

HEROES OF SHAOLIN

BLACK DRAGON



A Martial Arts Story of Gratitude
and Revenge

ZEN LEE

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Dark Way (黑道) A section of the Brotherhood of River and Lake whose members were mostly hardened criminals and convicts. They included bandits, robbers, thieves, pirates, smugglers, drug dealers, arsonists, assassins and gangsters.

Haohan (好汉) The literal meaning is ‘good fellas’. These men were respected by the Brotherhood of ‘River and Lake’ for their bravery, honour and loyalty.

Kung Fu Terms

- (1) External Kung Fu (外功) trains a person in the skills and techniques of a kung fu style. The training develops the muscles, tendons, bones and physical fitness.
- (2) Internal Kung Fu (内功) develops and treats the Qi (internal energy) in the body.
- (3) Qinggong (轻功) means ‘the art of lightness’. The body is trained to be ‘light as feather’ so that a person can run at great speed, leap high and drop down softly on the tip of the toe.
- (4) Closing or Opening Energy Points (点穴, 解穴) is a specialized skill in martial arts. When pressure is applied to a person’s energy point, he can be immobilised or even die. Similarly, the ‘closed’ energy point can be ‘opened’ or re-activated so that the person can move again.
- (5) Energy Points¹ (穴) These are acupuncture points located on the external pathway of the Qi channels.
- (6) Fighting Pose (武功招数) Each kung fu style has a practice routine which is made up of a series of fighting poses. There is no minimum or maximum number of fighting poses. Fighting poses can be joined together in sequences and the sequences can be varied. Each pose is given a descriptive phrase, for example ‘Black Tiger Steals Heart’, a straight punch at the chest from Shaolin kung fu.

Martial Arts Fellowship (武林) Include all practitioners of martial arts.

¹ The English names of the energy points are taken from the book ‘A Manual of Acupuncture’ by Peter Deadman and Mazin Al-Khafaji with Kevin Baker

Martial Arts Levels (武术阶段)

Level 1 *Jing* 精 (Essence) – to train the muscles, tendons and bones. This leads to the development of External Kung Fu (*Wai-Gong* 外功).

Level 2 *Qi* 气 (Internal Energy) – to develop, treat and refine the internal energy. This leads to the development of Internal Kung Fu (*Nei-Gong* 内功).

Level 3 *Shen* 神 (Mind and Spirit) – to attain spiritual fulfilment. In Buddhism, one is said to have reached ‘enlightenment’, and in Daoism, one is in union with the *Dao* or Way.

River and Lake (*Jianghu* 江湖) ‘River and Lake’ is the literary translation of the Chinese term ‘*Jianghu*’. It was an alternative world which existed in parallel to the Confucian establishment of the day. In a narrow sense, it was an underground world of outlaws and vagabonds. But in the wider sense, it embraced people from all segments of society who were bonded by the same code of conduct. In this alternative world, relationships of honour, loyalty, love, hatred and revenge were resolved in accordance with the ways of the ‘River and Lake’, outside the legal framework or norms of a Confucian society.

River and Lake, Brotherhood of People in the world of ‘River and Lake’ were regarded as brothers and sisters, sharing the same understanding and observing the same code of conduct.

PROLOGUE

The story 'Black Dragon' is Part II of the trilogy 'Heroes of Shaolin'. It continues the story of the three young heroes and their adventures into the world of 'River and Lake'.

A dark force is sweeping over the world of 'River and Lake', taking over gangs in the Dark Way and martial arts schools. The dark force is only identified by an imprint of a 'black dragon', and is referred to as 'The Black Dragon Sect'. Very little is known about this mysterious sect. Its members infiltrate every segment of the society, under assumed identities. The brutality and speedy expansion of the sect has alarmed the Brotherhood of River and Lake but little has been achieved to counter the rising dark force.

The story begins in the 10th year² of Kang Xi's reign.

² 1671 AD

RUN-IN AT THE HEAVENLY BRIDGE

It was the tenth year³ of Emperor Kang Xi's reign. Spring finally arrived after the long cold winter. Along the river banks, the willows stirred to life sprouting new leaves. The Heavenly Bridge arched high over the river, its white marble slabs and carved balustrades gleamed like white jade. Red lotuses emerged from the water and filled the river that ran below the bridge.

The Heavenly Bridge stood in the middle of the Outer City of Beijing. It was built specifically for use by emperors. Barriers were erected at both ends of the bridge to prevent entry. Alongside, there were two wooden bridges for use by commoners. As emperors were 'Sons of Heaven', the marble bridge came to be named the 'Heavenly Bridge'. Several times a year, the emperors would cross this bridge to travel to the Temple of Heaven and the Temple of Agriculture at the southern end of the Outer City where they would perform ritual offerings to Heaven, praying for good harvest and rain.

After the Manchu Conquest of China, the Chinese inhabitants were forced out of the Inner City to resettle in the Outer City. With the large influx of inhabitants, the Outer City at once flourished and thrived. The area around the Heavenly Bridge was the most vibrant and exciting, crowded with people every day.

On this fine spring morning, people flocked to the Heavenly Bridge. Performers were there competing as usual for space and audience. There were the acrobats, wrestlers, jugglers, medicine peddlers, storytellers, buskers, magicians, entertainers, fortune tellers and painters, all eagerly laying out their wares and showing off their skills, drawing circles of audience around them, the larger the circle, the more popular, and the more money would be made on the day.

At every corner, food peddlers cried at the top of their voices and rang their bells to attract customers, especially small children. For those who could afford to pay a little more, eateries were aplenty, some open-air, some in tent like structures, many of which provided story-telling, songs, and music from instruments such as the flute, zither, *pipa*⁴, er-hu⁵. The entertainment would not be complete without gambling, a thoroughly bad habit, but such an

³ 1671 AD

⁴ 琵琶 Chinese lute, a four-stringed plucked instrument

⁵ 二胡 a two-stringed bowed instrument, like a violin or fiddle.

inherent part of Chinese culture. Cricket fights, cock fights, gambling games of all sorts, dice, cards, dominoes flourished, and few could resist the temptation to try their luck on the day.

Not all who came here looked for an honest living. Undesirable elements came to try their luck too. Confidence tricksters, beggars, and pickpockets wandered about looking for their next victim. To add to the danger, dark forces lurked, and many a murky deal was brokered here. No wonder the place was infiltrated with under-cover yamen⁶ runners, informants, and ‘eyes and ears’ of power houses as they mingled in the crowd, collecting information and picking up gossip.

The area was essentially a poor men’s playground, a place for some cheap entertainment, food and bargain hunting. Yet quite often, the noble and the rich would stroll along disguised in plain clothes, looking for fun or for some secret liaison. It was because of this mix of people from such diverse backgrounds that the area around Heavenly Bridge gained its reputation as ‘the place where dragons and snakes mix and mingle’. Yet all these people could vanish instantly. On rainy and cold winter days, the visitors disappeared, the performers and stall owners packed up their wares. Apart from a few isolated covered structures left empty by the owners, the Heavenly Bridge area became largely a tract of muddy land, abandoned and desolate.

Two men walked towards the Heavenly Bridge, admiring its fine architecture and the beautiful scenery. They reached the southern end of the bridge and found their access blocked by the wooden barriers. They looked to end of the bridge. In the horizon rose the high walls of the Inner City, within which loomed the Forbidden City with its flying eaves, yellow glazed tiles and decorative roof ridges.

“So this bridge leads straight to the Forbidden City?” asked a man with envy in his eyes. He was 27 years old, broad and stocky, dark in complexion and a moustache that drooped to his chin. Except for his leather boots which had golden upturned points, his clothes were those normally worn by merchants from Mongolia, a yellow cotton robe-like garment with long sleeves called ‘deel’ wrapped across the chest and buttoned on the right, an orange sash around his waist from which hung three pouches, and a black velvet cap on his head. Like most merchants on the Silk Road, he wore a sword on his back. Yet the merchant’s clothing could not hide his stately bearing and the daring look in his eyes.

“This must be it, Your Highness. This is also my first visit to Beijing”, said his younger companion, a young man only 18 years old, but suave and mature beyond his years. He was

⁶ *Yamen*: Government office (e.g. the Magistracy) in feudal China.

dressed in blue in the same style as a Mongolian merchant, but was in fact a Tibetan named Sangye Gyatso, a novice monk and attendant to the Fifth Dalai Lama. He had become close to the Fifth Dalai Lama from a young age. At the age of eight, the Fifth Dalai Lama personally ordained him as a novice monk and provided him with excellent tutors. The Fifth Dalai Lama's special interest in him had raised a few eyebrows and fed the rumour that he was his natural son.

The first speaker was Prince Galdan of the Dzungar Mongols. At the age of thirteen, he had been sent to Tibet to train as a lama. He first received training under the Fourth Panchen Lama, and then studied together with Sangye Gyatso under the Fifth Dalai Lama. Two months ago, word had reached Tibet that Galdan's elder brother, ruler of the Dzungar Mongols, had been killed by a half brother. Galdan's own life was in danger as the half brother, Chechen Tayiji, had sent assassins to Tibet. Upon hearing the news, Galdan immediately disrobed to return home to avenge his brother's death. The Fifth Dalai Lama sent the novice monk Sangye along to accompany Prince Galdan as far as Beijing. The direct route from Tibet to the Dzungar base was too dangerous, and they had had to take a detour via Beijing, surviving several murder attempts on the way.

"That kid emperor Kang Xi had it easy. It took his ancestors sixty years of hard fighting to emerge from a small Jurchen tribe to land on the throne of the Forbidden City. The crown is too big for the boy's head. It fits me better."

Prince Galdan could not understand why Heaven had favoured Kang Xi and not him. He liked to think himself akin to the great Genghis Khan, a born warrior and conqueror, but by a twist of fate, he had been offered by his parents to the monastery. He was well aware that being a Mongol, there were limits to how far he could advance in the monastery. The Fourth Dalai Lama, previously a Mongol prince, had caused great consternation when he was enthroned and died tragically at the young age of twenty-seven in suspicious circumstances. To be honest, Galdan was never inclined to religious life. During his years in Tibet, he had never devoted his heart and soul to Buddhism. Instead he spent much of his time practising kung fu, riding and archery, all three skills in which he excelled. He had a very high regard of himself. He wanted to be the 'Eagle' that would one day fly over the Gobi desert and land on the Forbidden City. His brother's death had given him a chance to realise his dream.

"Your Highness has trained as a lama since the age of thirteen. Now why the sudden change of heart after your elder brother died?"

“I am destined to be great. I can be a great lama or a great emperor. Sakyamuni could have been a great king if he hadn’t chosen religion over the kingdom. My brother’s death struck me that it is now my destiny to lead the Dzungar Mongols and rebuild the great Mongol empire.”

The novice monk Sangye was lost for words. He saw for the first time the naked ambition of Prince Galdan. This was a man clever and daring. In recent years, the Dzungar Mongols had become a powerful force in West Mongolia and they were constantly at war with the Eastern Mongols. If only Prince Galdan could unite the whole of Mongolia as did Genghis Khan, he would be a powerful ally. He asked cautiously, “If you were on the throne of the Forbidden City, would you grant Tibet independence?”

Prince Galdan chuckled. “That goes without saying. You, dear Sangye, will have great power. You know what I mean.” His voice turned serious, “In the meantime, I expect you give me all the assistance I require.”

“I understand, Your Highness”.

A fat lama approached them⁷. He was wandering in the area when he saw Prince Galdan and the novice monk Sangye Gyatso, and recognised them immediately. He put his palms together close to his chest, with fingers pointing upwards, and bowed low. “Your Highness Prince Galdan, and esteemed Sangye, it is my great honour to meet you both here.”

“Sonam, why are you here? Aren’t you still under confinement?” chided the novice monk Sangye Gyatso. The fat lama had committed serious wrongdoings and had been confined indefinitely in a cave on top of a high cliff.

Unabashed, the fat lama bowed humbly and said, “I have repented and was given a second chance. As I am one of the very few who could speak and write Chinese, I was sent by His Holiness on a special mission to China so that I could prove myself and make amends.” This was a lie. The fat lama had in fact escaped, and while on the run, had met Master Wan, the Incense Master of the Heaven and Earth Triad. He knew Tibet wanted independence from Qing rule and this chance meeting was a heaven-sent opportunity for him to secure his release from confinement. He had persuaded Master Wan that he could bring about an alliance between Tibet and the Triad Society. He gained the trust of Master Wan, and even though he never became a real member of the Triad, he was sometimes invited to attend the Triad’s top level meetings when discussing strategies against the Manchus.

⁷ He was the same lama in Part I ‘Through The Wooden Men Lane’ who had accompanied Jade and Master Wan on the journey to Shaolin Monastery, poisoned Sir Qin’s retainer Toga and chased after Flint and the boys and drove them into a mountain cave.

The fat lama knew that he must impress Prince Galdan and Sangye Gyatso. They were two important men in the monastery, and might secure a pardon for him. He had heard rumours that the novice monk Sangye Gyatso was the natural son of the Fifth Dalai Lama. He also learnt that Prince Galdan had disrobed after the death of his elder brother and might one day become leader of the Dzungar Mongols.

Sangye became impatient. “Come out with it. Why are you here?”

“Uh, it’s about the Heaven and Earth Triad.”

The fat lama told the two men about the Heaven and Earth Triad, their activities, their determination to overthrow the Qing Dynasty, their huge operation and massive recruitment. He boasted that he was their lead to the Triad Society. “The Heaven and Earth Society will hold a meeting this very night at a venue not far from the Heavenly Bridge. I have the map you will need and I know the secret password.”

Prince Galdan thought, an enemy’s enemy is a friend. Why not? Though interested in what he had heard, he tried not to look too eager.

They were interrupted by a commotion. Men on high stilts dressed as the Eight Immortals were heading towards the river, followed by worshipping crowds who jostled and cheered after them. The Eight Immortals are Daoist deities, worshipped during the spring festivals as well as on the first and fifteenth days of the lunar months. However performers on high stilts were at the Heavenly Bridge providing entertainment practically on a daily basis. There was no shortage of excuses to perform as celebrations could go on the whole year round, seasonal festivals, birthdays of Buddhas, Daoist deities, Confucius, famous historical figures such as Guan Gong, emperors’ and empresses’ birthdays and deaths, victories, rainfall, good harvest and so on. Today was the fifteenth of the lunar month and the legend chosen for this occasion was the ‘Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea’⁸, a story about how each Immortal used his or her divine power to cross the sea. People from all parts of the city came to see performers walking across the river on their stilts. The stilts were six feet tall but the waters were more than fifteen feet deep. So how was that possible, the fat lama asked.

Prince Galdan laughed, “Stupid, it is a trick. These men are martial artists who practise *Qinggong*⁹, but even they could not leap over the river. Stumps were attached to the river bed. The men simply jumped onto the stumps and at the same time used their internal force to move the waters. From afar it looks as if the waters had parted to allow them to cross.” As he said this, he turned his head. Two boys were throwing stones and chasing one another. There were

⁸ 八仙过海

⁹ *Qinggong* 轻功—the art of lightness.

dozens of boys in the area, dirty and scruffy, begging for money, picking pockets or fooling around. One boy looked up and glanced in the men's direction, catching the eye of Prince Galdan. Their eyes locked for a second. Suddenly the boy ran towards the men on their stilts knocking one of them over. The man fell onto the boy who in turn fell onto the fat lama. The fat lama pushed the boy away, cursing "Get away, you dirty boy!" The boy ran and was soon lost in the crowd.

The fat lama gazed after the boy. Had he met him before¹⁰? There was something strange about this boy. He now realised it was the boy's *Qinggong* steps. "Lotus Steps!" The three men exclaimed in awe. The Lotus Steps were supposedly passed down by Avalokitesvara, the Sanskrit name for Guan Yin¹¹, the Buddha of Compassion. These *Qinggong* steps were the secret Tibetan kung fu, and could only pass down orally from the teacher to a select few disciples. The bodhisattva Avalokitesvara was most sacred to the Tibetans, and according to Tibetan myth, the Tibetan race descended from Avalokitesvara¹². This bodhisattva also had a mythical link to the Tibetan Gelugpa Sect. After many reincarnations as kings, Buddhist masters, yogis, the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara had finally been reborn into this world as Dalai Lamas. The mythical link to bodhisattva Avalokitesvara was particularly useful to the Fifth Dalai Lama when he assumed power as both the spiritual and secular head of Tibet in 1642.

The men were mystified. How did the boy learn the *Qinggong* steps? Who was his *Shifu*¹³? By now, the crowd were rushing towards the Heavenly Bridge. The three men pushed their way out to find a quiet spot to continue their conversation.

The fat lama Sonam remembered the map and put his hand inside his robe. But the map was gone. His vial of antidotes for the Green Demon Palm poison had also disappeared. His face turned red with anger. "It must have been that boy! He took the map."

"I saw the boy fall on you, but you pushed the boy away, didn't you?" Prince Galdan prided himself for being the best archer in Mongolia with eyes sharp as an eagle. He had been paying attention to the boy, yet he had not noticed the boy steal from the lama. How could he miss it?

¹⁰ The fat lama had indeed met the boy twice before (Part I 'Through The Wooden Men Lane'). The first time the boy had been a black shadow deliberately sent to lure him away so that his friend could get hold of the antidote for the lama's Green Demon Palm poison. The second time, the boy had been present at the Heaven and Earth Triad gathering at Mount Song near Shaolin Monastery, and the lama had chased him and his friends into a cave.

¹¹ 观音

¹² See Author's Notes – Chap 1, No. 9

¹³ kung fu teacher

He felt like an ‘eagle stung on the head by a flea’¹⁴. “We must find the boy!” he ordered. The three men headed off in the direction in which the boy had fled.

In an open-air café, a boy was taking away dishes and cleaning the tables for the waiting customers. This was a popular eating place serving noodles, dumplings, and fish balls. Its signature dish was red-cooked beef in noodles and drew so many customers that the place was always full, and people had to queue for a seat. To-day especially, after watching ‘Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea’, many had rushed here for a meal. Customers formed a long queue which ran round and round the café. Then came the unexpected, the queue was broken up. There was a tussle and three men barged their way in. The people shouted and swore, “Damn the queue jumpers! Beat them...”, but before they could finish the sentence, they found themselves flung to the ground like fallen leaves.

Prince Galdan, novice monk Sangye and the fat lama Sonam were looking for the boy but he seemed to have vanished into thin air. They had been walking aimlessly when they chanced upon this café but could not get in because of the crowd queuing outside. They wondered if the boy was inside. The fat lama leapt up a tree to look into the cafe. He recognised the boy. This time he could not let him get away.

The café was full of customers eating, drinking and chatting loudly. The fat lama shouted for everyone to leave. He and his companions began turning tables and chairs, smashing dishes, plates and bowls, and punching anyone blocking their way. Soon the customers fled. The owner’s pleas fell on deaf ears and he was powerless to stop the havoc.

The boy cleaning the tables dropped his towel and hid behind a group of Russian Cossacks. The Cossacks had arrived in Beijing with a Russian envoy to deliver a message to the Chinese Emperor from the Tsar. They were young men in their twenties, some blond with blue eyes and others dark-skinned with black hair. The dark-skinned Cossacks were Dahur Cossacks sent by the Commander of Nerchinsk to accompany the Russian envoy to Beijing. Except for one blond fair Cossack in the middle named Peter, the other Cossacks all wore a moustache or beard.

There was now only one other customer in the café. He occupied a small table in a dark corner, totally unconcerned with what was going on around him. He continued with his

¹⁴ A metaphor borrowed from the often used Chinese (Cantonese dialect) expression ‘A tiger stung on the head by a flea’ meaning ‘an impossible task’, or a laughable attempt by a ‘flea (a very small man) to sting the head of a Tiger (a big and strong man)’.

meal, paying no attention to the intruders. The fat lama shouted, “Are you deaf? Do you want me to throw you out?”

The diner ignored the lama, tucking into his food, not bothering even to look up at the fierce man before him. His face was obscured by a broad-brimmed straw hat. The novice monk Sangye could feel the aura of the man even from a distance. It was a ‘killer’s aura’, a sharp penetrating *Qi* emanating like a sharp blade just unsheathed from its scabbard. The stronger a man’s kung fu, the greater the distance from which a fellow martial artist could sense this ‘killer’s aura’. Sangye had no doubt that this lone diner was a top martial artist and a seasoned killer. Was he the assassin sent by Prince Galdan’s half-brother? Sangye stopped and watched.

The fat lama Sonam was annoyed and decided to teach the stupid man a lesson. He summoned his internal energy, raised his palm so that it turned green, and hit out at him, exercising his Green Demon Palm, a deadly poisonous blow for which no one else had the antidote. The lama always carried the antidote with him in case he met a stronger opponent and the poison rebounded back on him. As he had now lost his antidote, he was careful to use only fifty percent of his internal energy. This served two purposes, to let his opponent know that he had no intention of taking his life, and to enable himself withdraw quickly if the opponent turned out to be stronger than he had thought. Worse come to worse, he could increase his internal energy for a life-and-death combat. The man was unperturbed by the lama’s blow. He carried on eating, using chopsticks to pick up his food with one hand, and raising the palm of the other to meet the lama’s blow, all the time busying himself with his food, totally ignoring his attacker. The lama felt his palm was hitting icy air, and his hand began to freeze. He could not withdraw his hand. His palm felt as though it was sucked into an icy current. Sangye quickly leapt forward and pulled the fat lama away. He put his palm on the back of the fat lama, passing on his own internal energy to help him recover. The diner did not follow up with an attack, and instead turned his sights to Prince Galdan.

Prince Galdan approached the Russian Cossacks. He took out his sword and shouted at them to move away. The Cossack Peter stood up, signalled his companions, and without a word, they turned a table onto Galdan crashing the food, plates and bowls onto the ground. Galdan was taken aback and stepped aside. The Russian Cossack Peter drew out his rapier. The rapier, popular in Europe in the early seventeenth century, was like a Chinese sword, double-edged, long and thin with a cup-shape hand guard, whereas the Chinese sword had a round band or a small bell-shape hand guard.

Galdan thrust the tip of his sword straight at the Cossack, aiming at his wrist. The Cossack parried and glided his rapier briefly along Galdan’s blade, giving no clue to the real

target area. Galdan was not one to take unnecessary risks. He used his fanciful footwork and moved out of the sword range. The Cossack stepped forward, and moved the tip of his sword in a small circle to envelop and trap Galdan's blade. Galdan lifted the tip of his sword and made a circular cut at the Cossack's arm. The Cossack stepped backwards. His nine companions had drawn their weapons and they moved around Galdan in a circular fashion, some holding a sabre, and some a *Shashka*¹⁵ long sword and round shield¹⁶.

The Cossack Peter leapt out of the arena. He took the hand of the boy and fled. A loud clamour outside the café suggested that Chinese soldiers were arriving. The fighting stopped. Seeing the boy had fled, Galdan and his companions got out of the café before the soldiers arrived. When they looked back, they found the lone diner had also gone.

Later, Chinese officials complained to the Russian envoy that the Cossacks had behaved badly, forcing their way into the café, drinking and fighting, and injuring innocent bystanders. The officials further warned that the liberty of the Cossacks was to be restricted, and any future outings by Cossacks in the Capital would need to be accompanied by Chinese soldiers.

¹⁵ A long sword halfway between a sabre and a scimitar (oriental curved sword).

¹⁶ See Author's Notes

II

COSSACK AND RUSSIAN

The Russian envoy Milovanoff was sent by the Commander of Nerchinsk to Beijing with proposals that the Chinese emperor Kang Xi accept Russian suzerainty and place himself under the protection of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich. When the envoy and his party arrived in Beijing, they were housed in the Embassy Court guarded by Chinese soldiers. They had their audience with Emperor Kang Xi and were given a letter to take back to the Tsar. They were given permission to ramble at will through the city for two more weeks before they returned to Nerchinsk.

The Cossacks roamed the city for bargains but found things generally more expensive in Beijing shops than in Russia. They complained that sables of the same quality cost three times more than in Siberian towns, and other things they bought they did not know whether the price was fair because they had nothing to compare with or trade with. Then they heard about the Heavenly Bridge area, where there were really good bargains, cheap food and great entertainment. They were enjoying themselves until they found themselves involved in a fight. They had no idea they were fighting the Dzungar Prince Galdan. They were not even sure how they had become involved in the first place. Perhaps it was just to help out a fellow Cossack in trouble. They left the café and looked for their friend but could not find him, and so returned to the Embassy Court.

The Cossacks were bewildered by their friend's action. "Why did Peter run away with the boy? Who is this he?" A Dahur¹⁷ Cossack seemed as if he knew, so the others pressured him to tell them all. The Dahur Cossack began, "Yes, we've met the boy before. You remember three days ago, we went to a market place to find out what was being sold in Chinese markets, and at what price, so that the envoy could include this in his report to the Tsar. We went past a hawker selling steamed buns, they looked delicious with thin crusts and meat stuffing. People were eating them on the roadside. Peter remarked how lovely the buns smelled. We saw a boy, no older than sixteen, looking longingly at the buns, apparently with no money to buy. This was the boy who fled with Peter from the café. He looked as if he hadn't eaten for days, so fragile and thin. Peter was going to buy him a bun when we saw the boy grab one and hide into his sleeves. When the boy tried to take another bun, Peter caught his wrist and said in perfect Chinese, 'Bad boy!' The hawker, alerted, raised his pole to hit the boy. Peter stopped him and threw down a string of coppers, asking, 'How many buns for the money?' The hawker was all smiles when he saw a foreigner had offered to pay and held up ten fingers. Peter asked, 'Ten?' The hawker nodded. The boy shouted, 'Cheat, the money is enough for twenty'. Peter said to the hawker, 'The boy has taken one. You owe him nineteen. Let the boy pick up the remaining buns whenever it pleases him. Don't you cheat or bully the boy, or you will be punished.' The boy looked up at Peter and smiled.

"I had a good look at the boy. He was dirty and scruffy. His skin was not black, but he had put on something to blacken his face. We Dahurs are dark-skinned and we can tell. I noticed a tiny white neckline when he turned his head. And when Peter removed his hand from the boy's wrist, he left white finger marks on the hand revealing smooth pearly skin beneath the dirt. My instincts suggested that this was a GIRL, not a boy."

¹⁷ 'Dahur' is a derogatory term and is the former name of 'Daur', see Author's Notes.

“Lucky man!” exclaimed the Cossacks, not without a little envy in their hearts. “Did they see each other again? Was there a liaison?”

“Heaven forbid your dirty minds. You’ll never guess what happened next.”

“Come on, tell us.”

“The boy, er actually the girl, took the bun that she had hidden in her sleeve and threw it in the air. Our eyes followed the bun, and before we knew it, the girl had vanished, and the bun landed on my hat. Peter was puzzled and asked whether he had offended the Chinese sensitivity. I laughed and pointed out to him that he was actually dealing with a girl, and girls sometimes behave strangely. Peter agreed, it could have been a girl. He had noticed when he caught the boy’s wrist that it was very small and delicate.

“The next day, we went back to the market place again. We did not see the girl but we found the hawker who told us that she had not returned, but that some beggar boys had come for the buns and they left a message to thank the Russian man for his kindness. This afternoon is only the second time we have seen the girl. She is still disguised as a boy, but wearing clean clothes and she covered her hair with a wrap. She had her back to us and we didn’t notice her at first until these three men marched in when she ran over to hide behind Peter. She was in trouble and we decided to help her. That was why we challenged the Mongolian man to a fight, while I helped Peter get away with the girl. Now we have to wait for Peter to come back and tell us what has happened.”

On the river bank, two persons were slumped under a willow tree exhausted from their long run. The light breeze was soothing and they felt refreshed. The peace and quiet here was in sharp contrast to the hustle and bustle of the Heavenly Bridge area on the opposite side of the river. They imagined the fighting was still going on in the café, and for the time being, they were safe from their pursuers.

“I am Peter. Will you let me know your name?” He was now more than ever certain that the boy was a girl in disguise. He had held the boy’s hand when they fled, and the hand was soft and as smooth as if it had no bones. He was curious as to how the girl would look without camouflage. She could be beautiful.

“I am Qin HaiLing, but you can call me Haidi, easier to remember,” replied the boy.

“Haidi, you have parents?”

“My mother died when I was five. I live with my father.”

“Where is your father now? What is his name?”

“My father is away most of the time. People call him Sir Qin.”

“So he has a title, an important man.”

“A fifth rank official”. Haidi deflected further questions about her father, asking Peter, “Where did you learn to speak such fluent Chinese?”

“I learned it in Nerchinsk. I have been there three years already. I can also speak Mongolian, Manchu and several western languages.” Before long, he was telling her a lot about himself. Peter started off as a Cossack but it was his linguistic talent which got him noticed by Prince Vasily Golitsyn who sent him on a special mission to Nerchinsk.

Prince Golitsyn was well versed in foreign affairs and kept a close monitoring of the countries bordering Russia. He had heard about an empire in the south called ‘Cathay’ or ‘China’ which the Russians initially thought was another nomad tribe in the steppes like the Mongol tribes. As Russia

expanded to the regions along the Amur River, the Cossacks encountered frequent skirmishes with Chinese soldiers who dismantled Russian forts claiming that they were built on Chinese land, but the Cossacks returned and rebuilt the forts again. This went on for some years and Golitsyn decided to learn more about China and to find a solution to the Sino-Russian border conflicts. Peter's mission was to find out as much as he could about China and report back directly to the Prince.

Peter realised that they had gone off track in their conversation and tried to get Haidi to tell him more about herself and her family. "Haidi, you are obviously a rich girl, tell me why do you dress up as a pauper boy?"

"Because I ran away from home." Haidi was surprised that Peter had seen through her disguise.

"Was your father so bad to you, you ran away?"

"No, my father loves me dearly and is very protective of me".

"Then why?"

"It's a long story." Haidi told him that she lived with her father in a remote place with only servants and guards. The only time she had been out of the house was when she begged her father to take her with him to Shaolin Monastery, and there she had met Flint, Bussie, Tobie, Storm and the eunuch Speck. She had promised to be present at the three boys' graduation but her father refused to let her go alone. Her father and his retainer Toga were both busy, and her father could not trust anyone else to accompany her on the journey. Haidi decided to run away and meet up with her friends. She missed the boys' graduation but she had a fall-back plan with the boys to meet in Beijing. She managed to reach Beijing but was caught by her father's men when she tried to pawn a piece of jewellery. It was sheer bad luck that she happened to walk into a pawn shop which was owned by her father, and to pawn a piece of jewellery which had come from that very pawn shop. She was taken to live on an island for one year before returning to their Beijing home. Before long, she managed to run away again. "It is safer to disguise as a boy on the road. My friends at Shaolin Monastery still think I am my father's stable boy," Haidi chuckled.

Peter was taken by her ringing laughter and the grin in her eyes, and begged her to remove her make-up. As he had hoped, Haidi was indeed a beautiful girl. He could not connect the girl before him with the pauper boy, and admired her make-up skills. As a boy, Haidi had blackened her face and teeth and flattened her nose. In reality her teeth were glistening white, her skin fair and smooth like porcelain, and her nose cute with an upturned tip. When she smiled, two lovely dimples appeared on her cheeks. Haidi was undoubtedly a skilful master in the art of disguise, but it was the eyes which gave her away. They were bright and lively, the big dark pupils sparkled like evening stars in the sky. Peter was a swordsman and was trained to observe an opponent's every bodily and eye movement. A swordsman would follow an opponent's eyes to detect the next attack, and it was precisely Haidi's eyes that drew his attention when they first met at the market place. "You are apparently a first rate make-up artist, but your eyes gave you away."

"I could disguise my eyes as well, make them smaller with wrinkly or heavy lids, and even disguise myself as a blind person. But eye make-up is uncomfortable and hinders my vision. I prefer to disguise myself as a poor street boy. There are so many such boys here and nobody pays attention to them"

Peter had heard that Chinese girls were most proper and prim, seldom ventured out of their house, and on the rare occasions that they did go out, they were chaperoned. Haidi must be quite an exceptional girl to run away from home, to survive on her own, even with enemies after her. Haidi had behaved a little boyish, but she would soon blossom into a beautiful young lady. Peter asked softly, "Haidi, why were the three men in the café chasing you?"

“I stole something from the fat lama, a map and an antidote for a very lethal poison.” Haidi went on to tell him about the fat lama, the antidote for the Green Demon Palm and the Heaven and Earth Triad¹⁸.

“You and your father are both Han Chinese. Do you not support the movement to ‘overthrow the Qing and restore the Ming’?”

“My father’s ancestors moved to Guizhou during the early Ming dynasty. My mother was not a Han Chinese. She came from the Miao minority race. My father always said, ‘Does race matter? You have bad men and good men in every race. You cannot judge a man by his race.’ My father also told me that the last few Ming emperors were either corrupt or incompetent. He had no respect for them. As long as the Manchu emperor is a good emperor, he would not fight against him.”

“I cannot agree with your father more. I am a Pole but I served the Russian Tsar.” Seeing Haidi’s confusion, Peter explained, “Our ancestors fled from serfdom in Poland, Lithuania, and Muscovy. They established military communities in the steppes of Ukraine and southern Russia, and fought for those who paid for their services. The Cossacks are freemen and owe allegiance to no one except to the chief of their own region. People from different countries have come to join the Cossack communities. That’s why you have seen Cossacks at the café, of different colours and looks. I used to wear Tartar clothes, shave my forehead and tie my hair at the back into a pigtail. Tartars numbered only a few in our community but we like to disguise ourselves as Tartars or Turks. After I left my community to work solely for Prince Golitsyn, I have changed back to the Russian hair style and clothing. I even changed my weapon from a sabre to a rapier. I learned fencing from a great French master and had duelled as a second to the Prince. I now carry a rapier which I find serves me better.”

“But why serve Russia and not Poland?”

“Poland tries to dominate us but Russia respects our independence.”

“Does that mean you can also fight against Russia if someone pays more money?”

“Clever girl! This can happen but not likely. We have signed a treaty with Russia and pledged our loyalty. We will not break our pledge unless it threatens our independence.”

Haidi thought of the map she had taken from the fat lama. She had examined the map and noticed a cross marked on a spot which was located in the slums of the Outer City, the poorest and roughest area. She knew this place well. After her first encounter with the Cossack Peter at the market place, she had wandered around and came across a blind alley¹⁹ with a row of four decrepit houses. Someone was cooking and the smell of food was very tempting. It came from the house at the end of the alley. Haidi peeped in through the window and saw an old couple, the woman was cooking and the man was chopping firewood for the stove. Haidi sneaked into the house and stole bits of food from different dishes, a standard trick to avoid detection. She went back again and overheard the old man saying to his wife, “I need to go out and buy more food. It’s a big gathering here to-morrow. Make sure you tidy up the house and sweep the secret tunnel to make sure it’s not blocked.”

Haidi followed the woman and discovered that the four houses on the row were in fact knocked into one house inside which had a very large hall. Standing against the wall was a large table which looked like an altar, with spirit tablets, incense, candles and offerings of fruit and food. It reminded her of the Heaven and Earth Triad gathering which she had witnessed two years ago at Mount Song near Shaolin Monastery. This might possibly be a meeting place of the Triad. She hid behind a rafter and saw the old woman disappearing under the altar-like table and only returning after some time. When the woman left

¹⁸ 天地会 See Part I ‘Through The Wooden Men Lane’

¹⁹ hutong 胡同 blind alley 死胡同

the room, Haidi leapt down from the rafter. Under the table was a trapdoor which opened into a tunnel. The end of the tunnel was blocked by a large rock. She looked around and soon found the mechanics to move the rock. She went outside and found herself at the river bank near the Heavenly Bridge area. She also found similar mechanics hidden among the cracks which could move the rock and enable a person to get into the tunnel from outside. She didn't think much of the discovery until she had a look at the map, and realised that the Heaven and Earth Triad was having a meeting at this very house.

Haidi wanted to find out what the Triad was up to. She had a coat like a magician's coat full of pockets inside filled with her tools and make-up. In an instant the beautiful Chinese girl was turned into a scruffy pauper boy before Peter's eyes. Peter thought the transformation amazing but he would not let Haidi go alone. They formulated a plan, to get in through the tunnel and hide under the altar table. If things went wrong, Haidi would surrender herself and let Peter escape through the tunnel, and Peter would then take the map and a written message by Haidi to the housekeeper at her Beijing home for help. Peter insisted that he should stay behind but Haidi explained that the three men were looking for her. Rather than risking both to be caught, it was safer for one to run and seek help. If she was moved to another place, she would try to draw a bird or fish on a wall, or a tree on the ground to show the direction.

Haidi and Peter heard noises of a violent altercation not far away. They climbed up a tree and hid among the leaves to find out what was happening.

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AUTHOR'S NOTES

I

RUN-IN AT THE HEAVENLY BRIDGE

1.1 Heavenly Bridge

The Heavenly Bridge was first built in the Yuan Dynasty (1271AD-1368AD). At the time, the Outer City of Beijing was a wide stretch of countryside, muddy and watery. The waters accumulated in the wet outskirts ran like a river and flowed north to the moats of the capital city. A high-arch stone bridge was erected over the river to enable the Yuan Emperor to go from his Palace to the outskirts to perform ritual offerings to Heaven.

During the reign of the Ming Emperor Yong Le, a southern extension to the capital city was built which had since become known as the 'Outer City' and its northern walled enclosure the 'Inner City'. At the southern end of the Outer City, Emperor Yong Le built two temples, the Temple of Heaven and the Temple of Agriculture. The stone bridge was conveniently located in the middle of the Outer City. It became the Imperial Way for emperors to travel from the Forbidden City to perform ritual offerings at the Temple of Heaven and the Temple of Agriculture at the southern end of the Outer City.

Available literature describes the stone bridge as paved with white marble slabs with beautifully carved balustrades. The bridge shone like a piece of white jade, elegant and exquisite. Wooden barriers were erected at both ends of the bridge to prevent entry. Commoners wishing to cross over to the Inner City had to use the two wooden bridges alongside the marble bridge. The bridge thus derived its name 'The Heavenly Bridge' because it was built specifically for use by emperors who were 'Sons of Heaven'²⁰. However some scholars believe that the bridge was named 'The Heavenly Bridge' because it was on the way for emperors to make 'offerings to Heaven'. (Tianqiao 天桥: Zhang Ci Xi 张次溪 ; Tian Qiao 天桥: Duan Bing Ren 段柄仁).

In late Ming Dynasty, the river that ran under the bridge was filled in, but during the reign of Emperor Qian Long²¹, grandson of Kang Xi, the river was re-dredged. Rows of willow trees were planted along its banks, and the water filled with red lotuses. (Note: In the story, the river, the willows and lotuses do not reflect the scenery at the time of the reign of Kang Xi.)

In 1927 the bridge was flattened to enable the laying of tramline tracks. Later in 1934 the balusters were also removed when the road needed to be widened. By then, except for its name, the bridge had completely disappeared. The water had also dried up and what remained was a ditch famously known as the 'Dragon Beard Ditch (*Longxugou* 龙须沟)'.

For decades, the Dragon Beard Ditch was notorious for its dirty water, the foul stench from dead cats and rats, human and animal waste, rotten food and litter dumped into it. During rainy days, the

²⁰ Chinese Government internet source: www.bjstb.gov.cn

²¹ 乾隆

water overflowed and seeped into neighbouring houses causing health hazards to the residents. In 1950, the open ditch was finally cleaned and covered. Water pipes were laid in the underground ditch with roads built on its tarmac surface.

The Heavenly Bridge remains the name of the area, but as a saying in Beijing goes, it is now a place ‘with a heaven but no bridge’.

1.2 Prince Galdan of the Dzungar Mongols (1644-1697)

He was a Choros-Oirat²² prince, and grandson of Gushri Khan²³ on his mother’s side. At the age of 13, Galdan was sent to Tibet to receive training as a lama first under the fourth Panchen Lama and then the fifth Dalai Lama.

Towards the end of the Yuan dynasty, the Oirats from West Mongolia formed an alliance to defend themselves against the Eastern Mongols. They designated themselves ‘Dorben Oirat’ (The Alliance of Four), which comprised the four major tribes: Choros or Olot, Torghut, Dorbet, and Khoshot.

After the alliance dissolved, the West Mongolian tribes were simply called ‘Oirat’. In early 17th century, Galdan’s grandfather, Khara Khula²⁴, united the three tribes of Choros, Dorbet, Khoit, and formed a second great Oirat State known as the Dzungar Empire. Later the Khoshots and Torguts were forced to join the confederation with Galdan’s father, Erdeni Baatur, as the leader, thus unifying West Mongolia. The Choros were the dominant Oirat tribe of that era. The Oirats grew strong, separated themselves from the Mongols and declared themselves completely independent. In the 17th century, the Khanate of Dzungaria stretched from the Great Wall of China to present-day eastern Kazakhstan, and from present-day northern Kyrgyzstan to southern Siberia. After some 400 years of struggle for control of Mongolia, the Dzungaria Khanate was finally exterminated in 1757 during the reign of Qian Long, grandson of Kang Xi.

The Oirats or Dzungars were constantly at war with the Khalkhas who were the Eastern Mongols. It must be said that the Eastern Mongols had never regarded the Oirats as Mongols. The name ‘Mongol’ and the title ‘Khan’ were exclusively reserved for the Eastern Mongols, such as the Khalkhas and the Chakhars, and they claimed such as their birth right being direct descendants of Genghis Khan. This is not exactly correct because the Khoshots claimed descent from Qasar, brother of Genghis Khan. The Khoshots were the easternmost Oirat tribe, adjacent to the Eastern Mongol khanate of Altan Khan.

1.3 Sangye Gyatso (1653-1705)

He was the nephew of the second Desi, Trinley Gyatso. Rumours were rife at the time that he was the natural son of the Fifth Dalai Lama²⁵. However, Tibetan historians claimed that the remark was ‘said in levity’²⁶ when Sangye was made Desi at the young age of twenty-seven.

As a young boy, Sangye was educated by his uncle. As he grew older, he became one of the Fifth Dalai Lama’s attendants. In his book ‘The Fourteen Dalai Lamas (p351)’, Glenn Mullin wrote that

²² The Choros/Olot and Derbet tribes are the successor tribes to the Naiman, a Turco-Mongol tribe.

²³ Gushri (or Gushi) Khan (1582-1655) was ruler of the Khoshot Mongol tribe which descended from Qasar, brother of Genghis Khan. In 1642, Gushri Khan defeated the King of Tsang and gifted Tibet to the Fifth Dalai Lama.

²⁴ Khara Khula could only assume the title Khong Taji (Supreme Chief), as up to mid-seventeenth century, only the leader of the Khoshot tribe could claim the title of Khan.

²⁵ John F. Baddeley: *Russia, Mongolia, China* (page lxxxii);

²⁶ Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa: *Tibet – A Political History* p125

Sangye ‘disrobed in his early adulthood and became a much-admired libertine. According to popular tradition, there was not a single woman of standing in the Lhasa area whom he did not take to bed.’

1.4 Russian Cossacks

Cossacks were independent mercenaries employed by the Russian Tsar and they were free to choose their own weapons. In 17th century there were at least 6 major Cossack communities in the steppes of Ukraine and southern Russia. They elected their own commanders-in-chief (*ataman*) and were self-governed, but by 18th century, they gradually lost their autonomous status and many were eventually absorbed into the Russian military.

II

COSSACK AND RUSSIAN

2.1 Russian Envoy Milovanoff’s Mission to China - 1670

In April 1670, the commander of fort Nerchinsk, Danilo Arshinsky, sent envoys to Beijing with the proposal that the Chinese Emperor should accept Russian suzerainty. In Danilo Arshinsky’s memorandum, he reported that he had acted in accordance with orders given by the Russian Tsar to a certain Athanasii Pashkoff at an earlier date. The envoy Ignashka Milovanoff and two others, Antoshka FitiEFF and Grishko Kobiakoff, were given Official Instructions as to what to say to the Chinese Emperor.

On 9th April 1670, the three envoys accompanied by Cossacks set off from Nerchinsk for Beijing. It took them more than 30 days to reach Beijing²⁷, and they stayed in the Chinese capital for five weeks and three days (Note: In the story, the month and year have been changed to spring 1671 to fit in with the flow of the story). A week after their arrival in Beijing, the Official Instructions sealed with Commander Danilo Arshinsky’s seal was taken by the Chinese officials despite protests from the envoys that they wished to relate the matters directly to the Chinese Emperor. They waited another two weeks before they were granted an audience with Kang Xi, the Emperor of China. After the audience, they were allowed to ramble at will through the city for two weeks and then despatched back to Nerchinsk, carrying back with them a letter from Kang Xi to the Russian Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich. In the letter, Kang Xi complained about the Cossack encroachments of China’s frontier borders and demanded the return of Gantimur, a Solon²⁸ Prince who had gone over to Russia with his tribe. Back in Russia, the letter was found difficult to translate in full. The next year 1671, Kang Xi wrote another letter to the Russian Tsar demanding the return of Gantimur. Unfortunately the letter was written in Manchu and was not translated or replied to by the Russian Tsar. In 1676, the Russian Ambassador, Nikolai Gavrilovich Spathary, was sent by the Tsar to China, with instructions to find the meaning of the two letters. Kang Xi’s complaints in his two letters were eventually dealt with in Sparthary’s Mission to China.

²⁷ John F. Baddeley: Russia, Mongolia, China.

²⁸ ‘Solon’ was a name mistakenly used in the Qing Dynasty for ‘Daur’ or ‘Dahur’

The Mikhailovich mission in 1670 was, as expected, unsuccessful and humiliating. But what else would you expect from these illiterate Cossack “ambassadors”²⁹? The mere suggestion that China should accept Russian suzerainty was ‘so monstrous, it shows so total a want of comprehension, on the Russian side, of the main factors of the case, that one cannot be surprised at the subsequent humiliation of their country...’³⁰ In fact the Russian Tsar’s orders to Pashkoff were not found among ancient records, and John F Baddeley suggested that the Tsar’s orders might have been intended only for “any petty princes” of the various Siberian tribes Pashkoff might meet with on his way, and might not have been meant for the Great Emperor of China.

2.2 Sino-Russian Relations

Up to mid-seventeenth century, Russian knowledge of China had been paltry. Russia lagged years behind her European counterparts in establishing contact with China. The Dutch, Portuguese, Spaniards and other Europeans used the sea route, often landing first in Macao, Guangzhou or Taiwan before travelling to other parts of the country. They established trading posts in China and began trading in the early 16th century, sometimes openly with official permission, other times with stealth by means of smuggling in and out of China.

The Russians had a late start. It was only in 1653 that the Russian Tsar sent his first ambassador, Theodor Isakovich Baikoff, to China with a letter from him addressed to the Chinese Emperor about trade and commerce between the two countries. Baikoff was despatched from Moscow in 1653 and took the land route because Russia had no seaport, except the White Sea in the north, which was frozen for much of the year. Sweden had blocked Russia’s way to the Baltic Sea, and in the south, the Turks and the Crimean Tartars barred Russia from the Black Sea. Eventually it took Baikoff three years to reach Beijing in 1656. Baikoff was under strict instructions from the Tsar, amongst other things, not to ‘kiss the Bogdikhans’³¹ feet’. Baikoff adhered to the Tsar’s instructions, and refused to kowtow to the Chinese Emperor, and understandably, the mission ended a complete failure, achieving nothing, not even an audience with the Chinese Emperor. While the Russians thought China was another nomad tribe in the east, the Chinese accorded all foreign states the ‘tributary’ status, in other words, they were regarded as vassal-states. Thus all foreigners must kowtow to the Chinese Emperor. The failure in communications resulted in an impasse between the two countries. This was the situation before envoy Milovanoff’s mission to China in 1670.

2.3 Brief History of Russia from 13th century to 17th century.

At his death, Genghis Khan divided his empire among his four sons. His eldest son, Jochi, received the western portion of the empire, ‘as far as Mongol hoofs had beaten the ground’, which Jochi’s son, Batu, later built into an empire known as the ‘Golden Horde’. In 1237, Batu invaded Kiev, Russia. Over the next three years his armies destroyed nearly all of the major Russian cities. The Russian regional princes were forced to pay tribute to Batu’s Golden Horde. The Mongols ruled the southwest of Russia for two hundred years until Ivan IV The Terrible captured Kazan (1552) and Astrakhan (1556), and Russia was finally freed from Mongol domination. Already by the 15th century, the power of the Golden Horde had

²⁹ See John F. Baddeley: Russia, Mongolia, China p197. The three were actually envoys and not ambassadors as they were sent by the Commander of Nerchinsk and not the Tsar.

³⁰ Ibid p195

³¹ Bogdikhans – Russian address of the Chinese Emperor

declined. In 1440s the Horde was torn by civil war and began to disintegrate, broken up into several separate khanates, each of which was later annexed by the Muscovite Russia. While the Tartar influence waned, the Polish-Lithuanian influence grew. In the 16th century, Russia was facing Poland-Lithuania in the west, and the Tartars in the south who still controlled the vast steppes north of the Black Sea and the Caspian from the mouth of the Dnieper River to the southern Urals.

In the period 1610 to 1613, there was anarchy in Russia. This impasse was known in Russian history as the 'time of troubles'. Finally in 1613, Mikhail Romanov was elected Tsar of Russia. The Romanovs would go on to rule Russia for 304 years and Russian territories greatly expanded under their rule. The first two Romanov tsars (Michael 1613-45) and Alexis (1645-1676) continued the expansionist policy especially to the east, pressing further into the new regions of Siberia. The Russian Cossacks exacted tributes from local settlers and some were unfortunate enough to have to pay tributes to both the Russians and the Chinese. The Cossacks built forts and outposts as far as the Yenisei River, the Lena River, moving closer to the Chinese border every time. The Cossacks' frequent encroachment of China's frontier borders led to the complaint in Kang Xi's letter to the Russian Tsar carried back to Russia by the envoy Milovanoff in 1670 (see para 2.1 above).

2.4 Dahur/Daur

The word 'Dahur' is considered derogatory, but it was the former name of 'Daur'. In the 17th century, the Daurs settled in the north of the Amur around the Zeya River. They were caught between Russia and China and were asked to pay tributes to both the Tsar and the Chinese Emperor. Following the Russian expansion in the Amur region during 1654 and 1656, many of the Daurs moved south into the Chinese region where they were constantly recruited into the Qing's banner system while those left behind joined the Russian Cossacks. The Russians captured the Daur town of Yaxa where they built the fort Albazin in 1651. Albazin was the first Russian settlement in the Amur River region.

The Daurs are descendants of Khitans who established the Great Liao Dynasty that ruled over the regions of Manchuria, Mongolia and parts of northern China from 916AD to 1125AD. After their defeat by the Jurchens, they moved west and formed the Western Liao Dynasty, but were wiped out by the troops of Genghis Khan in 1218.

2.5 Prince Vasily Vasil'evich Golitsyn (1643-1714)

Prince Vasily Golitsyn came from an aristocratic family. He first served as cup-bearer to Tsar Alexis, and later as his coach attendant. In 1675, he was posted to Ukraine and took part in the Russo-Turkish Wars from 1676-1681. He became a close friend of Tsar Alexei's daughter, Sophia, who became regent in 1682. Rumours were abundant that they had become lovers. Under the patronage of Sophia, he rose to the position of Chief Minister and Army Commander.

After Sophia was deposed by her step-brother Peter the Great, Prince Golitsyn was arrested because of his connection with Sophia and exiled with his family to the far north where he died in 1714. Prince Golitsyn was a man of talent and vision, and particularly skilful in foreign affairs. He knew the Latin and Greek languages and had many foreign friends. Peter the Great who had deposed Sophia, could have used Golitsyn's many talents but for his hatred of Sophia which made it impossible for him to employ someone so close to Sophia.

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