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Cross-border Marital Relations between the Mongol Subjects of the Manchu and Russian Empires in the 18th Century

Battsengel Natsagdorj

Abstract

The Treaty of Kyakhta (1727), concluded between the Manchu Qing and Russian Empires, established a formal border that divided the Mongolian people into two distinct political entities. Despite strict imperial prohibitions on cross-border interaction, including explicit bans on intermarriage, archival sources from both Russia and Mongolia reveal that marital relations between Mongol subjects persisted throughout much of the 18th century. This article represents the first systematic attempt to examine this phenomenon using previously unpublished both Russian and Mongolian archival materials. The article explores the motivations behind such unions, the marriage traditions of the Buryats and Khalkha, and why the intermarriages ultimately came to an end. The article challenges the prolonged historiographical silence on this topic, shaped by Soviet-era policies that deliberately distanced the Buryats from their Mongol identity.

Keywords: cross-border marriage; Buryats; Khalkha Mongols; Qing–Russian frontier.

Introduction

On October 21, 1727 high officials of the Manchu Qing and Russian Empires have concluded the Border treaty between the two empires at the River Bura near the modern Russian city Kyakhta. From this time on the Mongol subjects of the two Empires were prohibited to cross the newly established border without special permission and were severely punished if dared to break this regulation. Both the Russian and the Qing authorities instructed the frontier population not to enter into marital relationship with the subjects of the other empire.[1] But large body of archival sources both from Russia

1 *Sbornik dogovorov Rossii s Kitaem 1689–1881 gg.* (St. Peterburg: Tipografiia imperatorskoi akademii nauk, 1889), p. 59; V. S. Myasnikov and A. I. Tarasova, eds., *Russko–Kitaiskie otnosheniia v XVIII veke. Volume III. 1727–1729* (Moskva: Nauka, 2006), p. 303; National Central Archives of Mongolia, M9–1–1.

and Mongolia indicate that marital relations between the subjects of the two empires continued to exist contrary to the strict prohibitions up to the end of the 18th century. Thorough examination of these documents shows us that newly established border line was drawn not by the natural border but through the whole body of the Mongolian people, separating them into two different polities. But the strengthening of the Russian authorities in Trans-Baikal region made unable to continue this kind of unique relationship between these two separated groups by the end of the eighteenth century.

This article represents the first attempt to compile available information and analyze the reasons behind such risky relationships between Mongol subjects of the two empires. For various reasons, this topic had not previously been raised or studied. In the Soviet Union, fearing "pan-Mongolian" sentiments among the Mongolian peoples, a policy of alienation of the Buryats from the Mongols was pursued. The Buryats were told that they were not Mongols and that incorporation into Russia had been their only salvation.[2] Concerning Mongol–Buryat relations in the eighteenth century, only a single article was written by the Soviet historian E. M. Zalkind, based on Russian archival sources, in which the topic of cross-border marriages is mentioned only in passing among other issues.[3] Therefore, the present article aims to fill this gap by using both Russian and Mongolian archival sources. The article consists of an introduction and two main sections, which describe in detail the marriage traditions of the Buryats and the Khalkha, as well as specific cases of cross-border marriages and their eventual outcomes and the conclusion. In this article, the Buryats who were subjects of the Russian Empire are designated as Russian Mongols, since they were and are a Mongolic people. The Khamnigans, or "Mounted Tungus," who have a complex ethnic origin with a predominant Mongolic component and a pastoral economy similar to that of the Mongols, are also treated here as Russian Mongols. The Russian Soyots, the Tofalars and the Tuvans of the Qing Empire—satellite ethnic groups of the Russian Buryats and the Qing Mongols—are likewise considered as belonging to the orbit of the Mongolian world.

Before proceeding to the analytical discussion, I consider it necessary to provide a brief overview of how, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, a part of the Mongols came under the authority of the Russian Empire. In the 1630s, the Muscovite state, represented by various adventurers—such as fur

2 Melissa Chakars, *The Socialist Way of Life in Siberia. Transformation in Buryatia* (Budapest–New York: Central European University Press, 2014), pp. 114–116.

3 Evgeniy Zalkind, "Mongolo–Buryatskie sviazi v XVIII veke," *Trudy Buryatskogo kompleksnogo nauchno-issledovatel'skogo instituta, materialy po istorii i filologii Tsentral'noi Azii* 8 (1962), pp. 36–48.

hunters—and by government troops advancing into Siberia in search of furs and deposits of silver and gold, reached the territories of the Buryat tribes west of Lake Baikal. At that time, the Buryats were subjects of the Khalkha princes and paid them *alban* (tribute). Bloody clashes with the Buryats on the western side of Lake Baikal continued for nearly thirty years, and in 1658–1660 the Mongol princes organized a mass resettlement of the Buryats deep into Khalkha territory.[4] The Buryats who remained were subjected to double tribute—both to the Mongol princes and to the Russian forts (ostrogs).[5] East of Lake Baikal, the Russians, being in close proximity to Khalkha-Mongol nomadic territories, were unable to collect yasak from the local population by force until the end of the seventeenth century, when Khalkha Mongolia itself fell victim to internecine warfare and accepted the suzerainty of the Qing Empire. To the east of Lake Baikal, it was primarily the small-numbered Tungus groups who paid yasak to the Russians. With the loss of Khalkha independence, however, the Mongol princes also lost control over these territories and were no longer able to collect tribute from the western shore of Lake Baikal. During the internecine conflicts of the second half of the seventeenth century in Khalkha, some Buryat tribes that had been vassals of the eastern Khalkha Mongol princes moved toward Lake Baikal and accepted Russian allegiance, thereby becoming the ancestors of the Khori Buryats in Transbaikalia. The Treaty of Kyakhta in 1727 merely confirmed this status quo, and as a result, part of the Mongols and Mongolized mounted Tungus became incorporated into the Russian Empire.

Traditional Mongol marriage—Khalkha and Buryats

According to the fundamental research works of Mongolian ethnographers published in the three volumes of *Mongolyn Ugsaatny Zui* (Mongolian Ethnography), pre-modern Mongol marriage was arranged almost only through bride-price operation. As we know from the very first ethnographic information given in the reports of Western European envoys such as Carpini and Rubruck, this form of marriage was the main type among the Mongols of the thirteenth century.[6] Rubruck writes: "Know about their weddings that no one has a wife

4 Alexei Okladnikov, *Ocherki iz istorii zapadnykh Buryat–Mongolov* (Leningrad: OGIZ, 1937), p. 119.

5 Tsongol B. Natsagdorj, "On the people of Khariad (Qariyad)," *Études mongoles et sibériennes, centrasiatiques et tibétaines* 46 (2015), pp. 1–19.

6 Christopher Dawson, ed., *The Mongol Mission; Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London–New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955), pp. 7, 104.

there unless he buys her." The Mongol word *qudalduqu* (to sell) itself comes from the root *quda* (father of son-in-law or daughter-in-law), that is, originally it meant to become relatives in-laws. In numerous documents, bride price (Mong. *barilγ-a; süi beleg*) was simply designated as a 'sale', i.e. *qudaldu/qudalduγ-a*. How this tradition was reflected among the Khalkha Mongols, we will consider further.

Among the Khalkha Mongols from central and western Mongolia, the bride price was paid in *bodo* (i.e. large livestock such as cattle, horses and camels) in odd numbers of 5, 7 or 9, and the amount of the bride price was determined by the bride's side. But the amount of the bride price depended on the wealth of the groom's side, on average they gave 2 horses, 5 camels and 25 sheep, and those who were poorer gave 2 sheep and 1 camel.[7] The bride price also included symbolic ritual items—glue, a file (tool) and a fire starter. There were sayings that this or that girl was worth 3 or 5 *bodo* (large livestock). But the bride's parents tried to give a dowry in accordance with the amount of the bride price. As a rule, the decision on matchmaking was made by the parents and the opinion of the young was not asked. Parents tried to marry their children in childhood and in this case the amount of the bride price was smaller, but part of it was immediately given to the bride's side during the matchmaking. In this case, oral contracts were concluded and the girl could no longer be given to others in marriage. If the bride's father violated the contract and gave his daughter to another man who paid a large bride price, then the first groom was given back the bride price cattle along with the offspring. There was another form of marriage by matchmaking. This was when two families exchanged their daughters. In this case, the bride price was not paid, since instead of the bride price, the daughter was given.[8] Such families were called *anda quda*. This happened because paying the bride price was a rather difficult problem for poor families. Therefore, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the rite of bride abduction began to be widely practiced everywhere—when the groom, unable to pay the bride price, took the girl away from the family in advance by agreement with her.[9] Since the emergence of this new method of marriage coincided with the change of the old order in Mongolia, many remembered this method as the main rite of marriage.

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7 S. Badamkhatan, ed., *Bügd Nairamdakh Mongol ard ulsyn ugsaatny züi* [Ethnography of Mongolian People's Republic], volume I (Ulaanbaatar: Ulsyn Khevleliin Gazar, 1987), p. 156.

8 Georgii Banchikov, *Brak i sem'ia u mongolov* (Ulan-Ude: Buryatskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1964), pp. 8–9.

9 Ivan Maiskii, *Mongolia nakanune revoliutsii* (Moskwa: Nauka, 1960), pp. 67–68.

a.

b.

Fig. 1: Early 1920's propaganda posters of the Mongolian People's Republic[10] (a) and Soviet Buryat-Mongolia[11] (b) against the bride price tradition

Now let's see how things were done with the Buryats. As in the rest of the Mongolian world, the Buryats also entered into marriage only through matchmaking by paying a bride price. As extensive ethnographic materials and archival documents show, there were two, so to speak, normal ways of concluding a marriage union: paying a bride price and "marriage by exchange," in which both families entering into kinship relations exchanged girls. "Marriage by exchange" in Buryat was called "*andalyaata/andaldaxa*" (literally *to exchange* or *exchanging*).[12] Marriages concluded by abducting or by converting to Orthodox Christianity to avoid paying a bride price were less common. The size of the bride price was determined by the financial status of the parties and various additional circumstances. Zalkind writes that the bride price began to lose its strictly natural character in the past, and the share of cash in it was increasing in accordance with the general development of the Buryat economy.

10 *Ajilcin emegtei* [Working Woman], 13 April 1930.

11 Boris Bazarov, ed., *Institut mongolovedeniia, buddologii i tibetologii Sibirskogo otdeleniia Rossiiskoi akademii nauk 100 let. Tom I. ot Buruchkoma k IMBT SO RAN* (Ulan-Ude–Irkutsk: Ottisk, 2022), p. 18.

12 Klara Basaeva, *Sem'ia i brak u Buryat. Vtoraia polovina XIX – nachalo XX veka* (Novosibirsk: Izdatel'stvo Nauka, 1980), p. 113.

In the eighteenth century, the bride price was paid almost exclusively in cattle. In 1729, during the matchmaking of Borokhon Shodoev from the Kholtubai clan to the daughter of Sava Khaev from the Ongoi clan, the bride price was set at 40 heads of horses and cattle, the same number of sheep, one teapot and one cast-iron bowl. In 1735, the size of the bride price in five cases was: 1) 10 horses, 10 heads of cattle, 50 sheep; 2) 10 horses, 10 heads of cattle, 60 sheep; 3) 10 horses, 10 heads of cattle, 30 sheep; 4) 10 horses, 10 heads of cattle, 40 sheep; 5) 25 horses and cattle and 100 sheep.[13] Despite small fluctuations, the average bride price rate at the beginning of the eighteenth century can be seen. In poor families the bride price was smaller. In 1736, one Buryat bought a wife for half the amount of cattle that was required in previous cases: 5 horses, 5 cattle and 20 sheep.[14] That such a bride price was really taken out of poverty follows from the fact that the girl was given to pay off the debt (in the specified amount of cattle) due to the impossibility of paying it in any other way. The bride price required very large expenses. And if a European merchant or a minor official tried to quickly send his hated wife to the next world in the hope of getting a good dowry for a new partner in life, then a nomad had to value the wife acquired with great effort for the household as a workforce and the mother of his children. According to Basaeva's research, due to the existence of the *Kalym* (Turkic loanword in Russian for bride price), the age limits for entering into marriage were not the same for different social strata. Low-income Buryats got married on average at 25–30 years old. Unable to pay the bride price, the poor were forced to earn money for many years in someone else's household to pay the bride price. Therefore, just like the Mongols of the Qing Empire, the Buryats began to use the method of abducting a bride with a preliminary agreement. The fact that the abduction was agreed upon in advance is evident from the fact that the Buryats call it "*bere bodxooxo*," that is, to help the bride escape. Although, traditional bride price marriage was an outdated anachronism for the most of the Buryats at the beginning of the twentieth century, the new Soviet regime used it to show the primitiveness of the old Buryat society opposed to the new order.[15]

In order to avoid excessive ruin of families due to the payment of the bride price, the Mongols indicated the average bride price for each group of society in their legislative acts. The following points were included in the *Yeke Čaaji* (Great Code) of 1640 regarding matchmaking and bride price[16]:

13 Evgenii Zalkind, *Obshestvennyi stroi Buryat v XVIII i pervoi polovine XIX veka* (Moskva: Nauka, 1970), p. 164.

14 Ibid. p. 150.

15 Tristra Newyear, "Our Primitive Customs' and 'Lord Kalym': The Evolving Buryat Discourse on Bride Price, 1890–1930," *Inner Asia* 11 (2009), pp. 5–22.

16 K. F. Golstunskii, *Mongolo–Oiratskie zakony 1640 goda, dopolnitel'nye ukazy Galdan-khuntaidzhiya i zakony, sostavlennye dlia volzhskikh kalmykov pri kalmytskom khane Donduk-Dashi*. Kalmyk text with Russian translation with commentaries (St. Peterburg: Tipografia imperatorskoi akademii nauk, 1880), pp. 7–8.

Table 1: Matchmaking and Bride Price in 1640

To whom:	**Size of given bride price**:
Daughters of titled noblemen and royal sons-in-laws	30 *Berke*[17], 150 horses and 400 sheep
Daughters of low ranked noblemen and royal sons-in-laws	15 *Berke*, 50 horses and 100 sheep
Daughters of *Demchi*[18], the head of 40 households	5 camels, 25 large cattle and 40 sheep
Daughters of *Shiulenghe*[19], the head of 20 households	4 camels, 20 large cattle and 30 sheep
Daughters of middle-class men	3 camels, 15 large cattle and 20 sheep
Daughters of low-class men	2 camels, 10 large cattle and 15 sheep

In the Qing legislation developed specifically for the Mongols, the minimum bride price for ordinary families was initially defined as 5 horses, 5 cattle and 50 sheep, and it was not condemned if they gave a smaller bride price.[20] But over time, this minimum was also reduced and included in the supplement to the *Mongγol Čaγaja-yin Bičig* (Mongolian Law) of 1789.

> When concluding marriage contracts between Mongols of different clans, if they are commoners, the bride's father should not demand a bride price of more than two horses, two oxen and twenty sheep. Those Mongols who give less than the required number are not subject to any liability. Anyone who dares to give more than the required number will be severely punished and the excess number will be confiscated.[21]

The Buryat customary laws also included special clauses regulating the minimum bride price amount. According to the law of 1775, the minimum bride price amount for the Selenga Buryats was 35 livestock—2 horses, 2 oxen, 1 cow with a calf, 1 mare with a foal, 1 three-year-old horse, 1 four-year-old horse, 1 five-year-old horse, 1 two-year-old foal, 1 two-year-old bull, 3 sheep with lambs, 3 goats with goatlings, 5 sheep and 5 goats, that is, 16 goats and

17 *Berke* is a general term of valuable goods that could include livestock, brocade and rifle.

18 Demci, a hereditary official title, denoted the head of a döcin, or forty-thousand unit.

19 *Shiulenghe*—hereditary official's title. The head of *khorin* twenty households.

20 B. Chimed and B. Bayarsaikhan, eds., *Mongolyn Khuul' Togtoomzhiin Tüükhen Emkhetgel 1206–1910 [Historical Compilation of Mongolian Legislation, 1206–1910]*, volume 1 (Ulaanbaatar: Mönkhiin üseg, 2010), p. 122.

21 [nigen jüil. qoyar obuγtu mongγol uruγ bolulčaqui-dur čöm qaraču kümün bolbasu barilγa-yin beleg-ün mal qoyar mori, qoyar üker, qorin qoni keregle. ülegüü ögčü bolqu ügei: jöribesü ülegüü öggügsen mal-i torγan abču alban-dur oruγul, čögen öggügsen-i anu čaγajilaqu ügei bolγ-a:] Borjigin Mönggündalai, ed., *Tadaγadu Mongγol–un Törü–yi Jasaqu Yabudal–un Yamun–u Qauli Jüil–ün Bicig* (Begejing: Ündüsüten-ü Keblel-ün Qoriy-a, 2006).

sheep and 19 large livestock—*bodo*.[22] At the same time, the Khori Buryats set the bride price amount at 20 livestock, referring to total devastation of the economic condition. But already in 1788, in a jointly drafted law of the Khori Buryats and the Selenga Buryats, the size of the bride price was set for both groups at 27 heads of cattle (the average number between 35 of the Selenga law and 20 of the Khori Buryat law).[23]

Cross-border marriage or human trafficking?

In the instruction of the Ambassadorial Chancellery of 27 June 1728, given by count Raguzinskii to Border patrol Gregor Firsov and the interpreter Stepan Kobey, cross-border marriages between the Russian and Qing subjects were strictly prohibited. It says:

> Weddings and marriages must be between Russian subjects according to their law and custom, voluntarily, without coercion, not allowing anyone to commit injustice or malice. One must take a girl as a wife from the subjects of His Imperial Majesty, and not to give their daughters to the Mungal land and not to take alien [daughters], and to be content with each other, so as not to devastate Russian subjects with bride price and other such disorder. And one must not cross the border to visit their relatives, from which a quarrel and hostility may arise.[24]

In the National Archives of Mongolia, I have found undated code enacted by Khalkha nobility headed by Tüsiyetü khan and Sečen khan, to regulate the Russian-related affairs. One of the paragraphs reads as follows:

> *nigen jüyil oros-un jüg ayilčilaju uruγ eligen-degen očiji qaraγul-i γarči yabuqu ba, qaraγul-un γadan-a-ača uruγ eligen-iyen niγuju oruγulji yabubasu mön ene yosuγar yalalay-a*: (If one will cross the border to visit their in-laws in Russia or bring their relatives or in-laws secretly to this side of border, then they shall be punished as above.)[25]

In other words, marriage and kinship ties between the subjects of the Russian Tsar and the Qing state were established long before the border between the two

22 B. Bayarsaikhan and B. Batbayar, eds., *Mongolyn Tör Erkh Züin Tüükh: Deezh Bichig* [Sources on the History of Mongolian State and Law], volume II (Ulaanbaatar: MUIS Khuul' Züin Surguul', 2006), pp. 166–167.

23 Ibid., p.83.

24 *Russko–Kitaiskie otnosheniia v XVIII veke*, p. 303.

25 National Central Archives of Mongolia, M9–1–1. Mentioned punishment included penalty of 40 cattle and 100 lashes.

states was established, and these permanent, kinship relations began to threaten the new order that was sought on both sides of the border. But despite such strict regulations on both sides, people continued these established traditions.

During my fieldwork in the archives of Mongolia and Russia, I constantly came across cases of such cross-border marriage ties between subjects of the two states. I have summarized the information from these cases in two tables, which are given below. Before proceeding further, it is necessary to provide a brief information of how these archival materials were compiled. In the National Archives of Mongolia, within the fond of the Khüree (Urga) governors, there are case files concerning the investigation of various incidents that arose in the border zone. To examine these cases, representatives of both sides gathered in Kyakhta every summer: the Qing side was represented by Khalkha Mongol Princes appointed by the Tüsheet Khan (later by the Khüree (Urga) governors—mostly Khalkha Mongol nobles originating from the close relatives of the Tüsheet Khan), together with their assistants, while the Russian side was represented by mid-ranking officers appointed for this purpose by the commandant of Selenginsk. The records and protocols of these investigations have been preserved—though not always in complete form—in the archive of the Khüree (Urga) governor (Fond M-1, National Archives of Mongolia).

Table 2: Cases from the Mongolian Archives[26]

№	Date	Wife	Husband	Bride-price amount	Outcome of the case
1	1728	Ičі, daughter of Quluγur the subject of commander Kersen, from Mongolia	Wangki, from the Oka River of Russia	10 horses	10 horses were given back from Mongolia and the bride was deported to Mongolia
2	1727–1746	Daughter of Koenai Syustyugeev, from the Sirpigur people (reindeer herders called Tofalar), Russia	Tuvan man Taraqai, son of Togančin, the subject of commander Turenei from Toji, Mongolia	4 reindeers	Uncertain. Bride-price was paid before 1727 but bride was given after the treaty. Thus Russian side demanded to punish the involved sides.

26 National Central Archive of Mongolia M1–1–7; M1–1–22; M1–1–33; M1–1–57; M1–1–162; M1–1–177; M1–1–2694; M1–1–2760; M1–1–2931.

3	1738	Daši, the subject of Erke aqai tayiji from the banner[27] of Jasaγ Čibaγjab, Mongolia. Her uncle Möngke took the bride-price.	Bojindoi (Andrei after the baptization) the son of Juqaqan, the subject of Buryat taisha Moji (Atagan), Russia	Uncertain	Uncertain.
4	1741–1742	Daughter of certain Mangačag, Mongolia	Russian subject Soyot man named Sara, son of Seter	30 reindeers	Uncertain. Russian side demanded from the Mongolian authorities to give back the bride-price, in order to take back the bride.
5	Before 1744	Mongol woman named Cerin. Certain Dorji (relationship of latter with the bride is unclear) took the bride-price.	Russian subject Buryat man named Gulai	Uncertain	Bride was given back to Mongolia among other fugitives.
6	Summer of 1745	Daughter of Šačačak Tunteev, the commander of Russian board post in the Uda River	Mongolian Tuvan man named Šarbandai, the son of Čaγačak, the subject of commander Kirbikei from the Shishged River, Mongolia.	Uncertain	Uncertain. Russian authorities found out this case in 1746 and demanded to return back the bride price and punish the husband and the father of the bride at the border.

27 Banner (*qosighun* or *khoshun*) is the administrative/military unit of all Mongols under the Qing rule grouped in *aimag* or *chuulghan* (league). The autonomous Mongolian banners must be clearly distinguished from the Manchu Eight banners system that formed the Qing dynasty's garrison soldiers.

7	Summer of 1746	Daughter of the commander Šodor, Mongolia	Tuvan man Kogudei from the Uda River border post, Russia	25 reindeers	Uncertain. Šodor, the father of the bride tried to give another daughter (for whom was paid 10 reindeers as bride price) to Kogudei, instead of the agreed one. Not willing to take the other daughter in order to get back his reindeers Kogudei applied complaint to Border patrol Salamatov. Russian side demanded from the Mongolian authorities to give back the bride price and punish the involved ones on border.
8	Before 1746	Ajara, the daughter of Mongol Ciwang	Bayar, the son of Buryat Baduqu	22 horses and cows	Both bride and bride price were handed back. Russian side brought the groom Bayar to punish him at the border, but the father of the bride Ciwang was not brought by Mongolian side due to latter's illness. Russians blamed Mongols in the protraction of the case.

9	1746–1767	(Mother) Boinok, widow of Mongol man Cering the subject of Šakdur tayiji from the banner of Jasaγ Cibaγjab. (Daugther) Šadada, the daughter of Boinok	(Husbands of mother) Ildui, Ochir, Barsui from the Khori Buryats (Husband of daughter) Son of certain Jongki, from the Khori Buryat clan Guchid	Uncertain	After the death of her husband, Boinok was left with son and daughter. Son was given to certain Tibetan monk as pupil. With her daughter Šadada, Boinok crossed the border and married to Buryat man named Ildui, but after some time her Buryat husband sold her to another Buryat man Ochir, and eventually he also sold her to another Buryat man Barsui. When her daughter Šadada reached adulthood in 1765, she was given to certain Buryat man from the Khori Buryat clan Guchid. And Boinok left her Buryat husband willing to die in her own homeland. After the investigation Boinok was sent to her old banner to live with her son monk Cibaγdaši.

10	1747	Servant girl of Sonom, middle ranking officer from the banner of Jasaγ Cibaγjab.	Certain Buryat man, Russian subject	19 large livestock (cattle and horses)	Border patrol soldier Dambil with his 3 comrades gave away this servant girl to Russian Buryat man. Sonom, the master of her applied complaint to Border Guard office and demanded her return. But Russian side announced that she passed away and demanded from the Mongolian authorities to return the bride price.
11	1747	Daughter of Gabuu, the subject of Danjin-Ombo from the disciples of Jebzundamba Qutuγtu, Mongolia.	Buryat Zaisang Bolod	20 large livestock, 30 sheep	After the investigation, Russian side demanded to return the livestock which was given as bride price for these two women. Fathers of two brides and their lord were unable to return the livestock. Eventually bride price was compensated and two women were handed back to Mongolian authorities.
12	1747	Daughter of Barimad, the subject of above mentioned Danjin-Ombo	Buryat man Orol	35 large livestock	

13	1746–1749	Amur, wife of certain Engkesen son of Dalai, subject of Gungge Tayiji from the Iro River of the banner of Jasaγ Cibaγjab.	Išigeldei son of Botoi, Khori Buryat man from the Kuačai clan	30 large livestock	At first Amur was handed to certain Mongol Sanduk and Chinese merchant Batu by her own husband. Then she was given to Russian subject Tsongol Buryat man Zasa son of Zaya, instead of their debt in amount of 43 oxen to latter. Then Zasa gave her as his own daughter to Khori Buryat man Išigeldei taking his 30 large livestock as bride price. Russian side demanded to return 43 oxen to Russia, but the Mongolian authorities refused to hand over. Thus, Amur remained at the Russian side.
14	1749	Soli, servant girl of certain Mongol Batu, the subject of Erke tayiji from the Kharaa River. Certain Mongol monk Bandi from the disciples of Jebzundamba Qutuγtu gave her away to Russian side.	Ariya, son of Garmajab Tsongol Buryat man	20 large livestock, 15 sheep	Mongolian authorities refused to return bride price. Thus, Russian side did not hand over the bride to Mongolian side.

15	Before 1752	Sister of Abqan, son of Siodar the Mongolian subject	Ciyan, son of Kugdei the Russian subject	10 reindeers	Uncertain. Russian side demanded to return the bride price.
16	1759–1760	Amur, servant girl of Toti, the border post soldier who was sent to serve at the Chigtai post from the banner of Count Daši.	Gombocerin, Russian Buryat subject	(Russian claim) 7 large livestock (Mongolian claim) bride price was not paid.	Russian side returned her in 1760 and demanded the Mongolian authorities to hand over the bride price.

Table 3: Mongol Wives of the Khamnigan People 1751[28]

№	Names of the husband (Russian subject) and wife (Qing subject)	Bride price		Children	
		Large livestock	Sheep and goats	Boys	Girls
	Sartol clan				
1	Retired Zaisang Intun and his wife Keremejin	10		1	4
2	Tsoshki son of Bukhantsai and his wife Karaku	25	25	2	2
3	Mendujin son of Nerkengui and his wife Kunge	27		2	2
4	Boji stepson of Manku and his wife Nalui	30	40	4	
5	Gendun son of Lobsang and his wife Kelagar	25	30	2	2
6	Tsukhoi son of Nikita and his wife Kushega	30	60	2	3
7	Bardakui son of Aranza and his wife Bitsakhansu	15	25	5	3
8	Maly son of Dadan and his wife Naptasu	20	25	3	1
9	Monkochur son of Ongoloi and his wife Jirgal	15	25	2	1
10	Gombo son of Badari and his wife Biltegeljin	20	30	4	
11	Erdeni son of Guringka and his wife Bichikhan	20	25	3	1
12	Tulon son of Guringka and his wife Mekjer	25	25	3	2
13	Ochir son of Guringka and his wife Mashida	25	30	1	4

28 Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Respubliki Buryatiia, № 87, Opis'. 1, D. 2.

14	Deceased Shulenga Dabanai and his wife Ashik	30	30	4	2
15	Deceased Shilui son of Ivan and his wife Ayak	30	30	3	2
16	Tsoktu son of Kharlapan and his wife Kharadui	20	25	1	1
17	Dulga son of Bambu and his wife Bolidai	60	100	2	2
18	Kuyak son of Bambu and his wife Minger	10	25		
	Luniker clan				
19	Gurzui son of Uneger and his wife Bomboi	25	30		
20	Tsolgaul son of Uneger and his wife Kurakchin	10			2
21	Bolei son of Gurzui and his wife Karakun	50	80	4	1
22	Deceased Ineduk son of Gurzui and his wife Kurim	30	40	1	1
23	Kashikan son of Uyalga and his wife Sherakchin	50	100	5	4
24	Yurchi son of Nechinga and his wife Yekachu	40	60		5
25	Deceased Chinetu son of Nechinga and his wife Dagichu	40	60	5	
26	Erdeni son of Nechinga and his wife Jugai	50	80	2	2
27	Nikifor son of Duji and his wife Zambalai	70	100	3	2
28	Deceased Badai son of Chechek and his wife Dashitsu	30	50	4	2
29	Unegenei son of Momochon and his wife Bujigir	20	30	1	1
30	Deceased Dashi son of Bardaku and his wife Bakan	20	30	1	1
31	Deceased Omnichai son of Avlan and his wife Mainadu	30	60	1	
32	Bulten son of Buntsyn and his wife Badmachu	30	50	2	2
33	Tagawchai son of Kalantu and his wife Ajin	20	40	2	1
34	Jangei son of Kusendei and his wife Uwasantsa	10			
35	Shotkasun son of Kalchan and his wife Bani	50	80	2	
36	Lonil son of Gewshinga and his wife Nidun	20	30	1	1
37	Selenge son of Juwalai and his wife Iroltu	20	30	3	2
38	Unichkei son of Tulgatu and his wife Solongo	30	40		
39	Ulukei son of Disintsa and his wife Masii	40	50	2	1
40	Buki son of Daki and his wife Ishiwul	20	30		2
	Pochegor clan				
41	Unuchei son of Teleur and his wife Dashi	25	70	2	1
	Chemchagir clan				
42	Muchai son of Kushaga and his wife Keltei	25		2	

	Gung's clan				
43	Former Zaisang Sonom son of Bazar and his wife Kuwa	70	80	2	2
44	Former Shulenga Tseden son of Badma and his wife Khalyun	50	100	2	2
45	Shogdoi son of Badma and his wife Bubei	11	30	4	
46	Ubashi son of Sabka and his wife Kharaku	80	100	1	4
47	Gombo son of Khoshuchin and his first wife Bichikhan	80	150		
48	and his second wife Borokhu	60	100	1	4
49	Inzanai son of Unzal and his wife Dekji	30	50	4	1
50	Karganai son of Unzal and his wife Bakhan	30	30	2	3
51	Ishidei son of Utsen and his wife Kuwaku	10	30		2
52	Okindei son of Zodoku and his wife Kharakhan	30	60		1
53	Donji son of Borgoi and his wife Dombokhon	20	50		3
54	Abida son of Arsalan and his wife Adanka	20	30	1	1
55	Zalgoi son of Ananda and his wife Tupshin	25	40	5	3
56	Deceased Damiran son of Ajindai and his wife Bundan	70	150	1	1
57	Bayakhan Syusin and his wife Moku	60	150	4	1
58	Normo son of Mani and his wife Ayur	40	70	1	
	Uzon clan				
59	Former Zaisang Ubashi son of Dugar and his wife Moku	50	60	3	1
60	Buni son of Shobu and his wife Amitan	80+1 camel	100	5	2
61	Mendu son of Mokhai and his wife Boroku	20	40		4
62	Mengetu son of Amugulang and his wife Chaganku	30	40	2	2
63	Batu son of Dugar and his wife Jimi	50	60	2	2
64	Sonom son of Ishige and his wife Ayushi	30	40	2	2
65	Deceased Ceren son of Mo and his wife Jirgalan	70	100	3	
66	Ukurdui son of Tsoktu and his wife Neresu	40	50	1	3
67	Lologoi son of Nagadan and his wife Majik	20	40	3	
	Namyad clan				
68	Argalchi son of Irbakai and his wife Unugu	30+1 camel	40	3	
69	Chondoi son of Garmandai and his wife Bichikan			2	1
70	Degelzur son of Tsongok and his wife	20+2 camels	30	2	3
71	Bardaku son of Bazar and his wife Bichikan	40	60	3	2

Provided above list of Mongol wives of the Onon Khamnigans (the Russians called them Mounted Tungus) was compiled in 1751 by the Khamnigan chiefs at the request of the Troitskosavsk border administration. Khamnigan chiefs explained the presence of so many Mongol wives by the fact that these wives were taken by them from those Mongol fugitives who fled to Russia during the second Dzungar-Qing war in 1730–1731, i.e. 20 years ago.[29] But this explanation is apparently not true, and most likely these women were taken by them in violation of the border regulations. In 1738, unknown thieves from Mongolia stole one mare from the Khamnigan Sartol Zaisang (Chief) Intun, who was on border patrol duty at the border. And when he demanded that the Mongolian side pay the fine of 10 heads required by the border treaty, the Mongols, due to the lack of cattle, gave him a Mongol woman.[30] This woman named Keremejin is first on our list. Since marriage with the Mongols were strictly forbidden, they were reported to the Russian authorities only when one wanted to hurt their ill-wishers. In 1749, a certain newly baptized lama from the Buryats, Ivan Pchelin reported to the Khamnigan prince Pavel Gantimurov that the Khori Buryats had bought Mongol women and girls as wives, namely, "Balchir of the Koatsai clan resold his Mongol woman to the Bodongut clan, Uyalga of the same Koatsai clan took a Mongol woman last year, Bair of the Sharait clan has a Mongol wife, Sanuruk Tekeev of the Galzut clan has a wife named Sokhor, Irintsey of the same Buryat clan has a Mongol widow, the former wife of the Buryat Bakhan Zodboev."[31] Most of these marriages were concluded between ordinary people—parents who gave away their daughters and grooms who were looking for wives. But there were other cases when a woman was sold for real or given in redemption of debt. Let's look at two such cases.

In 1746, the Mongolian authorities demanded to hand over a Mongol woman named Amur, who was sold by certain Delek and Yesudei to the Russian side to the Buryats for 6 cattle, but the Buryats did not give the arranged price. Accused of buying a Mongol girl, Lama Jantsan Baturov and commoner Kharaku Sharaev, denied all this during a confrontation and were acquitted. But the Russian authorities ordered them to search and find that Mongol woman. Two years later, it turned out that the Khori Buryat from the Koatsai clan, Ishigeldei Botoev, had that girl as a wife. Ishigeldei, brought to the trial, said that his wife was not a Mongol, but the daughter of the Buryat Zasa Zayaev from the Tsongol clan and was taken from him for a bride price of 30 horses. Ishigeldei's wife Amur said that she was a Mongol and married to the Mongol Enkesun from the banner of the Zasak Chibakjab[=*jasaγ čibaγjab*] (territory of which bordered with Russian domain), but two years ago her husband gave her to the Chinese merchant 'Yellow' Batu for some unknown reason.[32] And

29 See Nikolai Bantysh-Kamenskii, *Diplomaticheskoe sobranie del mezhdu Rossiiskim i Kitaiskim gosudarstvami s 1619 po 1792-i god* (Kazan: Tipografiia imperatorskogo universiteta, 1882), pp. 215–217.

30 RGADA: Russian State Archives of the Ancient Documents, Fond. 1092, Opis'. 1, D. 3, S. 33.

31 RGADA: Russian State Archives of the Ancient Documents, Fond.1092, Opis'. 1, D. 25, S. 565.

32 Most likely she was given by her husband to this Chinese merchant to settle a debt.

that Chinese merchant, together with his Mongol companion Sanduk, gave her abroad to the Russian Buryat Zasa Zayaev. A month later, Zasa Zayaev gave her as his daughter to the Khori Buryat Ishigeldei and ordered her not to say that she was a Mongol, but to pretend to be his daughter. Also brought to the trial Zasa Zayaev did not deny, but admitted his guilt and said that earlier he sold 43 bulls abroad to that Chinese and his Mongol companion for 217 rubles, but instead of money they brought that girl Amur and he took her so as not to be left with nothing. Then he gave her as his daughter to the Khori Buryat man, taking from him a bride price of 30 horses. Having examined all the evidence, the border authorities decided to punish Zasa Zayaev and his Qing companions with whips, and to give the girl back if the Qing side returned the 43 bulls. Zayaev was obliged to return the 30 horses to Ishigeldei taken from him as a bride price. But the following year, 1749, the Mongols denied that Amur was given for 43 bulls and therefore she remained on the Russian side like the other Mongol woman, the bride price paid for her was not compensated from the Mongolian side.[33] Since she is not mentioned again in the following proceedings, we can conclude that she remained on the Russian side to live with her new husband. Descendants of that Ishigeldei live in Russia and Mongolia, but it seems that they have not preserved the memory of her.[34]

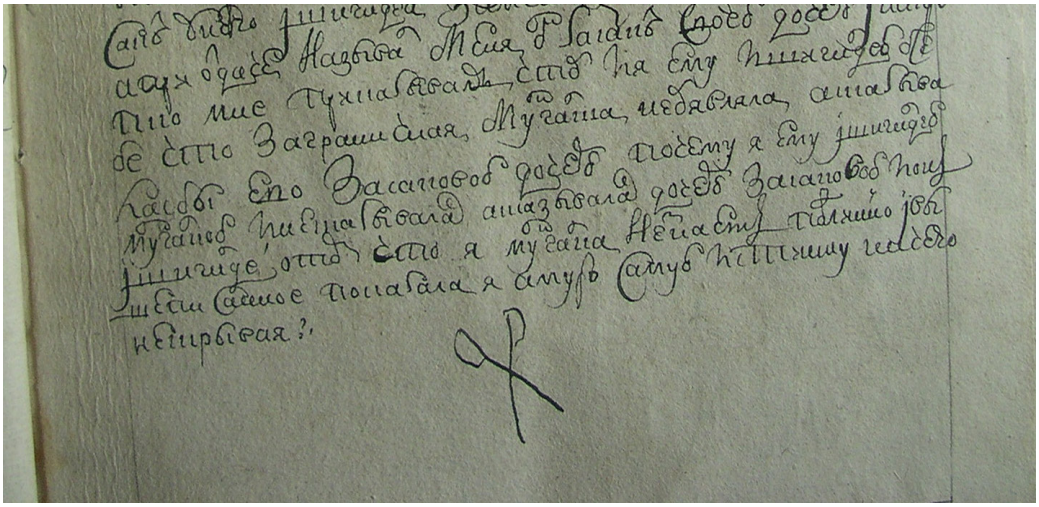

Fig. 2: The signature of Amur under her testimony. She left her signature in the form of scissors or a poker, as these tools are very important in the life of a Mongol woman, the keeper of the household hearth.

33 RGADA: Russian State Archives of the Ancient Documents, Fond. 1092, Opis'. 1, D. 16, S. 13–33.

34 I have interviewed Mr. Baldandorj Tsedendamba (b. 1941) from the Khoasai clan of the Khori-Buryat, former Minister of the Water Management of Mongolian People's Republic, the descendant of Ishigeldei in the 8th generation, in Ulaanbaatar (2009). Khoasai→Bookhoi→Khartai→Khamnai→Bootoi→Ishigeldei→Minggan→ Kalwa→Zaisang Tseringpel→Zaisang Cebek→Garma→Rinchin→Tsedendamba→Baldandorj (b. 1941).

a. b.

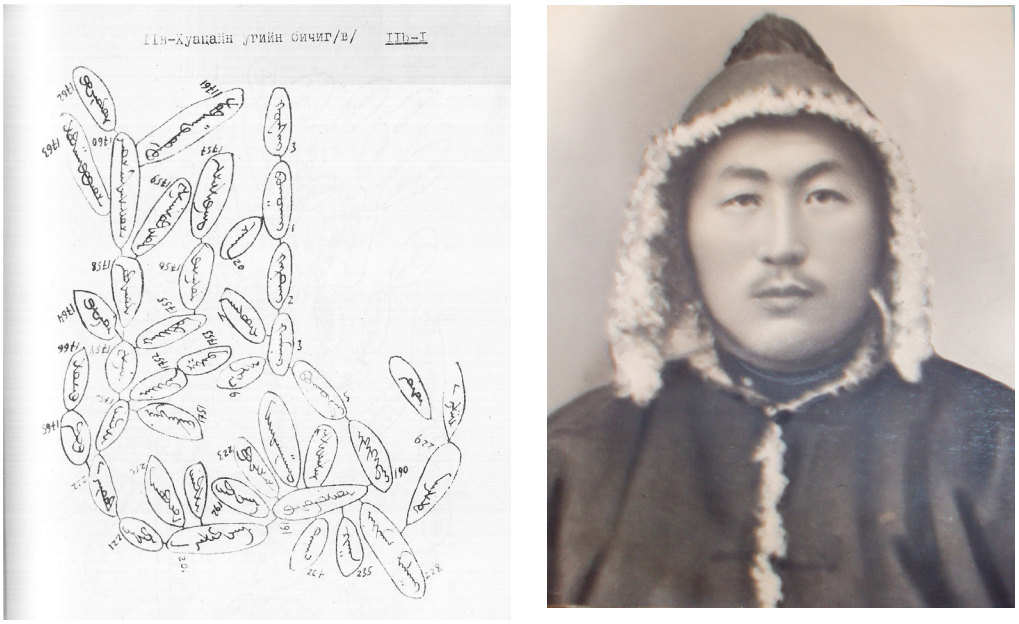

Fig. 3: (a) Genealogical table of the Khoasai clan of the Khori Buryat, showing the lineage of Ishigeldei, the son of Botoi; (b) Rinchin Garmaev, the descendant of Ishigeldei Botoev in the 6th generation, who migrated to Mongolia, (executed in 1934).

Another incident occurred in 1759. In the summer of that year, a service man of the Mongolian Chiktai Karaul (border-post), a certain Toti, complained to the Mongolian border authorities that his slave-girl named Amur had disappeared from his household. A year later, the same Toti reported that he learned from a quarrel between his fellow soldiers from the same Chiktai Karaul, Deldegei and Tseren, that Tseren had secretly given his slave girl abroad to two Russian Buryats. Tseren, brought to the investigation, admitted that he had helped Toti's slave girl Amur to flee the previous summer, since her master had been constantly beating her because she had been seeing Tseren. And one day, seeing her hiding in the forest, he took pity on her and helped her to escape abroad to his old Buryat friend Gombotseren, who just happened to see them there while fishing on the Chikoi River. Tseren claimed that he had taken nothing in return. The Mongol commanders reported this to the Russian border authorities, demanding that the girl be returned and the guilty be punished according to the border treaty. The Russian authorities responded to the Mongols that after investigating this case it turned out that the Russian Buryats Khulkha and Badalui, two brothers, took the girl from Tseren for a bride price of 7 heads of cattle, and not for free. The elder brother Khulkha hanged himself out of fear of severe punishment for violating the border treaty. Therefore, the Russian authorities returned the girl to the Mongols, but demanded that they

return the bride price of 7 heads of cattle paid for her next year.[35] Although the testimonies of the parties differ, it can be concluded that it is unlikely that the girl was given away for free. But since she was a slave the "bride price" for her was understated. It is interesting that both women bore the name Amur, which means "calm" or "easy" in Mongolian, as their parents wished for a peaceful and easy life for their children. However, their lives were not as calm and easy as their name suggests, as we can see.

It is evident that these two cases cannot be characterized as marital transactions. They resemble human trafficking far more than they do marriages. In that harsh age, traditional Mongolian society still retained slaves—members of the most vulnerable stratum, originating from prisoners of war, as well as women and children sold into slavery by impoverished families.[36] It is possible that some of those unfortunate enslaved women, living under constant oppression due to their status, entered into collusion with the border guard soldiers and went into such arrangements voluntarily, seeking to find happiness in family life on the other side of the border. All parties appeared to benefit: the poor slave woman became the wife of a free man, while the guards appropriated the bride price. It is quite possible that the guard soldiers did not disclose the women's true origins to the prospective grooms. Only the owners of these female slaves were dissatisfied, as they suffered the loss of valuable labor. In 1747, a certain Sodnom from the banner of the Jasaγ Cibaγjab, the owner of one such female slave—whose name is not mentioned in the documents—complained that a soldier named Dambil from the Chiktai guard post had secretly taken away his slave woman and sold her across the border. The commanders of the guard post punished Dambil for this act and fined him fifty head of cattle, thereby compensating the owner for his loss. The officials who examined the case then sought instructions from Vice-General Prince Rinčendorji, who oversaw frontier affairs, on how such crimes were to be handled in the future, since the current regulations contained no explicit provisions regarding such matters.[37]

All the cases known to us were examined and investigated by the Russian border authorities in Troitskosavsk, as these incidents occurred in the border zone and involved subjects of a foreign state. In the early and mid-18th century, the border administration in Troitskosavsk functioned as a typical colonial authority, where all power was concentrated in the hands of Russian border commissioners and the brigadier, who served as the region's chief military-administrative officer. The Buryat-Mongols were only responsible for patrolling

35 National Central Archive of Mongolia, M1–1–172, pp. 38–40, 98–100.

36 Samuel H. Bass, "The Bound Steppe: Slavery, State, and Family in Qing Mongolia" (PhD. Diss., Indiana University, 2021); Dorothea Heuschert-Laage, "Slavery in Eighteenth Century Mongolia: Transactions in People and Notions of Property According to the Qanggin Banner Archives," *Working Paper* 2022/10, pp. 1–26.

37 National Central Archive of Mongolia, M1–1–33, pp. 54–55.

the border. All known proceedings regarding marriages between subjects of the two empires were initiated by the Qing side. Only then would the Russian border authorities become aware of violations of the border treaty. Therefore, all operations involving the retrieval of brides from Qing Mongolia could only take place with the silent consent and participation of Russian border guards—who were Buryat-Mongols. There were even instances where a border guard, having taken a liking to a bride, would seize her for himself, threatening the unlucky groom with severe punishment for violating the border treaty. As a result, a saying emerged among the Khori Buryats: "*songōlyndo xononhār sōrxoyndo xono*"[38]—meaning, "It's better to spend the night at the forest's edge than to stay overnight with the Tsongols"—a warning about this very danger.[39]

One may say that on the Qing side of the border the situation was exactly the same: the operation of giving brides across the frontier and receiving bride-price livestock was carried out with the knowledge of the border-guard soldiers, who themselves were involved in these affairs and took their share from such operations, concealing information about them. In one of the documents concerning the investigation of border matters, the official appointed to these negotiations by the Vice-General of the Tüsheet Khan Aimag of Khalkha lamented that, without certain instructions from above, he did not proceed to punish those guard soldiers who had been assigned to the border posts from another—namely, the Secen Khan Aimag. The point is that the forty-seven border guard posts were divided among the four Khalkha Aimags, and the soldiers of each Aimag served guard duty at the posts belonging to their respective Aimag along the line of the Russian border. Let me cite here the quote from this document from 1747, which illustrates the state of affairs vividly.

> Since such cases of secretly giving women over to the Russian side in exchange for the payment of a bride price occur frequently, we have investigated these matters and punished, according to the law as usual, those guilty persons from our Aimag, and, having confiscated the livestock from them, returned it to the Russian side. In these affairs the guard soldiers of the Secen Khan Aimag were also involved, and they drove the livestock secretly through those guard posts that are under the jurisdiction of the Secen Khan Aimag. We interrogated all those implicated in this case and established that they had assisted in sending the women to the Russian side and in driving livestock from there to our side at night, taking for themselves part of that livestock. That livestock was confiscated from them and handed back to the Russian side. It is also necessary to punish, in accordance with the law, those soldiers and commanders who

38 Svetlana Bardakhanova, *Malye zhanry Buryatskogo fol'klora* (Ulan-Ude: Buryatskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1982), p. 35.

39 This was told to me in 2008 by Nikolai Radnaevich Tsybikov (1941–2021) from the Abagad-Tsongol clan, the resident of Kudara-Somon village in the Kyakhta district of the Republic of Buryatia. The Tsongols served in the border guard along the Kyakhta direction.

committed such disorder. But since they belong to the guard detachments of another—namely, the Secen Khan Aimag—without proper authorization from your higher authority, we did not proceed with punishment until your Vice-General Prince instruct us on this matter…[40]

A review of all the materials available to us shows that mainly girls were given to Russian subjects, and not vice versa. Those rare cases (we know of only two cases) when daughters-in-law were Russian subjects were recorded on the western section of the Russian–Mongolian border, where Tuvan reindeer herders live on both sides.[41] We also know of only two cases when women from Buryatia disappeared and were found on the Mongolian side. In the first case, in 1749, one woman got lost on her way home and, finding herself on the Mongolian side, was taken into the taiga by a Mongolian Tungus hunter and was forced to become his wife. But when this became known to the Russian side in 1751, the Mongolian authorities found her and returned her back to Russia.[42] In another case, in 1748, the younger wife of the Buryat commander of the Tseji karaul, unable to bear the beatings of her husband and senior wife, fled to the Russian village of Bayan-Khosun to be baptized, but having gotten lost, ended up on the Mongolian side. She refused the offer of the Mongolian guard soldiers to stay on this side and marry one of them, demanding that she be delivered to the Russian border authorities in Kyakhta.[43]

Why did they only take brides from the Mongolian side, while there were almost no such cases from the Russian side? How can this be explained? An analysis of the collected materials shows that the size of the bride price was one of the main reasons for this phenomenon. As I have already noted above, the Qing legislation regulated the acceptable minimum size of the bride price, and paying more than a certain amount was punishable by law. Therefore, the

40 […eyimü jerge-yin kümün-i oros-un jüg-tür qulaγayilaju qudalduγsan kereg-üd olan-u tula bida qariyatu γajar-ud–ača ni bayičaγaju tere ulus-un beyen-eče mal-i oros-un jüg-tü bučaγaju öggügülkü ba beyes-i ni yalalaqu-yi öber-ün ayimaγ-un ulus-i toγtaγaγsan čaγaja-yin yosuγar urida-yin jirum-iyar sidkegsen-eče γadana tere ulus-i qulaγayilan niγuju qudalduqu-du kümün ögču mal-i niγuju ačaraγsan γajar-ud ni čečen qan-u ayimaγ-un qaraγul-ud-un daγaγsan ama-yin γajar basa ču jarim ni čečen qan ayimaγ-un qaraγul-un ulus. mani ulus-i kümün qudalduqu, jiγučilaju kümün qudaldulčaγad söni niγuju oruγulju mal abquγuluγad abuγsan mal-ača mani qubiyaju idebe kemegsen kereg-üd-i bida ende-ben teden-i ama aγuljaγulun abuγsan mal-i ni gederge bučaγaju oros-tu ögkü bolγaju sidkegsen-eče γadana teyimü samaγun kereg γarγaγsan qaraγul-un ulus-un beye be daγamal jangginar-tai-yi yala yalalaqu yabudal bui aγsan bolbaču tere ama-yin qaraγul kemegči čöm čečen qan ayimaγ-un qaraγulu-ud-un ama tula ögere ayimaγ-un qaraγul-un ulus tula jarliγ olul ügei bida joriγ-iyar darui yalalabasu jokiqu ügei-yin tula yaγakiju sidkebesü jokiqu yabudal-i jangjun qošoi čin vang-un jiγaγsan-i daγaju sidkekü…] National Central Archive of Mongolia, M1–1–33, pp. 37–39.

41 See above the Table 2.

42 National Central Archive of Mongolia, M1–1–32, p. 22.

43 National Central Archive of Mongolia, M1–1–39b.

Mongols had a much smaller bride price than the Buryats of Russia. Here are a few examples. In 1750, the Khalkha Mongol Minjur from the banner of the Jasaγ Wangčinjab from the Sečen Khan aimag married to an ordinary girl from other banner by paying a bride price of 1 horse, 3 cows, and 15 sheep and goats.[44] A little later, at the beginning of the 1770s, in one case the bride price was 3 cows, and in another case—1 horse and 5 goats.[45] As a result of the prolonged military campaign of the Qing Empire aimed at the conquest of the Dzungar state and the natural disasters that occurred in the mid-18th century, the economic well-being of the Khalkha Mongols sharply deteriorated. It may therefore be assumed that they had an economic incentive to marry off their daughters across the border to Russian Mongols, taking much higher bride price from latter.

Meanwhile, the average amount of bride price received from Russian subjects was much larger than on the Qing side, as can be seen from the tables above. Therefore, subjects of the Qing Empire willingly gave their daughters abroad to Russian subjects. Since the entire operation was carried out secretly, and sometimes with the tacit consent and participation of Mongolian border guards (who were all Khalkha-Mongols under their Mongol commanders), one might think that the parents did not accompany the daughter and did not give the required dowry according to the customary law. Thus, this was "win-win" situation for both Mongol sides. Seeing such a profitable business, some particularly enterprising Mongol border guards from the Qing Empire secretly transferred slave girls of other people to the Russian side, passing them off as their daughters. Since this was a violation followed by severe punishment on both sides, such marriages were carefully concealed. All recorded cases of such violations became known to us due to denunciations of ill-wishers. If the Mongolian side demanded to return a woman given to the Russian side, the Russian authorities would investigate the case and extradite her back, but only with the condition that the bride price be returned. If the bride price was not returned, the woman was not extradited either. All participants of those human-trafficking were mercilessly whipped in public at the border.

Judging by the documents, the size of the bride price for Russian subjects did not differ significantly from the bride price paid to Qing Mongol subjects. If there was no particular difference in the size, then, why did Russian Buryat and Khamnigan subjects seek to take wives on the Mongolian side, risking being caught and punished for illegally crossing the border? Were they seeking marriage with the Qing-subjected Mongols, in order to escape the incest? First of all, one must understand that there were enough exogamous people left on the Russian side, not to fear the incestuous marriage. The Buryats and Khamnigans were composed from the various clans or *Otog*s. Thus, the answer, in my

44 National Central Archive of Mongolia, M10–2–240, p. 5.

45 Ö. Chimed, comp., *Manzhiin Türemgiilliin Üye dekh Mongolyn Emegteichüüdiyn Darlagdal*: *1764–1833* [The Oppression of Mongolian Women under Manchu Rule: 1764–1833](Ulaanbaatar: Tsergiin Khevlekh Uildver, 1958), p. 31.

opinion, is obvious. The Buryats and Khamnigans were once part of the larger Mongol world until they found themselves abroad as part of a state alien to them. As we can see from the work of the Irkutsk official Franz Langhans (1789) on the peoples of Eastern Siberia, the Russian authorities prohibited the Buryats from calling themselves Mongols and even recorded those Khalkhas who accepted Russian citizenship as Buryats in official censuses.[46] At the same time, Qing officials did not distinguish between Buryats and Khalkhas, considering them all equally as Mongols.[47] Since time immemorial, marriage and family ties have provided the inhabitants of the Eurasian steppes with a high probability of survival. Therefore, despite the official and strict prohibitions, Russian Mongols sought to maintain marital and family ties with their maternal ethnie in order to satisfy their needs in trade, economic and religious life. But with the strengthening of security on both sides of the Russian–Qing border, this connection came to naught by the end of the 18th century.

In connection with the deterioration of Russo–Qing relations caused by the refusal to extradite Dzungar refugees—most notably the last Dzungar ruler and former Qing subject Amursana—trade in Kyakhta was suspended in 1764.[48] As a result of natural disasters coinciding with unrest in Khalkha, armed Mongolian bands began to attack Russian border settlements, and the small border guard units were unable to repel these attacks effectively. Consequently, in 1760 a 500-men Cossack regiment was formed from mounted Tungus, or Khamnigans, under the command of Prince Gantimurov. Prolonged droughts and mass livestock losses in the 1750s–1760s, together with the suspension of border trade in Kyakhta, also struck the Buryats severely. In order to free themselves from the payment of yasak, some of them sought to enter the Cossack estate and guard the border on the condition of exemption from this tax. Their request was granted, and in 1764 four Buryat Cossack regiments were formed from the Selenga Buryats, who then began border service.[49]

Conclusion

Documents from the archives of Russia and Mongolia clearly indicate that, despite strict prohibitions on both sides, traditional marital ties between subjects of the Qing and Russian empires continued to exist. In the overwhelming

46 "Collection of Reports on the Origins and Ancestry of Various Non-Christian Tribes Living in Irkutsk Province, on the Legends Preserved Among Them, on Memorable Events, and on Their Laws and Rituals," compiled by Langhans, 1789, Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii Arkhiv, f. 300, op. 1, d. 300, l. 120.

47 Staunton, George Thomas, Sir. Narrative of the Chinese Embassy to the Khan of the Tourgouth Tartars in the Years 1712, 13, 14, & 15; by the Chinese ambassador, and published, by the emperor's authority, at Pekin. London. 1821, pp. 44, 49.

48 Yanagisawa Akira, "Some Remarks on the "Addendum to the Treaty of Kiakhta" in 1768," *The Memoirs of the Toyo Bunko* 63 (2005), pp. 65–88.

49 Afinogen Vasiliev, *Zabaikal'skie kazaki. Istoricheskii ocherk.* II toma (Chita: Tipografiia voiskovogo khoziaistvennogo pravleniia zabaikal'skogo kazach'ego voiska, 1916), pp. 171–177.

majority of cases, these were Mongol girls from the Qing Empire, married to subjects of the Russian Empire. The Qing Mongols were economically interested in these ties, since the Russian Mongols paid them a bride price greater than that established by the legislation of the Qing Empire. And for the Mongols from the Russian state, these marital ties served as a connecting bridge with their maternal ethnicity, which found itself beyond the state border. Long-term marital ties between the Mongols of Russia and the Qing Empire, despite the strictest prohibitions, indicate that the border drawn between the two empires was indeed an artificial formation that divided a once united people. Most cases of proceedings regarding such violations of the border regime were initiated and investigated by the Russian side. The Russian authorities were not interested in the continued ties between the Buryats and the Khalkha-Mongols, who were subjects of the Qing Empire. Therefore, they closely monitored violations of this kind. Moreover, they considered the payment of a bride price across the border a loss to the state treasury and, upon discovering such incidents, strictly demanded the return of the paid bride price. On the Qing side, marriage with Russian Mongols was officially prohibited, but border authorities did not strictly monitor their subjects. Unlike men, who were registered as conscripts, women were not officially recorded anywhere. As a result, only in certain cases—such as when a slave went missing—were official investigations conducted. Some documents indicate that, within these cross-border marital ties, there were also elements of human trafficking operations in which the Qing-side guard soldiers themselves were involved. It is possible that some of these "victims," enslaved women, entered into such arrangements voluntarily in an attempt to improve their otherwise bleak circumstances. These mutually beneficial marital relations between the Mongols of the two empires came to an end with the strengthening of border security on both sides in the second half of the 18th century. By that time, the artificially drawn Russo–Qing border had already begun to take on the characteristics of a dividing line between two sub-ethnic groups of the larger Mongol world.