

Mutual Relations and Perceptions of Russians and Central Asians: Preliminary Notes for Comparative Imperial Studies

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Recently, similar interests have emerged among historians of various empires and colonies. Growing attention is being paid to the multiconfessional and multinational characters of empires, interactions between imperial powers and local communities, the invention of traditions, and Orientalism and its internalization by Oriental people themselves. However, this trend has appeared either coincidentally or as a result of independent adoption of common theoretical concepts, rather than from collaboration between historians of different empires. As we have launched comparative research on empires in the framework of a project on major regional powers in Eurasia,¹ I would like to present, for the sake of further research, some very preliminary observations on how to recognize and analyze similarities and differences between Russian Central Asia and other colonies and empires, especially British India and the Ottoman Empire, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. My analysis mainly addresses mutual perceptions of colonizers and colonized, although I deal with this topic not merely as a problem of representation and discourse, but also as one that is linked with the policies and strategies of both sides.

Who is better for Russia: “savage” nomads, or “fanatical” Muslims?

The first point I would like to focus on is that, while postcolonial studies have contributed much to the studies of empires and colonies, they have exaggerated the dichotomy of colonizer and colonized. At least in the Russian Empire, the relations between the authorities and local people were constructed in parallel with manipulation of interethnic relations, and it is essential to analyze the authorities' attitude to two or more groups of people simultaneously. The image of any one group of people was also diverse and fluid.

I will discuss these issues by using the example of nomads, because I am aware that researchers of Ottoman history have conceptualized the Ottoman version of Orientalism and the civilizing mission by pointing out that Ottomans perceived nomads as

¹ <<http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/rp/english/index.html>>

backward savages.² Russians, who identified themselves even more closely with Europeans than the Ottomans did, also called nomads savage, uncivilized and ignorant.³ Some, like Aleksei Levshin (a renowned scholar and administrator), tried to see “natural men” and “noble savages” in the Kazakh nomads, but when they became acquainted with the internal struggles of Kazakh society and the Kazakhs’ tactics in dealing with outsiders, they also started to emphasize their rudeness, brutality, deceptiveness and laziness.⁴

However, nomads were regarded as having their own merits for the Ottoman and Russian empires, albeit for different reasons. Ottomans thought they had to treat Arab nomads well because they were “the people of the Prophet.”⁵ Kazakh nomads were considered by Russians to be less dangerous than sedentary Muslims, because they were less prone to Islamic “fanaticism.”⁶ Earlier, under the reign of Catherine II, who believed that Islam would instill discipline in the Kazakhs, Tatar mullahs, with the Orenburg mufti as their head, played important roles in Russia’s policy toward the Kazakhs and were expected to control education and the local judiciary on the Kazakh steppe.⁷ But the tsarist government became increasingly wary of Islam in the mid-nineteenth century and emphasized the danger of “fanaticism” among the Tatars and “Sarts” (a majority of the present-day Uzbeks). The famous Russian-educated Kazakh scholar Shoqan Wälikhanov

² Selim Deringil, “‘They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery’: The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 2 (2003), pp. 311–342, esp. 317–318; Akiba Jun, “Preliminaries to a Comparative History of the Russian and Ottoman Empires: Perspectives from Ottoman Studies,” in Matsuzato Kimitaka, ed., *Imperiology: From Empirical Knowledge to Discussing the Russian Empire* (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2007), pp. 33–47, esp. 41–42.

³ Olesia Sukhikh, “Obraz kazakha-kochevnika v russkoi obshchestvenno-politicheskoi mysli v kontse XVIII–pervoi polovine XIX veka” (dissertatsiia na soiskanie uchenoi stepeni kandidata istoricheskikh nauk, Omsk, 2007).

⁴ A. I. Levshin, *Opisanie kirgiz-kazach'ikh, ili kirgiz-kaisatskikh, ord i stepei* (Almaty, 1996; orig. pub. 1832), pp. 295, 320–323, 543–544.

⁵ Deringil, “They Live in a State,” p. 332.

⁶ “Fanatic” was almost a fixed epithet for devout Muslims in the writings of Russian officials. Interestingly enough, Ottomans also used this word in relation to Yemenis, who clung to Islamic courts. Jun Akiba, “Osuman teikoku no Arabu henkyō ni okeru shihō gyōsei [Judicial administration in Arabic peripheries of the Ottoman Empire],” in *19 seiki Chūtō Barukan heno atarashii apurōchi* (Proceedings of a workshop held by the National Institutes for the Humanities project “Eurasia and Japan,” Chiba, 2007), p. 30.

⁷ Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 199–200; D. Iu. Arapov, ed., *Islam v Rossiiskoi imperii: zakonodatel'nye akty, opisaniia, statistika* (Moscow, 2001), pp. 49–50; D. D. Azamatov, *Orenburgskoe magometanskoe dukhovnoe sobranie v kontse XVIII–XIX vv.* (Ufa, 1999), pp. 29–30; *Kazakhsko-russkie otnosheniia v XVIII–XIX vekakh (1771–1867 gody): Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Alma-Ata, 1964), pp. 143–148.

played an auxiliary but important role in establishing the image of Kazakhs as half-Muslims threatened by Tatars and in danger of further Islamization.⁸

The generally accepted idea that more civilized sedentary people could serve as a model for nomads was often upset by the fear of Islam. The first Turkestan governor-general (1867–82), Konstantin von Kaufman, warned that the expansion of Sart settlements on the Kazakh steppe would be very disadvantageous for Russia, because they followed “the principles of fanatic Islam, irreconcilably hostile to European social order.”⁹ Moreover, Kazakhs proved to be more receptive to Russian education and culture than Sarts were. Captain Lev Kostenko, the author of a famous (though poorly written) book on Central Asia, wrote that one could not expect Muslim peoples to develop without the help of outsiders, and the Kazakhs had a better chance of mastering Russian *grazhdanstvennost'* (civic virtue or cultural standards) than sedentary Muslims did, because they were devoid of fanaticism and capable of learning higher civilization.¹⁰ Later, when Russian schools were opened in Turkestan, many more Kazakhs than Sarts entered them.¹¹

Russians also associated nomads with bellicosity. During the repeated discussions on whether or not Central Asians should be conscripted, Russian officers considered that nomads, “who fight daily against harsh nature,” retained “militant instincts, engrafted for millennia,” and for them “war is a desirable and familiar environment.” These arguments were used both for those who advocated conscription of nomads on the basis of their capability as warriors and for those who were against this idea, regarding it as dangerous to arm warlike people.¹²

Generally, military officers were influential in how Asian peoples came to be perceived in Russia, through their work as administrators and researchers of peripheral

⁸ E.g., see his note presumably written in 1863 or 1864, which was soon quoted by a governmental commission that drafted statutes for administration in Central Asia. Ch. Ch. Valikhanov, “O musul'manstve v stepi,” in his *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh*, vol. 4 (Alma-Ata, 1985), pp. 71–75.

⁹ *Proekt Vsepoddanneishego otcheta General-Ad"iutanta K. P. fon-Kaufmana 1-go po grazhdanskomu upravleniiu i ustroistvu v oblastiakh Turkestanskogo general-gubernatorstva, 7 Noiabria 1867 – 25 Marta 1881 g.* (St. Petersburg, 1885), pp. 38–39.

¹⁰ L. Kostenko, *Sredniaia Aziia i vodvorenii v nei russkoi grazhdanstvennosti* (St. Petersburg, 1870), pp. 41–42, 86–87. Kostenko's opinion of the Kazakhs was ambivalent, and he cited a number of their negative characteristics as well.

¹¹ S. Gramenitskii, *Ocherk razvitiia narodnogo obrazovaniia v Turkestanskom krae* (Tashkent, 1896), p. 9.

¹² For more about the discussions on conscription and militias, see Uyama Tomohiko, “A Particularist Empire: The Russian Policies of Christianization and Military Conscription in Central Asia,” in Uyama Tomohiko, ed., *Empire, Islam, and Politics in Central Eurasia* (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2007), pp. 23–63.

regions.¹³ For them, warlike indigenes were troublesome but respectful people who might be useful in Russia's future wars with foreign nations. Ordinary Russians partly shared their mentality, which added conspicuous elements of machismo to Russian discourse on Asians. In Russian literature, North Caucasian fighters were often depicted favorably, though destined to be conquered by Russia. Ammalat-Bek, who decapitates a Russian colonel (his former patron and friend) in a novel by Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, was very popular among Russian readers. As Susan Layton writes, it is hard to imagine that the British would be so enraptured by a Friday who shot and decapitated Robinson Crusoe.¹⁴

In the end, however, sympathy did not necessarily mean trust. Both nomads and sedentary people in Central Asia never became subject to universal conscription (though some of them served in the army on an irregular basis) because of their perceived low trustworthiness (*blagonadezhnost'*) and *grazhdanstvennost'*. This stood in contrast to the case of Indians, whose army was used as a valuable instrument of British imperialism and was sent to Egypt, Shanghai and elsewhere, although the British were sometimes reluctant to rely on Indian soldiers for the racist reason that they did not want to mobilize them on a large scale in "white man's wars," such as the South African War (1899–1902).¹⁵

Another remarkable feature of the Russians' attitude toward nomads was the Russian wariness of promoting sedentarization. Although sedentarization policy emerged from time to time, it was haphazard and implemented on a limited scale. Opposition to this policy was based on a sound judgment that the nomadic way of life was not simply a sign of backwardness, but was dictated by the natural conditions. Levshin considered nomadism to be the lifestyle most suited to the steppe, and he warned that it would be unwise to change rich herdsmen into poor farmers.¹⁶

In the early twentieth century, the government propagated a policy of settling nomads in order to vacate land for Russian farmers, but in reality it simply confiscated land without creating the conditions that would enable former nomads to conduct farming. Right after the revolt of 1916, the last Turkestan governor-general, Aleksei Kuropatkin, wrote that the sedentarization policy was mistaken. His logic was similar to that used by Levshin

¹³ See the following volume that contains biographies of 398 Russian military orientalists. M. K. Baskhanov, *Russkie voennye vostokovedy do 1917 goda: Biobibliograficheskii slovar'* (Moscow, 2005).

¹⁴ Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), chaps. 7–11, esp. p. 130.

¹⁵ Akita Shigeru, *Igirisu teikoku to Ajia kokusai chitsujo* [The British Empire and the international order of Asia] (Nagoya: Nagoya daigaku shuppankai, 2003), chaps. 1–4.

¹⁶ Levshin, *Opisanie kirgiz-kazach'ikh*, p. 300.

more than eighty years earlier: A vast portion of Central Asia is suitable only for nomadic livestock breeding, and the Kyrgyz are useful as born cattle breeders and cavalrymen.¹⁷ After all, Eurasian empires never enforced total sedentarization of nomads before the Soviet Union forced Central Asian nomads to settle in the 1930s. For comparative research, further investigation is needed on how empires other than Russia perceived and treated nomads.

Invented custom, classification of the population and “cajoling” of the locals

In this section, I explore several concepts associated with nationalism, colonialism and imperial rituals that are useful for research on Russian Central Asia and thus shed light on similarities between empires. As has been pointed out by researchers who have addressed the “invention of tradition,” British administrators in Africa, who respected their own British tradition, looked with favor upon what they took to be traditional in Africa and invented “traditions” such as tribes and customary law.¹⁸ Many Russian officials also thought that preservation of local jurisprudence, both Islamic and customary law, was useful for governing non-Russian regions. The legal system that Russia introduced in Central Asia was complicated and nearly chaotic, but it was roughly as follows. The sedentary Muslim population was under the jurisdiction of Islamic courts, the nomadic population was under customary law courts and issues involving both of them or Europeans, as well as highly important or controversial issues, were judged by Russian courts.

Most premodern states including empires comprised regions with varied legal systems and traditions, and they strove to either unify or classify them, especially in the process of modernization. For example, historians of the Ottoman Empire have discussed how the Ottoman legal system, which was largely based on the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, integrated or failed to integrate peripheral legal systems that were based on other schools.¹⁹ Russian officials also attempted to bring the legal system in Central Asia closer to the Russian standard. Thus, legal reform was primarily a technical issue, but at the same time, a kind of fetishization of custom was observed. Combined with anti-Tatar and

¹⁷ “Vosstanie 1916 g. v Srednei Azii. 1. Iz dnevnika A. N. Kuropatkina,” *Krasnyi arkhiv* 34 (1929), pp. 60–61.

¹⁸ Terence Ranger, “The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa,” in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 212, 247–260.

¹⁹ Akiba, “Osuman Teikoku no Arabu henkyō.”

anti-Islamic policy, customary law and other non-Islamic customs of nomads were thought to reflect “moral purity” that had to be preserved. Actually, however, the fixation of customary law (hitherto oral and flexible) in written forms, the election of customary law court judges and the clear separation of customary and Islamic law were novel to local society and can be regarded as invented customs.²⁰

The complex legal system that Russia introduced in Central Asia presupposed the existence of clear divisions of nomads and sedentary people and of various ethnic groups, divisions that in fact were blurry and fluid. It was the Russian authorities that made these divisions clearer, although much confusion still remained until Soviet power fixed the ethnic boundaries in the 1920s. According to an article published in a Russian Muslim newspaper in 1912, Sarts and “Kirgiz”²¹ became more clearly conscious of their distinction than before, because Russian rule introduced a clear division of jurisdiction between Islamic and customary law courts.²² Here we can observe what Benedict Anderson has called the “(confusedly) classifying mind,” based on studies of Southeast Asia. According to him, this mind was characteristic of colonial states, which invented, in an ostensibly rigorous manner, pseudoethnic categories that did not always correspond to the identities of local people.²³ The British also stressed the diversity of India, whose integration was to be guaranteed only by the British.²⁴

However, one may argue that the Russian Empire was particularly keen on manipulating interethnic relations. In the western regions, the government was hostile to Poles and Jews, and it provoked Ukrainian peasants to fight against them, while simultaneously appeasing Poles and Jews by claiming it would defend them from assaults by Ukrainians.²⁵ In the eastern regions, the government took protectionist and paternalistic

²⁰ Uyama Tomohiko, “A Strategic Alliance between Kazakh Intellectuals and Russian Administrators: Imagined Communities in *Dala Walayatining Gazeti* (1888–1902),” in Hayashi Tadayuki, ed., *The Construction and Deconstruction of National Histories in Slavic Eurasia* (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2003), pp. 237–259; Virginia Martin, *Law and Custom in the Steppe: The Kazakhs of the Middle Horde and Russian Colonialism in the Nineteenth Century* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001), pp. 3–8, 166.

²¹ In the usage of the tsarist period, “Kirgiz” indicated both Kazakhs and Kyrgyz.

²² Cited from N. A. Bobrovnikov, *Russko-tuzemnye uchilishcha, mekteby i medresy Srednei Azii: putevye zametki* (St. Petersburg, 1913), p. 62.

²³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991), p. 165.

²⁴ Bernard S. Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India,” in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, pp. 165–209, esp. 166, 184, 193–194.

²⁵ Matsuzato calls this policy “ethnic Bonapartism.” Matsuzato Kimitaka, “19 seiki kara 20 seiki shotō ni kaketeno ugan Ukuraina ni okeru Pōrando fakutā [Polish factors in Right-Bank Ukraine from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century],” *Suravu Kenkyū* 45 (1998), pp.

attitudes to peoples who were thought to be weak and threatened by the Tatars and Islam (especially the Chuvash, the Kazakhs and the Finno-Ugric peoples of the Volga-Ural region), while preserving Islamic institutions among the Tatars and Sarts. From around 1900, the government embarked on explicitly Russo-centric policy, but the particularistic way of adopting different policies toward different regions and ethnic groups persisted. The simplistic dichotomy of Russian colonizer versus non-Russian colonized does not work well when we analyze the policy of the Russian Empire.

Another form of invention concerned how imperial power should be represented using symbols and ceremonies, as historians of the British Empire have vividly described.²⁶ Although there is not much research of this kind on Russian Central Asia, it is well known that Kaufman was fond of gorgeous ceremonies intended to show his authority. According to Nikolai Ostroumov (an Orientalist and educator), Kaufman was aware that his nickname “yarim-padsha” (half-tsar) sounded like “viceroy” of India.²⁷ Even uezd (district) chiefs toured with huge retinues, assuming that the prestige of Russian power in the region was supported by pomp and gorgeousness.²⁸

Much discussion has also addressed how the British Empire, by creating an elaborate system of titles and orders, stimulated a lust for honor among both British and indigenous colonial elites and brought them together into a unified and ranked body.²⁹ Just as the British practiced “cajoling local leaders,” the Ottomans tried to win over provincial notables by “flattering” them and “giving them a little something.”³⁰ Again, thorough research on the system of titles and orders in Russian Central Asia has yet to be conducted,³¹ but awarding them to native administrators and notables to “tickle their vanity” was undoubtedly a significant governing technique. Among the opportunities to visualize the unified and ranked body of officials were the governor-generals’ tours of inspection, when they met local administrators and gave them awards.³²

Despite the importance of the system of honors, one cannot but notice the

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²⁶ Cohn, “Representing Authority”; David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

²⁷ N. P. Ostroumov, *Sarty: etnograficheskie materialy*, vol. 1 (Tashkent, 1890), p. 85.

²⁸ V. P. Nalivkin, “Tuzemtsy ran'she i teper” (orig. pub. 1913), in D. Iu. Arapov, ed., *Musul'manskaia Sredniaia Aziia: Traditsionalizm i XX vek* (Moscow, 2004), p. 60.

²⁹ Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, ch. 7.

³⁰ Deringil, “They Live in a State,” pp. 318, 339.

³¹ For a study of ceremonies that the tsarist government held for Kalmyk and Kazakh elites and its awards for them, see Zh. B. Kundakbaeva, “Znakom milosti E.I.V. ...”: *Rossiiia i narody Severnogo Prikaspiia v XVIII veke* (Moscow, 2005), pp. 67–92.

³² Uyama, “A Strategic Alliance,” p. 242.

stinginess of empires in bestowing high ranks and orders on indigenous people of the colonies, which might have reflected caution and distrust of them. With some exceptions, Central Asian notables were not incorporated into the hereditary aristocracy of Russia (although Caucasian notables were), and their privileges were gradually abolished. Native bureaucrats could not occupy the position of uezd chief or higher. Indian entitlements were also only for the life of the holder, being part of a sort of contract for “good service.”³³

Education: Was there a Russian parallel to the Orientalist-Anglicist controversy?

Here I argue for the effectiveness of comparative analysis based on empirical research, taking the example of education. The Orientalist-Anglicist controversy in British India around the 1830s provides us with a good reference point for analyzing patterns of colonial administrators’ attitudes toward indigenous culture. Orientalists, who constituted the mainstream in education policy in India until then, respected Indian classical education and wished to engraft Western knowledge onto it, whereas Anglicists saw little good in traditional Indian education and wished to modernize India by introducing English-language education as widely as possible. The controversy led to a temporary victory for Anglicists, but Orientalists fought back, and a new trend emerged from among neo-Orientalists: emphasis on vernacular education. As a result, vernacular mass education, English elite education and some classical Indian education coexisted in subsequent years.³⁴

There was no known major dispute on the principles of education in Russian Central Asia, although there were debates on teaching methods. However, the basic principle was quite similar to that in British India, containing elements that corresponded to Anglicism and vernacularism, and pupils learned both their own language and Russian. The most prominent theoretician on the education of non-Russians in the east, Nikolai Il'minskii, declared that “primary education of the non-Russian populations in their native tongues is the most promising path to the future spread of the Russian language and Russian ways.”³⁵ Il'minskii had a missionary background, and his idea of a gradual spread of Russian culture through the medium of non-Russian mother tongues was based on the lessons of the failure of forced Christianization policy in the Volga-Ural region. Although transition from

³³ Cohn, “Representing Authority,” pp. 181–182.

³⁴ Lynn Zastoupil and Martin Moir, eds., *The Great Indian Education Debate: Documents Relating to the Orientalist-Anglicist Controversy, 1781–1843* (Richmond: Curzon, 1999).

³⁵ Cited from Serge A. Zenkovsky, *Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 29.

classical to vernacular education was a general trend in the modern world, it is noteworthy that it was often connected with missionary work in the colonial context: Important promoters of vernacular education in India included the Serampore missionaries in Bengal, who saw the local vernacular as vital to advancing their religious and educational goals.³⁶

In Turkestan, however, Orthodox missionary activities were prohibited, and administrators sought non-religious ways to draw natives closer to Russians. Kaufman thought it necessary to educate Russians and natives together, though teaching religious subjects separately, and to make Orthodox believers and Muslims equally useful citizens of Russia.³⁷ But there were considerable difficulties in realizing his idea. Russian-native schools in Turkestan began to be opened only after Kaufman's death, as late as 1885 (analogous schools were opened on the Kazakh steppe earlier), but many schools had only native pupils and some had only Russian pupils, because natives and Russians lived in separate quarters in most cities.³⁸ Some native teachers did not understand Russian, and achievement by native pupils in the Russian language remained poor. Those few Russian pupils who studied in Russian-native schools were expected to help native children to improve their Russian language skills, but they often spoke with them in a Central Asian language, and not in Russian.³⁹

The paucity of "Orientalist" elements in Russian education in Central Asia can be explained by the different situations of indigenous classical education and culture in India and Central Asia. In India, classics written in Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic were abundant, and the system of classical education remained viable. Many British, especially Orientalists, respected and studied classical Indian culture, not least because the position of Orientalists in academia and the government hinged on its value. In Central Asia, although Bukhara was renowned as a center of medieval Islamic scholarship and education, it had long been in decay by the time of the Russian conquest, and Islamic scholars and teachers in Bukhara were harshly criticized by Muslim (both Tatar and local) reformists for their conservativeness. Russians who studied Central Asia were more interested in geography, ethnography and folklore than in classical culture, and their Islamic studies tended to be generalistic rather than focusing on Central Asian Islamic tradition.

Another reason why significant numbers of British were willing to protect classical Indian culture was that the Mughals had supported it, and the British wanted to show that

³⁶ Zastoupil and Moir, *The Great Indian Education Debate*, pp. 60–63.

³⁷ Gramenitskii, *Ocherk razvitiia*, pp. 3–4.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 42–46, 58.

³⁹ Bobrovnikov, *Rusko-tuzemnye uchilishcha*, pp. 13–19, 40–41. The fear of Russians being assimilated by Central Asian people repeatedly appeared in the writings of Russian officials.

they were doing the same. On various occasions, the British earnestly tried to demonstrate that they were successors to the Mughals in legitimacy and ritual authority.⁴⁰ In contrast, Russians were keen on proving their superiority over previous rulers of Central Asia. When representatives of the Steppe region visited St. Petersburg to celebrate Nikolai II's wedding, *Dala Walayatining Gazeti* (a newspaper published under the auspices of the governor-generalship of the Steppe) wrote that, unlike Kazakh khans who had resorted to violent and barbaric oppression, the tsar granted the Kazakhs the same rights as Russian peasants and the laws of the empire firmly protected them.⁴¹

A remarkable phenomenon in the Orientalist-Anglicist controversy is that both sides were influenced by the positions of Indians, who sometimes directly participated in the debate, even though final decisions were taken by British officials. The level of participation by Central Asians in Russian educational affairs seemed lower, with some notable exceptions, such as Ibrahim Altinsarin, who founded many schools for Kazakh children as the inspector of schools in the Torghay oblast, and Said Azim-bay, a wealthy Tashkent merchant who sponsored Russian education among the indigenous population. Generally, the Russian authorities were often suspicious of Central Asian intellectuals and elites. We return to this issue in the next section.

Why did Central Asian elites cooperate with Russia?

Now I examine the seemingly strange contradiction between Russia's low level of governance and the loyalty of native elites from a comparative perspective. Many scholars, including the author, have described tsarist Russian rule of Central Asia as ineffective, emphasizing Russia's inability to properly use local elites and intermediaries and accumulate colonial knowledge.⁴² The Russian government actively used Tatars as intermediaries until the mid-nineteenth century,⁴³ but then stopped relying on them. It neither properly trained other informants, nor did it work out a way of directly and closely communicating with local people.

Especially in Turkestan, it was thought that native administrators were hindering

⁴⁰ See Cohn, "Representing Authority."

⁴¹ *Dala Walayatining Gazeti*, 1894, no. 51.

⁴² Uyama, "A Particularist Empire," pp. 59–63; A. S. Morrison, *Russian Rule in Samarkand 1868–1910: A Comparison with British India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁴³ Gulmira Sultangalieva, "The Russian Empire and the Intermediary Role of Tatars in Kazakhstan: The Politics of Cooperation and Rejection," in Uyama Tomohiko, ed., *Asiatic Russia: Imperial Power in Regional and International Contexts* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 52–79.

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the Russian authorities from knowing Muslim life. Some Russian officers called them an “impenetrable curtain,”⁴⁴ and Vladimir Nalivkin called them a “living wall.”⁴⁵ The lack of trust in local elites as intermediaries was hardly a uniquely Russian phenomenon. According to Alexander Morrison, resentment toward intermediaries was a common trope of imperial polemic in India and other colonies.⁴⁶ The British also disliked anglicized Indians, so-called “Babu.” Even so, it is undeniable that the lack of trust between Russian and native administrators, as well as between administrators and common people, gave Russian officials an extremely shaky grasp of the local situation. Nalivkin pointed out that the Russian authorities, being unable and unwilling to listen to local people’s criticism of Russian rule and corrupt Muslim officials, could not prevent the Andijan uprising in 1898 and, even after the uprising, took only repressive and counterproductive measures.⁴⁷

The Russian authorities’ attitude to Central Asian intellectuals became all the more cold and distrustful after the Russian Revolution of 1905, when the latter became politically active. The government was reluctant to accept offers by native intellectuals and Duma deputies to mediate between it and ordinary people. Central Asians were deprived of the right to vote in 1907 (only one year after the Duma was created), and intellectuals were compelled to work through Muslim deputies from other regions and Russian deputies from Central Asia. The political rights of Central Asians were arguably more limited than those of Indians and inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire’s peripheries,⁴⁸ although one must take into consideration that parliamentarism in Russia itself was less mature.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, the attitude of Central Asian elites and intellectuals toward Russia was basically cooperative and compliant. In the second half of the nineteenth century, when

⁴⁴ Uyama, “Particularist Empire,” pp. 47–48.

⁴⁵ Alexander Morrison analyzes the role of native administrators in Russian rule and the Russians’ perception of them by focusing on the term “living wall.” Morrison, *Russian Rule in Samarkand*, pp. 172–200.

⁴⁶ Morrison, *Russian Rule in Samarkand*, pp. 149–150.

⁴⁷ Nalivkin, “Tuzemtsy ran’she i teper’,” pp. 99–104.

⁴⁸ Indians were represented in the Imperial Legislative Council of India, and some Indians, like Naoroji and Bhownaggee, were elected to the British Parliament by constituencies in mainland Britain. The Ottoman Parliament, though closed for 30 years until the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, was elected from various regions, religious and ethnic groups on basically equal terms. Provincial councils were also active in the Ottoman Empire.

⁴⁹ In general, we have to reckon with time spans when we make comparative research. While the colonization of India evolved gradually, Russian Central Asia experienced conquest, creation of the administrative system and its reforms, attempts at modernization, native revolts, a rise of Russo-centrism, and the collapse of the empire, in the course of only half a century. This difference of time frame affected the nature of governance and relations between colonizer and colonized in the two regions.

the number of Russian-educated Kazakh intellectuals began to grow, they shared similar opinions with the Russian authorities on the agenda for the reform of Kazakh society: the preservation of Kazakh customs and language (in opposition to the Tatar influence), the spread of education, the development of agriculture and the improvement of the status of women. In addition, they both criticized Kazakh local officials. After Russia introduced a system of elections for native administrators and judges, elections became a venue for factional strife and they cost candidates large sums for buying votes and offering bribes to Russian officials. Once elected, they levied unlawful taxes on the population in order to recover the expenses. Although the Russian administration needed Kazakh administrators, it wanted to rid itself of the responsibility of the system's malfunctions. Kazakh intellectuals, for their part, wanted to contrast their progressiveness with the corruption and stagnancy of Kazakh administrators.⁵⁰

In Bukhara, the Islamic intellectual ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Sami perceived the Russian incursion as merely accessory to a decline of his own state that was already in progress, and he focused his criticism on the arrogance of the amir and the moral weakness of their compatriots rather than on the Russian conquest.⁵¹ Mainstream Islamic scholars in Turkestan argued that Russian Turkestan was *Dār al-Islām* (the Land of Islam, where Islamic law prevails) and not *Dār al-Harb* (the Land of War, which antagonizes Islam), because Muslim *qādīs* and officials enforced Islamic law (only on the local level, to be precise). They condemned Dukchi Ishan who, attempting to expel Russians, led the Andijan uprising that ended in failure and brought death and suffering to Muslims.⁵² In India, around 1870, Islamic scholars debated whether British India was *Dār al-Islām* or *Dār al-Harb*, and many of them, using subtle arguments based on Islamic jurisprudence and avoiding a clear answer to the question, concluded that the British were just rulers who protected Muslims' rights, and there was no reason to rebel against them.⁵³ Turkestani Islamic scholars were more unequivocal in justifying Russian rule by using Islamic terms, but conformist attitudes were common to Indians and Turkestanis. Even after the government intensified its oppressive policies in the wake of the 1905 Revolution,

⁵⁰ Uyama, “A Strategic Alliance.”

⁵¹ Jo-Ann Gross, “Historical Memory, Cultural Identity, and Change: Mirza ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Sami’s Representation of the Russian Conquest of Bukhara,” in Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzarini, eds., *Russia’s Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700–1917* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 203–226, esp. 208–214.

⁵² Komatsu Hisao, “*Dār al-Islām* under Russian Rule As Understood by Turkestani Muslim Intellectuals,” in Uyama, *Empire, Islam, and Politics*, pp. 3–21.

⁵³ P. Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 107–115.

Mutual Relations and Perceptions

reformist intellectuals in Turkestan as well as Kazakh intellectuals continued to describe Europeans and Russians as models of progress, while calling their own peoples “ignorant.” Although it is difficult to collect comprehensive information on non-elite Central Asians’ attitudes toward Russia, evidence suggests that, while misgivings about Christian rulers were often observed, open resistance was much less common than obedience and cooperation. The main targets of the rebels during the revolt of 1916 were native administrators rather than Russians.⁵⁴

Here, an intriguing question arises. Although tsarist Russian governance in Central Asia was poor, in the long run, Russian imperialism in Central Asia was arguably more successful than that in Russia’s western peripheries and that of other empires. Local elites were basically loyal to Russia, there were very few separatist tendencies during the Russian Revolution of 1917 and Central Asia was successfully reincorporated into Soviet Russia. Even after the Soviet Union finally collapsed, people in Central Asia remained largely pro-Russian.⁵⁵ Of course, we have to seek reasons for Russia’s recent success mainly in the post-Soviet situation and Soviet history, but we can at least say that tsarist rule in Central Asia did not inflict fatal damage to Russo-Central Asian relations.

There could be many hypothetical reasons for positive relations between Russians and Central Asians, including economic ones such as relatively low taxes.⁵⁶ Here I cite three reasons. First, the tradition of indigenous statehood was weak. By the time of the Russian conquest, nomadic Kazakhs and Zunghars had lost their military supremacy, and the attempts of the Bukharan Amirate and the Kokand Khanate to strengthen their authority on the basis of Islam were not entirely successful. There were few voices demanding the resurrection or reinvigoration of the khans’ power, and Central Asians accepted the legitimacy of Russian rule with relative ease. The Russians were luckier than the British, who had to imitate the Mughals’ rituals and found that even this was insufficient to rule the extremely diverse Indian society. They were much luckier than the Japanese, who were faced with a Chinese nationalism that successfully transformed and incorporated traditional dynastic notions of regional order; making the last Qing emperor the puppet head of

⁵⁴ Uyama Tomohiko, “Two Attempts at Building a Qazaq State: The Revolt of 1916 and the Alash Movement,” in Stéphane A. Dudoignon and Komatsu Hisao, eds., *Islam in Politics in Russia and Central Asia* (London: Kegan Paul, 2001), pp. 77–98.

⁵⁵ According to the Asia Barometer survey conducted by Japanese universities in 2005, 90.9% of respondents in Uzbekistan and 80.0% in Kazakhstan answered that Russia had a good or rather good influence on their country. The respective ratings for Japan were 52.2% and 40.7%; for China, 44.0% and 32.2%; for the United States, 32.7% and 23.4%. <<https://www.asiabarometer.org/en/findings/General%20findings/2005/Q26>>

⁵⁶ Morrison, *Russian Rule in Samarkand*, pp. 118, 291.

Manchukuo did not help the Japanese to enhance their colonial legitimacy in China.

Second, Central Asian intellectuals were acutely conscious of the backwardness, crisis and decay of their own society, and they strongly desired modernization. Adherent to a progressive view of history, they were convinced that they could gain a position equal to that of larger nations by acquiring modern knowledge and technology. Intending to serve the people by enlightening them about European culture, intellectuals admonished them to adapt themselves to the modern world, speaking sometimes in a didactic and scolding tone that was akin to the paternalism and authoritarianism of Russian officials.⁵⁷ They were aware that Russia was not a first-class country, but they knew that Europe was situated behind Russia, and they wanted to attain civilization through Russia, through the medium of the Russian language.⁵⁸ In this sense, their attitude toward Russia was markedly different from the attitude of the people of East Turkestan and Tibet, who did not associate China with progress and have demonstrated distrust of the Chinese up to today.

Third, although the attitudes of Russians toward Central Asians were confused and often contemptuous, the psychological distance between them was arguably closer than that between, say, Africans and the French, who often regarded Africans as herds of monkeys without individuality.⁵⁹ Moreover, Russia was a divided society, and Central Asians knew that there were many Russians who were critical of their own government and sympathetic to non-Russians.⁶⁰

Russian administrators' distrust of Central Asians was, in a sense, associated with the fact that the latter could secure, to some extent, their interests by negotiating with the former. Russian officials were frustrated with native administrators precisely because their role in governing the region was crucial, for they collected taxes and information on the local situation, albeit insufficiently. Turkestani Muslims were successful in negotiating with

⁵⁷ Uyama Tomohiko, " 'Devotion to the People' and Paternalistic Authoritarianism among Qazaq Intellectuals, from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to 1917," in Stéphane A. Dudoignon, ed., *Devout Societies vs. Impious States? Transmitting Islamic Learning in Russia, Central Asia and China, through the Twentieth Century* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2004), pp. 19–27.

⁵⁸ Adeeb Khalid, "Representations of Russia in Central Asian Jadid Discourse," in Brower and Lazzarini, *Russia's Orient*, pp. 188–202; Uyama Tomohiko, "20 seiki shotō ni okeru Kazafu chishikijin no seikaikan: M. Duratofu 'Mezameyo, Kazafu!' wo chūshin ni [The *Weltanschauung* of the Kazakh intelligentsia at the beginning of the twentieth century: An analysis of Mir-Ya'qub Dulatov's *Awake, Kazakh!*]," *Suravu Kenkyū* 44 (1997), pp. 1–36.

⁵⁹ Majima Ichirō, "Shokuminchi tōchi ni okeru saika to kotaika: Futsuryō nishi Afurika, Zōge kaigan shokuminchi kara [Differentiation and individualization in colonial governance: Ivory Coast colony of French West Africa]," in Kurimoto Eisei and Inose Kumie, eds., *Shokuminchi keiken* (Kyoto: Jinbun shoin, 1999), pp. 97–101.

⁶⁰ For example, Siberian autonomists (*oblastniki*) had close relations with Kazakh and Buriat intellectuals.

the colonial bureaucracy to preserve Islamic courts and, at the same time, in soliciting intervention in local conflicts.⁶¹ They could also influence the classification of the population: the ethnonym “Sart” gradually disappeared from official documents in the Samarkand oblast in the 1890s and the 1897 census recorded only a small number of Sarts there, partly because of the influence of Serali Lapin, a translator for the Samarkand oblast governor, who strongly denounced use of the word “Sart” as derogatory and advocated use of the word “Uzbek” instead.⁶² Although this was a local phenomenon in the Samarkand oblast, it served as a precedent for the Soviet policy that united Sarts and Uzbeks under the single ethnonym “Uzbek.”

Preliminary conclusion

The main aim of this paper has been to show some promising points for further comparative research of empires, and I do not intend to draw definite conclusions here. However, two preliminary notes can be made.

First, given the vast territories of empires and the diversity of their inhabitants, incompleteness of information about peripheries is inherent to empires, and policy was often based on stereotypical perceptions. These perceptions, however, were created not simply by the imaginations of the colonizers, but with some level of participation of the local people, and they were based on the preconditions of the colonies, as we have seen in the example of education. Rather than limiting ourselves to superficially analyzing colonizers’ discourses (as some adherents to postcolonial studies do), we should compare the concrete situations of various empires and colonies. In examining the complex situations and attitudes of the colonized people, it is essential to study materials in local languages.

Second, although modernization does not seem to be a popular subject in today’s academia, it is an extremely important factor in understanding the strategies and behaviors of various actors in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. For colonial intellectuals, the desire to modernize their societies was crucial in determining their political course and whether they should cooperate with colonizers. We also have to take into consideration that empires, especially non-Western ones, were themselves in the process of modernization.

⁶¹ Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar*, pp. 260–292.

⁶² Sergei Abashin, *Natsionalizmy v Srednei Azii: v poiskakh identichnosti* (St. Petersburg, 2007), pp. 126–129, 135–136; idem, “Empire and Demography in Turkestan: Numbers and the Politics of Counting,” in Uyama, *Asiatic Russia*, pp. 129–149, esp. 146–147. Lapin was a Kazakh who later became the leader of the conservative political group Ulama Jamiyati.