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## Russian Architectural Heritage in the Xinjiang-Uygur Autonomous Region of China as Manifestation of Interethnic and Intercultural Interaction in the 19<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> Centuries

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**Abstract:** The author identifies the Russian architectural heritage in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China in the process of intercultural and interethnic interaction of the Russian Diaspora with the peoples of the province. In this regard, the subject of the study is the preserved monuments of Russian culture – residential buildings, temples, cemeteries. The structure of the study is determined by the need to explore the mutual influence of the culture of the Russian diaspora and those of local peoples on the example of architectural structures. The research is based on modern literature, as well as documents of Russian archives: materials deposited in the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire, the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, the State Archive of the Russian Federation, the Russian State Military Historical Archive. Most of them have not been introduced into scientific use before. The author identifies the features of intercultural and interethnic interaction of representatives of the Russian diaspora with local peoples for a long time and depending on the political situation in the region. It is noted that at the stage of the formation of the Russian Diaspora in the XUAR there were difficulties in the relations between Russians and representatives of local ethnic groups. At the same time, the local culture had a serious impact on the development of the Russian diaspora. There is noted the rather competent policy of the Chinese and Russian authorities at the present stage to support the culture of Russians in Xinjiang, although the author does not exclude difficulties in its further preservation. Therefore, according to the author, there is a need for further close interaction between the Chinese and Russian authorities in order to determine new courses of cooperation in this direction.

**Keywords:** national policy, politics of memory, Western Siberia, foreign cultural environment, transculturation

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## Русское архитектурное наследие в Синьцзян-Уйгурском автономном районе Китая как проявление межэтнического и межкультурного взаимодействия в XIX–XXI вв.

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**Аннотация:** Определяется роль русского архитектурного наследия в Синьцзян-Уйгурском автономном районе (СУАР) Китая в процессе межкультурного и межэтнического взаимодействия русской диаспоры с народами провинции. В связи с этим предметом исследования являются сохранившиеся здесь памятники русской культуры – жилые постройки, храмы, кладбища. Структура исследования обусловлена необходимостью изучения взаимовлияния культуры русской диаспоры и культур местных народов на примере архитектурных сооружений. В основе исследования – современная литература, а также документы российских архивов: материалы, отложившиеся в Архиве внешней политики Российской империи, Архиве внешней политики Российской Федерации, Государственном архиве Российской Федерации, Российском государственном военно-историческом архиве. Большинство из них ранее не вводились в научный оборот. Автор выявляет особенности межкультурного и межэтнического взаимодействия представителей русской диаспоры с местными народами на протяжении длительного времени и в контексте политической ситуации в регионе. Отмечается, что на этапе формирования русской диаспоры в СУАР имели место трудности во взаимоотношениях русских и представителей местных этносов. Вместе с тем можно говорить о тесном взаимовлиянии населяющих современный Синьцзян этносов. Местная культура оказывала серьезное влияние и на развитие русской диаспоры. Автор отмечает достаточно грамотную политику китайских и российских властей на современном этапе по поддержке культуры русских в Синьцзяне, хотя и не исключает трудностей на пути ее дальнейшего сохранения в будущем. Потому, по мнению автора, существует необходимость дальнейшего тесного взаимодействия китайских и российских властей с целью определения новых курсов сотрудничества в этом направлении.

**Ключевые слова:** национальная политика, политика памяти, Западная Сибирь, инокультурная среда, транскulturация

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### Introduction

The problems of interethnic and intercultural interaction have always been relevant and continue to be vital nowadays. This is due to the difference in cultures and the need for interstate and cultural interaction. In some regions of the world, these problems are especially acute, due to significant civilizational dissimilarities and the difference between the peoples inhabiting them, as well as the specifics of the policy towards them. The Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of China has always been one of such regions. Representatives of various ethnic groups and denominations have long lived there. At present, the ethnic picture of the region is also very diverse: Han men, Uighurs, Kazakhs, Kirghiz, Kalmyks, Manchus, Uzbeks, Tatars, Russians, etc. live there. All of

them profess different religions – Islam, Buddhism, Orthodoxy, etc. Therefore, the issues of intercultural interaction are still relevant.

In modern domestic and foreign literature, a lot of attention has recently been paid to the study of national policy in this region.<sup>1</sup> However, the researchers are focused on the study of the specifics of the policy towards representatives of the Han and Uighur cultures, as well as the problems of religious interaction. The issues of the position of ethnic Russians in Xinjiang, the peculiarities of their contacts with representatives of local cultures and denominations are practically not touched upon. Due to the lack of the source base, the works that are devoted to these issues contain very little information, and often duplicate it.

At the same time, there should be noted a number of thorough studies that reveal certain aspects of this topic. Among them are the publications of K.V. Biryukova, V.G. Datsyshen, E.V. Drobotushenko, Yu.N. Lantsova, G.P. Kamneva, A.A. Sotnikov, S.A. Sotnikov, Liang Zhe, E.A. Petyakshina, T.V. Romanenko.<sup>2</sup> They characterize the activities of the Beijing Spiritual Mission in different historical periods, the features of Orthodox churches in China, including Xinjiang. But only in the study of T.V. Romanenko, an attempt was made to consider the role of Orthodoxy in China in the context of the interaction of Russian and Chinese cultures.

At the same time, the publications did not consider monuments of Russian culture irrelevant to cult; there is practically no information about Russian cemeteries, monuments to the Russian (Soviet) military, features of Russian architecture in the provinces, the influence of local conditions on it, etc.

The purpose of this study is to characterize the specifics of the Russian cultural heritage in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China on the example of the monuments that existed earlier and have survived today, and to show its influence on the

<sup>1</sup> A.V. Bondarenko, “Modern national and religious politics in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region,” *Rossiia i ATR*, no. 3 (2007): 105–9; V.M. Kapitsyn, and Van Yao, “Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China: territorial self-government and national policy,” *Ars Administrandi*, no. 3 (2013): 107–117; D.V. Buyarov, “Some aspects of State regulation of the religious sphere in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region,” *Teoriya i praktika obshchestvennogo razvitiya*, no. 18 (2015): 228–230; V.S. Novichkov, “The main directions of national policy in the Xinjiang People's Republic of China after 2000,” *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, no. 424 (2017): 116–122, <https://doi.org/10.17223/15617793/424/16>; D.A. Anan'ina, “Interethnic conflict on the territory of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China,” *Gumanitarnyi vektor* 13 (2018): 6–11; V.A. Epshtein, and D.A. Bochkov, “China's Policy on the Integration of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region: 1949–2018,” *Uchenye zapiski Kazanskogo universiteta. Seriya: Gumanitarnye Nauki* 160, kn. 6 (2018): 1442–1454 etc.

<sup>2</sup> K.V. Biryukova, “Historiography of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in China: to the problem statement,” *Uchenye zapiski Orlovskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, no. 1 (2015): 74–80; K.V. Biryukova, “Temples of the Russian Spiritual Mission in China,” *Uchenye zapiski Orlovskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, no. 6 (2015): 25–8; V.G. Datsyshen, *Khristianstvo v Kitae: istoriia i sovremennost'* [Christianity in China: History and Modernity]. (Moscow: Scientific and educational forum on international relations Publ., 2007); E.V. Drobotushenko, “Orthodoxy in China in the second half of the 40s of the XX century according to the documents of the State Archive of the Russian Federation,” *Gumanitarnyi vektor. Ser. Istorija. Politologiya* 11, no. 4 (2016): 86–92, <https://doi.org/10.21209/2307-1842-2016-11-4-86-92>; E.V. Drobotushenko, “On the Development of Orthodoxy in Northwest China in the Early 1950s,” *Vestnik BGU. Gumanitarnye issledovaniya Vnutrennei Azii*, 4 (2017): 78–84, <https://doi.org/10.18101/2305-753Kh-2017-4-78-84>; E.V. Drobotushenko, Yu.N. Lantsova, et al, “Features of the existence of emigrant Baptist communities in the west, north and northeast of China in the second half of the 40s of the XX century,” *Samarskii nauchnyi vestnik* 10, no. 4 (2021): 193–6, <https://doi.org/10.17816/snv2021104209>; Chzhe Lyan, *Pravoslavie v kontekste sovremennogo rossiisko-kitaiskogo vzaimodeistviya (1949–2015 gg.)* [Orthodoxy in the context of modern Russian-Chinese Interaction (1949–2015)] (Moscow: RUDN Publ., 2016); E.A. Petyakshina, “Russians in Xinjiang (from the history of the Orthodox Church in East Turkestan of the second half of the XIX – XX century),” *Tomskii zhurnal LING i ANTR. Tomsk Journal LING & ANTHRO*, no. 3 (9) (2015): 128–135; T.V. Romanenko, “Orthodoxy in the context of Interaction between Russian and Chinese Cultures,” *Uchenye zapiski ZabGU. Ser. Filosofiya. Kul'turologiya. Sotsiologiya. Sotsial'naya rabota* 11, no. 3 (2016): 87–93.

features of interethnic and intercultural interaction of Russians with representatives of the peoples of the province in the 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

For this purpose, documents from Russian archives were involved: materials deposited in the Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire, the Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, the State Archive of the Russian Federation, the Russian State Military Historical Archive. Most of them have not been introduced into scientific discourse before. For example, the documents of the Russian consulates in Xinjiang – reports, certificates, correspondence with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Empire, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the USSR. A significant part of the materials are Internet resources, ego-documents, as well as modern domestic and foreign literature.

The research methodology is based on the approaches to the study of intercultural interaction of the theory of high- and low-context cultures by E. Hall, which helps to look at representatives of different cultures from the inside and contributes to the development of ways to understand cultural communicative patterns.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, when studying the features of intercultural interaction between ethnic Russians and the peoples inhabiting East Turkestan, there were taken into account the peculiarities of Eastern cultures and the inapplicability of the methods of classical European human science in their pure form to the study of cultural issues in the realities of the East.<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that oriental studies in general have always adhered to the integrated approach to the study of cultures and, accordingly, intercultural interaction. Modern Oriental studies are also based on the comprehensive study of various ways of seeing the world, based on fundamentally different perception matrices characteristic of different types of civilizations, which in turn contributes to going beyond the conventions of European and Eastern civilizations and establishing a path for their mutual communication and understanding.<sup>5</sup> The use of these approaches is most appropriate for identifying the features of interaction between ethnic Russians and representatives of a number of Eastern ethnic groups living in East Turkestan.

There were used such research methods as chronological, typological, comparative, value-normative and structural-functional.

### Formation of Russian settlements

The first immigrants from the Russian Empire came to Xinjiang in the late 18<sup>th</sup> – early 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there had been formed the main centers of settlement of Russian subjects in Xinjiang; their number was small – about 2000 people; among them there were only a few hundred ethnic Russians.<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that the total population in Xinjiang (excluding Kashgaria), according to Russian military intelligence as of 1887, was about 454 thousand “people of both sexes.”<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, the number of immigrants from Russia in Xinjiang changed depending on the political situation in the province, in the Russian Empire (later – the USSR), as well as on the development of relations between the two states. Based on the statistics of the Xinjiang

<sup>3</sup> А.П. Sadokhin, *Vvedenie v teoriyu mezhkul'turnoi kommunikatsii* [Introduction to the theory of intercultural communication] (Moscow: High School Publ., 2005); E.T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1989); E.T. Hall, and M.R. Hall, *Understanding Cultural Differences: Germans, French and Americans* ([S.l.]: Intercultural Press, 1990).

<sup>4</sup> *Kontseptsii sovremenogo vostokovedeniia* [Concepts of modern oriental studies] (St. Petersburg: KARO Publ., 2013), 201.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>6</sup> D.S. Panarina, ed. *Vostochnye vetvi rossiiskoi diaspori v proshlom i nastoyashchem* [Eastern branches of the Russian diaspora in the past and present] (Moscow: Institut vostokovedeniia RAN, 2019), 93.

<sup>7</sup> Rossiyskiy gosudarstvennyy voyenno-istoricheskiy arkhiv [Russian State Military Historical Archive] (henceforth RGVIA), f. 2000, op. 1, d. 957, l. 85 reverse.

government, Chinese researchers give the following figures: by 1916 in all towns of the province there were 15,481 residents who had Russian citizenship.<sup>8</sup> Due to the 1916 uprising, the region received an influx of refugees. According to the Russian consular services, the number of refugees in the Ili region alone reached 100,000 people.<sup>9</sup> The report of the USSR consulate in the Ili region indicates that by 1927, during emigration from Russia and migration from other regions of Xinjiang, the number of former subjects of the Russian Empire in this district amounted to about 10 thousand people.<sup>10</sup> There are no data for other regions. In his memoirs, Russian emigrant N.S. Treskin notes that at the turn of the 1920–1930s there were about 13,500 Russians in Xinjiang.<sup>11</sup>

According to the 2020 census, the population of Xinjiang was 25,852,345 people.<sup>12</sup> The modern Russian-speaking diaspora in Xinjiang is small and amounts to only 8,5 thousand people.<sup>13</sup>

Immigrants from Russia that settled in the province at different times were forced to interact with local peoples and the Chinese administration. Initially, they faced some difficulties. For example, in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, ethnic Russians were mainly represented by Old Believers who settled in Xinjiang. They formed a number of settlements in the regions of the province bordering Russia. However, since the Old Believers lead a closed lifestyle and do not seek to adapt to the traditions of other cultures; they did not try to establish relations with the local peoples. Moreover, they often treated them negatively. This also applied to Russian peasants – supporters of the Russian Orthodox Church. Such an attitude towards the local peoples sometimes led to conflicts, even to skirmishes.<sup>14</sup> However, there were exceptions, when individual Russian peasant colonists were imbued with the culture of local peoples, studied their language, traditions and interacted more closely. But such cases were rare. An example is Cossack Ivan Afanasyevich Mokin that hosted the Kyrgyz, drank tea with them, was fluent in the Kyrgyz language, and knew their traditions.<sup>15</sup>

The fact that most of the settlements of Russian peasants were in the north of the province, in the Altai District, where the climate and natural conditions were close to

<sup>8</sup> Chzhe Lyan, *Pravoslavie v kontekste*, 146.

<sup>9</sup> Arkhiv vneshey politiki Rossiiskoy imperii [Archive of foreign policy of the Russian Empire] (henceforth AVP RI), f. 143, d. 448, l. 146.

<sup>10</sup> Arkhiv vneshey politiki Rossiiskoy Federatsii [Archive of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation] (henceforth AVP RF), f. 2, op. 9, p. 117, d. 14, l. 32.

<sup>11</sup> N.S. Treskin, “O Zhizni i o sebe [About life and about yourself],” in O. Bakich, ed. *Rossiyanе v Azii. Literaturno-istoricheskii ezhegodnik* [Russians in Asia. Literary and historical yearbook]. Vol. 5 (Toronto: Torontskii universitet Publ., 1998), 127.

<sup>12</sup> “Sin’tszyan-Uygurskiy avtonomnyy rayon,” *Rossiya i Kitay*, accessed July 29, 2022, <https://ruchina.org/xin-province.html>

<sup>13</sup> E.S. Bazhenova, and A.V. Ostrovskii, *Sin’tszyan – gorizonty novogo Shelkovogo puti* [Xinjiang – the horizons of the new Silk Road] (Moscow: MBA Publishing House, 2016), 88; According to Chinese authors, 11 thousand people. See about this: Shanpin Yui, *Mnogolikii Sin’tszyan* [The many faces of Xinjiang] (Pekin: Intercontinental Publishing House of China Publ., 2015), 220.

<sup>14</sup> See: E.N. Nazemtseva, “Problemy mezhetnicheskikh vzaimootnoshenii predstavitelei russkoi diaspory i mestnogo naseleniya v Altayskom okruge Sin’tszyana v 1917 g. (po dokumentam rossiiskogo konsul’stva v Sharasume) [Problems of interethnic relations between representatives of the Russian Diaspora and the local population in the Altai district of Xinjiang in 1917 (according to the documents of the Russian consulate in Sharasume)],” in D.L. Prokazina, ed. *Sibir’ v fokuse istoricheskikh, vostokovednykh i pravovykh issledovaniy: materialy pervoi Vserossiiskoi nauchnoi konferentsii, posvyashchennoi pamyati izvestnogo uchenogo, pedagoga, prosvetitelya i obshchestvennogo deyatelya, doktora istoricheskikh nauk, professora Aleksandra Vladimirovicha Startseva (1956–2019)* [Siberia in the focus of historical, Oriental and legal studies: materials of the first All-Russian Scientific Conference dedicated to the memory of the famous scientist, teacher, educator and public figure, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor Alexander Vladimirovich Startsev (1956–2019)], 113–121 (Barnaul: Barnaul Law Institute of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia Publ., 2021).

<sup>15</sup> AVP RI, f. 143, op. 491, d. 640, l. 348.

those of Russia did not contribute to interaction either. They could construct their houses and outbuildings in the same way as in their homeland and thus recreate some features of Russian life and culture. According to the Russian consulate in the town of Sharasume, in the villages there were built wooden log-houses, with solid outbuildings.<sup>16</sup> In some villages, the houses of Russian peasants even resembled the country estate<sup>s</sup>.<sup>17</sup>

Wooden log-houses, bath-houses have been preserved there to this day; however, they are mainly inhabited by local residents. Nevertheless, according to the reviews of modern travelers, the villages of the Chinese Altai are practically indistinguishable from those of Western Siberia.<sup>18</sup>

Some Russian buildings in the towns of Xinjiang have also been preserved. As a rule, these are brick one-story houses with shutters; they are located on the site of the former Russian trading posts.

### Russian trading posts

The Russian trading posts that appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the cities of the province, in which the Russian consulates were located, also had features of Russian architecture. Russian consul N.V. Bogoyavlensky draws attention to this. For example, in his opinion, at the very beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Russian part of Ghulja “was favorably compared with the Chinese” and looked as follows:

Here we see neat houses of European architecture. Some houses have gardens. The bazaar is a series of stone shops overlooking a covered gallery, and in general is similar to many shopping arcades in Russia.<sup>19</sup>

In another city of the province – Kashgar – during that period there was no Russian trading post; Russian subjects lived in different parts of the city. According to the description of Russian commander, military historian, orientalist and traveler V.F. Novitsky, the building of the Russian consulate was located on the bank of the river Kyzyl Suv, on one of the outskirts of the city, on a plot of land donated by the Chinese government. The consulate buildings originally consisted of one-story adobe houses with flat roofs located very close to each other. They formed a small yard inside and were surrounded by a low adobe fence, that is, they were typical local buildings.<sup>20</sup> Later, there was erected a one-story European-style brick building which has been preserved to this day.

The Russian trading post in Chuguchak in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was beautifully constructed buildings and was a “decoration of the city,” which is mentioned in the notes by another Russian traveler, military commander and geographer I.F. Babkov while traveling in Xinjiang.<sup>21</sup> However, these buildings were later destroyed. In the 1880s, the trading post began to be rebuilt, but was no longer so impressive architecturally, since

<sup>16</sup> AVP RI, f. 143, op. 491, d. 640, l. 340.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., l. 344.

<sup>18</sup> I. Rotar', “Neobychnyi Kitai. Putevye zametki iz Sin'tszyan-Uigurskogo avtonomnogo raiona,” *Fergana. Novosti Tsentral'noi Azii*, April 7, 2011, <https://www.fergananews.com/article.php?id=6936>.

<sup>19</sup> N.V. Bogoyavlenskii, *Zapadnyi Zastennyi Kitai: Ego proshloe, nastoyashchee sostoyanie i polozhenie v nem russkikh poddannyykh* [Western Wall China: His past, present condition and the position of Russian subjects in it.] (St. Petersburg: A.S. Suvorin Publ., 1906), 335.

<sup>20</sup> M.K. Baskhanov, and E.A. Rezvan, *Kashgar: fotoletopis' Bol'shoi igry (kolleksii N.F. Petrovskogo i Ya.Ya. Lyutsha v sobranii MAE RAN)* [Kashgar: a photo chronicle of the Big Game (collections of N.F. Petrovsky and Ya.Ya. Lutsch in the collection of the MAE RAS)] (St. Petersburg: Nestor-History Publ., 2021), 138.

<sup>21</sup> I.F. Babkov, *Vospominaniia o moei sluzhbe v Zapadnoi Sibiri, 1859–1875 g.: Razgranichenie s Zap. Kitaem 1869 g.* [Memoirs of my service in Western Siberia, 1859–1875: Differentiation from Zap. China 1869] (St. Petersburg: V.F. Kirshbaum Publ., 1912), 88.

there was not drawn up a specific development plan; and no attention was paid to the architecture of the houses. As a result, as noted by N.V. Bogoyavlensky,

now we see crooked streets, crooked and narrow alleys, in which one house stands one way, another house in a different way; a corner of a house protrudes into the street here, some kind of a dilapidated shed protrudes there, and so on. In general, the Chuguchak trading post is a perfect copy of the Sart settlements in Central Asia.<sup>22</sup>

It should be noted that the Russian consulate was located in a “beautiful wooden house.”<sup>23</sup> Some Russian houses have been preserved to this day.

The Russian trading post in the capital of Xinjiang – Urumchi – was located in the southeastern part of the city and was built according to the plan of Russian consul S.A. Fedorov. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was a street, “on the sides of which there were houses and shops of Russian subjects.” These were one-story houses. On both sides of the street there grew trees forming a shady alley. As noted by N.V. Bogoyavlensky, the trading post made a “very favorable impression” with its appearance.<sup>24</sup> The consulate occupied a large area on the edge of the trading post and gave the “impression of a well-appointed estate” surrounded by a garden. On the initiative of Bogoyavlensky, on the territory of the consulate in 1903 there was founded a church.<sup>25</sup> There was even a meteorological station.<sup>26</sup>

Subsequently, the building of the Russian consulate in Urumchi was completed and restored. From 1924, it housed the Soviet Consulate General. In modern Urumchi, this building has the status of a historical and architectural monument. In 1994, the city government declared it a protected cultural object, and in 2003, a similar decision was made by the people's government of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. This is evidenced by memorial plaques on the wall of the consulate and in the part in front of it. In addition, in the first half of the 1990s the local administration placed a bust of V.I. Lenin in front of the building façade.<sup>27</sup>

It is noteworthy that the type of Russian trading post described above in Urumchi was preserved until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1920–1940s in the city there were houses in the Russian-Asian style and numerous signs in Russian. For example, a correspondent of one of the emigre newspapers noted in his report that “Urumchi has now become a sort of a semi-Russian city. Russian is heard everywhere. Most urban and rural Chinese, Dungans, Sarts and other natives of the region speak Russian decently and willingly. In the streets of Urumchi there are Russian signs everywhere. There are several Russian restaurants, not to mention canteens and inns. Everywhere there are Russian shops, confectioneries and bakeries, various workshops. There is a factory producing pimy. In the vicinity there are exemplary gardens, large fruit farms, chicken farms, saddlery and piecework workshops for the repair and even manufacture of agricultural im-

<sup>22</sup> N.V. Bogoyavlenskii, *Zapadnyi Zastennyi Kitai*, 337.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 338.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 339.

<sup>26</sup> K.G. Mannergeim, “Predvaritel'nyi otchet o poezdke, predprinatoi po Vysochaishemu povelenniu cherez Kitaiskii Turkestan i severnye provintsii Kitaia v g. Pekin, v 1906–7 i 8 gg., [Preliminary report on a trip undertaken by the Supreme Command through Chinese Turkestan and the northern provinces of China to Beijing, in 1906–7 and 8],” in *Sbornik geograficheskikh, topograficheskikh i statisticheskikh materialov po Azii. Voенno-uchenyi kom. Glavnogo shtaba, 1882–1914*. Vol. 12, issue 81 (St Petersburg: Glavnoe upravlenie General'nogo shtaba, 1909).

<sup>27</sup> L.I. Glushchenko, and I.A. Sadovskaya, “Urumchi. Dzhungariya. Kazakhstanskii etap ekspeditsii [Urumqi. Dzungaria. Kazakhstan stage of the expedition of N.K. Rerikh].” Elektronnaia biblioteka Mezhdunarodnogo tsentra Rerikhov, accessed August 23, 2022. <https://lib.icr.su/node/1796>.

plements, large grain farms and cotton plantations.”<sup>28</sup> A similar description of the Russian quarter of Urumchi was made by N.K. Roerich who visited the province capital in 1926:

We walk along the Russian trading post to the Chinese city. It is a wide street with low Russian-built houses. We read the signs: “Confectionery,” “Jeweler,” “Bardygin's Partnership.”<sup>29</sup>

### Orthodox churches in Xinjiang

At the same time, the Russians not only brought in the features of their own culture, but also absorbed the elements of the local one. This was reflected both in the architecture of city blocks and villages, and in the appearance of places of worship, monuments, cemeteries, communication, and new traditions.

Thus, the first Russian Orthodox church was located in a small Chinese building in Ghulja. The image of this church was published in the “Niva” magazine.<sup>30</sup> In the church there were collected copies of many revered Russian icons.<sup>31</sup> However, in 1883, this building was destroyed by Chinese troops after Russia returned to China the previously Russian-occupied Ili region.<sup>32</sup>

By 1915, there was already a new Orthodox church on the territory of the Russian consulate in Ghulja.<sup>33</sup> Then in 1925 the church was moved to another building, and in 1937–1938 there was built the Church of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker. In the 1940s a bell tower was erected next to the main building. The temple existed until the 1960s, but during the Cultural Revolution the church was destroyed.

In the 1990s the Russian community of Ghulja asked the Chinese government to build an Orthodox church.<sup>34</sup> In 1992, the Chinese authorities restored the temple in Ghulja at their own expense. The consecration of the temple in honor of St. Nicholas was performed in April 2003 by Abbot Vianor (Ivanov) who had arrived from Kazakhstan.<sup>35</sup>

In a Chinese building in Sharasume in Altai District of Xinjiang, at the Russian consulate and the Russian military formation based there – the Sharasume detachment – in 1913 there was also opened an Orthodox church. At the insistence of the head of the detachment, Colonel E.S. Sergeev, a priest regularly came there from the town of Zaysan.<sup>36</sup> During the Civil War in Russia, the church and the consulate provided assistance to refugees who had left their homeland.<sup>37</sup>

According to N.V. Bogoyavlensky, in the second half of the 19th century at the Russian consulate in Chuguchak there was also an Orthodox church, but during the Muslim uprising it was ruined, and its building was disassembled.<sup>38</sup> It is noteworthy that the building of the Russian consulate in Chuguchak was also disassembled, but not by the Chinese, but by Russian peasants living at the border. The consulate was opened

<sup>28</sup> Gosudarstvennyy arkhiv Rossiyskoy Federatsii [State Archive of the Russian Federation] (henceforth GARF), f. 5873, op. 1, d. 9, l. 17a.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted from: Glushchenko, L.I., and Sadovskaya, I.A. “Urumchi. Dzhungariya.”

<sup>30</sup> *Niva*, no. 41 (1879): 815.

<sup>31</sup> “Svyashchennik Dionisiy Pozdnyayev. Istoriya Pravoslavnoy Tserkvi v Sin'tszyane,” *Pravoslaviye v Kitaye*, August 23, 2022, [http://www.orthodox.cn/localchurch/pozdnyayev/app3\\_ru.htm](http://www.orthodox.cn/localchurch/pozdnyayev/app3_ru.htm).

<sup>32</sup> V.G. Datsyshen, *Khristianstvo v Kitae*, 126.

<sup>33</sup> *Istoriia Rossiiskoi Dukhovoi Missii v Kitae. Sbornik statei* [History of the Russian Spiritual Mission in China. Digest of articles.] (Moscow: Izd-vo Svyato-Vladimirskogo bratstva Publ., 1997), 364.

<sup>34</sup> “Kak russkii uchitel' Luniaofu (Lunev) stal deputatom Narodnogo politiko-konsul'tativnogo soveta Kitaya (interv'yu),” *Centrasia.org*, accessed August 23, 2022, <https://centrasia.org/newsA.php?st=1054594320>

<sup>35</sup> “Khramy kitayskoy avtonomnoy pravoslavnoy tserkvi,” *Pravoslaviye*, accessed August 23, 2022, <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/orthodoxchurches/41612.htm>

<sup>36</sup> Yu.A. Denyakin, *Zaisan pravoslavnyi*, 165.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>38</sup> N.V. Bogoyavlenskii, *Zapadnyi Zastennyi Kitai*, 334.

again after 1882.<sup>39</sup> However, the temple was never restored; the remains of the building were used first for household needs by the Chinese authorities, then as a hospital by the White Guard units retreating from Russia to Xinjiang.<sup>40</sup> Later this building was also ruined. In 2009, the local Orthodox community obtained a permit to build a temple, which was to be financed by the local government. Currently, regular services are held in the houses of parishioners.<sup>41</sup>

There was also an Orthodox church in Kashgar,<sup>42</sup> but there is no reliable information about it yet.

In the province capital, Urumchi, there was no temple for a long time. The Orthodox community was small (a few dozen people). Nevertheless, in 1903, on the initiative of Consul N.V. Bogoyavlensky, they started to build an Orthodox church at the Russian consulate in Urumchi.<sup>43</sup> But then, due to design errors and the threat of the collapse of the temple, its construction was stopped. Later, thanks to the efforts of A.A. Dyakov, the Russian consul in Urumchi in 1913, its construction was resumed. Dyakov, together with the local Russian community, developed a new project that made it possible to correct errors in the construction without destroying the previous structure. The documents on the construction were sent to St. Petersburg. In addition, there was even drawn up a petition by the commission of the local Russian community on the need to continue the construction of the temple.<sup>44</sup>

As a result, the temple was completed, but there was still no permanent priest there. After the establishment of Soviet-Chinese relations and the opening of the Consulate General of the USSR in Urumchi, the Soviet diplomats wanted to make a club out of the church located on its territory, but this was opposed not only by the Russian emigrants in Xinjiang, but also by the Chinese leadership of the province. As a result, the temple was preserved.<sup>45</sup> However, in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this temple suffered a similar fate as the others – it was destroyed. In 1991, at the request of the Orthodox population of Urumchi, the government of Xinjiang built a new church instead of the destroyed one, called Nikolsky, but there is still no serving priest there; services are conducted by local Russians and their descendants. Very rarely (once every few years) Orthodox priests from Kazakhstan, Russia or Australia come to Urumchi, as well as to other cities in the province.<sup>46</sup>

As N.I. Lunev notes, today “most parishioners of the Orthodox church in Urumchi are elderly women from mixed marriages.” In recent years, there has been an obvious predominance of Chinese culture. The children and grandchildren of these women do not attend the Orthodox Church, do not speak Russian, and are not interested in Russian culture. At the same time, the older generation is not concerned about this problem very much and does not attempt to resolve it.<sup>47</sup>

There were also Orthodox preaching houses in small villages in the province.<sup>48</sup> According to the just opinion of Soviet sources, the Orthodox churches were a kind of con-

<sup>39</sup> N.V. Bogoyavlenskii, *Zapadnyi Zastennyi Kitai*, 342.

<sup>40</sup> E.A. Petyakshina, “Russians in Xinjiang, 131.

<sup>41</sup> Khramy kitayskoy avtonomnoy pravoslavnoy tserkvi.

<sup>42</sup> Okorokov, A.V., and Okorokova, M.A. *Russkie pravoslavnye khramy v Kitae* [Russian Orthodox Churches in China] (Moscow: Heritage Institute Publ., 2022), 496.

<sup>43</sup> AVP RI, f. 143, op. 491, d. 427, l. 401.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, d. 429, l. 4–4 revers.

<sup>45</sup> *Istoriia Rossiiskoi Dukhovnoi Missii v Kitae*, 366.

<sup>46</sup> “Khramy kitaiskoi avtonomnoi.”

<sup>47</sup> N.V. Starkova, “‘Olosy’ ili russkie v Kitae.” *Russkii mir*. Accessed August 25, 2022. <https://rusmir.media/2009/03/01/olosy>

<sup>48</sup> *Istoriia Rossiiskoi Dukhovnoi Missii v Kitae*, 366.

necting link and united all the Orthodox Christians.<sup>49</sup> This is also confirmed by modern Chinese researchers who believe that Orthodoxy contributed to the development of contacts between the two cultures.<sup>50</sup>

### Russian cemeteries

Among the monuments of Russian culture that remain today in Xinjiang are Russian cemeteries in Suiding, Ghulja, Urumchi, Kashgar, and other places. However, most Russian cemeteries are in poor condition. Over time, there disappeared inscriptions, tombstones and crosses on many graves. In addition, there is intensive urban development near the cemeteries. This, in particular, was mentioned in an interview by M.V. Drozdov, the chairman of the World Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots who noted that in that part of the Urumchi cemetery,

where the emigrants are buried there is desolation. The crosses are tumbled down and broken, the graves are neglected. It seems that at any moment excavators can be driven here, and they will remove everything.<sup>51</sup>

The Russian cemetery in Ghulja has also been preserved. During the “cultural revolution” there also disappeared crosses and monuments; it ceased to be a memorial to thousands of Russian people and turned into one huge common grave. Most of the graves have been restored only in recent years.<sup>52</sup>

There was also a Russian cemetery in Kashgar. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was a small triangular piece of land with several graves topped with Russian crosses.<sup>53</sup> But there is no information about its current state yet.

Russian military graves have also been preserved on the territory of Xinjiang. Unlike the graves of the Russian civilian population, they are kept in order. For example, in the Dongshan Ecological Park in Urumchi, there is a monument in the form of a stele 3.2 m high. The monument has a bas-relief in the form of a red star with a hammer and sickle framed by a golden laurel wreath. On both sides of the monument there are 26 graves, each of them contains three ashes. In the grave behind the monument there are buried the remains of a woman. All the graves are covered with granite slabs with a bas-relief in the form of red stars. On the burial there is a plaque with the text in Russian and Chinese:

The remains of 79 soldiers of the Soviet Red Army who died for the freedom of the Chinese people in the 1930s are buried here. Initially, the burial was in the Russian cemetery in Urumchi in the Sanyunbei region. In May 2010, with the consent of the Government of the Russian Federation, the burial was moved to this place.<sup>54</sup>

On the monument there is a plaque with the text in Russian and Chinese: “Memory eternal to the Russian heroes who died for the Chinese people.”<sup>55</sup>

In order to preserve the monuments of Russian culture and to develop intercultural interaction in Xinjiang, it is important to maintain close ties within the framework of

<sup>49</sup> GARF, f. 6991, op. 1, d. 276, l. 41.

<sup>50</sup> Chzhe Lyan, *Pravoslavie v kontekste*, 61.

<sup>51</sup> E. Loriya, “Doroga na Kharbin.” *Kultura*, accessed Desember 15, 2015, <https://portal-kultura.ru/articles/country/125951-doroga-na-kharbin/>

<sup>52</sup> A.A. Knyazev, “Kul'dzhinskiy krest,” *Internet Archive*, accessed August 25, 2022, [https://web.archive.org/web/20111112045629/http://www.knyazev.org/books/Knyazev\\_kuldja\\_cross.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20111112045629/http://www.knyazev.org/books/Knyazev_kuldja_cross.pdf)

<sup>53</sup> M.K. Baskhanov, and E.A. Rezvan, *Kashgar*, 142.

<sup>54</sup> “Mass graves of Soviet soldiers in the city of Urumqi,” Russian Embassy in China, accessed August 24, 2022, [https://beijing.mid.ru/ru/voenno\\_memorialnaya\\_rabota/voinskie\\_zakhoroneniya\\_na\\_territorii\\_knr/spisok\\_voinskikh\\_zakhoroneny/sintszyan\\_uygurskiy\\_avtonomnyy\\_rayon/bm\\_urumchi/](https://beijing.mid.ru/ru/voenno_memorialnaya_rabota/voinskie_zakhoroneniya_na_territorii_knr/spisok_voinskikh_zakhoroneny/sintszyan_uygurskiy_avtonomnyy_rayon/bm_urumchi/)

<sup>55</sup> *Idem*.

cross-border cooperation. Since 2009, within the framework of the departmental target program of the Altai Territory “Support and development of relations with compatriots abroad,” there has been carried out cooperation with the public organization “Russian Club in Urumchi.”<sup>56</sup>

### Conclusions

The interaction of cultures is one of the most important conditions for the coexistence of various human communities and the basis for the development of interethnic relations. There can be different models of interaction of cultures – at the ethnic, national or civilizational level. The dialogue of cultures contributes to the cultural and spiritual mutual enrichment of different societies and ethnic groups. Its absence naturally leads to confrontation up to genocide. Various processes of intercultural interaction lead to different results. Positive interaction promotes unification at the level of integration, the formation of new societies that combine the historical features of the old culture and new ones developed in the process of interaction with a new cultural environment – transculturation. The destructive interaction of cultures leads to a hostile attitude of ethnic groups to each other and their inability to conduct a dialogue.

The Russian diaspora in Xinjiang province which has been formed over the past two centuries is an example of a generally positive interaction between representatives of different cultures – Russian, Turkic-speaking ethnic groups, Han, etc. This interaction contributed to the formation of a modern society of immigrants from Russia of different times that united, on the one hand, the features of different waves of Russian migrants, and, on the other hand, the peculiarities of the peoples of Xinjiang. This was expressed in various manifestations of the culture of local ethnic Russians – material and non-material.

The monuments of Russian culture preserved today in Xinjiang testify to the difficult but interesting life of the Russian diaspora in this unique region of China, the contribution of Russians to its development, and the mutual influence of cultures. The latter was of specific character. It was not complete and determinative for each culture. The first generations of Russians were characterized by the desire to preserve the features of their culture both through non-material (language, traditions) and material (residential buildings, buildings of various institutions, places of worship, burial places) cultural heritage. Over time, the non-material cultural heritage was preserved only in the Old Believer families. The rest of the Russians almost completely integrated into the local society and culture. It is the few architectural monuments preserved there and erected again that testify to the Russian cultural heritage in the province. The preservation of these monuments will contribute to the further development of bilateral contacts and mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries.

At the present stage, one should note a rather competent politics of memory in relation to the cultural heritage of Russians in this region of China, both on the part of the Chinese leadership and the Russian authorities. Many monuments have been restored. A significant part of them is under state protection. However, much remains to be done to preserve the unique monuments of Russian culture in this complex and multifaceted Chinese province.

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<sup>56</sup> “‘Russian Club’ in Urumqi met guests from Altai.” Altai – 21<sup>st</sup> century, accessed August 24, 2022, <https://www.fondaltai21.ru/2017/04/26/russkiy-klub-v-urumchi-vstretit-gostey-s-altaya/>

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