

challenge. War is not the determining factor in history; it always occurs in the context of demographic changes, technological inventions, commercialization, and the development of organizational skills.

But neither should war, qua war, be neglected. Peter Paret issues an important warning in a review of writings on warfare in the West. Historians of war, Paret argues, should not only study the connection of war with state-building, the family, demographic change, and social values. The study of war also quite properly includes the analysis of battles, of strategy and tactics, command, and weapons.<sup>42</sup> Important differences exist between wars and their consequences in China and Europe, and of course between these and other areas in the world. As John Fairbank wrote two decades ago: 'Among China's contributions to today's world is a distinctive military record that has been too little studied.'<sup>43</sup> This volume is offered in the hope that it makes a beginning with this.

<sup>42</sup> Paret, 'The new military history,' in *Understanding War*, p. 222.

<sup>43</sup> Fairbank, 'Introduction,' in Frank Kierman and John Fairbank (eds), *Chinese Ways in Warfare* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 1.

## *Military Mobilization in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century China, Russia, and Mongolia*

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### Introduction

From the mid-seventeenth to the late eighteenth centuries three agrarian states—Chinese, Mongolian, and Russian—struggled for power over the heartland of the Eurasian continent. Each had dynamic central leaders mobilizing agrarian surpluses based on drastically different ecologies, institutions, and military structures. When the dust cleared, by 1760, only two survived.

Why three? Everyone has heard of the expansion of the Russian state into Siberia, and many scholars know that at the same time the Qing empire, under Manchu rule, expanded in an unprecedented fashion into the oases, deserts, and steppes of Central Asia. But the third contender for power, the Zunghar state of the Western Mongols, is relatively unknown. Its expansion represented the last of a series of efforts at hegemony over the steppe by nomadic rulers which had begun at least as early as the Xiongnu confederation of the second century B.C. (Barfield, 1989).

The Great Game of the nineteenth century pitted the British and Russian empires against each other for domination of Central Asia at the cost of the indigenous peoples of Afghanistan, Tibet, and Xinjiang, and of the weakening Chinese state. Likewise, the collapse of the Soviet Union in the twentieth century will ignite new contests for power in this region, whose players include Russians, Chinese, Kazakhs, Iranians, Turks, among others. The eighteenth-century game played out a similar drama with a different cast. It deserves attention for several reasons: it marked the elimination of independent nomad power; it offers comparisons of forms of agrarian mobilization outside the European context; it was one of the last major

international competitions based almost exclusively on agrarian, not industrial economies. (Cf. McNeill, 1982).

In 1644, the Manchu rulers of the newly established Qing dynasty (A.D. 1644–1911) took control of North China from the Chinese-ruled Ming (A.D. 1368–1644) as the first stage of their 'Great Enterprise'. (Wakeman, 1985) From 1644 to 1683 they were preoccupied first with driving out the loyalists of the fallen Ming and secondly with suppressing revolts in South and Southeast China. (Struve 1984; Spence & Wills, eds 1979). In 1674, the twenty-year-old Kangxi emperor, having thrown off the regency of his uncles, suppressed revolts by three enfeoffed Manchu nobles who had supported the conquest, but who subsequently created autonomous appanages in the South (the Three Feudatories Revolt). (Kessler 1976) He then put down the unruly peasantry of Taiwan who had found allies in seaborne merchant pirates, Dutch traders, and Ming loyalists. (Wills, in Spence & Wills, eds 1979; Shepherd 1993) Having secured the Southeast, the Manchus turned their attention to the region which had constantly been the greatest threat to Chinese imperial security—the arid Northwest. Here a revitalized nomadic state-building project, led by the Western Mongol (Oirat, Eleuth) chieftain Galdan (r. 1671–1697), claimed control over the vast reaches of present-day Xinjiang, Inner and Outer Mongolia, and parts of present day Qinghai, Tibet, and Kazakhstan. Galdan drew on active support from the Tibetan Lamaist regime in Lhasa, at least passive acquiescence from most of the oasis-dwelling Turkish peoples of the Tarim Basin, and on varying degrees of personal, tribal, and ethnic loyalty from other Mongolian, Turkish, and Tibetan peoples extending from Hami and Kokonor in the East to Lhasa in the West.

Meanwhile, the rulers of Muscovy had engaged in constant warfare on both their Eastern and Western frontiers. In the East, the taking of Kazan and Astrakhan in the 1550s was followed by further attacks on the Tatars. Russians had also begun commercial and military expansion into Siberia after 1580. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, under Peter the Great (r. 1689–1725) and his successors, Russian rulers entered into contact with all the other players in the Central Asian Great Game: Kazakhs, Turkestanis, Chinese, Siberian tribal leaders, Mongols, etc. Treaty negotiations with the Chinese in 1689 (Nerchinsk) and 1727 (Kiakhta) had delimited the border in Siberia and Manchuria between the Russian and Chinese empires and ensured regulated border trade. (Mancall 1971; Foust 1969)

These are still the 'legitimate' borders which the Chinese claim in principle today (a principle denied by the Russians).

In all three states, military expansion, increased 'stateness', and commercial expansion went hand in hand. Ultimately, however, the resources of men, food, money, weaponry, and prestige had to be extracted, purchased, or produced from the agrarian substructure. Each of these huge agrarian empires had to transform the production relations, trading networks, and extractive techniques of their peasantries in order to mobilize the maximum possible military force. Their mutual competition and negotiation significantly shaped the political and social evolution of all three regimes.

It was a life-or-death struggle. In the end, of course, only two states survived. The Zunghar state was crushed by an extended series of Chinese military campaigns, from the Kangxi emperor's three wars against Galdan (1690–97) to the Qianlong emperor's campaigns of 1755–1760. The Zunghar state and people, perhaps one million of them, vanished from the historical stage, obliterated by a combination of starvation, battlefield death, Chinese massacres, epidemic disease, dispersal through flight, and enslavement to Chinese, Russian, Kazakh, and other overlords. Russian tacit acquiescence to the extermination of the Zunghar state was critical to Chinese success. Even though at times they offered refuge or material support to Zunghar state builders, in the end the Russians refused to intervene directly. The elimination of the Mongolian state gave the Chinese imperial rulers the largest area they ever had controlled, including the present boundaries of the People's Republic plus the present-day Mongolian Republic, the Ili valley in Kazakhstan, part of Kirghizia, and parts of Siberia north of the Amur River. The Qing maintained nominal control of this region (although losing *de facto* sovereignty over the Ili valley and other regions to Russia after 1870) until the collapse of the empire in 1911. This was the longest period in history of extended control by a unified regime over both the Chinese heartland and the Central Asian steppe.

Western social scientists have developed a sophisticated literature which analyzes comparatively and historically the linkages between state formation, military power, the rise of capitalism, and agrarian production. (Anderson 1979; Tilly 1990; Wallerstein 1974) Nearly all of this literature focuses exclusively on the European experience. Debates revolve around time-honoured issues of Western sociology and history: the significance of class relations, the systematic

interrelation of capitalist economies with state power; the nexus of war, economy, and power. Useful as it is, their perspective remains too narrow. Conversely, although historians of China have developed a rich fund of related concepts and narratives to examine the rise, fall, and rise of the Ming and Qing dynasties from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, they have nearly always examined China in isolation from the global context. Parallels to the Western European experience have been noted, but few convincing explanations found. Only a few bold 'world historians' have speculated on the links integrating global processes during this period. (Atwell 1982, 1986, 1988; Fletcher 1985; Goldstone 1988, 1991; McNeill 1981; Wakeman 1986) But empirical demonstration of posited parallels is still scarce.

Furthermore, even comparative study of China and Europe is too confining. The cores of both of these regions have long been dominated by settled agriculturalists. Nomadic pastoralism has, however, been the dominant social formation in the expanse of Central Asia roughly east of the Urals, north of the Iranian plateau, south of the Siberian forests, and north to northwest of the Great Wall. Although the heartland of China, North and South, has been based on settled peasantry, the interaction with nomadism, the looming presence and shadowy existence of an alien other, has always been crucial to China's social, political, and cultural development. K. N. Chaudhuri has recently argued that the entire history of Asia cannot be understood independently of the history of the steppe, and much the same can be said for Russia and Ukraine. (Chaudhuri 1990, 138-48; McNeill 1964; Ostrowski 1990; Vernadsky 1953) When we look at the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, we see the last time when nomads and settled regimes interacted as equal, autonomous presences. After the mid-eighteenth century, nomads were reduced to a subordinate status as internal colonies of the Russian and Chinese empires—an equally fascinating, but different story. Analyzing this final phase of steppe-settled interaction leads to fresh insights about the relationships between agrarian and pastoral ecology and state formation.

The available secondary or theoretical literature on this particular time and place is not large. No satisfactory English-language synthetic account has ever been written of this process. Why has it been neglected? Several underlying preconceptions of both Western and non-Western history and social theory are exposed by this neglect. Eurocentrism, mentioned above, is only one. Sinocentrism, by both Chinese and Westerners, privileges the 'core' eighteen provinces of

predominantly Han China, assigning the rest to a remote, peripheral frontier. Studies of modern Chinese history focused on China's 'response to the West' concentrate overwhelmingly on the maritime contact with Western Europeans, Americans, and Japanese, subordinating the equally significant and longer-lasting overland links with Russia and Central Asia. Orientalism, in its Chinese guise, past and present, sees nomads, Turks, Tibetans, Muslims, Mongols—all the diverse populations of Central Asia—as either irredeemably alien, or comprehensible only to the extent that they assimilate to Han Chinese categories ('cooked' barbarians). (Gladney 1991; Crossley 1990) Central Asian specialists wrestle with individual pieces of a vast and confusing linguistic, religious, and geographic realm. For most of them, the Mongol empire of Chingis Khan and Kublai Khan is the high point; after that it is all downhill.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, nationalist historiography, a product of the nineteenth century which pervades the historical writing of all contemporary nation-states, implies that the domination of Russia and China over this region was to be expected, a natural and inevitable product of a historical process driven by great leaders like Kangxi and Peter the Great. Losers are relegated to the dustbin of history.<sup>2</sup> For example, the chapter on the Northwest in the 'General History of the Qing' by the PRC historian Dai Yi begins with a quote from Mao Zedong: 'China is a country with a large population formed from the union of many nationalities', and continues: 'After the Qing dynasty established complete control over the entire country, the minority peoples distributed on our country's broad western and northern borders—Mongols, Tibetans, Hui (Chinese Muslims), Uighurs, Kazakhs, Burut, etc.—began to establish political and economic links with the central Qing government, and increasingly became inseparable members of our country's multinational state'. (Dai 1981, vol. 2, 136)

Necessity, totalization, and finality: these basically Hegelian principles of historical interpretation suited the era of the rising nation state. (Chartier 1988, 57) Today, however, contingency, fragmenta-

<sup>1</sup> The chapter on the post-Mongol period in Denis Sinor's bibliography of Central Asia is entitled 'L'époque de la décadence'. (Sinor, 1963)

<sup>2</sup> The resurrection of an autonomous Mongolian state in the twentieth century only partially disproves this tendency, since Mongolian historiography very closely follows the Russian Marxist-nationalist line. But it does have interesting variations, e.g. on the interpretation of the significance of Chingis Khan, and an even stronger anti-Chinese tone than in Russian historiography after the Sino-Soviet split.

tion, and diversity seem like far more useful interpretive principles than the immanency, determinism, and monist politico-cultural unity of the nineteenth century. The collapse of the Soviet Union and its domination of Central Asia is only one example. The whole analysis of state-building world-wide needs greater attention to the contingent political and social construction of nation-states. We must subvert inherited nationalist historiography by discovering new organizing themes.<sup>3</sup>

Historians of technology, another field strongly marked by the classically Whiggish notion of inevitable progress, have offered several guidelines for undermining these assumptions: 1) pay as much attention to technological failures as to successes; 2) examine similar technological developments in several different cultural contexts; 3) look closely at the interrelationships of personality, political environment, technical determinants, and social structure. (Staudenmeier 1985; Smith & Marx, eds. 1994) Analogously, in examining the agrarian foundations of state-building, we need to focus now on the accidents of leadership (succession to power matters), failed efforts, and cross-cultural (especially non-Western) perspectives. Central Asia is an excellent place to look.

Of necessity, in this limited space, I can only sketch a few features. In what follows, I first provide a brief narrative account which emphasizes the global interactions between the three contending powers. Since the Russian and Chinese stories are much better known, I give more attention to the Mongolian state. Then I examine two critical links between state-building and agrarian ecology: grain provisioning and population mobility.<sup>4</sup> I conclude with a discussion of the Chinese use of inscriptions in consolidating hegemony over Central Asia.

*A Note on Scale:* It is roughly 4000 kilometers from the Ural mountains to the Great Wall, and 2400 kilometers from the southern end of the Siberian forest to the northern rim of the Himalayan plateau. Central Asia, broadly defined, covers nearly ten million square kilometers, equivalent to the size of the entire People's Republic, Europe, or the United States. State-building here takes place on a continental scale, without any of the conveniences offered by water

<sup>3</sup> Cf. a similar approach to the history of the Chinese revolution by Joseph Esherick (1995).

<sup>4</sup> I do not mean to rule out other factors as less important. Others which deserve greater treatment are disease transmission, commercial integration, military technology, and religio-cultural change.

transport, or boundaries defined by valleys and mountain ranges. Grasslands, forests, deserts, and high mountains define an extremely fragmented, inhospitable ecology. Chinese expeditions into the Northwest exceeded the distance of Napoleon's march on Russia, over much more hostile terrain. Nomadic state builders had nowhere near the concentration of resources available to their settled competitors, but all state builders in the steppe had to compensate for its poverty and fragmentation. (Christian 1994)

Historically, Central Asia had usually been fragmented. Only rarely did a nomadic empire builder succeed in unifying the vast disparate region, and these empires seldom lasted long. Chingis Khan's Mongol empire was a rare exception, as Thomas Barfield has argued. (Barfield 1989) Essentially, the resources of the steppe were inadequate to support a large imperial military or bureaucratic apparatus. Successful nomadic empire builders had to rely on resources from outside, extracting wealth through trade, tribute, or plunder.

### I. The Rise and Fall of the Zunghars

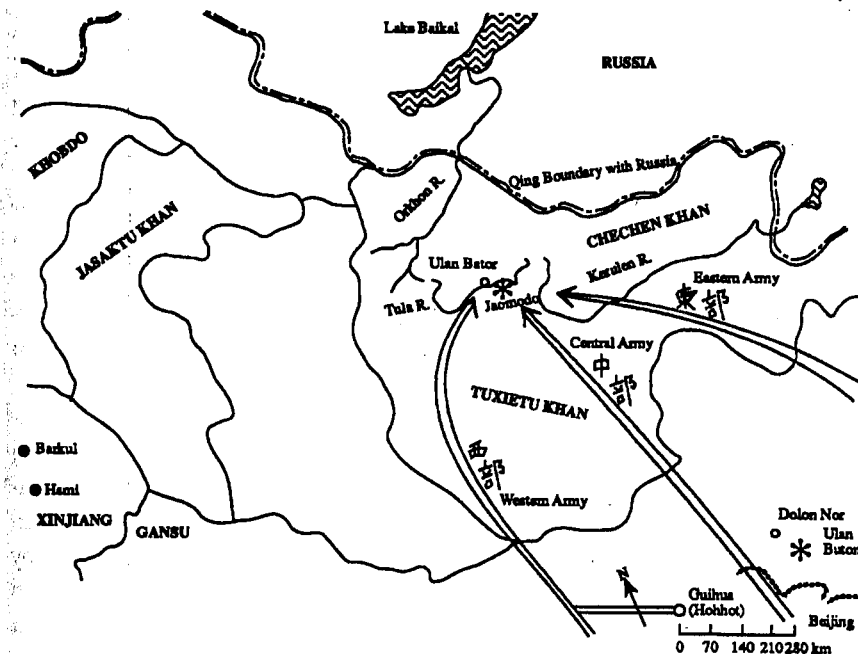
Galdan's father, Batur Hongtaiji (r. 1634–1653), began the building of the Zunghars into a major military power. Dominating the Tarbagatai and Urumqi region, he obtained weapons and livestock from the Russians, built a permanent capital, and embraced the Lamaist religion. On Batur's death in 1653, his son Sengge succeeded him, but was murdered in 1671. Galdan, learning of his brother's murder, returned from Lhasa in 1673 and soon gained authority over the Zunghar chiefs. By 1679 he had taken over Eastern Turkestan, Hami, and Turfan, and requested confirmation of his title of Bushuktu Khan by Kangxi.

Disputes among two Khans of the Eastern Mongols (Khalkhas) offered both Galdan and Kangxi opportunities to extend their influence into Mongolia. Galdan conducted a major expedition eastward in 1688, in which he crushed the 5,000 Khalkha troops opposing him. Reports of Galdan's men plundering and burning temples in Khalkha territory sent tens of thousands of starving refugees fleeing to ask for Kangxi's protection. The emperor generously provided relief supplies to the Khalkha refugees, but he was preoccupied with negotiations with the Russians to prevent them aiding Galdan. In 1688, he was prepared to take only defensive action, but by 1690/6,

after the signing of the Treaty of Nerchinsk, he was prepared to launch his first personal expedition against Galdan. Kangxi's first expedition against Galdan was provoked by Galdan's effort to invade Outer Mongolia in search of booty for his troops. The decisive battle of Ulan Butong took place 300 kilometers north of Beijing, on 1690/8/1.<sup>5</sup> Galdan's forces hid in the forests and used Russian cannon to put up stiff resistance, but Qing artillery damaged them badly. Galdan was allowed to retreat after negotiations mediated by the Dalai Lama's representatives. Although Galdan swore an oath of allegiance to Kangxi, the emperor clearly did not trust him. From this point on, Kangxi was determined to crush Galdan, but illness had forced the emperor to return to the capital on 7/24. After his defeat at Ulan Butong, Galdan retreated to the Khobdo region of Western Mongolia, 2500 kilometers from Beijing, well out of Kangxi's reach. There he was able to repress internal opposition and rebuild his forces. The vastness of the steppe and the Qing's logistical limitations were Galdan's major protectors. Kangxi's main strategy became one of luring Galdan closer to China so that he could strike at him again. For the second expedition, he spent over a year preparing three large armies which could travel 1200 kilometers away from Beijing. By 1695/6 Galdan was on the move east again, driven partly by poor harvests in Zungharia. First he headed for Hami, then for the Kerulen River (near present-day Ulan Bator). Kangxi enticed him there with invitations from the Kolchin princes, who pretended to be on Galdan's side. Galdan's army arrived at the Tula River with nearly 20,000 men and horses. On 1695/10/3 Kangxi announced his intention to lead a second major expedition against Galdan. Noting that he had hoped to draw Galdan closer in, he nevertheless insisted on sending the armies far across the desert, despite objections from his generals. The Central Army, 37,000 men led by Kangxi himself, would travel from Beijing 1100 kilometers across the Gobi desert; the East Route army would leave from Shengjing (Fengtian) with 35,000 men and head for the Kerulen, a distance of 1300 kilometers; the West Route army of 35,000 men would set out from Guihua in Ningxia and travel a shorter route of 900–1100 kilometers to the Tula River (see map 1).

The armies gathered huge amounts of food, horses, donkeys, carts, armor, weaponry and uniforms in preparation for the decisive con-

<sup>5</sup> Dates are given in the following format: Western year/ Chinese lunar month/ lunar day.



Map 1. Kangxi's second Zunghar campaign, 1696. Source: based on Tan Qixiang (ed), *Zhongguo Lishi Dituji* (Beijing, 1975), vol. 8.

frontation. The Central Route army set out from Beijing on 1696/2/29. Kangxi wrote detailed letters to his sons along the way describing the terrain, the supplies of water and grass, and the mood of the army. (Okada, 1979; Cimeddorji 1991) Rumors of a Russian army of 60,000 men supporting Galdan aroused strong objections to Kangxi's expedition, but he firmly rejected proposals for retreat. By 4/22, after 50 days of marching, the Central Army arrived at Kerulen. As planned, they had marched through the snows and arrived in time for the greening of the grasses in spring. The support troops were, however, slow in arriving with extra food supplies and baggage. Kangxi aimed to lure Galdan into battle and prevent him from fleeing before the West army had arrived at Tula to block his escape. By 5/7, worried about the lack of water in the region for his troops, he launched an intensive search for new springs. He had still found no traces of Galdan's camp. But in the next two days he discovered that Galdan, realizing the size of the Qing army, had fled in haste, abandoning much of his weaponry and gear. Kangxi, in hot pursuit, drove Galdan directly into the Western army of Feiyanggu, which destroyed the Mongol army at the famed battle of Jaomodo

on 1695/5/13. Qing cannon shattered the Zunghar army of 7000 men because it had not had time to set up a fixed defense. Kangxi was greatly relieved, especially since food supplies were growing short for both the West and Central armies. He quickly returned to the capital, where he arrived on 6/9.

The campaign had lasted 99 days; a 3000 kilometer round trip for Kangxi. It was much longer in duration and in length than the first one, but Kangxi had ample time to prepare his army. The preparations for actual battle turned out to be nearly superfluous: his greatest achievement had been to equip three large armies and send them out directly into the steppe.

Galdan, nevertheless, escaped again, this time with only a few hundred famished followers. Meanwhile, Galdan's nephew, Tsewang Rabtan, took advantage of his absence to occupy the heart of Zungharia. With secret Qing support, he made it impossible for Galdan to flee West. Galdan's only option was to head for Hami and thereby to refuge in Tibet. Kangxi's third expedition was explicitly designed as a 'hunting expedition' for Galdan's head. He set out on 9/19 with a small force, lightly armed, carrying only small amounts of supplies. Galdan failed to obtain food supplies for himself and his 1500 men when he attacked the Qing garrison. Kangxi urged Galdan to surrender, pointing out that his cause was hopeless without food and men. The emperor crossed the frozen Yellow River and moved into the Ordos region by 11/25, but he turned back at this point for unclear reasons. A curious incident indicates that he may have been running short of supplies in the winter cold. A bondservant called out to Kangxi that the army must return, because food had nearly been exhausted. The furious emperor ordered the bondservant executed and vowed to eat snow if necessary to run Galdan down. Nevertheless, the army did turn back. This expedition lasted 91 days.

Galdan had still escaped capture, but Kangxi had prevented him from reaching Hami and moving into Tibet. All the Qing leaders realized that Galdan, isolated, deserted by his followers, short of food in the vicious winters of the steppe, had only a short time to live. Yet Kangxi, still unsatisfied, began a fourth expedition against him, rejecting the advice of his senior counsellors. He reached Ningxia, where he stayed for eighteen days before turning back on 4/1. Finally, in the middle of the fourth lunar month of 1697, he received Feiyanggu's report announcing Galdan's death.

Kangxi's relentless pursuit of Galdan went far beyond the bounds of strategic necessity. Each expedition put great burdens on the local

people, burdens that Kangxi tried to alleviate, but not at the cost of calling off the expedition. Resistance to each expedition grew stiffer, clearly reflecting official concerns about alienating the local population besides their publicly expressed concern for the emperor's health. Kangxi's great force of will, and his endurance of harsh military conditions, have impressed all observers, but we may well suspect him of an excessive thirst for vengeance. Putting the conflict in such personal terms, aiming at the elimination of one leader, reveals Central Asian strategic thinking showing through his Confucian veneer. The Galdan campaigns combined the Chinese genius for logistic planning with a Central Asian thirst for personal vengeance. Hence they were large in scale, heavily burdensome to the local people, and strategically inappropriate.

The Yongzheng emperor's reign (1722-35) forms an interesting interlude, which I do not have room to describe. Yongzheng is best known for his active promotion of institutional reform, including the full development of the Grand Council advisory body in preparation for a new frontier campaign. (Bartlett 1991) Yet at the same time, Yongzheng was the only Qing emperor to lose a major battle to the Zunghars in 1731, when Mongol warriors eliminated all but two thousand of the fifty-thousand man Qing army. I believe it can be argued that, once again, logistical limitations combined with Yongzheng's excessive attention to internal affairs and neglect of preparation for frontier warfare were the main causes of this defeat.

#### *Qianlong's Final Blows, 1755-1760*

The remoteness of Zungharia and the limitations of Qing mobilization still protected the Zunghars. Their years of expansion were over, but they could doggedly survive until a much more massive Qing mobilization could reach them. Internal dissension, an endemic feature of nomadic polities, doomed the Zunghars in the end. After Galdan Tseren's death in 1745, disputes over the succession led to war between two rival princes, Dawaci and Amursana. Dawaci succeeded in driving out Amursana in 1753/5 and naming himself Khan, but Amursana sought Qing support to regain power. This was the opportunity Qianlong had been waiting for. In 1754/5 he decided on a major military expedition, the first of the Three Great Campaigns waged in Central Asia. Thirty thousand men in the Northern Route army set out from Uliyasutai, with Amursana as assistant































