia, published the compilation *Menggu minzu tongshi*

(*General History of the Mongolian Nation*) in 2002 (Menggu 2002). The 4th volume of this work indicates that “Tsevan-Rabdan on the one hand stood for the development of the economy, and, on the other hand, resorted to a flexible foreign policy that stimulated the Jungar Khanate to recover quickly. After his elder son Galdan-Tseren took the throne, he fully adhered to the foreign and domestic policy of Tsevan, allowing the development of the Jungar Khanate to reach its peak” (Menggu 2002: 165).

Even in this small fragment, we can observe a change in the concept of the Jungar Khanate’s status in some representatives of modern Chinese historiography. This paper does not employ the traditional “praise and blame” scheme; in general, it recounts historical events more objectively than its predecessors do.

Unfortunately, the main Chinese-language survey “*Zhungeer shilue*” (in Perdue’s words) (Perdue 2005: 594) does not give any information on the location of Oirat groups, but it does mention three groups of Uighur people who were incorporated into the Jungar state: the Tarynqy, Bezirge, and Ushag (Bichurin 1985: 133, 134).

In comparison with “*The History of Civilization*”, “*Weilate Menggu Jianshi*” does provide data on the locations of Oirat tribes; however, some locations do not appear in that text’s table as they do in a comparable table in “*Menggu Minzu Tongshi*”. “*Weilate Menggu Jianshi*” also has a table that mentions 21 Otoqs, but it says nothing about the locations of Zakhchins and Buchins, and is unclear about the location of Tuguts (Weilate 1992: 269). The same is true of the Dorbet Tseren’s location (Weilate 1992: 271). “*Weilate Menggu Jianshi*” has an advantage, however: a map showing the locations of the Oirat Otoqs and Angi (Weilate 1992: 126–127).

4. Recent revelations regarding the location of Oirat tribes in the Jungar Khanate from *Menggu minzu tongshi* (*General History of the Mongolian Nation*)

For illustrative purposes, we give a complete translation of a fragment from the compilation *Menggu minzu tongshi* (*General History of the Mongolian Nation*) (Menggu 2002) describing the administrative staff, divisions, and geographical dispersal of the Jungar Khanate. In comparison with “*Zhungeer shilue*,” “*Weilate Menggu Jianshi*,” and “*History of Civilization of Central Asia*,” the “*Menggu Minzu Tongshi*” gives more detailed information on the locations of Oirat groups. A number of ethnonyms and names have been reconstructed where possible, though Chinese transcriptions have been preserved where necessary. The text has been divided into paragraphs for ease of reading.

“In the first half of the 18th century, Jungar’s economy was flourishing and its political and religious systems improving. During the reign of Tsevan-Rabdan, the power structure of the Khanate was expanded, and the administrative system grew more meticulous by the day.

In the capital, the Khan’s family established specialized positions, and the staff, who were responsible for various affairs, helped the Khan and the Wans (Princes) in dealing with management. They brought the Khan’s ideas to fruition in more than one sphere, and (they) protected the far-reaching rights of the Khan, but (they) acted limitedly. According to the *Xiyu tuzhi*, the Khan’s family had several important divisions:

- 1) Tushimel. The Khan had 4 tushimels, (who were) the great officials, (and they)

managed political affairs for the Khanate. (This position) was similar to the “Diba,” (who was) attached to the Khan’s family of the Khoshots. In their position, they were higher than other officials, and they “were dignitaries, (who) held important positions and participated in the solution of Jungar’s political affairs.

The political affairs of 6 nomadic territories and 21 Angas (at first) were engaged by the Zaisangs, (who) reported (their decisions) to the Tushimel, (who) had to examine (decisions) carefully, (and) approve (the decisions), and (then the decisions) reached Taiji, (who) carried them out.” It also says that, according to the situation portrayed by the Zaisangs, 4 Tushimels made the decisions, and, after the Khan’s approval, (they) were carried out.

- 2) Zarguchi. “He is the Tushimel’s assistant. He runs the business (related) to the judicial punishment of bandits. (These) officials were six.” They had both political and judicial powers. Since the (reign of) Galdan, Zarguchi had possessed judicial power in the Khan’s court. Galdan in the codes indicated clearly that, regardless of whether the litigant were Muslim or Mongol, court cases should be settled through the head Zarguchi.
- 3) Demchi. “In interior (affairs), Demchi helps Taiji to manage housekeeping; in external (affairs, Demchi) levies taxes from nomadic territories. (He) sends (tax collectors) to the Muslim territory to the south of the (Tian Shan) mountains to levy state dues and taxes (from them). (He) meets the Burut’s ambassadors. (These) officials were two.” The most important official duties of the Demchi were the management of the financial revenues of the Khan’s family and the setting and collection of taxes.
- 4) Albachi-Zaisang. He was responsible for the tax arrears of 24 Otoks and 21 Angas; there were four of these officials. Under their authority, they had about 100 Albachis, who were sent to different places to collect arrears.

In addition, the Khan’s court established positions to run various businesses:

- a) The Ketchener, who “took upon himself the settling of affairs (relating to the) subordinates of Great Taiji, (including) Mongolian yurts and (yurts of) Taiji; (the Ketchener) also runs a business related to the headquarters of the Khan.
- b) The Altachins, who were responsible for coloring and modeling the Buddhist statues.
- c) The Zahchins, who “run a business (related to) the defense of borders, service in the Kaluns (pickets), patrolling, and intelligence.”
- d) The Urats, who were responsible for the smiths, (who made) weapons and weapons-grade tools.
- e) The Buchiners, who managed military camps, firearms, and related assets. The Buchins and other persons responsible for weapons were subordinate to the Buchiner.

There was an “Otok–Anga” system in the territorial plan: “The Otok was subordinate to the Khan; the Anga was subordinate to each Taiji. The territory of the Otoks covered the (region) Ili, as the territory of the Anga covered (the land) outside the Otok. The Otok was similar to the Dutong of the 8 banners, and the Anga (was similar to) the Dufu (local chief) of the outer province. The Otok belonging to the Khan was directly under the jurisdiction of the Khan, who lived and roamed around Ili. The Otok paid taxes and bore duties for the Khan’s house. The head of the Otok was a Zaisang: (they were) either one man or 3 to 4 men. “The most important (official) in the Otok was the Zaisang, next came the Demchi, then the Shulenga,

and the lowest (one) was the Arban-aha.

The Demchi was the official ... involved in civil cases: (he) levied taxes, maintained the wellbeing of the people ... engaged in matchmaking, and bore the duty of the inspector. A number of subordinate families were indifferent, from 10 to 250. A Shulenga was responsible for collecting taxes and was the Demchi's assistant.

An Arban-aha was the "head of 10 families"; [he was of] a lower bureaucratic rank.

Previously, there were 12 Otoks in Jungaria, but later (their number) became 24. Their names, the numbers of families and Zaisangs, and their locations, as described in *Xiyu tuzhi*, are shown below.

Name of Otok	Number of zaisangs	Number of families	Location
Wu-lu-te	4	5,000	Kunges (southeast of Ili)
Kharachin	1	5,000	uncertain
Erketen	1	5,000	Tobolun (Balhash)
Keryat	2	6,000	Yulduz (Hejing)
Zho-to-lu-ke	1	3,000	uncertain
Abahesi, Hedan	1 + 1	4,000	uncertain
Bukhus	1	3,000	Ku-er-tu
O-bi-te	1	3,000	Emil
O-lo-dai	2	3,000	uncertain
Duo-guo-lu-te	1	4,000	Tu-er-gen
Khorbos	1	3,000	Kunges
Tsokhur	1	3,000	uncertain
Ba-er-da-mu-te	3	4,000	uncertain
Ketchener	5	4,000	uncertain
Galtzat	3	4,000	Karashar (west of lake Boston)
Sharas	2	3,000	the same place
Mahus	1	5,000	Ulan-Khujir
Bukunut	1	2,000	Hobok
Tugut	1	500	uncertain*
Urat	1	3,000	river Jirgalan
Altachin	1	3,000	Altai, Bulgan,
Zahchin	3	2,000	Tsagan-Tohoi** (eastern part of Jungaria)
Buchin	3	1,000	the same place
Kyrgyz	4	4,000	uncertain
Telengut	4	4,000	uncertain
O-er-chu-ke	1	500	uncertain
Wu-er-han-ji-lan	1	800	uncertain
Mingat	2	3,000	lake Issyk-Kul

* Norbu says that the Urat roamed around Kunges (Norbu 1999: 255).

** In Norbu's work, we can see that there were two areas with the same name in the Jungar period. One is around the middle section of the river Ayaguz in modern Kazakhstan. The other, called "Tsagaan-tohoy," is near the Jair mountain ridge in Tarbagatai. It has now become Tsagan-Tohoy county, or Yu-ming-xian in Chinese, lying at 46° 2' north latitude and 82° 9' east longitude (Norbu 1999: 197).

An Anga (meaning “part” or “branch”) was, according to the Tian Shan-mao, the apauge of the khanate but not directly subordinate to the Khan. An Anga had a certain autonomy in financial terms but had to maintain the Khan politically, militarily, and administratively. The *Complete Record of Jungar Tribes* records that “all Taijis have 21 Angas, but the (Anga) belongs to Jungar Khan ... Every Taiji rules one Anga, (but) all (should) send troops to march, and the (Taijis) have to listen to their Khan’s orders.” It is believed that the Anga was established during the reign of Galdan-Tseren. Historical materials from the period of Galdan Boshigtu-Khan did not record the Anga, so its appearance should be attributed to the period of Tsevan-Rabdan, if not a later time. The locations of the 21 Angas were as follows:

Jungar’s 6 Angas:

- 1) Davachi. The territory of (his) roaming was in Tsagaan-Hujir southeast Zaisang-nor; according to Norbu Tsagan Hujir, this is the name of a small river lying to the north of Mount Olgotsog and to the west of the river Tomorto-Tsorgo. It is now the southernmost part of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan (Norbu 1999: 251).
- 2) Dashi-Dava. This roaming territory was located in the eastern part of the Yulduz.
- 3) Dorji-Danba. This roaming territory has not been ascertained.
- 4) Galzan-Dorji. This roaming territory was in Urumqi, Changji, and Lo-Ke-lun.
- 5) Nemehu-Jirgal. This roaming territory was in Ho-er-gun (the mouth of the southern bank of the river Chu).
- 6) Ochir-Ubashi. This roaming territory was in Gurban-Alimatu (south of the river Ili, in modern Almaty).

Derbet’s 3 Angas:

- 1) Tseren. This roaming territory was located by the river Irtysh.
- 2) Dashi. This roaming territory has not been ascertained.
- 3) Boshiagashi. This roaming territory was located at the mouth of the River Talas.

Khoshut’s 1 Anga:

- 1) Chagdor-Manji. This roaming territory was located on the southern bank of the lake Issyk-Kul.

Khoit’s 9 Angas:

- 1) Ta-er-ba-ha-qin-sa-yin-ba-le-ke (perhaps “Tarbagchin Sain-Belig”). This roaming territory was located by the A-le-dan-te-bu-shi-ola mountain (northwest of the Borotala).
- 2) He-tun-e-mo-gen. This roaming territory was in Ho-er-gun.
- 3) Duo-lo-te-leng. This roaming territory has not been ascertained.
- 4) Donduk. This roaming territory has not been ascertained.
- 5) E-ke-ming-an-ba-ya-er. This roaming territory was in the Tarbagatai.
- 6) Tseren-Banjur. This roaming territory was in the Jair (200 miles northwest of the Tarbagatai).
- 7) Batur-Emegen. This roaming territory has not been ascertained.
- 8) Tsagantug-Amursana. This roaming territory was in Cho-er-guo (southeast of Zaisan-nor).
- 9) Bo-lo-guo-te-tai-ji-no-hai-chi-chi-ke. This roaming territory has not been ascertained.

Torgut’s 2 Angas:

- 1) Batur-Ubashi. This roaming territory was in Ho-er-gun.

2) Dondub. This roaming territory has not been ascertained.

An administrative system, “Jisa,” was established for monastery maintenance (“Jisa” means “duty”). In fact, it was a shabiner that satisfied the domestic needs of monastic schools. According to the *Zhungeer Quanbu Jilue (Complete Record of Jungar Tribes)*, the Jisa were responsible for cases involving lamas. At first, there were 5 Jisas, but their number later increased to 9.

There were distinctions between the titles of the Jisas: A-ke-ba (Akba), Lai-ma-li-mu (Lamrim), Du-er-ba (Dulva), Dui-so-long, and I-ke-hu-la-er. In fact, these 5 Jisas were linked to 5 shabiner schools: Zhou (Akba), Qidi (Lam-rim), Liu (Dulva), Wen-si-zhou (Dui-so-long), and Da-zhong (I-ke-hu-la-er). The first two schools were founded during Galdan’s reign; the others were established under Tsevan-Rabdan’s. The names of the other 4 Jisas were Yun-du-xun, Shan-po-ling, San-dui, and Ping-chen. The 9 Jisas had 10,600 families of shabiners. Each Jisa was ruled by zaisang, the system of the Otok. The large Akba was managed by four zaisangs. The other Jisas, smaller than the Akba, were ruled by one zaisang. The roaming territory of 5 Jisas was the land to the west of present-day Kobuksar and Tachen. The roaming territory of the other 4 Jisas has not been ascertained.

The earliest Jisas were established during the reign of Galdan Boshigtu Khan. By the time of Galdan-Tseren’s reign, the Jisa system was gradually improving. According to the *Cheng-ji-si-han zhi qing-shi (Historical Annals of Genghis Khan)*, Galdan-Tseren established the following rules: each Zha-cang (monastic school) must possess 500 lamas, and each lama must have two Mongolian yurts, 3 servants, 2 loaded camels, 6 horses, one pedigree stallion, 100 sheep, silk materials, clothes, utensils, and provisions” (Mengu 2002: 171–176).

5. Conclusion

As we can see, the administrative and territorial structure of the Jungar Khanate clearly proves its self-sufficiency and independence in its relations with the Manchu Qing dynasty. Obviously, these data are of great value to the ethnic history of the Oirats. Using the information in *Xiyu tuzhi*, supplemented by the comments of Mongolian historians from the Peoples’ Republic of China (Hoh-hot), we were able to locate the Oirat ethnic groups in Jungaria and combine this information with modern place names in order to facilitate future research on this topic.

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