THE RUSSIAN CONQUEST OF CENTRAL ASIA

The Russian conquest of Central Asia was perhaps the nineteenth century’s most dramatic and successful example of European imperial expansion, adding 1.5 million square miles and at least 6 million people – most of them Muslims – to the Tsar’s domains. Alexander Morrison provides the first comprehensive military and diplomatic history of the conquest to be published for over a hundred years. From the earliest conflicts on the steppe frontier in the 1830s to the annexation of the Pamirs in the early 1900s, he gives a detailed account of the logistics and operational history of Russian wars against Khoqand, Bukhara and Khiva, the capture of Tashkent and Samarkand, and the bloody subjection of the Turkmen, as well as Russian diplomatic relations with China, Persia and the British Empire. Based on archival research in Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Georgia and India, memoirs and Islamic chronicles, this book explains how Russia conquered a colonial empire in Central Asia, with consequences that still resonate today.

THE RUSSIAN CONQUEST
OF CENTRAL ASIA

A Study in Imperial Expansion, 1814–1914

ALEXANDER MORRISON

New College, Oxford
In memory of John Malcolm Morrison (1949–2017)
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book has been ten years in the making, during which I have had three different jobs and worked in archives and libraries in six different countries. I have made many friends and accumulated many scholarly debts along the way, and will try to remember them all as best I can.

In what was then still the School of History at the University of Liverpool I would like to thank Paul Booth, Harald Braun, Marios Costambeys, Alex Drace-Francis, Charles Esdaile, Michael Hopkins, Michael Hughes, Richard Huzzey, Stephen Kenny, Eve Rosenhaft, Benedetta Rossi, Nigel Swain and Dmitri van den Berrselaar for many years of advice, support and guidance in what was my first academic job. I could not have asked for better colleagues or a more supportive environment as I adjusted to full-time teaching and the dreary requirements of the ‘Research Excellence Framework’. During my time at Liverpool I also held a fifty-pound Fellowship at All Souls College, Oxford, which was of great assistance to my research: my thanks to the Warden and Fellows.

The School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Nazarbayev University in what I will continue to call Astana was a remarkable place to work and a unique intellectual community – well on the way to becoming the most important centre for Central Asian studies in the world after barely a decade of existence. Thanks to my friends and colleagues Erika Alpert, Zhuldyz Amankulova, the late Sofiya An, Aiganym Ayazbayeva, Alima Bissenova, Daniel and Zohra Beben, Elliott Bowen, Aziz Burkhanov, Mwita Chacha, Zachary Coifran, Neil Collins, Eric Espinoza, Andrei Filchenko, David Hammerbeck, Michael Hancock-Parmer, Meruert Ibrayeva, Saniya Karpykova, Meiramgul Kusseinova, Yoshiharu Kobayashi, Kevin Lam, Jack Lee, Don Leggett, Laura Makhulbayeva, Gwen McEvoy, Gabriel McGuire, James Nikopoulos, Loretta O’Donnell, Brendan Pietsch, Duncan Priestley, Daniel and Christina Pugh, Nurlan Qabdilhaq, Danielle Ross, Rosario and Aida Ronga, Edwin Sayes, Caress Schenk, Daniel Scarborough, Uli Schamiloglu, John Schoeberlein, Francesco Sica, Charles Sullivan, Victoria Thorstensson, Alexei Trochev, Nikolai Tsyrempilov, Siegfried van Duffel, Stephen Wheatcroft, Chris Whitson, the late Matthew Wilhite, Spencer Willardson, Zbigniew Wojnowski, Mahire Yakup and Almira Zholamanova – and to my students.
Alibek Akhmetov, Alen Askar, Laura Berdikhojaeva, Madina Bizhanova, Yerkebulan Dosmakhambet, Yuan Gao, Inzhuna Karazhanova, Galiya Khassenkhanova, Dmitri Melnikov, Nursultan Nurumkhanov, Xeniya Prilutskaya, Makhabbat Sadykova, Aliya Tazhibayeva, Adina Tulegenova, Di Wang, Kamshat Yermaganbetova and Ademi Zhakyp. There is nothing like teaching *History of Kazakhstan* semester after semester to help you refine and focus your ideas about Central Asia’s past.

I have also benefited hugely from being part of the wider community of Kazakhstani historians during my time in Astana and since: thanks to Miras Abdralkim, Meruert Abusseitova, Mikhail Akulov, the late Timur Beisembiev, Assylikhan Bikenov, Karlygash Bizhigitova, Gianluca Bonora, Tenlik Dalayeva, Irina Erofeeva, Gulbanu Izbassarova, Nikolai Kropivnitskii, Zhanar Jampeisssova, Ablet Kamalov, Svetlana Kovalskaya, Galina Ksenzhik, Yerlan Medeubaev, Ashirbek Muminov, Gulnara Musabalina, Arailym Musagalieva, Gulmira Orynbaeva, Pavel Shabley, Dina Sharipova, Anar Smagulova, Gulmira Sultangalieva, Zhuldyz Tulibaeva, Saule Uderbaeva and Marziya Zhyllysbaeva.

In Oxford David Parrott made me feel at home at New College from the moment I arrived, and has been unfailingly kind and patient with the many idiotic queries I have put to him since. I would also like to thank Roy Allison, Katya Andreyev, Robert Beddard, James Belich, Nigel Biggar, the late Jeremy Catto, Erica Charters, Nicholas Cole, Sarah Crook, the late John Davis, Michael Feener, John-Paul Ghobrial, Adrian Gregory, Dan Healey, Edmund Herzig, Rob Johnson, Catriona Kelly, Colin Kidd, Robin Lane-Fox, Noel Malcolm, Julia Mannherz, Katie McKeogh, Andy Meadows, Asli Niyazioglu, Sofya Omarova, Ali Parchami, Christian Sahner, Beatrice Teissier, Hannah Theaker, Christopher Tyerman, David Washbrook, the late Mark Whittow, Peter Wilson, George Woudhuysen, John Vickers and Andrei Zorin.

I began the research for this book in 2009 thanks to a small research grant from the British Academy, which also funded a conference on the Russian conquest of Central Asia at the University of Liverpool in 2012. This did much to form my ideas and resulted in a special issue of *Central Asian Survey* on the topic. In 2011, together with Dr Berny Sèbe of the University of Birmingham, I was awarded an AHRC early career research grant, ‘Outposts of Conquest’, for a comparative study of colonial fortresses in the steppe and the Sahara which funded an important field trip to the Syr-Darya region. In 2012 I was awarded a Philip Leverhulme Prize by the Leverhulme foundation, which funded trips to Moscow, St Petersburg and Amsterdam, as well as a semester of leave at Liverpool. Most recently I have benefited from funding from the History Faculty at Oxford for a monograph workshop in the summer of 2018, which did much to finally get me over the finishing line, and a subvention from the Ludwig Humanities Research Fund at New College to pay for the drawing
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

of maps and the inclusion of additional illustrations. My thanks to all these funding bodies.

Thanks to Michael Watson, Emily Sharp and Lisa Carter of Cambridge University Press, for their understanding and patience during this book’s very long gestation, and to Steven Holt for his eagle-eyed copy-editing. Portions of the Introduction and of Chapters 2, 3 and 5 first appeared as articles in Ab Imperio, Central Asian Survey, The Journal of the Economic & Social History of the Orient and Modern Asian Studies. My thanks to the editors of those journals for permission to re-publish. I would also like to thank Teona Iashvili, Arnur Karymsakov and Tat’yana Burmistrova, the directors respectively of the National Archives of Georgia, the Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian State Military-Historical Archive, for permission to reproduce images of documents from these archives. Especial thanks to Natasha Bregel for permission to base Map 1 on her father Yuri Bregel’s teaching map of Central Asia at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

I began writing this book in 2010 on a Visiting Fellowship at the Slavic Research Centre of Hokkaido University, where I was hosted by Uyama Tomohiko, an inexhaustible fount of knowledge on everything to do with the history of the Qazaqs. It was he who told me I needed to explain not just why the conquest of Central Asia happened, but why it happened when it did. Dominic Lieven’s work has long been an inspiration, and for the last twenty years he has encouraged me to persist with the diplomatic and military history of the Russian empire in the teeth of academic fashion. Scott Levi has always been ready to enlighten me on abstruse points of Central Asian military terminology over a beer or two. David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye has been generous with his insights on Turkestan generals and explorers, and in sharing sources. When I was in Astana David McDonald offered unstinting moral and practical support in the face of the more surreal aspects of NU’s bureaucracy, as well as much sound academic advice there and as a very generous host in Madison. Over the last four years it has been a great privilege to be able to discuss the nomadic economy, the vacuousness of the ‘Silk Road’ and the dietary benefits of horsemeat with Anatoly Khazanov.

Neither this book nor any of my other research would have been possible without the endless kindness and hospitality of Misha Labovsky and Olga Vinogradova, who for two decades now have been offering me a home from home on Malaya Bronnaya whenever I have needed to work in Moscow: I am deeply grateful to them. Also in Moscow I would like to thank Vladimir Bobrovnikov, Tatiana Kotiukova, Evgenii Kozhokin, Andrey Linrin and Dmitrii Vasil’ev. In St Petersburg Sergei Abashin, Alfrid Bustanov, Boris Kolontskii, Roman Pochekeav and Alexander Semyonov have provided academic support and unfailingly stimulating ideas, and Olga and Emmanuel Berard much-needed relaxation at their picture-perfect dacha. In Orenburg
Sergei Liubichankovskii was an exemplary host and allowed me to present my work on the Orenburg customs to an expert audience.

In Tashkent and Samarkand I am grateful to Bakhtiyar Babajanov for his generous hospitality and incisive conversation, as well as Evgenii Abdullaev, Raushan Abdullaev, Hushnud Abdurasulov, Akmal Bazarbaev, Said Gaziev, Muhayo Isakova, Alisher Khaliyarov, Oybek Mahmudov, Sherzodhon Mahmudov, Jolal Nasirov, Hilola Nazirova, Sirojiddin Nurmatov, Azim Malikov, Ludmila Pak, Oksana Pugovkina, Elena Pustovaya, Sanobar Shadmanova, Uktambek Sultanov, Gulchehra Sultanova, Nuriyogdi Toshev, Abduvahob Vahidov and Qahramon Yaqubov. In Khujand Inomjon Mamadailey and Nabijon Rahimov were kind and generous hosts. In Bishkek and Karakol I would like to thank Gulzada Abdaliev, Gulnara Aitpaeva, Christopher Baker, Janyl Bokontoeva, Svetlana Jacquesson, Adyl Kanimetov, Aziza Suiumbaeva, Medet Tiulegenov and Cholpon Turdalieva. In Tbilisi Timothy Blauvelt took me to the sulphur baths, while Anton Vacharadze showed that post-Soviet archives can be accessible and user-friendly when they have the right person running them.

In Delhi, Bhola and Promodini Varma, Manik Varma and Sachi Srivastava have been encouraging my scholarship for nearly two decades. I am deeply grateful to them, and to Madhavan Palat.


Especial thanks to those who read and commented on individual chapters to help me avoid the worst howlers: Ulfatbek Abdurasulov, Bakhtiyar Babajanov,
Daniel Beben, Victoria Clement, Markus Hauser, Anton Ikhsanov, Ablet Kamalov, Oybek Mahmudov, Robert Middleton, James Pickett, Daniel Prior and Paul Richmond. Paolo Sartori and Marianne Kamp read the entire manuscript at the monograph workshop in Oxford in 2018 and provided detailed comments. I am deeply grateful to them for taking the trouble. I would also particularly like to thank Daniel Beben, Tom Welsford and Paolo Sartori for assistance with documents in Chaghatai and for correcting my execrable Persian. Tom also read the entire manuscript, providing line by line commentary, proof-reading and copy-editing. If this book is readable at all it is thanks to him. The remaining errors are of course my own responsibility.

Berny Sèbe also deserves special thanks for his acute observational skills, brilliant photography and unflagging cheerfulness during our journey from the Aral Sea along the valley of the Syr-Darya in search of fortresses in the summer of 2012. My memories of that trip are all the more precious since the third member of our party was my dear friend Alim Sabitov, whose death in 2019 has left a void that can never be filled. Every one of the many trips I have made to Almaty since 2005 has been a prazdnik thanks to him and Gulnara Abikeyeva.

My mother, Penny, and brother Nicholas have reminded me that there is more to life than academia – for cricket, theatre, birds and bumblebees my thanks and love.

My wife, Beatrice Penati, was healthily sceptical about this book from the beginning – too many men with moustaches and not enough numbers or Excel spreadsheets. She has been striving heroically for the last ten years to turn me into a poriadochnyi chelovek, and along the way we have shared many things which are much more important than this book. The fact that I have finished it is a testimony to her patience, support and love.

My father, John Morrison, encouraged me to become a historian rather than follow in his footsteps as a journalist because I never use one word where six will do. He did not live to see the completion of this book, but I know that he would have thought it far too long. I dedicate it to his memory.
NOTE ON TRANSLATION, TRANSLITERATION AND DATES

For the transliteration of Russian terms and proper names I have used the simplified library of Congress system without diacritics, apart from ’ to indicate the soft sign (ь), and using ya rather than the misleading ia for я. Terms and names in Central Asian languages are generally transliterated from historic spellings in the Arabic script, again using a simplified system without diacritics except for ‘ to indicate ʼain (݂) and ’ for hamza (ʼ). Where familiar versions of a name already exist in English I have stuck with the established spelling (e.g. Samarkand not Samarqand). Where a direct English equivalent exists, technical terms have been translated, notably oblast’ (province) and uезд (district). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Russian, French and Persian are my own, while all translations from Chaghatai are by a friend who prefers to remain anonymous, but whose assistance I gratefully acknowledge.

Before 14 February 1918 the Russian empire operated according to the Julian calendar, which was thirteen days behind the Gregorian calendar used in the rest of Europe, and now worldwide. Almost all dates in this book are Old Style (O.S.), but when the Russians were dealing directly with the British I have also given Gregorian dates. All dates in the footnotes are those given in the original document, which in most cases means they are O.S.
ABBREVIATIONS

Archives

F. – Fond (Fund); Op. – Opis’ (Catalogue); D. – Delo (File); l. – list’ (folio); ob – oborot’ (verso).

AV
Arkhiv Vostokovedov Sankt-Peterburgskogo Filiala Instituta Vostokovedenii RAN (St Petersburg Filial of the Oriental Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Archive of Orientalists)

AVPRI
Arkhiv Vneshnei Politiki Rossiskoi Imperii (Archive of the Russian Empire’s Foreign Policy, Moscow).

BL
British Library, London.

GAOO
Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Orenburgskoi Oblasti (State Archive of Orenburg Province, Orenburg)

GARF
Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiskoi Federatsii (State Archive of the Russian Federation, Moscow).

IAOO
Istoricheskii Arkhiv Omskoi Oblasti (Historical Archive of Omsk Province, Omsk)

IOR
India Office Records (British Library, London)

IISH
International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam

NAG
National Archives of Georgia (Tbilisi)

NAI
National Archives of India (New Delhi)

RGIA
Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv (Russian State Historical Archive, St Petersburg)

RGIMOPI
Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Musei, Otdel Pis’mennykh Istochnikov (Russian State Historical Museum, Division of Written Sources, Moscow)

RGVIA
Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voenna-Istoricheskii Arkhiv (Russian State Military-Historical Archive, Moscow).

TsGARKaz
Tsentral’nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Respubliki Kazakhstan (Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Almaty).

TsGARUz
Tsentral’nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Respubliki Uzbekistan (Central State Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Tashkent).

Document Collections

AKAK
Akty, sobranne Kavkazskoi Arkheograficheskoi Komissii (Tiiflis: Tip. Glavnogo Upravleniya Namestnika Kavkazskogo, 1881)

KRO
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS


PP Parliamentary Papers

PSZ Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii


Serebrennikov A. G. Serebrennikov (ed.) Sbornik Materialov dlya istorii zavoevaniya Turkestanskogo Kraya 1839 g.–1845 g (Tashkent: Tip. Sht. Turkestanskogo V.O., 1908–1912) 4 Vols & Turkestanski Kraj. Sbornik Materialov dlya istorii ego zavoevaniya 1846 g.–52 g, 1864 g.–66 g (Tashkent: Tip. Shtaba Turkestanskogo Voennogo Okruga, 1914–15) 13 Vols

Sbornik Sbornik Imperatorskogo Russkogo Istoricheskogo Obshchestva


Chronicles


LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS


Journals and Publications

AHR American Historical Review
AI Ab Imperio
AS Asiatische Studien
CAC Cahiers d'Asie Centrale
CAS Central Asian Survey
CSSH Comparative Studies in Society & History
EcHR Economic History Review
EHR English Historical Review
GJ The Geographical Journal
HJ The Historical Journal
IIRGO Izvestiya Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo Obshchestva
IJMES International Journal of Middle-East Studies
IS Iranian Studies
IV Istoricheskii Vestnik
IZ Istoricheskie Zapiski
JAH Journal of Asian History
JBFGO Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas
JESHO Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient
JGH Journal of Global History
JIS Journal of Islamic Studies
JMH Journal of Military History
JPS Journal of Persianate Studies
JRGS Journal of the Royal Geographical Society
JWH Journal of World History
Kritika Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History
MAS Modern Asian Studies
MES Middle-Eastern Studies
PPV Pis'mennye Pamyatniki Vostoka
PRGS Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society
RA Russkii Arkhiv
RS Russkaya Starina
RV Russkii Vestnik
SEER Slavonic & East European Review
SR Slavic Review
St Pb. St Petersburg
## List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>TKLA</td>
<td>Protokol zasedaniya i soobshcheniya chlenov Turkestanskogo Kruzhka Liubitelei Arkheologii</td>
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<td>TOUAK</td>
<td>Trudy Orenburgskoi Uchenoi Arkhivnoi Komissii</td>
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<td>TRHS</td>
<td>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</td>
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<td>TVOIRAO</td>
<td>Trudy Vostochnogo Otdeleniya Imperatorskogo Russkogo Arkheologicheskogo Osnovhestva</td>
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<td>TS</td>
<td>Turkestanskii Sbornik</td>
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<td>TV</td>
<td>Turkestanskie Vedomosti</td>
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<tr>
<td>VE</td>
<td>Vestnik Evropy</td>
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<tr>
<td>VIRGO</td>
<td>Vestnik Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo Obshestva</td>
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<tr>
<td>VS</td>
<td>Voennyi Sbornik</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZIRGO</td>
<td>Zapiski/Zhurnal Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo Osnovhestva</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZVOIRAO</td>
<td>Zapiski Vostochnogo Otdele niya Imperatorskogo Russkogo Arkheologicheskogo Osnovhestva</td>
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Glossary

‘Adat – customary law, applied in the Russian Empire to the law used by nomads.
Aul – a nomadic encampment or winter settlement.
Aqsaqal – ‘white-beard’. An elder, a village headman.
Arba – a high, two-wheeled cart.
Arq – an irrigation canal.
Baty – a warrior or hero, cognate of Bahadur (Persian) and Bogatyr (Russian).
Bek/Beg – a title of respect, (sometimes) governor of a province.
Berdanka – affectionate term for the Berdan rifle, introduced in the Russian army after 1870.
Bii – a Kyrghyz or Qazaq judge or figure of authority.
Bekkhwah – a Khoqandi court rank, literally meaning a ‘petitioner for justice’.
Dasht-i Qipchaq – ‘the field of the Qipchaqs’. Name used for the steppe between the twelfth and nineteenth centuries.
Desyatina – Russian measurement of area, equivalent to 2¾ acres or 1.09 hectares.
Diwan – Qazaq term for the administrative divisions created by the Russians in the steppe in the 1820s, but with the broader meaning of a court or political centre.
Diwan-begi – chief minister (Khiva).
Dungan – Han Chinese Muslims, many of whom migrated to Russian Turkestan in the 1880s.
Fazany – ‘pheasants’ – a contemptuous term for aristocratic officers who secured a transfer to Central Asia when there was a campaign and a chance of medals or promotion.
Jigit – Turkic term meaning a mounted warrior, used by the Russians for mounted messengers, bodyguards etc.
Jungharia – what is now northern Xinjiang in western China.
Khan – a royal title indicating (in principle) both Chingissid descent and widespread recognition of a right to rule. By the nineteenth century only Qazaq Khans were genuinely Chingissids.
Khoja or Khwaja – a religious honorific indicating descent from the prophet’s kin, and (sometimes) membership of a Sufi lineage.
Kibitka – term used by the Russians for nomadic households and yurts.
Kirgiz – The generic term used by the Russians for both Qazaqs and Kyrgyz in Central Asia. I have preserved it in quotations from primary sources, while referring to Qazaqs and Kyrgyz in the main body of the text.
Inorodtsy – literally ‘those of a different birth’. A term used to describe some of the non-Russian peoples of the empire. As a legal category it denoted those excluded from Russian citizenship.
xxiv GLOSSARY

Ishan – a religious leader, whose authority could derive from personal charisma, or from blood descent from or being taught by a famous saint. Associated with Sufism, although not all ishans belonged to a Sufi order.

Lazutchik – scout or spy.

Manap – a figure of authority among the Kyrgyz.

Mawara ‘al-nahr – ‘the land beyond the river’. The river in question is the Oxus or Amu-Darya. This was the classic Arabic term for the settled lands of Central Asia, lying roughly between the Amu-Darya and the Syr-Darya.

Oblast – a province, with a population of a million or more. Known as a guberniya in European Russia.

Okrug – a military district.

Otdel – an administrative division.

Pood – Russian measurement of weight, equivalent to 36 lbs.

Pristav – in this period the officer in charge of a region whose administration has not yet been regularised.

Qazi-Kalan – the chief Islamic judge of a city.

Qush-begi – Chief Minister (Bukhara).

Sarbaz – infantry drilled according to modern methods in the armies of Bukhara and Khoqand.

Sart – a generic term used both by Russians and by nomads for the settled population of Central Asia.

Sayyid – one claiming descent from the tribe of the Prophet.

Shaika – raiding band.

Sotnya – a company of Cossack cavalry, usually 100–120 men.

Stanitsa – a Cossack settlement.

Sultan – a title which among Qazaqs indicates Chingissid descent, i.e. membership of the ‘white bone’ aristocracy.

Taranchi – ‘farmer’ – the name by which the modern Uyghurs were known in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Töre/Tura – a title of respect, indicating membership of the ‘white bone’ Chingissid aristocracy among Qazaqs.

Trakt – highway or post-road.

Tuzemtsy – ‘natives’. The general term used by Russians to describe the local population.

Uezd – a district, which in Turkestan could have a population of 250,000 or more.

‘ulama – the collective term for Muslim clergy and theological scholars, plural of alim.

Verst – Russian measurement of distance, equivalent to about two-thirds of a mile.

Volost – an administrative division, in Central Asia usually with about 2,000 households.

Zakat – the Islamic tax on goods, 1/40th of their value – widely applied to livestock in Central Asia.

Zhuz – ‘hundred’, usually translated as ‘horde’. Name for the three political divisions of the Qazaqs.
Map 1 Central Asia before the Russian conquest. (Redrawn from 'Central Asia: First Half of the 19th Century'. © Yuri Bregel, with the kind permission of Natasha Bregel.)