

**Hodong Kim.** *Holy War in China: The Muslim Rebellion and State in Chinese Central Asia, 1864-1877.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004. xvii + 295 pp. \$55.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8047-4884-1.



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Recent interest in Central Asia, especially Islamic and Islamist movements in the region, has made this book by Hodong Kim very timely. Kim's focus is on the Muslim rebellion in Chinese Turkestan (later to be called "Xinjiang," or "New Territories" by the Chinese) in the 1860s and 1870s. Most of what we have known about the rebellion has come from Chinese and Western sources (there were several Russian and British representatives and merchants present during Yaqub Beg's brief regime). Kim's extremely valuable addition to our knowledge of this rebellion is in his extensive use of Muslim sources. As has always been suspected, these sources provide a sometimes very different view of matters. However, Kim utilizes the other sources as well, and while he could have done more with the Chinese sources, his mining of the Western and even Ottoman sources is extensive.

According to Kim, this was very much a Muslim rebellion, from the earliest participants and their motivations, to the resulting state set up by Yaqub Beg. This revolt was seen by its followers as a holy war to expel the infidels and their rule of

Muslim Turkestan. The revolt was initiated by the Tungans, a Chinese-speaking Muslim people, also called "Hui" or "Han Muslims." They were a minority in lands populated mostly by a variety of Turkic-speaking Muslims. Indeed, these two groups were often suspicious of each other. However, in this revolt they were soon united as Muslim holy warriors. Kim does a fine job of demonstrating that during the course of the rebellion, after the Qing military and officials were killed or forced out of the land, a functioning independent Muslim state was formed, with very specific application of Muslim shariah law, including prohibitions on drinking and restrictions on women. This appeal to Islam gained the regime a measure of legitimacy, but Kim suggests the application of Islamic principles also repelled much of the population, some of whom eventually actually welcomed the return of the Chinese. Islam worked as an appeal to expel the Chinese, but was limited in enabling a stable, secure state. Once the mass slaughters of the Chinese inhabitants was completed and the common enemy removed, the Turkic-speakers often turned against the Tungans, and even the various Turkic tribes engaged in in-

ternecine conflict over lands, leadership positions, and taxes. The Islamic cement cracked.

Yaqub Beg's regime made extensive efforts to gain international legitimacy, gaining recognition from Great Britain and Russia, including the negotiation of trade agreements with each. One of the highlights of Kim's research was disclosing the very extensive contacts between the new Muslim state and the Ottoman Empire. Yaqub Beg's state agreed to accept Ottoman suzerainty in return for weapons, uniforms, advisors, and even some troops. These activities help Kim explain why in 1876-77 the Qing military had such a relatively easy time of retaking the region.

Traditional Chinese and Western secondary accounts have tended to stress the competence and leadership of the Chinese commander of the expedition, Zuo Zongtang. Hodong Kim's contribution in this work is to demonstrate that the Yaqub Beg regime in fact could not sustain a military force large enough to resist consistent Qing pressure; at least, it could not do so with the resources available to it in Turkestan. The need for good relations with the Ottoman sultan were not merely political and ideological, but above all military. Yaqub Beg needed the weapons, funds, and trained officers the sultan could provide. Maintaining his army of 40,000 put a terrible tax burden on a population estimated at about one million. Still, Ottoman training and Russian and British arms did not give Yaqub Beg a reliable army. During the Qing assault, the Tungan units often surrendered or fled before battle began, and other units abandoned their garrisons to flee deeper into Kashgharia.

One real addition to our knowledge of the military aspects of the Qing campaign to crush the revolt is the revelation that Yaqub Beg ordered his forces not to open fire on the Qing even if delaying fire required withdrawal in the face of attack. This order, according to the author, appears in several of the Muslim sources, but not at all in the Chinese sources. That would explain why tradi-

tional accounts of the suppression of the rebellion have not mentioned such an order. Kim notes the few explanations for this odd order, but finds them unconvincing and speculates that Yaqub Beg hoped to reach an agreement with the Qing court for the independence of his regime. Yaqub Beg himself died during the campaign—possibly of poison—leaving little fighting before the Qing fully recovered the land and made it a centrally administered province of the Qing realm.

Readers will be particularly interested in the author's details of the military aspects of this rebellion and its suppression. Unfortunately, this is one of the weakest areas of the book. Since Kim is primarily interested in the political character of the event, my criticism may not be entirely fair. Yet, there are some issues regarding the Qing military in which this work is unnecessarily disappointing. For example, while Kim had access to and utilized a large array of Chinese primary and secondary sources, he seems unfamiliar with the structure of the Qing military. Also, he refers to the main Qing military forces as "Green Battalions." This is a literal translation of the Chinese term "lu ying," but since at least the mid-nineteenth century writers in English have nearly always referred to it as the "Green Standard Army," or, "Army of the Green Standard." Kim may have reasons for not using these common terms, but if so, he fails to explain them. He also seems to confuse all the Qing military forces, whether Eight Banner or Green Standard. Even readers familiar with the general disposition of Qing garrisons in Xinjiang will find it difficult to determine which Qing units fought during the early phases of the rebellion. The significance of this omission is that it ignores the quality of the Qing military units chased out of the region. The Eight Banners had been the main military prop of the dynasty and reputedly the forces stationed in Xinjiang were among the best. Kim describes a small number of actions in which the Qing forces exhibited a great deal of skill and courage, forcing the rebels to commit substantial time and large numbers of

troops to defeat them. Knowing that these were Eight Banner units would help confirm the general view of the quality of the Banner garrisons in the region. On the other hand, if these were Green Standard Army units, prior assessments would need to be revisited.

Equally disappointing, Kim offers few specifics on the military conduct of the suppression campaign. If documents from the preceding two centuries are any indication, the material Kim examined should be full of details and descriptions. Official histories for eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Chinese military campaigns have a wealth of data, not only on operations, but also planning, logistics, and intelligence. With some care, these documents can generally be relied on. It is possible, however, that such may not be the case for the mid-nineteenth century Chinese official documents Kim looked at for a rebellion that took place in a time of great upheaval, disorder, and change in China. These early official histories can also be very difficult to sort through and understand unless one is willing to invest a good deal of time. For example, chronology is based on events at the court and not when events occurred on the ground. Thus, battles or even actions within battles can appear out of order; to cite just one example, correction reports of casualties from a battle may appear in a history many pages before the original report of casualties. Even Chinese historians have found these sources sometimes difficult to wade through. This difficulty in sorting out details in the official histories might explain why Kim chose not to rely on them, and instead to use the Muslim histories. However, the author could have taken descriptions of the military campaign from the Muslim records. As his use of Muslim sources is clearly the most valuable addition to our understanding of this rebellion, my complaint is a minor one.

Readers wanting to understand this rebellion from the viewpoint of the rebels will not be disappointed. The introduction explains clearly the

goals and structure of this work, and the book is very well organized. Nonacademic readers may find the constant analysis and critique of the sources somewhat tedious, but Kim writes in a smooth style and no section is extraneous to his main themes.

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