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### History of the emergence of the Russian people and the spheres of the Russian language use in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region

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#### Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of the history of Russians in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China (XUAR), where attention is paid to the main spheres of use of the Russian language. The article provides information about the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and also tells about when the Russian people and their language appeared. The waves of the Russian emigration are analyzed. These waves affected deeply the number of Russians. The main areas of application of the Russian language in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China are investigated. All this is of additional interest because the topic remains insufficiently explored. It doesn't lose its relevance as Russians still live in Xinjiang and continue to speak Russian, which is their important communication tool.

*Keywords:* Xinjiang, Russians, Russian emigration, population size, Gulja, Urumqi, Russian diaspora, waves of emigration, Russian language, spheres of language use.

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#### 1. Introduction

During the time of the Soviet Union, the study of Russian emigration was not so important in the scientific community. In the post-Soviet period, the interest to this problem began to grow. Since then more works devoted to the Russian diaspora in China appeared (Yu.V. Argudyaeva, Yu.I. Gutin, Yu.V. Klyaus, V.G. Obukhov [7], O.V. Kurto, A.P. Tarasov, A.V. Blokhinskaya, O.A. Timofeev [11], .S.V. Gordeeva, E.V. Kasimova, E.A. Oglezneva, etc.).

#### 2. Structure

The Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (XUAR) is located in the northwestern part of China and borders on seven countries - the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan [12]. It is the largest administrative region of China, that occupies 1/6 of the country. There are many minerals and strategic raw materials. In ancient times and in the Middle Ages, the Great Silk Road passed here, which contributed to the prosperity of the region and served as the cultural union of China, Central Asia and Europe [2].

The total population of XUAR is about 22 million people, of which 40% are representatives of the titular Han nation of China, and 46% are Uighurs (they are the people of the Turkic language group, they mostly profess Islam). In addition to the Han and Uighurs, Xinjiang is inhabited by representatives of 45 nationalities: Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kirghiz (peoples from Central

Asia), Dungans, Mongols, and there are also a few diasporas - 9000 Russians and 4500 Tatars [4].

The Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region is the second time emergence's place of the Russian region of China and has the largest Russian population - 8489 people in 2010 [10]. In this case, it is extremely important for our research to consider the history of the emergence of the Russian population in XUAR, which can be divided into certain waves of emigration.

## **2.1. The Russian history in Xinjiang**

One of the most important events for the history of the first wave of Russian emigration is the signing of the Gulja Treaty in 1851. It gave an opportunity to the Russian merchants to get to Ili region. When the agreement was signed, the Russian consulate and the trade representation appeared in the town of Gulja (Yining) and therefore the first Russian settlers came to these places [3].

The second wave of Russian emigration is more numerous. It was noted in 1917-1922s. The main reason was the Russian revolution, which turned into a civil war. At this time, White Guardists' families, representatives of a merchant class and peasants, who didn't accept Soviet power in Russia, moved to Xinjiang. In addition, large-scale formations of Orenburg and Semirechensk armies of the atamans, A.I. Dutov and B.V. Annenkov, entered into Xinjiang [6].

In the 1930-1940s the third wave of Russian settlers arrived. During this time, the number of Russians increased strongly. The main reason for emigration was the consequences of collectivization. As a result, peasants, Semirechye Cossacks, priests fled from hunger to Xinjiang [1].

Researchers agree that after the 1940s and 1960s a large majority of Russians began to leave Xinjiang. They moved to the USSR, Australia and the United States. It was partly done because of religious Russian split in Xinjiang (their attitude to Moscow Patriarchate). The differences in the Orthodox Church of China took place [5].

After the 1960s Russian diaspora in Xinjiang almost stopped its existence. Cultural revolution started in China. Together with that there were the repressions against the Russians, the destructions of their temples, books etc. Russian schools were closed, half-blood people were sent in the labor camp on the re-education. As for the "thoroughbred" Russians, they were allowed to emigrate what was done by the majority of them [9].

The Russian life in Xinjiang only by the 1980s began coming to normal: repressions became softer, schools started opening and temples commenced restoring. In 1990 the number of Russians was 8065 people. After it the Russian population was growing little by little. It remained stable (about 8500 people) until now.

## **2.2. The Russian language in XUAR and the spheres of its use**

The emergence of Russians in Xinjiang contributed to the emergence of the Russian language, which was preserved and developed along with the life of Russian immigrants. In addition, the state of the Russian language was not the same, it was changing in accordance with the waves of Russian emigration. In this case, it is advisable to accentuate the main spheres of use of the Russian language in Xinjiang.

**The sphere of trading activities.** At the beginning of the XX century the Russian language was playing a tangible role in the economy of Xinjiang, as the number of the Russian population remained there rather significant. According to E.N. Lashutina, in 1907 there were about 10000 Russian merchants, of whom more than 800 were in Urumqi. In addition, 290 trade shops were

opened in Chuguchak, and a Russian shopping district appeared in Gulja [5]. At that time, Russian trade was carried out in stores and shops by representatives of the Russian merchants.

**The sphere of religious activities.** The main spiritual Russian center of close communication and rallying was the Orthodox Church. In 1877 the first stone church in Gulja was opened.

There were 2 prayer houses and three Orthodox churches in Xinjiang. It was difficult to judge how the church life developed at that time due to the lack of sources. But it's rather considerable to mention that Orthodoxy had a positive effect on immigrants from Russia without limiting the growth of the Russian population because it categorically rejected the possibility of abortions [3].

The role of religious component was possibly the most significant thing in the life of Russian immigrants. Temples and churches were as a unique communication centre in Russian. Thanks to it, the Russians, who were so far away from each other, could survive as an organic whole.

**The sphere of educational activities.** The first Russian schools of Xinjiang opened their doors to pupils even in pre-revolutionary time in Gulja, which was called "The Russian capital of Xinjiang". Teaching was conducted in Russian according to the textbooks that were sent from the USSR. In Stalin's school only children of Soviet subjects studied. The aforementioned schools were located in Gulja until the period of the Cultural Revolution [8].

Now, education in primary and secondary classes of Xinjiang students is realized in 7 languages, one of which is Russian, but not always. Much depends on the population and the place of residence.

**The sphere of cultural activities.** According to the information provided by E.N. Lashutina, the first Russian immigrants brought with them special elements of culture in Xinjiang. It was the cut of clothes (women's dresses, European costume), musical instruments (balalaika, accordion, button accordion), songs and dances (Russian folk dances, tap dance), Russian cuisine (bread, jam, dairy products) [5]. All this was created in order to preserve the Russian language and Russian culture. But despite all this, the Russian emigrants didn't so succeed in spreading their cultural life as much as they would like. The main reason was that among the Russian diaspora in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region there were few intellectuals (artists, actors, poets, writers, etc.). Mostly there was the working population: peasants, Cossacks, workers [8].

Currently, the Russian quarter exists in Gulja, where several families live. Among them there are both "thoroughbred" Russians and mestizos. Recently, in 2012, the next center of the modern Russian culture and the Russian language in Urumqi appeared. This centre was called "The Russian Club". It provides support to Russian emigrants, helps to organize holidays (New Year, Christmas, Easter, Trinity), contests, events [5]. For the Russians who remained in Urumqi, this is utterly important, because now there is no Russian quarter in Urumqi and they are very far from each other. "The Russian Club" is not only the center of modern Russian culture, but also the place where the Russian language is well used.

**The sphere of household activities.** This sphere of the Russian language use is one of the main areas in the life of Russian emigrants in Xinjiang. With the emergence of the first Russians in Xinjiang, communication took place mainly in Russian. With the increase in the number of the Russian population, everyday communication in their native language also grew. The families spoke the most in Russian. Some parents ("thoroughbred" Russians) even made their children speak only Russian. But over time, the influence of the Russian language began to decline, after the second half of the 20th century, especially during the Cultural Revolution in China. A few Russians who remained in Xinjiang consciously refused to teach their children the Russian language in order to avoid repression and other problems [10]. Fortunately, after the 1980s a new period of Russian life in Xinjiang began. At the same time, the Russian language began to gradually revive.

### 3. Conclusion

Thus, the Russians made their uniqueness and had a sufficient impact on various areas of life in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Their main element was the Russian language. The sharp decline in the population has caused the fact that today the influence and the level of proficiency in Russian in Xinjiang are limited and considerably reduced. However, today the Russians are trying to preserve their identity, culture, religion and language. It's evident to us by reason of the fact that XUAR is still the most "Russian" region in China, where some spheres of the use of the Russian language (trading, religious, educational, cultural, household) are preserved. In addition, an important factor in preserving Russian culture and the Russian language is the policy of the PRC in XUAR, aimed at developing tourism and at maintaining the further existence of the Russian diaspora.

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