*The Tributary System in China's Historical Imagination: China and Hunza, ca. 1760–1960**

HSIAO-TING LIN

Abstract

This article examines over 200 years (1761–1963) of China's relations with the Central Asian tribal state of Hunza. Employing a territorial genealogical approach, this research explores how Hunza, not initially recognised during the high Qing as an inner dependency or vassal, was gradually re-conceptualised by the Qing court as a historical tributary protectorate, and then in the Republican and Nationalist eras became known as a 'lost territory' ripe for restoration. It will also argue that the tributary system is not a dynastic legacy that ceased to function after 1911; but rather, it was an instrument of political expediency that continued to be used in the post-imperial era. In a sense, this research offers a new thinking about the 'tribute system' which might really be a nineteenth and twentieth century reinterpretation of an older form of symbolically asymmetric interstate relations (common in one form or another throughout many parts of Asia); this reinterpretation was strongly informed by English-language terminology and formulations, including 'suzerainty' and the mistranslation of 'gong' as 'tribute' itself, and both Britain and China manipulated the terminology and claimed to further their respective territorial, diplomatic and strategic interests.

Rethinking the Tributary System

Ever since John King Fairbank first raised the "Chinese world order" theory four decades ago, the nature of imperial China's external relations has been the subject of debate. Fairbank's thesis posited a "Sino-centric hierarchical world order", in which China had a superior-inferior, overlord-vassal relationship with its neighbours. According to Fairbank, such a relationship functioned as part of a highly sophisticated tributary system that was, in effect, the only institution for traditional international relations in China-dominated Asia before the intrusion of western powers. The tributary system, Fairbank argued, was the model for conducting diplomatic and trade affairs between foreign rulers and the Chinese emperor. In brief, the Chinese emperor conferred upon neighbouring rulers official titles and ranks, providing a form of legitimacy. In return, the foreigners adopted a posture of

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subjugation, thereby confirming the superiority of Chinese civilisation and the legitimacy of the Chinese emperor.[1] Mark Mancall takes Fairbank's Sino-centrism thesis further by claiming that the concept of the tributary system is in fact no more than a "western invention for descriptive purposes". He argues that traditional Chinese scholar-bureaucrats did not themselves conceive of the tributary system as an institution that was distinct from the other institutions of Confucian society.[2]

In recent years, a considerable amount of rethinking about the tributary system has been undertaken, challenging the 'tributary' model and earlier views of Qing imperium. Pamela Crossley points out that although historians have, in varying degrees, decried the theory's oversimplification, lack of contextualisation, and deficiency of nuance, the phrase 'Chinese world order' has become immortalised.[3] In her recent ground-breaking work on the Qing's relations with the khanate of Khoqand in Central Asia, Laura Newby sheds new light on the incongruities between the theory and the practice of the tributary system, revealing the full extent of the gulf between the ideological claim for imperial China's foreign policy and its practice.[4] James Millward and Nicola Di Cosmo, on the other hand, have convincingly demonstrated the inadequacy of Fairbank's 'tribute' concept for grasping the complex interactions of the Qing Empire with its peoples. Their discussions of frontier trade and frontier points of contact imply new ways of approaching China's relations with the world beyond its borders. As a result, 'tribute' might have different meanings for different people, and the concept of tribute might be viewed as an 'environment' that surrounded all of the Qing's relations on its frontiers, comprising commercial, security, and ritual relationships.[5] Despite these admirable attempts to re-evaluate the tributary theory, an undeniable impression is that as Qing rule in China gradually declined after the mid-nineteenth century, the tributary system, along with its supporting ideology of a 'Chinese world order', came to an end.[6]

Could the 'tributary relationship' itself sometimes have been the result of deliberate political manoeuvres or imaginative processes? When officials of the late Qing period became aware of the differing eastern and western images of world order, was it possible that this ambiguously defined model of interaction between China and its tributaries could serve as

[1]John K. Fairbank (ed.), *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, MA, 1968); Fairbank, "Introduction: The Old Order", in *The Cambridge History of China: X: Late Ch'ing, 1800–1911, Part 1*, ed. Fairbank (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 29–34.

[2]Mark Mancall, "The Ch'ing Tributary System: An Interpretive Essay", in *The Chinese World Order*, ed. Fairbank, pp. 63–64.

[3]Pamela Crossley, "Review of Cherishing Men from Afar: Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Society*, 57: 2 (1997), pp. 597–611. See also James L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men From Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham, 1995).

[4]See Laura J. Newby, *The Empire and the Khanate: A Political History of Qing Relations with Khoqand, c.1760–1860* (Leiden, 2005).

[5]See: James A. Millward, "Qing Silk-Horse Trade with the Qazaqs in Yili and Tarbaghatai", *Central and Inner Asian Studies*, No. 7 (1992), pp. 1–42; Millward, *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759–1864* (Stanford, 1998), pp. 45–50; Nicola Di Cosmo, "Qing Colonial Administration in the Inner Asian Dependencies", *International History Review*, 20: 2 (1998), pp. 287–309. On the discussion of the nature of 'tribute' in Qing China, see also Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 400–406.

[6]See: Zhao Suisheng, *Power Competition in East Asia: From the Old Chinese World Order to Post-Cold War Regional Multipolarity* (New York, 1977); Key-Hiuk Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order* (Berkeley, 1980), pp. 328–351; Morris Rossabi (ed.), *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th-14th Centuries* (Berkeley, 1983).

an instrument to rebuild the political and diplomatic prestige of the Qing court? Further, did the substance of the 'tributary system', as previous scholars suggest, cease to exist as a result of the collapse of the Chinese dynastic order in 1911?

This article examines over 200 years (1761–1963) of China's relations with the Central Asian tribal state of Hunza (also known as Kanjut). Employing a territorial genealogical approach, this article seeks to offer some answers to the above uneasy questions from a perspective that is different from the existing discussions on the tributary system. This research explores how Hunza, not initially recognised during the high Qing as an inner dependency or vassal,[7] was gradually re-conceptualised by the Qing court as a historical tributary protectorate, and then in the Republican and Nationalist eras became known as a 'lost territory' ripe for restoration. It will also argue that the tributary system is not a dynastic legacy that ceased to function after 1911; but rather, it was an instrument of political expediency that continued to be used in the post-imperial era. Meanwhile, as Qing China's interactions with Hunza demonstrated, the concept of traditional dependencies seems to have arisen more from the late nineteenth-century Qing experience of dealing with the British and the Russians than from Chinese imperial tradition. The British, in particular, introduced the terms 'sovereignty' and 'suzerainty' into regional diplomacy, thereby parsing the notion of imperial sovereignty and territoriality in new ways. As this research suggests, ironically and yet interestingly from a historical perspective, it was apparently the British who started using the term 'tributary' with regard to late Qing China's relations with Hunza. While the Qing government agreed to reciprocate, with a representation of the establishment of some kind of symbolically asymmetric diplomatic relationship in which they assumed the position of superiority in Central Asia this was momentary.

Hunza and Qing-conquered Central Asia

In the 1750s the Qianlong Emperor's armies defeated the Zunghar Mongols and conquered the area north and south of the Tian Shan, taking control of the most ethnologically diverse territory in Central Asia. With the establishment of a military and political presence in Zungharia and Altishahr, the Qing court began to administer these two vast regions as an imperial dependency under the name of Xinjiang ('New Dominion'). A huge garrison was installed in Ili (Kulja), commanded by the Peking-appointed military governor, who had civil jurisdiction not only over the Mongol banners within Zungharia, but also the Kirghiz and Kazakh tribes, the principalities of Hami and Turfan, and all the oasis cities of Altishahr. Qing military forces were divided among districts in northern, eastern and southern Xinjiang, centred around Kulja, Urumqi and Kashgar, respectively. In addition, there were numerous guard-posts stationed on the imperial frontiers, manned not only by local Qing officials, but also by native chieftains and indigenous households.[8]

As military and political supremacy shifted from the hands of the Zunghars to the Manchus, a new tributary order, with Qing now centred as the overlord, also began to emerge in Central and Inner Asia. Tributary status, in the eyes of the Qing government, conferred

[7]Unlike provinces under imperial China's direct jurisdictions, inner dependencies and vassals usually offered tribute to the Emperor of China and the imperial court did not govern these territories directly.

[8]Joseph Fletcher, "Ch'ing Inner Asia *c.* 1800", in *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 10, Part I, pp. 58–66.

on foreigners the right to trade under specific conditions, and legitimised the emperor's authority over foreign visitors in China. Within the framework of this loosely defined order, political entities were hierarchically ranked around imperial China. As Joseph Fletcher's research shows, however, tributary status did not always imply the protection of the Qing court. The only true protectorates were inner dependencies within the imperial borders, some of whose rulers were regarded as tributaries, but not as foreign tributaries.[9] As a result, the tribal groups west of the Manchu guard-posts (*kalun*) and in the steppe regions beyond the imperial frontiers, such as Tashkent, Bukhara, Badakhshan, Kokand and the Kazakhs, were generally regarded as foreign tributaries or 'outer barbarians' (*wai fan*).[10] These outer tributaries sent tributes to the Qing court in Peking and in exchange received official titles from the court, were granted privileges to trade in the markets of Xinjiang, and possibly enjoyed some degree of commerce with the Qing government. Whereas different types of administrative structures were imposed upon the inner dependencies of Mongolia, Xinjiang and Tibet, the Qing government adopted a looser policy towards its outer tributaries in Central Asia, and interfered as little as possible in the native peoples' internal affairs.[11]

As Qing authority was consolidated in the Altishahr region, tribal principalities in the Pamirs, including Hunza, were absorbed into the emergent tributary order. Situated in the valley between the Karakorams and the Hindu-Kush range, Hunza was noted for its geopolitical significance. Its possession of the strategic passes leading to the Pamirs and Afghanistan, as well as the valley of the Yarkand River in southern Altishahr, allowed it to control, and frequently, loot caravans travelling between Central Asia, Xinjiang, and India.[12] Yet Hunza's geographical significance did not become a major concern in the region until the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the Romanov dynasty and Queen Victoria's empire launched a feverish battle for the mastery of Central Asia.

The beginning of Hunza's relations with the Qing Empire, one Chinese record indicates, can be traced back to 1761, when a Mir called Kisro Khan sent a mission to Kashgar and presented a *tael* and a half of gold dust to the new Qing Imperial agent. In return, in the name of the Qianglong Emperor, the Hunzakuts in Kashgar received several times the value of the presented gold dust from the Manchus, in the form of goods such as teacups made in Russia, silk, satin and brocades.[13] Due to the lack of textual sources, however, we know very little about the ensuing interactions between Qing China and Hunza, and whether or not tributary interactions of this kind were conducted on a yearly basis.[14]

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 37–38.

[10] For the peoples of Central Asia in the mid-eighteenth century borders were still a nebulous concept. Yet though by no means determining the border, the Qing-instituted *kalun* were generally recognised as the demarcation of the Western Regions and of Chinese imperial control in the northwest. See Laura Newby, "Xinjiang: In Search of an Identity", in *Unity And Diversity: Local Cultures And Identities In China*, eds. Tao Tao Liu and David Faure, (Hong Kong, 1996), pp. 68, 76.

[11] Ma Ruyan and Ma Dazheng (eds.), *Qingdai de bianjiang zhengce* [Frontier policy of the Qing dynasty] (Beijing, 1994), pp. 23–55.

[12] John Clark, *Hunza: Lost Kingdom of the Himalayas* (Karachi, 1956); Barbara Mons, *High Road to Hunza* (London, 1958), pp. 90–97.

[13] Wang Shunan (comp.), *Xinjiang Guojie Tuzhi* [Illustrated gazetteer of the national boundaries in Xinjiang] (Hereafter *XGT*), 1909, *juan* 5, pp. 132–133. Wang quoted this piece of information from an imperial memorial submitted by Xin Zhu, then Qing councillor at Yarkand, to Peking in 1761.

[14] Apart from the 1761 memorial submitted from Kashgar to Peking, research into Grand Secretariat Archives suggests that the Hunza envoys paid tribute to the Qing officials in Kashgar again in 1792. This is perhaps one

We do know, however, that during the Qianlong (r. 1736–1795) and Jiaqing (r. 1796–1820) periods, the remote Hunza territory was not deemed a Qing internal vassal or inner dependency, upon which high authorities in Peking endeavoured to impose administrative structures and station resident officials. Furthermore, in imperially promulgated statutes or ritual codes, court ministers and frontier officials of the Qianlong and Jiaqing Emperors never categorised Hunza as one of Qing's Muslim Central Asian 'outer tributaries' (*waifan chaogong*), the rulers of which were asked to send tribute missions to Qing on an alternating basis.[15] Neither was there any reference made in the dynastically commissioned atlas of the Qianlong/Jiaqing era specifying the place name of 'Hunza' or 'Kanjut'.[16] In Wei Yuan's *Shengwu Ji*, composed in the 1840s, Hunza was mentioned as one of many Central Asian petty tribal states that had unimportant commercial connections with the empire. Based on the fact that tribes as such had from time to time paid their tributes concurrently to other large neighbouring Khanates, and that these tiny states usually lacked the capabilities to send their tributes farther to the court at Peking, Wei pointed out specifically that Hunza had been historically excluded from the group-list of the Qing tributary dependencies in Central Asia.[17]

Since coming to power in Altishahr, the Manchus might have treated merchants of Hunza on a roughly equal status with those caravans coming from the further remote 'outer-outer vassals' of Tashkent, Badakshan and Baltistan. As one work put it recently, by the late 1760s when the Qing began to regulate trade and tax affairs in its newly acquired Central Asian territory, all merchants coming eastwards from the Kashmir and Pamir regions were required to pay 'foreign merchants' taxes which were actually less of a burden and were given more preferential treatment than that of local merchants of the Qing-conquered Yarkand, Khotan and Kashgar districts.[18]

Qing China's *laissez faire* policy towards Hunza is discernable upon examination of the battles that occurred periodically between the Hunzakuts and their adjoining tribes, particularly when these events adversely affected the Qing authority in Central Asia. Just as Zunghar rule was about to collapse in the middle of the eighteenth century, an army of Farmas, Mughals and Turks from Altishahr launched a large-scale invasion of Hunza. The joint invading forces were soon defeated by the ferocious Hunzakuts, who retaliated and annexed the regions of Rashkam, Tagdumbash and Dafdar in present-day Pakistani-controlled northwestern Kashmir. These districts were incorporated into Qing's new administrative domain after the arrival of the Manchus, but the Hunzakuts never really

of the very few Qing official archival records showing tributary evidence between Hunza and China prior to the Daoguang reign. See *Neige Daku Dang'an* [Grand Secretariat archives], National Palace Museum, Taipei, registrar nos. 065853 & 091797.

[15]See: *Da Qing Huidian* [Collected statutes of the great Qing dynasty], *juan* 79, 80; Chinese Academy of Social Science (ed.), *Qianlong chao Da Qing huidian zhong de Li Fan Yuan ziliao* [Compiled materials of Li Fan Yuan in the Qianlong period] (Beijing, 1988); *Jiaqing Yitong Zhibiao* [Gazetteer of the unified Great Qing, Jiaqing edition], *juan* 20, in 1935 reprinted version (Shanghai), Vol. 10; Tuo-jin et al. (comp.), *Qinding Huijiang Zeli* [Imperially commissioned Substatutes of the Muslim regions], 1842.

[16]*Huangyu Tu* [Comprehensive atlas of the imperial territory], in *Da Qing Yitongzhi* [Gazetteer of the unified Great Qing], Heshen *et al*. (comps.), (1790), reprinted (1897), Vol. 1. In the *Huangyu Tu*, the whole of the Pamir region was drawn ambiguously in between the imperial territories and Qing's outer tributaries in Inner Asia.

[17]Wei Yuan, *Shengwu Ji* [Chronicle of military campaigns] (1846), *juan* 4, (Beijing, 1984 repr.), Vol. 1, p. 176.

[18]Janet Rizvi, *Trans-Himalayan Caravans: Merchant Princes and Peasant Traders in Ladakh* (New Delhi, 1999), pp. 184–185.

relinquished their territorial claims over these previously-held territories in Altishahr.[19] As a Hunza autobiographical source indicates, at the turn of the nineteenth century, the territory claimed by Hunza encompassed Oprang Valley, the Yarkand River, the Wakhan Corridor, Tagdumbash Pamir, the Rashkam valley, and a portion of the Qing-administered Sarikol region, including the strategic oasis of Tashkurgan.[20] Irmtraud Müller-Stellrecht's research further indicates that, around 1800, the Mir of Hunza succeeded in restoring his sphere of influence in Tagdumbash Pamir by compelling the local Kirghiz nomads, who were then theoretically under Qing jurisdiction, to pay tribute to Hunza regularly. The advance northwards gave Hunza the advantages of being able to exploit the products of Kirghiz livestock farming, acquire new grazing areas, and direct access to the caravan route between Yarkand and Badakhshan.[21]

The Hunza raids on the fluid borders of the Chinese Pamirs might have inflicted considerable pain upon Qing local administration. The scarcity of historical materials, however, does not allow us to speculate as to how the Hunzakuts and Manchus in Altishahr solved territorial and administrative disputes. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to argue that, by means of paying some tribute to the Qing authorities in Kashgar, Mirs of Hunza sought to safeguard their traditional privileges, the most crucial being pasture rights in southern Xinjiang. It might also have been the Hunzakuts' hope that, by exhibiting some sort of political allegiance to the new Manchu overlord, the lucrative caravan raids between Yarkand and India would be recognised, albeit implicitly, as their special perquisite.[22]

Qing-Hunza Relations under the 'Great Game'

In the first decades, Qing colonial rule in most of Xinjiang was relatively stable. This stability lasted until the mid-nineteenth century, when native unrest began to disturb Qing administration in Central Asia more frequently. In 1845–47, a large number of local Muslims rebelled in the Altishahr area. At the request of Qing local officials, the Hunzakuts came to assist the Manchu troops in subjugating the Muslim rebels south of Kashgar and Yarkand. In the aftermath of the pacification campaign, territory as far west as Dafdar near the Murghab River was officially handed over to the Mir of Hunza. This was despite the fact that his subjects had long been grazing their cattle freely between Yarkand and Tashkurgan, and had been exercising *de facto* control over most of the Altishahr-Pamir border areas.[23] In addition, as a reward for his assistance in pacifying the Muslim rebellions, officials in Xinjiang granted the Mir Ghazan Khan the right to purchase a large piece of *Jagir* (land) and a residence in

[19] Shahid Hamid, *Karakuram Hunza: The Land of Just Enough* (Karachi, 1979), p. 31.

[20] Mohomed Nazim Khan, *The Autobiography of Sir Mohomed Nazim Khan, K.C.I.E., Mir of Hunza* (hereafter *The Autobiography*), pp. 2–9. Mohomed Nazim Khan succeeded his brother Safdar Ali as Mir in 1892 and ruled Hunza until 1938. The original manuscript was translated from Urdu into Persian and English. The English version was done in 1936 by Khan Bahadur Muhammad Meseh Pal, Indian Assistant in Gilgit. One copy of this unpublished manuscript is currently deposited in the University Library, UC Berkeley (CT 1508 K45 A3).

[21] Irmtraud Müller-Stellrecht, *Hunza und China (1761–1891): 130 Jahre einer Beziehung und ihre Bedeutung für die wirtschaftliche und politische Entwicklung Hunzas im 18 und 19 Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden, 1978), pp. 17–21.

[22] C. P. Skrine, *Chinese Central Asia* (London, 1926), pp. 18–24.

[23] Stellrecht, *Hunza und China*, pp. 24–27.

Yarkand, a move that was against the Qing regulation that no foreigners were allowed to possess land within Chinese borders.[24]

In 1865, a native of Fergana named Yakub Beg was dispatched to Kashgar by the Khan of Kokand, together with a *khwaja*[25] who was attempting to oust the Qing authorities and restore his family's control of the Altishahr region. Before long, Yakub Beg managed to undermine the *khwaja*'s authority in the area and established himself as the ruler of a new Islamic state in Xinjiang. This time the Manchus were not immediately able to pacify the rebellion, due to an earlier uprising in 1862 among the Chinese Muslims of Gansu that had created a barrier between China proper and Xinjiang. Yakub Beg's regime lasted until 1877–78, when Qing expedition forces led by Zuo Zongtang eventually defeated the rebellious Muslims and restored Chinese authority, both north and south of the Tian Shan. Six years later, in 1884, Xinjiang became an official province of China.[26]

By the time Qing reestablished its position in Xinjiang in the early 1880s, Central Asia had a very different face. Keen competition between the British and the Russian empires for supremacy over Central Asia, often romantically depicted as the 'Great Game', had intensified. By the 1870s, the Russians, having already annexed Tashkent, Burkhara and Kokand, were well established in Transoxania and hungry for more territory. In response to the Russian advance into Central Asia and the possibility of an invasion from the north, the British went to great lengths to secure their preeminent rights in Tibet, Kashmir, Ladakh, and as much as possible, the whole of the Pamirs.[27] Moreover, in order to control trade and commerce in Central Asia, the British Government of India had been eager to develop a friendly relationship with Yakub Beg's new regime, at the expense of Hunza's traditional rights in the Altishahr region. Officials in New Delhi promised Yakub Beg that the Mir of Hunza's privileged 'raiding activities' would be considerably checked, with a view to ensuring peace and trade facilities between Xinjiang and British India. The British also supported Yakub Beg's regime in asserting territorial rights over the Hunza-dominated regions on the Sino-Pamir border, without having first negotiated with the Hunzakuts. In 1870, the British and Yakub Beg signed a treaty, enabling the Government of India to consolidate its authority over trans-Karakoram trade. To this, Ghazan Khan was obliged to temporarily withdraw his authority from southern Altishahr now controlled by Yakub Beg's new Muslim state, and he became increasingly hostile to the British.[28]

In 1881, the British Government of India installed a "Political Agency" in Gilgit as yet another step towards consolidating its presence in the Kashmir and Pamir regions. Their Russian rivals responded by annexing Murghab, a territory close to the Wakhan Corridor in Afghanistan, in 1885, causing the Czar's domain to come much closer to the Indian border. Now the British felt tremendous pressure to strengthen their line of defence further

[24] *The Autobiography*, pp. 11–12; Hamid, *Karakuram Hunza*, p. 46. It should be noted that, in practice, the possession of land by foreigners in this part of the Qing empire was very common.

[25] A Persian title of respect that can mean a sufi *shaykh* (elder). See Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 37.

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 263–268.

[27] On the "Great Game", see Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia* (Oxford, 2001); Anthony Verrier, *Francis Younghusband and the Great Game* (London, 1991).

[28] Government of India (comp.), *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements And Sanads: Relating to India And Neighbouring Countries* (Calcutta, 1909), Vol. XI, pp. 295–307; See also Rizvi, *Trans-Himalayan Caravans*, pp. 202–203.

into Kashmiri tribal states that had not yet come under their control. Hunza possessed routes leading to the Pamirs, Afghanistan, Russian Central Asia, and southern Xinjiang, and became Great Britain's highest priority.[29] With a view to rejecting the possible influx of British authority, Safdar Ali, who murdered his father Ghazan Khan and usurped the throne in 1886, made open appeals to the Chinese and Russians for assistance. In that very same year, Safdar Ali sent a messenger with a tribute to Kashgar to say that he had only recently succeeded to his post and did not feel secure in the confidence of his people. Accordingly, Safdar Ali begged the Qing court to bestow upon him a fourth-ranked official title so that his reputation would be elevated and his rule in Hunza enhanced. The new Mir of Hunza meanwhile wasted no time in showing his political sincerity to the Qing authorities, claiming that his state had always been loyal to the Qing Emperors and that, during the absence of Qing administration in Altishahr, his court did not join Yakub Beg's rebellion in Turkestan. Safdar Ali's request was later approved by Peking.[30]

The improved relations between Hunza and China contributed to the entry of a Qing official onto Hunza soil in 1888 for the first time in history.[31] Early that year, war broke out between Hunza and its feudal overlord Kashmir. Apparently unable to withstand the approaching British-supported Kashmiri forces, Safdar Ali asked the Chinese, whom he now regarded as his new 'suzerain', for arms and ammunition. Shortly afterwards, a senior Qing official in Kashgar named Zhang Hongchou was sent to Hunza to verify the facts. The Qing troops did not interfere in this cross-tribal war, but did send a small amount of ammunition to Safdar Ali, including two rifles and two boxes of bullets, as a gesture of Qing support. In the meantime, Qing officials in Yarkand were also engaged in mediating a financial and legal dispute raised by local Hunzakuts and Kashmiris, who turned to the Chinese for final arbitration.[32]

Disturbed by the increasingly close interaction between China and Hunza, the British Minister at Peking addressed the Qing court in the summer of 1888, warning that "Hunza had long been a feudatory of Kashmir", and it would be impossible for the British Government of India to allow this petty tribal state to become a tributary to the Qing Empire.[33] The authorities in Peking made no official response, presumably either because Qing policy planners in the court did not genuinely deem Hunza as China's inner dependency, or simply because they were ignorant of what was really happening in the remote Pamir and Altishahr borderlands.

Nevertheless, Safdar Ali's political gesture of submitting his state to Qing rule cannot be over-exaggerated, for simultaneously, the shrewd Mir was also busy courting the Russians,

[29]John Keay, *The Gilgit Game: The Explorers of the Western Himalayas, 1865–95* (Karachi, 1990), pp. 152–161; Dorothy Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers: A Political Review of British, Chinese, Indian and Russian Rivalries* (London, 1969), pp. 71–95.

[30]Yuan Dahua *et al.* (comp.), *Xinjiang Tuzhi* [Illustrated Gazetteer of Xinjiang] (hereafter *XT*), (Urumqi, 1911), 99/5b-6a; *Translation of the Peking Gazette for 1887* (Shanghai, 1888), p. 151.

[31]See S. Shahid Hamid, *Karakuram Hunza* (Karachi, 1979), pp. 24–29. A concise description of Qing China's relations with Hunza during the Great Game can also be found in Mahnaz Z. Ispahani, *Roads and Rivals: The Political Uses of Access in the Borderlands of Asia* (Ithaca, 1989), pp. 151–157.

[32]*The Autobiography*, pp. 33–39.

[33]British Library (London), Oriental and India Office Collections (OIOC), L/P&S/7/55, British Legation (Peking) to Zongli Yamen (Qing Foreign Office), June 21, 1888, enclosed in India Office secret letter No. 15, October, 1888.

while he continued to pay annual tributes to his rival state of Kashmir as a result of the war lost to the Kashmiris in the late 1860s. In 1888, Safdar Ali allowed a Russian expedition led by Colonel Gromchevsky to enter Hunza. These Russians were cordially received by the Mir, who was advised to "have faith in the Czar" and to establish treaty relations with St Petersburg. The Russians also promised to supply Hunza with sufficient munitions to defend itself against foreign invasions. Three months later, as a return visit, a Hunza mission was dispatched to Tashkent where the Mir's emissaries were given six rifles as a first instalment of the promised Russian aid.[34] The anxious British reacted by sending Colonel Algernon Durand, then Political Agent at Gilgit, to Hunza to persuade, if not coerce, Safdar Ali into cooperating with the British. Colonel Durand in particular asked the Mir to open the route from Gilgit to Kashgar for the British, to cease raids of the India-Xinjiang caravans, and on no account to have any dealings with the Russians or the Chinese. According to British sources, the Mir at that moment tentatively agreed to these conditions.[35]

Old Façade, New Relationship

Eager to impress the various tribes in the Kashmir and Pamir regions, the British held a grandiose Durbar at Gilgit in 1889. In the meantime, government planners in India were anxious to demarcate the undefined boundary in the Pamirs bordering Russia, China and British India. But the Russians were also busy promoting their interests in Hunza. An invitation was extended to Safdar Ali in 1891 to meet the Czar's Governor-General of Turkestan. It was also in this year that the increasingly pro-Russian Mir of Hunza suddenly ordered the blockade of the regular courier service between British India and southern Xinjiang, causing the British Government of India to lose contact with its representative office (which later became the British Consular-General) at Kashgar.[36]

The British were losing patience and decided to invade Hunza, for without the Mir of Hunza's aid, they would not be able to control either the important Hindu-Kush passes or strengthen their position in the region as a whole. In November 1891, a British expedition led by Colonel Durand advanced across the river at Chalt, and began to approach Hunza as well as its equally antagonistic neighbour, the Nagar State. Surprisingly, the British forces encountered little resistance and eventually captured Baltit, the seat of Hunza, in December of that year. At one point during this campaign, Safdar Ali asked China and Russia for assistance. Yet before aid could arrive, he fled to Tashkurgan in southern Xinjiang along with a hundred retainers.[37]

[34]OIOC, L/P&S/7/55, Peshawar confidential diary, entry of December 22, 1888; Hamid, *Karakuram Hunza*, pp. 57–58.

[35]OIOC, L/P&S/7/58, India Office memo, September 1889, enclosed in India Office secret letter No. 105, December 3, 1889; Algernon Durand, *The Making of a Frontier: Five Years' Experiences and Adventures in Gilgit, Hunza, Chitral and the Eastern Hindu-Kush* (Karachi, 2001 reprint), pp. 226–253.

[36]OIOC, L/P&S/7/64, Safdar Ali to Col Durand, September 1891, enclosed in India Office secret letter No. I-C, October 25, 1891; Keay, *The Gilgit Game*, pp. 197–214.

[37]*XT*, 17/12b-14a; *Qing Shilu* [Veritable records of the Qing reigns], *Dezong reign* (hereafter *QS/DZ*), *juan* 308, p. 10a; OIOC, L/P&S/7/65, India Office memo, undated, December 1891, enclosed in India Office secret letter No. 8, January 13, 1892.

Qing officials were extremely unwilling to become involved in the British-Hunza dispute and reprimanded the exiled Safdar Ali for adding to their troubles.[38] Almost simultaneously, Colonel Durand wrote to Zhang Hongchou in Kashgar, urging him to return Nazim Khan, Safdar Ali's younger brother who was then in Tashkurgan with the runaway Mir, so that he could assume control of Hunza. An invitation was extended to Qing officials to visit Baltit and participate in the forthcoming installation ceremony held by the Government of India for the new Mir. As British archival materials reveal, the decision was made with a view to securing Chinese support for British trading privileges equivalent to those enjoyed by the Russians in Xinjiang, and for the right of British merchants to travel between India and Xinjiang via the Qing-controlled Sarikol region.[39]

After meticulous calculation and consideration, Peking accepted the British invitation. The Qing court recognised that its authority over Hunza was meager, if not entirely imaginary, and therefore they had nothing substantial to lose whether or not this remote tribal region was genuinely being recognised as part of Chinese territory. However, as Xue Fucheng, then Qing 'Minister to Britain', revealed in his memorial submitted to the court, the presence of Qing officials at the new Mir's enthronement ceremony would symbolise that the Qing court had successfully secured its suzerain right over Hunza, one of its traditional Central Asia tributaries. The Qing role in the creation of the new Hunza Mir would help construct a myth that Peking had been able to restore a protectorate that was 'almost lost' as the result of foreign encroachment.[40] Xue was fully aware that it remained questionable whether Hunza could be truly counted as a traditional inner vassal subordinate to the Qing court and upon whose rulers it could confer titles, as in the cases of Korea or Vietnam. Nevertheless, Xue and his colleagues in Peking were convinced that it would best serve China's political interests to participate in the ceremony, even though the Chinese would have to share the spotlight with the British. In other words, the Qing court could avail itself of a unique opportunity to demonstrate to its subjects as well as foreign countries that the Qing remained steadfast with regards to securing its historical relationship with its traditional dependencies. This would help to elevate the Qing's national prestige at a time when China had already lost Burma, Vietnam, Ryukyu and other border territories in the Northeast, Northwest, and the Himalayans.[41]

Viewing the matter from a different perspective, local Qing officials in Altishahr also saw no reason to object to the creation of a Hunza tributary. They were convinced that they could expect additional financial and military resources from the court in order to further strengthen Qing presence in the Pamir region and defend the border. This was manifested in an imperial memorial submitted in 1894 by Tao Mo, then Qing governor of Xinjiang, which indicated that, after 1892, an extra 7,000 odd silver *taels* had been added by the Qing court for expenditure on Altishahr affairs. The memorial suggests that most of the increased

[38] *The Autobiography*, pp. 48–50.

[39] OIOC, L/P&S/7/64, Col Durand to India Office, July 22, 1891, enclosed in India Office secret letter No. I-C, October 25, 1891; L/P&S/7/66, Macartney (British Representative at Kashgar) to Government of India, February 16, 1892, enclosed in India Office secret letter No. 96, May 31, 1892.

[40] *XGT*, *juan* 6, pp. 145–146.

[41] *XGT*, *juan* 6, pp. 146–147; Zhao Erxun et al. (comp.), *Qingshi gao* [Draft standard history of the Qing, hereafter *QG*], (Peking, 1927), *liezhuan* 233; *QS/DZ*, *juan* 315, p. 3b.

expenses were for the purpose of installing the new Mir of Hunza in 1892, and establishing several new military outposts on the borders between Hunza, the Pamirs and Kashgar.[42]

In the summer of 1892, Zhang Hongchou and another Qing senior official arrived in Baltit as invited guests. According to both British and Hunza sources, the British Government of India sent Colonel Robertson, new Political Agent at Gilgit, to chair the enthronement. A *sanad* (official edict) from the Maharaja of Kashmir was read out in front of everyone announcing Nazim Khan as the new Mir of Hunza, a move by which Kashmiri suzerainty over Hunza was clearly established. Robertson then led Nazim Khan from the chair on which he was sitting and placed him upon the throne. A royal scarf was draped over on the new Mir's shoulders, and guns were fired at the same time.[43] The two Qing officials were eager to give Nazim Khan the presents they had brought, yet the new Mir was advised not to accept them. Later on when a formal banquet was undertaken, Zhang Hongchou again tried to give the presents to the new Mir. Yet the Chinese official was again not allowed to approach him. Much displeased and disgraced at the treatment they had received, the two Qing officials left Hunza the very next day.[44]

In the following two years, no mission was sent from Hunza to Kashgar. Only in 1894 when the British implied that tribute should be paid to the Qing authorities in Xinjiang, did the Mir recommence his annual mission to Kashgar.[45] British sources indicate that Nazim Khan was advised to do so in order to resume Hunza's traditional pastoral and grazing privileges in southern Xinjiang. He was even encouraged by policy makers in New Delhi to claim territorial rights over the 'no man's land' of the Altishahr-Pamir border regions, once the collapsing Qing court was no longer able to hold these territories effectively.[46]

Chinese sources provide a totally different account of the enthronement at Baltit. After returning to Kashgar, Zhang Hongchou reported to Peking that Chinese and British officials had successfully conducted a 'joint installation' in Hunza. In this account, the Chinese were seated in the place of honour in Baltit, with the British seated in the next place, and the new Mir at the lowest ranking position. The Guangxu Emperor's edict was read aloud by Zhang in front of everyone, and handsome gifts were meanwhile bestowed to the new Mir, who "bent the knee to receive the imperial munificence". In his memorial to the court, Zhang proudly claimed that China's reputation was enormously elevated among the Muslim regions in Central Asia, and the emperor's benevolence as well as authority had been extended to the border peoples.[47] Such political propaganda and self-deception, however, could never entirely conceal the extent to which the dependency of Hunza on the Qing court had been invented. This fact was revealed in 1899, when the British again broached the issue of border

[42]Tao Mo, *Tao Mo Xinjiang Zougao* [Collections of the memorials of Tao Mo regarding Xinjiang affairs] (1894), (Taipei, 1970 reprint), pp. 17–24.

[43]*Autobiography*, pp. 61–62; OIOC, L/P&S/7/66, India Office memo, June 1892, enclosed in India Office secret letter No. 120, July 5, 1892.

[44]*Ibid*; *Autobiography*, pp. 62–63; *A Collection of Treaties, Engagement And Sanads*, Vol. XI, p. 292. According to the British document, the two Chinese officials prepared for the new Mir a hat adorned with a button and a peacock feather. These hats were worn by Qing officials and denoted their rank in the Qing official structure. The British thus regarded the Mir's acceptance of the gift "would have unfortunate implications".

[45]Reports on Hunza's recommencement of paying tributes to Qing officials at Kashgar were widely circulated in China proper. See, for example, *Translation of the Peking Gazette for 1895* (Shanghai, 1896), p. 64.

[46]*Autobiography*, pp. 62–63; Hamid, *Karakuram Hunza*, pp. 69–70.

[47]*XGT*, *juan* 6, p. 147; *QG*, *liezhuan* 234.

demarcation on the Pamirs to Peking, proposing that a fixed national boundary be drawn upon, dividing Xinjiang and Hunza. Although in the end Peking made no official response to the British proposal, the Qing court at one point seriously considered a compromise. It was the additional proviso suggesting that the so-called 'Hunza territory' should include the vast territories of the Qing-controlled Tagdumbash Pamir, Rashkam and Sarikol regions that deterred Peking from accepting the British proposal.[48]

The Qing officials were successful in spreading the propaganda that they had 'presided over' the new Mir of Hunza's installation in the summer of 1892. This success added much-needed political and diplomatic credibility to the weakening Peking court, which seemed to have won a remarkable coup in rescuing a traditional 'inner dependency' from being territorially separated from China and restoring a bit of the Qing's vanishing prestige in Central Asia. Yet as Qing authority in Hunza was virtually fictitious, when faced with the British proposal of 1899 pressuring China to relinquish its shadowy suzerainty over Hunza, Peking was in no position to object.[49] The precarious frontier situation in the Pamirs at the turn of the twentieth century inevitably generated a wide belief among the Chinese people that Peking could no longer resist strong imperialist encroachment and would in the long run be obliged to retreat from its traditional position vis-à-vis Hunza. This belief circulated despite the fact that the Qing court had never officially accepted the British-proposed territorial readjustment in the Pamirs.[50]

Towards the end of Manchu rule, the popular assumption that Hunza had since early times been one of Qing's inner vassals, and that after a brief return to the Qing fold it was lost again to the British imperialists, was firmly rooted by the Chinese intelligentsia. This is not difficult to discern when one investigates the maps, historiographies and other publications of the late Qing and early Republican periods. Writing in 1909, nearly two decades after Qing's asserted reaffirmation of authority over Hunza, Wang Shunan in a steadfast manner described Hunza as having been absorbed in China's imperial domain "since time immemorial". When tracing the origin and evolution of Hunza's territorial connections with the Qing Empire, Wang honestly pointed out that in Li Guangting's *Xiyu Tuzhi* [Illustrated gazetteer of the Western Regions], compiled in the Daoguang reign (1821–1850), Hunza was actually marked 'outside' the Qing imperial border. Yet he argued rather unconvincingly that this was only to "make a distinction between those districts administered under the magistrate system and

[48] *XGT*, *Juan* 8, pp. 214–215. It should be mentioned that, in 1911, some British diplomats in China again raised the Hunza issue, proposing that an attempt should be made to exchange the British right in Hunza and Sarikol regions for those of China on the Burma-Yunnan frontier. Policy planners in London, however, seeing a chaotic situation in China after the collapse of Qing rule, did not formalise such an idea. See OIOC, L/P&S/11/6, "Confidential Memorandum on Frontier Affairs", enclosed in "Report on the Chinese Frontiers of India", dated October 3, 1911; Sir John Jordan (British Minister to China) to Foreign Office, May 14, 1912, enclosed in Foreign Office to India Office, June 12, 1912.

[49] OIOC, L/P&S/10/924, "Frontier between Hunza and the Chinese Dominions", India Office memo dated November 18, 1911.

[50] Qing officials' insistence on their gossamer right over Hunza was sufficiently revealed in their dealings with not only the British, but also the Russians. See: Archives of the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica (Taipei), Archives of the Zongli Yamen, 02-10-017-02.004, 015-017, dispatch from the Xinjiang Governor to the Zongli Yamen, November 9, 1902; 02-10-017-02.006, 024-028, Instructions from the Zongli Yamen to the Xinjiang Governor, November 11, 1902.

those not".[51] Traces of deliberate reconstruction of a 'territorial genealogy' in order to verify that imperial China had long possessed the Hunza territory can also be found in other works of this time. Conceivably, these belated efforts to produce historical evidence were made with a view to asserting that the 'British imperialists' had no right to urge the Chinese to relinquish their 'time-honoured' suzerainty over this tribal state.[52]

Tributary Connections in the Post-Qing Era

After the collapse of the Qing, Xinjiang was run as the fiefdom of a series of autocratic rulers only marginally under central Chinese control. From 1912 until the mid-1940s, this vast territory was dominated by the *de facto* independent provincial regimes of Yang Zengxin (1912–28), Jin Shuren (1928–33), and Sheng Shicai (1933–1944). Under the administration of these semi-autonomous governors, only nominal allegiance was extended to the weak central authorities located either in Peking or in Nanking. In other words, given Xinjiang's geographical remoteness and lack of political governability, during the Republican era officials, as well as commoners in China proper, actually knew very little about what was really going on in this territory.[53] In the growing nationalist and revolutionary milieu of post-1911 Chinese society, when referring to China's 'humiliating past history', Hunza, together with the Pamirs and other borderlands such as Outer Mongolia, Tannu Tuva, Ryukyu and Manchuria, were regarded as China's traditional frontier territories "wholly or partially lost to the foreign Imperialists". But these assumptions were based on vague collective memories rather than sociopolitical realities.[54]

When scrutinising what actually happened between Hunza and the semi-autonomous Xinjiang authorities in the post-Qing period, a completely different picture emerges, revealing a huge gap between the actual facts and the politically shared memories presented in the Republican repertoire. After 1911, the Mir of Hunza became convinced that the only way to keep his pastoral and grazing rights in Sarikol intact was to maintain a stable and amicable relationship with the Chinese authorities in Xinjiang. As a result, he continued to send annual tribute to Governor Yang Zengxin's officials in Kashgar, and in return he received gifts and some financial subsidies from the local officials of southern Xinjiang.[55]

[51] *XGT*, *Juan* 1, p. 2. "Boundaries" were of course not marked on maps at the Daoguang period. Wang Shunan might have indicated that Hunza was marked outside the Qing "*kalun*" in Li Guangting's work. If so, then Wang's analysis regarding the Qing magistrate system is obviously wrong. I am grateful to Laura Newby for reminding me of this point.

[52] See, for example, Zhong Yong, *Xijiang jiaoshe zhiyao* [Comprehensive record of negotiations over the Western frontiers], 1910, (Taipei, 1963 reprint), *Juan* 4, pp. 22b-26b; *QG*, *Liezhuan* 316, *shuguo* [Qing dependencies] 4.

[53] On the history of Republican Xinjiang, see Andrew D. Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims in Chinese Central Asia: A Political History of Republican Sinkiang, 1911–1949* (Cambridge, 1986).

[54] See, for example, Jiang Junzhan, *Xinjiang Jingying lun* [On administrating Xinjiang] (Nanking, 1933), pp. 123–124; Hua Qiyun, *Zhongguo Bianjiang* [China's frontiers] (Nanking, 1933), pp. 187–188; Li Huan, *Xinjiang Yanjiu* [The study of Xinjiang] (Chongqing, 1944), pp. 256–260. Even as late as the early 1970s when Chiang Kai-shek's regime had lost China for more than two decades, publications in Taiwan still specify that Hunza (Kanjut) is an inseparable part of Chinese territory. See, for example, Guo Jiqiao, *Bianjiang Zhengce zhi Yanjiu* [Studies on the frontier policy] (Taipei, 1970), pp. 66–67; and Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission (ed.), *Bianjiang yu Guofang* [Frontiers and national defense] (Taipei, 1970), pp. 83–84.

[55] OIOC, L/P&S/12/2342, "Kashgar Annual Report for the period April 1, 1922 to March 31, 1924", enclosed in C. P. Skrine (British Consul-General at Kashgar) to Government of India, August 21, 1924.

Ironically, it was actually the Chinese who at this stage were trying to expel the bothersome Hunzakuts from the Sino-Pamir borderland. In 1923, the Kashgar magistrate wrote to Nazim Khan, informing him that the Xinjiang government would send its own people to colonise the southern wastelands and that the Hunza grazers should withdraw from Sarikol without delay.[56] Later on, realising that they were unable to completely remove the Hunzakuts from the southern Xinjiang area, the local Chinese authorities decided to impose a grazing tax on the Mir of Hunza for his 'illegal' grazing activities. Although the British Government of India at one point intervened and sought to mediate the dispute, New Delhi generally believed that, in view of the feverish anti-imperialist atmosphere in China at that time, it was unwise either to press the breakup of the remaining tributary ties between Kashgar and Hunza, or to support the Mir of Hunza in using more drastic means to secure his traditional pastoral rights in southern Xinjiang.[57]

The long-term dispute was finally solved in 1931, after Nazim Khan expressed to the Xinjiang authorities his willingness to pay taxes to the Chinese and reiterated his political submission to China by promising the continuation of his 'annual tribute' to Kashgar.[58] The resumption of this gold-dust gift exchange between Hunza and the Xinjiang provincial authorities in the early 1930s thus represented the continued establishment of the symbolically asymmetric diplomatic relationship in which the Chinese assumed a superior position, as had been the case in the late nineteenth century.

Chinese influence over Hunza affairs can also be detected in other cases from the 1920s and early 1930s.[59] In one case, in the spring of 1930, two Hunzakuts arrived in Sarikol on their way to Kashgar with passports issued by the British Government of India. The Chinese border officials were said to have told them that, as Hunza was under China, they should not have taken passports from India. The Chinese took away the British Indian passports and issued passports of their own, charging the two Hunzakuts three *rupee*s each.[60] Another example took place in 1934 and involved a property dispute among the Hunza ruling class. After the so-called 'joint' enthronement of Nazim Khan in the 1890s, Qing officials recognised the new Mir's rights to succeed the Hunza property at Yarkand, yet requested that he permit the exiled Safdar Ali and his family to enjoy its incomes as they had no other means of subsistence. Nazim Khan agreed, but Safdar Ali secretly sold the property and distributed the money to his four children before he died in 1931. Deeply

[56]OIOC, L/P&S/10/924, "Translation of a letter from the *Daotai* of Kashgar to the Mir of Hunza", enclosed in Gilgit Political Agency Office to Government of India, October 5, 1923. The Chinese magistrate wrote to the Mir in a somewhat politically unsophisticated manner, as if the Chinese recognised Hunza as a foreign state: ". . .. I must say that this is contrary to international law. You, Mir of Hunza, who are their ruler, are hereby asked to order them to vacate Chinese territory. If these men come next year to cultivate land in Chinese territory, our men will turn them out. . .."

[57]OIOC, L/P&S/10/924, "Foreign Office minutes on Mir of Hunza's Grazing Rights in Sinkiang", enclosed in Foreign Office to India Office, October 28, 1926; Letter from Political Agent (Gilgit) to Resident in Kashmir, February 26, 1928.

[58]OIOC, L/P&S/10/924, British Political Agent (Gilgit) to Resident in Kashmir, April 8, 1931; British Consulate-General at Kashgar to Government of India, July 30, 1931.

[59]The Xinjiang authorities' reluctance to deem Hunza a part of provincial territory can also be detected in a 1924 telegram from Governor Yang to Peking, in which the Governor specified expressively that he had no intention to compete with the British Raj over the right in this tiny tribal region. See Archives of the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, Archives of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 03-32-119-02.003, 009-010, Yang Zengxin to Foreign Ministry, March 21, 1924.

[60]OIOC, L/P&S/10/924, British Consulate-General at Kashgar to Government of India, May 19, 1930.

furious, Nazim Khan turned to both the British and the Chinese for assistance. Eventually the Chinese officials at Yarkand who came in as arbitrators, and announced that Nazim Khan had the right to succeed the Yarkand property and urged the Mir's nephews and nieces to return the money.[61]

While people in China proper were lamenting China's 'lost territories' in Central Asia, one feature of the tributary arrangement between China and Hunza actually lingered on well into the 1930s. The one *tael* and half of gold dust continued to be presented to Kashgar annually as a symbol of China's dim suzerainty over Hunza, and local Chinese authorities continued to influence Hunza's internal affairs.[62] This post-Qing tributary tie did not cease until 1935, when, in the face of a growing anti-British Xinjiang Government dominated by Sheng Shicai, the Mir of Hunza was instructed by the British Government of India not to have any connections with the sovietized Xinjiang authorities. By 1936, Sheng Shicai's authority had been extended into southern Xinjiang, and his troops, supported by the Soviet Russians, could be seen even as far south as in Tashkurghan. The Mir of Hunza's representative in Sarikol was ousted, and his grazing rights in the Sino-Pamir borders were abolished.[63]

Since coming to power in 1928, Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Government never really ruled any piece of Xinjiang territory. The shift in the political landscape of Central Asia during World War II, however, provided Chiang and the Nationalists with an opportunity to bring central authority into this region for the first time. Around 1941–42, the supposedly invincible Soviet Red Army suffered several disastrous defeats at the hands of the Germans. Expecting that Hitler would eventually overpower Soviet Russia, Sheng Shicai swung from his previous pro-Moscow policy to an anti-Communist stance, and tried to patch up his relations with Chiang Kai-shek, now backed by the United States in diplomatic, financial and military terms. A secret understanding was reached between Sheng and Chiang's staff in the summer of 1942. In the following months, at Sheng's insistence, the Soviet military and technical personnel withdrew from Xinjiang, and were replaced by a Nationalist political, military, economic and financial presence. Towards the end of 1943, when Sheng realised that Moscow's defeat was neither imminent nor even likely, he attempted once more to reverse his pro-Kuomintang policy. It did not work, and in 1944 Chiang Kai-shek replaced him with one of his most trusted political advisors. This marked the reestablishment of direct Central Government control over China's far northwest for the first time since 1911.[64] By the summer of 1946, Nationalist forces were present in the region of the Pamirs and had reopened the traditional Sino-Kashmiri route that had been sealed since the early 1940s.[65]

[61]OIOC, L/P&S/12/97, G. V. B. Gillan (Gilgit) to Government of India, March 1, 1934, enclosed in Government of India to India Office, April 11, 1934.

[62]The Hunzakuts' annual tributes to Kashgar at one point stimulated the curiosity of the new Xinjiang Governor Jin Shuren, who suspected that the gold from Hunza was possibly obtained in Chinese territory. Jin therefore ordered his officials to verify whether there was any gold mine in Rashkam or Sarikol. See OIOC, L/P&S/10/924, British Consulate-General (Kashgar) to Government of India, March 31, 1932.

[63]OIOC, L/P&S/12/2332, Kashgar Dairies for the month of April 1935, February & March 1936, enclosed in British Consulate-General (Kashgar) to Government of India, May 2, 1935, March 5 & April 2, 1936; *Autobiography*, p. 143.

[64]Allen Whiting and Shen Shicai, *Sinkiang: Pawn or Pivot?* (East Lansing, MI, 1958), pp. 51–53; Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia*, pp. 271–272.

[65]Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims in Chinese Central Asia*, pp. 204–208.

Chiang Kai-shek and his government were totally unfamiliar with both the political climate and local administrative practice in Xinjiang. In the summer of 1947, Mohammad Jamal Khan, Hunza's new Mir since 1945, dispatched a two-man mission to Kashgar and requested the traditional relationship between the two sides be restored. The Nationalist Government was entirely ignorant of what had been going on in the past decades, and Chiang Kai-shek's advisors were unaware of the Mir's traditional rights in Sarikol and Rashkam.[66] However, despite this lack of local knowledge, the ruling Nationalists were aware that the possible reestablishment of closer ties with this 'already lost' Central Asian tribal territory could be capitalised upon to elevate their prestige and to further consolidate China's postwar position in the Pamir and other Central Asian regions. Set against this backdrop, a detailed scheme was prepared in December 1947 for the negotiations with the Hunza envoys in Kashgar, in which the Nationalist Government conceded restoration of the old tributary connections with Hunza as a way to lure this state back into postwar China's territorial and administrative framework.[67] In early 1948, a *modus vivendi* was eventually signed between the Hunza envoys and General Zhao Xiguang, Nationalist Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Xinjiang Garrison Force in southern Xinjiang. Theoretically, the Hunzakuts were ready to return to the fold of China's administrative jurisdiction and recognise China's 'suzerainty', if not sovereignty.[68]

The Chinese Nationalists thought that they were ready to proclaim the successful return of one of China's 'lost territories', but their intentions came to naught when one month later in February 1948 it was reported that the Mir of Hunza had decided to join Pakistan and fight against India after the outbreak of the Kashmiri war.[69] Astonished by this turn of events, General Zhao Xiguang secretly sent officials to Baltit in February and June 1948, both to verify the report and to persuade the Mir to join the Chinese Republic. When meeting the Chinese officials, Mohammad Jamal Khan once again expressed his willingness to restore tributary ties with China, but he rejected the idea of unconditional political submission of Hunza to Chinese control. In addition, the Mir reiterated his desire for the immediate return of 'lost privileges' in the Hunza-Xinjiang border region, including the pastoral and grazing rights. The disgruntled Mir of Hunza made further demands that the Xinjiang authorities recognise the validity of passports issued by his court, and that the Chinese Government allow his people to utilize and take over the traditional mail-courier route between Kashgar and Gilgit that was previously used by the British Government of India. But when the Chinese officials referred to the signing of another formal treaty in which the mutually agreed tributary relationship would be confirmed, the Mir resolutely refused.[70]

[66] See Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Taipei), Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter AMFA), 119/4, Foreign Ministry memoranda, dated October 1, 1947 and April 8, 1948.

[67] AMFA, 119/4, Wang Shijie (Foreign Minister) to Chiang Kai-shek, December 4, 1947; Chiang to Wang, December 12, 1947; Ministry of Foreign Affairs to General Zhao Xiguang (Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Xinjiang Garrison Force), December 17, 1947.

[68] AMFA, 119/4, "Sino-Hunza *modus vivendi*", dated January 7, 1948; General Zhao to Liu Zerong (Foreign Ministry Commissioner in Xinjiang), January 7, 1948, all enclosed in Liu to Foreign Ministry, January 12, 1948.

[69] OIOC, L/P&S/13/1860, India Office minute paper, December 11, 1947. On news regarding the revolution in Gilgit and the Mir of Hunza's decision to side with Pakistan, see "The October Revolution in Gilgit", *The Statesman* (New Delhi), January 16, 1948, enclosed in OIOC, L/P&S/12/3303, British High Commissioner in India to Commonwealth Relations Office, January 22, 1948.

[70] OIOC, L/P&S/13/1860, Commonwealth Relations Office memo, dated February 26, 1948; AMFA, 119/4, North-Western Headquarters to Foreign Ministry, April 4, 1948; letter from the Mir of Hunza to General Zhao,

As the civil war between Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang regime and the Chinese Communist Party intensified in the latter half of 1948, officials in Nanking also found themselves in increasingly difficult positions vis-à-vis Central Asian affairs. In September 1948, Xinjiang authorities prompted the Nationalist Government to seriously consider recognising Hunza as an 'independent state' as a deliberate strategy to win the favour of the Mir Mohammed Jamal Khan and to counteract the Pakistani influence in Hunza. However, both the frontier advisors and foreign policy planners in Nanking refrained from making any substantial decisions.[71] As Chiang Kai-shek's rule was about to collapse, and as the Nationalist Government's political legitimacy was weakening both inside and outside China, bringing this remote state into Nanking's territorial and political orbit was clearly neither a realistic nor a crucial goal.

In the autumn of 1948, fighting in Kashmir continued between India and Pakistan, even though a United Nations resolution calling for a ceasefire had been passed earlier in August. The unremitting warfare at the 'top of the world' had inflicted catastrophic damage upon the Kashmiri and Pamir tribal states. According to contemporary Chinese intelligence sources, Muslim refugees from Gilgit and the adjacent regions began to cross the Pamirs into Tashkurgan with their goods, livestock and herds. More strikingly, the Mir of Hunza and his entourage were reported to have also fled from their tiny court at Baltit to Misgar, some two days' distance from the Chinese-controlled district of Sarikol and the Mintaka Pass. The Mir was alleged to have already transported most of his valuable possessions to Yarkand in advance for safety reasons. At one point, it seemed very likely that the Mir would flee to southern Xinjiang, as his predecessor had in the 1890s.[72] In early 1949, a United Nations ceasefire line was eventually drawn, with India controlling the southern part of Kashmir and Pakistan possessing the northern regions of Gilgit, Baltistan and Hunza. This turn of events was followed by the complete collapse of Chiang Kai-shek's rule in China later that year. From this point on, Hunza no longer acted as an independent state capable of conducting its own external affairs, and thus the examination of the two-century long Sino-Hunza relationship comes to a close here.

Epilogue

Although the collapse of Nationalist rule in China temporarily resolved the Nationalist Government's clandestine designs on Hunza, the status of Hunza remained disputed. General Zhao Xiguang, along with his Nationalist forces stationed in southern Xinjiang, eventually shifted their political allegiance and joined the new Chinese Communist regime after 1949. Thus, the Beijing authorities would likely have learned of the existence of the Sino-Hunza *modus vivendi*. In the following decade after their coming to power, however, the Chinese Communists did not publicise any official attitudes towards Hunza. Nevertheless, in the mid-1950s the presence of the Chinese on the Hunza border at one point forced the Pakistan

dated February 15, 1948, enclosed in Liu Zerong to Foreign Ministry, May 5, 1948; letter from the Mir of Hunza to General Zhao, dated June 14, enclosed in Liu Zerong to Nanking, August 24, 1948; General Zhao's report to Foreign Ministry, September 1, 1948.

[71] AMFA, 119/4, Foreign Ministry memo, September 21, 1948.

[72] AMFA, 119/4, Intelligence report from Nationalist Northwestern Headquarters, enclosed in Liu Zerong to Foreign Ministry, October 2, 1948.

Government to withdraw its frontier police in order to avoid a clash with the more powerful Chinese.[73] And as late as 1960, maps published on both sides of the Taiwan Straights still claimed Hunza as part of China. The inclusion of Hunza in China's territorial domain in post-1949 maps can thus be considered a remnant of the 1948 Sino-Hunza *modus vivendi*, as well as the result of China's historical imagination regarding this tiny piece of territory.[74] Only when Beijing recognised the *de facto* control of Pakistan over Hunza in the Sino-Pakistani Boundary Agreement of March 3, 1963, did the territorial dispute finally come to a close.

As the foregoing study has revealed, Hunza was usually neglected by high Qing officials, as were many of the petty tributary states with petty tributary ties to Xinjiang following the Qianlong Emperor's conquest of Central Asia. Even as late as the Daoguang reign, whether Hunza could be termed as China's 'outer vassal' remained open to discussion. The situation changed, however, after Zuo Zongtang re-conquered Chinese Central Asia in the 1870s. The struggle for supremacy in Central Asia between Britain and Russia elevated the geographical importance of Hunza to China. When Hunza fell under British control and its ruler fled to Xinjiang in the early 1890s, the Qing authorities took advantage of the tumult, and constructed an image of China triumphantly 'securing' suzerainty over the Central Asian territory. At a time when Manchu rule in China was precarious, people in China proper were generally convinced that the ailing Qing had indeed momentarily restored national prestige in the traditional borderlands, and that Hunza was without question an inseparable part of China. It therefore also came as no surprise that, when Qing rule eventually collapsed and the new central authorities could no longer firmly grasp Chinese Central Asia, Hunza, together with other border regions, were wholly regarded as China's 'lost territories'. However, as the aforementioned discussion has suggested, it was apparently the British who started using the term 'tributary' with regard to the ailing Qing's relations with Hunza. The Qing agreed to reciprocate, with the establishment of some kind of symbolically asymmetric diplomatic relationship in which their position of superiority in Central Asia was momentarily created.

People in China proper in the post-Qing era were unaware of the real political situation in Xinjiang and Central Asia, which is unsurprising given its geographical remoteness and inaccessibility. From top officials to the grassroots, the people were ignorant of the fact that it was actually the semi-autonomous Xinjiang authorities that predominantly influenced Sino-Hunza interactions in the post-Qing period. When China's Chiang Kai-shek regime returned to Central Asia in the 1940s, the Nationalists were ignorant of the recent history of the Sino-Pamir borderlands. Emulating the Qing administration in the Guangxu era, the Nationalist officials endeavoured to capitalise upon a 'lost territory' image of Hunza to benefit their regime both politically and diplomatically. They took advantage of the Mir of Hunza's effort to secure pastoral and grazing rights in southern Xinjiang, as his predecessors had done, to attempt to bring the 'lost' Hunza state back to within China's territorial and

[73] W. M. Dobell, "Ramification of the China-Pakistan Border Treaty", *Pacific Affairs*, 37: 3 (1964), pp. 288–289. Similar account of Chinese troops having "invaded" Hunza can be found in Chinese works. See, for example, Jin Deyang, *Bianjiang Zengjiang Xinsheng* [The proposal of creating new provinces on the frontier] (Taipei, 1967), p. 134.

[74] See, for example, *Zhonghua Renmin Gonghrguo Fensheng Ditu* [Provincial maps of the People's Republic of China] (Shanghai, 1960 reprint), p. 32, and Zhang Qiyun (ed.), *Zhonghua Minguo Ditu* [National atlas of the Republic of China] (Taipei, 1972), Vol. 2, E 13.

administrative orbit. The Nationalist Government failed, owing to both its overall military demise in China and the outbreak of war between India and Pakistan over Kashmir.

For a long time scholarly circles have interpreted the tributary model as a unique interactive form of diplomatic and trade relationship between China and foreign countries that existed before the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911. The thrust of this paper is not to dismantle this interpretation, rather, taking China's relations with the Central Asian state of Hunza as a case, it raises previously overlooked evidence that sheds new light on the way in which early-modern and modern Chinese authorities sought to manipulate a nebulously defined interactive model in order to benefit themselves politically and diplomatically. In a sense, this research offers a new thinking about what the 'tribute system' might really be: a nineteenth- and twentieth-century reinterpretation of an older form of symbolically asymmetric interstate relations (common in one form or another throughout many parts of Asia): this reinterpretation was strongly informed by English-language terminology and formulations, including 'suzerainty' and the mistranslation of '*gong*' as 'tribute' itself. Both Britain and China manipulated this terminology as it claimed to further their respective territorial, diplomatic and strategic interests.

In his authoritative work, Benedict Anderson defines a 'nation' as an "imagined political community".[75] If his definition holds, then the examination of over 180 years of the Sino-Hunza relationship may further suggest that the ideas of 'territoriality', and perhaps "lost territoriality", can also result from a process of political imagining that changes over time according to different purposes and aims.

Hsiao-ting Lin
Hoover Institution, Stanford University

[75]Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991), pp. 5–7.