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The Nikolai Spafarii calamity : the dismal failure of Russia's first ambassadorial mission to China (1675)

Heidi M. Stark

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The Nikolai Spafarii Calamity:
The Dismal Failure of Russia's First Ambassadorial Mission to China
(1675)

by

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Bachelor of History, Saginaw Valley State University, 1990

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

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This thesis, submitted by Heidi M. Stark in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER	
1. The Amur Basin Dispute--Manchus and Cossacks	6
2. The First Missions	45
3. The Making of a Diplomatic Mission	64
4. Spafarii in Action	89
5. Conclusions, Lessons and Realities	134
SOURCES CONSULTED	143

INTRODUCTION

On February twenty-fifth, 1675, Russia dispatched her first official ambassador, Nikolai Milescu Spafarii, to the distant Asian empire of China. The Russian government hoped to establish positive relations and develop a lucrative and immediate trade agreement with this distant power by creating a monopoly on Chinese goods traded in Europe.¹ To assist in achieving this objective, the Russian foreign office provided Spafarii with an extensive entourage, lavish gifts to present to the Emperor, and a set of instructions that seemed to anticipate every contingency.

Lulled by the preparation and confidence of Russia's leadership and his own preconceived ideas of Chinese culture and sophistication, Spafarii believed that his mission would be rapidly and successfully concluded. He envisioned himself triumphantly returning to Moscow, extremely rich from Chinese gifts and trade, and presented with a lucrative appointment from the Tsar as a reward for his exceptional and loyal service.²

¹ Basil Dmytryshyn, E. A. P. Crownhart-Vaughan, and Thomas Vaughan, Russia's Conquest of Siberia, 1558-1700: A Documentary Record, vol. 1, To Siberia and Russian America (Portland: Oregon Historical Press, 1985), lx.

² This was a common reward for loyal servants. Spafarii was eventually rewarded by Peter The Great nearly fifteen years after his mission. The political upheaval created by Alexis's death coupled with complaints of Spafarii's behavior in China brought by Spafarii's men, resulted in Spafarii's disgrace. Peter revived the translator's career and in 1683 rewarded him with "one silver kovsh (dipper)" and "two grivens weight and ten arshins of lundish {London} cloth and damask kuthteriu." John Baddeley, Russia, Mongolia, China (London, MacMillan and Co., 1919; Reprint, 1964), 207.

But Spafarii's assignment to China was more difficult than it appeared. Several other Russian envoys and messengers had been sent to the Chinese empire during the previous century. None had managed to engage the Emperor in a political discussion or establish any lasting relationship between the two nations. In fact, only one, a lowly messenger--Setkul Ablin--managed to depart China and maintain friendly relations with the Chinese government.³

Although the failure of Russia's early contacts can be attributed to diverse causes, it is generally accepted that the primary obstacles were created by inter-cultural differences between the two empires. Russian traditions maintain that the Tsar received his authority to rule directly from God. This close link with the divine ensured the Tsar a regal position in the world's hierarchy and instilled the belief that he owed obedience to no other earthly power.⁴ China, in contrast, could not conceive of the concept of divine authority. Her Emperor was not simply appointed by God, but was himself an omnipotent being. As the ruler of the middle kingdom--the center of the civilized world--all earthbound men owed him veneration and tribute.⁵ The natural incompatibility of these two distinct cultures assured that conflict was inevitable and that Spafarii's assignment would be extremely challenging. Additionally, more mundane problems caused by miscommunication, the language barrier, and strict guidelines for negotiation would further hamper his ability to successfully conclude his assignment. However, none of these obstacles can fully explain

³ See Chapter 2, pg. 48.

⁴ Basil Dmytryshin, *A History of Russia* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1977), 206.

⁵ Owen Lattimore, *Mongols vs. Manchuria* (New York: H. Fertig, 1969), 15-16, 54-58.

the reasons for the mission's dismal defeat. Only one factor, Spafarii himself, bears the ultimate responsibility for the failure of the first ambassadorial mission to China.

Spafarii's attitude toward the Chinese was arrogant. His position was hard and unyielding. He was argumentative, disrespectful, and insensitive toward Chinese customs. The natural result was an explosive and resounding repudiation, which resulted in Spafarii's expulsion from Peking and the severance of all Russo-Chinese communications. Further, the Chinese emperor used Spafarii for the next fifty years as an example of poor diplomacy and improper behavior. Spafarii's inability to recognize a potentially disastrous confrontation and alter his negotiating approach to compensate for inter-cultural differences infuriated the Chinese and created distrust between the officials of both countries. Thus, it is Spafarii as an individual, his mannerisms and deportment, that aggravated the diplomatic situation to such a level that failure was inevitable.

As the leader of a mission that failed to accomplish its objectives, Spafarii would have significant impact on the future relationship between Russia and China. Although Russia would not immediately achieve her goal of a trade relationship, Spafarii did manage during the course of his protracted stay in Peking to establish extensive contacts with Chinese officials and developed a tentative relationship with the Chinese emperor. Through these contacts, Spafarii's mission clearly illustrated the communication problem that lay at the heart of the ongoing Russian-Chinese conflict. Thus his mission, although a failure in the short term, was a necessary part of the diplomatic process. Only such a spectacular failure could demonstrate to both sides their incompatible political ideals.

Traditionally, examinations of Spafarii's mission to China have centered on the problems caused by cultural differences or the personality conflict between Spafarii and the primary Chinese negotiator, Mala.⁶ Little or no blame for the mission's failure has ever been attached to Spafarii for his actions in China. Nor have any speculations been made regarding the lasting impact of this poorly mannered Russian ambassador on the future of Russo-Chinese relations beyond the successful negotiation of the Treaty of

⁶ A large number of Siberian documents and records have been lost through the years by fire, careless keeping or simple destruction and deterioration. Thanks to G. F. Muller, a German historian who traveled extensively throughout Siberia for ten years (1733-1743) many documents have been preserved that would have otherwise been lost. Out of the many document collections in both the St. Petersburg and Moscow libraries, two well researched works chronicle Spafarii's mission: Muller's six volume Siberian History published in 1732-1764 and a two volume Siberian History published by his protégé J. E. Fischer (1768). Unfortunately, Muller's work has disappeared. Baddeley's Russia, Mongolia, China is the last known work to have utilized Muller's work as a reference source and a number of the documents contained in its pages are extrapolated from the six volume history. Finally, Spafarii's own record, "Statenii spisok posolstva N. Spafariia v Kitai," in Vestnik Arkheologii I Istorii, provides a personal accounting of the embassy.

There are very few modern works analyzing Spafarii's mission. Perhaps the best known is Mark Mancall's excellent book, Russia and China: Their Diplomatic Relations to 1728. Other source material providing interesting or contradictory views are Vincent Chin, Sino-Russian Relations in the Seventeenth Century. V. S. Miasnikov, The Ch'ing Empire and the Russian State in the Seventeenth Century Translated by Vic Schneiersin, and Liu Hsuan-min's excellent article, "Russo-Chinese Relations up to the Treaty of Nerchinsk," from the Chinese Social and Political Science Review.

Nerchinsk (1689). Through examination of the events of this ill-fated mission, as related by the words and feelings of Spafarii, this paper will pursue the emotional conflict created by the Russian ambassador's attitude and actions during his mission in China. The results of this emotional aspect, both in its immediate impact on the Treaty of Nerchinsk and the indelible impression which strongly influenced China's perception of Russian diplomacy, requires further examination and should be considered in the analysis of early Russian-Chinese relations.

CHAPTER 1: THE AMUR BASIN DISPUTE--MANCHUS AND COSSACKS

From 1643 to 1675, Russia and China had been engaged in an armed conflict over the control of the rich resources of the Amur basin and competed for the suzerainty of its peoples. For more than thirty years, Russian Cossacks had continuously ravaged the region, demanding furs and foodstuffs from the defenseless natives and killing indiscriminately when the required goods were withheld. The Chinese government, bound by their ties of kinship and tribute, was compelled to assist the natives. But despite several large scale military operations in the region, the Chinese were incapable of ridding the land of the Russian invaders.

By 1670, China was no longer able to muster the troops needed to control the Amur basin. The young Ch'ing dynasty required every able-bodied man to suppress the Ming dissenters in the southern reaches of China. Unable to maintain military protection for the Amur, China was willing to negotiate with the Russians to peaceably split the Amur basin. She realized that without military support, she was helpless to protect the Amur natives and the territory would be gradually torn away by the Russians.⁷ Unwilling

⁷ V. S. Miasnikov, The Ch'ing Empire and the Russian State in the Seventeenth Century, translated by Vic Schneiersin (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1980), 405.

to completely relinquish her claims in the Amur basin and allow Russia full control over the northern Manchu tribes, China preferred the option of negotiating a treaty.

China maintained a strong negotiating position. The Amur basin, through adjacent borders and historical ownership, technically belonged to her. She claimed the Amur through ancient ties, asserting the Amur natives were members of the wild Jurchen tribes, kin to the Manchu and related by blood. The Amur tribes also paid China tribute and had freely chosen to accept the leadership of the Manchu. The fact that China was incapable of protecting the region from intruders was an irrelevant factor. The support of the natives' allegiance and their common ancestry was deemed sufficient by the Manchu to substantiate their claim.

Yet China's strongest argument for her continued control over the Amur was the basin's location. With Peking located just twelve hundred kilometers due south of the basin, the close physical contact encouraged interaction. Unfortunately for the Chinese, the Khingan mountain range provided an inconvenient barrier. It hindered travel and communication and limited Peking's ability to maintain a close relationship. This range was small, however, with peaks rising just two hundred to three hundred meters above the surrounding territory. In comparison to the mighty barriers the Russians faced, the Khingan range was only a minor inconvenience.

Two great ranges, the Stanovoi range in the north and the Yablonovii to the west, effectively impeded Russian access to the Amur basin. Only one major river provided reasonable access to the Amur's interior. The Olekma, a tributary of the mighty Lena,

formed its headwaters on the east side of the Yablonovii range and offered a difficult but usable ingress for Russian explorers.⁸ However, this mountainous barrier was only the end of a long and tedious journey for the Russians. Because the Amur was located in the extreme Southeastern corner of the Russian empire, supplies, troops and messages had to travel more than five thousand kilometers from Moscow over a wild and untamed steppe and marshland before reaching the forested foothills of the Yablonovii range.

Once inside the Amur's protective ring of mountains, one massive river system provided easy access throughout the region. The Amur, a river which winds more than fifteen hundred miles from the Pacific ocean into the interior, is augmented by four major tributaries. The Shilka and Argun, the Amur's source rivers, provide access deep into the mountainous western terrain. To the east, the lesser tributaries, the Sungari and Ussuri, provide watery highways south into Chinese territory. These five waterways, the Amur and her four tributaries, provided Russian access to the entire Amur Basin--an area measuring more than 1,230,000 square kilometers.⁹

At first glance it is obvious why both Russia and China prized the Amur in the mid-seventeenth century. This massive enclosed basin was a haven of diversity and wealth. The entire area was characterized by exceptionally rich soil, temperate climate and abundant wildlife. Average temperatures, even in the upper region, ranged between sixteen and nineteen degrees Celsius. The resulting growing season, while short and cool,

⁸ Melvyn G. Howe, The Soviet Union: A Geographical Study (Plymouth: MacDonal'd and Evans, 1983), 379.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 396.

was surprisingly productive and produced an amazing array of grains and vegetables. Numerous grains--including rye, spring wheat, oats, and barley--were cultivated by the local tribesmen. Cabbage and potatoes also grew exceptionally well in the rich Amur soil. At the higher elevations, pastoral activities were favored. Cattle and hearty stout-legged horses roamed the flat mountain plains in abundance. Even the river itself was rich in whitefish and sturgeon, while its delta, which opens on the Pacific Ocean, provided an ideal launch for seafaring boats.¹⁰

For the Russians, the Amur's most prized aspect was its bountiful wildlife. An array of fur-bearing animals, including the cherished sable, ermine, and several species of fox, (especially red and black Arctic), thrived and multiplied freely in the thick Amur forests. The exceptional quality of Amur furs, thick and lush due to the cooler temperatures and rich diet, brought premium prices during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and were highly valued by the Russian trappers who flooded the region searching for pelts.¹¹

The Manchu, on the other hand, were not interested in exploiting the material wealth of the Amur. They were more concerned with the native population. To the Manchu, the people of the Amur represented part of an ancient link with the cherished Chin dynasty (1115-1234). The Jurchen, from whom the Manchu descended, fostered the Chin dynasty and ruled the entire Manchurian-Amur region--an area stretching from

¹⁰ Ibid., 406-07.

¹¹ Ibid., 405.

northern Siberia, south through modern Irkutsk to the southern tip of Manchuria and westward into the high mountain plateaus. However, despite defeating the Khitans¹² and severely threatening the existence of the South Sung Dynasty (1127-1279) of Southern China, the Jurchen were doomed. The continuous threat of the Mongol hordes was impossible to combat.¹³

In 1234, the powerful Chin dynasty fell, dissolving the cohesive bond developed by the Jurchen tribes. As the population scattered, the Jurchen divided into four geographically separate and distinct tribes. The Mao-Lien moved south of the Ch'ang-Pai river. Just to their north and extending to the Yalu river lived the Chien-Chou--the tribe that evolved into the Manchu, the future rulers of China. The Hai-Hsi inhabited the areas near the Sungari and Arshih rivers, while in the land surrounding the Amur and the Ussuri, the Wild Jurchen lived.¹⁴ The Manchu believed that the Amur tribes were, in reality, the wild Jurchen tribes, isolated in the Amur basin and largely forgotten for four hundred years.

There is a grain of truth in the Manchu belief. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, members of the Jurchen tribes interacted with the existing Amur natives, mixing with the native stock and altering the natives' time-honored customs and way of life.

¹² The Khitans were a tribe of Asian nomadic people that created the Liao empire in the tenth century. It is commonly assumed that they were absorbed into the Mongol nation between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. Denis Twitchett and John K Fairbanks, eds., Ming Dynasty 1368-1644, vol. 7, pt. 1, Cambridge History of China, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 397.

¹³ M. G. Levin and L. P. Potapov, Peoples of Siberia, (London: University of Chicago Press, 1954), 97.

¹⁴ Twitchett, 266.

Unfortunately, while their influence is clear throughout the basin, nowhere in the Amur does clear evidence exist confirming the arrival and settlement of the Wild Jurchen tribes.¹⁵

A reasonable hypothesis suggests internal dissension combined with the continuous plague of Mongols in the region completely eliminated Jurchen autonomy and dissolved their tribal authority. The displaced tribal members were then absorbed into the independent Amur tribes. The Nanays of the Ussuri River, for example, seem to have retained much of the Wild Jurchen culture though, even here it is distorted by the ancient Amur culture of the Niviki. While the evidence indicates the Amur natives are not direct descendants of the Wild Jurchen, the diversity of the Amur tribes, in language and culture confirms a separate heritage comprised of Jurchen elements as well as Chinese, Mongol, and Turkish.¹⁶

For four hundred years following the disintegration of the Chin dynasty, the Amur tribes were left in strict isolation. Not until 1616 was their solitude broken. Members of the strong Manchu clan penetrated the Amur searching for remnants of the Wild Jurchen tribes. They sought allies and support among their old relations in their bid against the faltering Ming dynasty. Tribes throughout the lower and central Amur were contacted

¹⁵ Levin, 692.

¹⁶ Ibid., 696.

and willingly offered their allegiance to the growing strength of the Manchu. By 1636, the upper Amur tribes also supported their distant relations.¹⁷

The natives' decision to join the Manchu was not due to oppression, but was rather a decision to enhance their security and well-being. Unlike the traditional idea of tribute, The Manchu's concept had few drawbacks. They pledged support and assistance to the natives and asked only that other invaders be made unwelcome. The standard notion that tribute involved subservience and subjugation was repugnant to the Manchu. They believed that tribute should be the confirmation of a contract between two willing and equal partners. Offerings presented by the weaker member implied that a gift of equal or greater value must be given in exchange. This harmonious approach made the Amur natives willing to accept the Manchu's leadership.

Suzerainty to the Manchu did not alter life in the Amur. With the exception of occasional trade caravans and Manchu officials sent to observe the continued security of the basin, the natives continued their daily routines. Even the Manchus' bid for the Ming throne failed to disturb the peaceful quiet of the region. The silence and isolation of the Amur remained intact despite the major alteration of China's ruling authority. This peaceful isolation was shattered by the invasion of Russian explorers in the mid sixteenth-hundreds, who demanded tribute and challenged China's authority over the region.

¹⁷ Information on the Manchu challenge to the Ming dynasty by Nurhaci can be located in Twitchett, 574-82 and Owen Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China*, American Geographical Society Research Series, (New York: American Geographical Society, 1940), 127-33. Regarding Abahai, Nurhaci's son, and the conquest of the Chinese throne, Twitchett, 616-18; 628-29.

Before this fateful confrontation in the Amur, Russia and China knew very little concrete information about each other's existence. They had encountered each other only twice in the centuries preceding the sixteen-hundreds. These early contacts, while relatively insignificant to sixteenth-century politics, indicated awareness by both parties of the other's existence.¹⁸ A few brief notes in the Chinese record indicates that a Russian Grand Duke, Yaroslav, visited the City of Karakorune in 1246 to attend the coronation of the Grand Khan Kuyak.¹⁹

The second event occurred nearly a century later, in 1329-32. The Chinese record recorded that a group of Russian prisoners were being held just north of Peking by the Yuan Emperor, Wen-Tsung. These prisoners were settled on Chinese land, and were given clothing, oxen, tools and seed.²⁰ Whether they were imprisoned or remained of their own free will is unknown. The Chinese record does indicate that they were a curiosity and primarily provided game and fish for the Emperor's table.²¹

¹⁸ During this period, both Russia and China were controlled by Mongols. Batu Khan, predecessor of Kublai, (d.1294) established the Sung dynasty (960-1279) in China. Tien-fang Cheng, A History of Sino-Russian Relations, with an introduction by John Lieghton Stuart (Washington D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1957), 5-6.

¹⁹ Yaroslav apparently did not make the long journey in an official capacity but purely for social and curiosity reasons. It is likely that Yaroslav would have completely escaped the notice of the Chinese, but he died during his visit. Mark Mancall, Russia and China: Their Diplomatic Relations to 1728 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1971), 36. Baddeley, xxxiv.

²⁰ Harry Schwartz, Tsars, Mandarins, and Commissars: a History of Chinese-Russian Relations (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1964), 24. There are also scattered reports of Russians employed among Peking's imperial guards. Cheng, 10.

²¹ Vincent Chin, Sino-Russian Relations in the Seventeenth Century, (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), 34. During this period, China knew little of the lands outside her own domain and had no desire to explore and understand neighboring countries. Without knowledge of the Russian people, it was extremely difficult for reclusive China to distinguish between the various peoples outside her borders. Every early reference to Russia in the Chinese record is a vague account of a distant people. The Chinese

Unsurprisingly, both of these instances are unconfirmed by Russian sources. Early Russian records are notoriously unreliable and incomplete, and little evidence of diplomatic contacts remains from these early periods. An excellent example of the unreliability of early Russian documents is the first Russian-recorded visit to China. The Russian archives contain a document that was reportedly filed in 1567. The chronicle, entitled "Descriptions of Countries Beyond Siberia", describes the conquest of Siberia and the status of the large country to the east known as China. The expedition, lead by two men, Pertrov and Alishev, reportedly visited China and traveled extensively through the eastern region.²²

Historians, however, seriously doubt that this mission ever took place. First, the normally meticulous Chinese records failed to report the visit of a foreign entourage in 1567 and, in fact, did not mention any Russian visit during the 1500's.²³ Secondly, the document's information seems improbable for this time period. In the 1560's, the Siberian conquest had not yet begun and the segments regarding China seem to parallel events of seventeenth-century China, not sixteenth-century.²⁴ Vincent Chin, a Chinese political historian, speculates that this mission was misdocumented by Russian chroniclers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He feels that the document is a misplaced copy of

never indicated any working knowledge of Russia's location nor have written any suggestive clues of culture and behavior that may assist in actually confirming the nationality of these two encounters. In all likelihood China attached little significance to these early encounters and were untroubled as to the nationality of these insignificant peoples.

²² Samuel Wells Williams, The Middle Kingdom, vol. 2 (New York: Paragon, 1966), 441.

²³ "Journey of Petlin and Mundoff, 1618-1619," in Baddeley, 69.

²⁴ Chin, 35.

the Petlin mission report from 1618. Chin explains that the document is nearly verbatim to the official report filed by Petlin upon his return to Moscow. Additionally, the data gleaned from the 1567 report is consistent with the early quarter of the seventeenth century. Chin's theory is strengthened by the realization that an individual named Pertrov was a member of a 1616 mission to Mongolia.²⁵

The inaccuracy in Russian records is understandable. The fifteenth century was extremely hectic and unsettling for the entire Russian population. Under the rule of Ivan Groznyi (commonly referred to as Ivan the Terrible), Russia endured sweeping political and ecclesiastical reforms and fought an ambitious military campaign against the southern Khanates. As Russia rapidly grew in power and importance, she also was included in the political affairs of Europe and began negotiating trade agreements with the more powerful nations. Amid this turbulent time period, ensuring the accuracy of historical documents was given only minor importance. Economics became the primary concern.

Victory over the Khanates required large amounts of capital, weapons and manpower. Relations with Europe demanded large amounts of monetary support for envoys and messengers and their traveling expenses. Initiating trade also required large amounts of ready assets. Russia was, however, desperately short of currency. The war had nearly emptied her coffers, and her traditional economic system was based primarily

²⁵ Ibid.

on barter or trade-in-kind. The European nations demanded hard currency which was simply not available.²⁶

Unlike other European nations, Russia lacked natural sources of silver, gold, and other valuable ore metals and precious stones. Although Russia did have a reasonable amount of copper available for coinage, copper was relatively cheap and the rubles Russia produced were worthless outside the country without the support of precious metals. To compound this lack of hard currency, Russia was hampered by circumstance. A cool climate, short growing season, and long distances to European markets made trading agricultural produce impossible. Without a strong agricultural base, Russia was unable to develop cottage industries to produce trade goods for export. Instead, Russia's European trade consisted of Asian and Middle Eastern goods that were transported over Russian soil. But even these valuable goods failed to generate hard currency. Asian merchants demanded precious metals in exchange for spices and silks and European traders refused to pay gold or silver for these goods--they preferred to trade-in-kind. The result was a vicious economic circle that ensured Russia was indigent.²⁷

During the mid fifteen hundreds, Russia discovered an item that solved this economic difficulty--fur. Animal pelts were the one item Russia had in abundance. Throughout Russia a vast profusion of wild and wooded lands provided safe haven for numerous species of fur bearing mammals. Russia's cold, bitter weather, considered a

²⁶ Mancall, 11-12.

²⁷ Hsuan-min, 392.

detriment to agricultural growth, proved to be a blessing. It encouraged the growth of thick lush pelts unrivaled in quality anywhere in the world. The result of these two factors provided Russia a natural monopoly of thick, high-quality animal pelts. Europe became ecstatic over Russia's new export. The wealthy elite clamored for the precious and rare furs and willingly accepted them in lieu of gold and silver. Russian diplomats began to arrive routinely in Europe's great cities carrying bales of fine pelts. These furs were carefully doled out as payment for food, lodging and other travel expenditures incurred by their entourage. Sable and mink were offered as diplomatic "gifts" and used as payment for political favors and subsidies.²⁸

Russia's increasing interest in European affairs during the late sixteenth century, combined with rapidly multiplying European trade, dramatically increased Russia's fur requirements. From a modest 3.75 % of the state's economic income in 1589, fur skyrocketed to an impressive 11 percent over a fifteen-year period. Amazingly, this figure remained steady for the next forty years, only dropping slightly to 10 percent in 1644.²⁹ Efforts to satisfy this huge governmental requirement rapidly depleted the areas surrounding the Volga and the Don rivers, forcing hunters to range great distances to locate the precious pelts.

²⁸ Raymond H. Fisher, The Russian Fur Trade 1550-1700 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1943), 100.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 102.

East was the natural direction for Russian expansion and exploration. In all other directions, strong powers--Turkey to the south, Poland and Lithuania to the west and Sweden to the frigid north--possessively defended their borders from Russian encroachment. Only to the east was open land available. Although once controlled by the Mongol hordes, the steppe to the east of Russia had lain empty since the disintegration of their empire in 1480 and awaited an infusion of new people to settle and control the vast region. Eagerly, Russians began investigating the vast flat steppe, assisted by the land's natural topography. The area was interlaced with a profusion of river systems that made eastern travel quick and relatively simple. In under fifty years, the Russian exploring parties had spread across the steppe and began entering the treacherous Yablonovii mountain range of Siberia.³⁰

Russian merchants, led by Anika Stroganov in 1558, headed the eastern fur charge. The promise of bountiful furs and new trade opportunities enticed many merchants to fund large exploration parties. These efforts were encouraged by significant government incentives which included long-term relief from heavy government taxes and unconditional military and government assistance. These factors, when combined with the possibility of huge profits from fur sales, encouraged hundreds of merchants to travel into the eastern wilderness.³¹ By 1586 they had crossed the Ural mountain range and established many

³⁰Dmytryshin, *Russia's Conquest of Siberia*, xl.

³¹ Normally, Russian exploration parties operated on a three step plan. First, they followed river systems deep into the wilderness, searching for game and evidence of fur-bearing predators. When a promising area was located, a strategic fort called an "ostrog" was constructed to act as a secure base of operations.

forts, including Tiumen (1586), Surgut and Tara in 1594, and Tomsk in 1604. Relentless exploring resulted in expeditions eastward from these newly established forts in the mountains to the south and to the extreme far east. By 1619, the Russians reached the Enisei river system and founded the plains fort of Eniseisk. Ilimsk and Krasnoiarsk, two settlements in the Buryat territories to the west of lake Baikal, became brisk exchange points of fur for gold and silver in the late 1620's. The last great northern flowing river system, the Lena, received its first settlement, Irkutsk, in 1632.³²

During this tremendous effort, Russia never forgot China, the legendary land to the far southeast. While trade and exploration continued on the plains, Russia continuously sent small dispatches further east to discover China's exact location. Few of these missions provided concrete information. The most credible account is from a 1608 mission dispatched by the Tomsk Voevoda, Vasili Vasilievich Volinski.³³ Initially, this mission was instructed to travel southward through the territory of the Atlin Khan in the guise of a trading caravan, but they aborted their mission when the Kalruks revolted against the Atlin Khan. Threatened by ambush and open hostility, the expedition hastily

Local natives, were then contacted and compelled to assist the Russian's efforts. The natives were forced to provide an exorbitant number of furs in tribute and tithes to the Russian tsar. Finally, Russian hunters and trappers radiated outward from the ostrog in all directions subjugating natives and securing as many furs as they could carry for tanning and transport back to Moscow. George Vjatcheslau Lantzeff, Siberia in the Seventeenth Century (New York: Octagon Books, 1972) 87-90.

³² Dmytryshin, Russia's Conquest of Siberia, xl.

³³ A Voevoda was the local authority on the Russian frontier. He was entrusted to regulate the gathering of tribute and ensure that it was received in Moscow in a timely manner. In addition he was the dispenser of local justice and acted as the Tsar's administrator.

retreated back to Russian territory. Upon their return they filed a report explaining all they had heard about the lands to the south.³⁴

And to the Chinese kingdom, it is three month's journey from the Atlin Tsar, and the Chinese Kingdom has a stone-built town and courtyards in that town, like the Russians; in those courtyards there are stone-built halls and he (evidently the Chinese Emperor) is stronger in people than the Atlin Tsar, and richer. And in his court there are stone-built halls. And in that town there are temples, and in them a great ringing of bells. There are no crosses in the temples, and what religion they have is unknown, but they live like the Russians. They use fire-arms, and people come from many lands to trade with them, and they wear golden robes, and to him they bring all kinds of precious stones and other things out of many countries.³⁵

This wealth of information was enough to fund an official delegation to China to encourage relations. In 1618, the Russian government sent Ivan Shko Petlin and Ondruchka Mundov into Chinese territory. Although the pair and their entourage safely arrived in China, they were unaware of proper Chinese protocol. Petlin had not brought gifts to the Khan, and lacking them was refused an audience with the Emperor. The Chinese officials did welcome the visiting group warmly and encouraged them to return with proper gifts.³⁶ Before Petlin returned to Russian territory he was given an official document from the Khan that expressed China's eagerness to establish trade.

The letter read as follows:

Van Li {Wan-li} Chinese Tsar, two men arrived out of Russia and Van Li, Chinese Tsar said to those Russian people, come to trade, then go away

³⁴ "The Petition of Prince Toyon, the Eyushta Chieftain," in Baddeley, 34-35.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ "The Statenii Spisok," in Baddeley, 82. Mancall, 43.

and come again. In the whole world, thou, a great lord and I, am not a small one; let the road between us be clear up and down to go by and do you {Russians} bring the best you have and in return I will make you presents of good silk-stuff, and you will journey back, and if you come again, and with you people from the great Lord, bringing a letter from him, I will send him a letter in return. And then letters come from you, I will order that they will be received with greatest honour and the people with them; but I cannot send an ambassador to you. Great Lord, for the way is long and they know not the language; but I now address my homage to you, Great Lord, and beg him to believe that, were it possible I would send my ambassadors but by my custom, O Tsar, I neither leave my own kingdom nor allow my ambassadors or merchants to do so.³⁷

This letter clearly indicates the willingness of the Chinese to establish trade relations with the Russians but denotes that Russian traders must travel to China. Beyond this implicit message the letter explains little of the time period and serves only as a reference point to establish the Russians' interest in trading relations with China.

Although this letter's authenticity is highly debated by Chinese Scholars,³⁸ the fact that the Russians felt that it was genuine is significant. For more than sixty years, the Russian government held and examined this letter, formulating political policy and ultimately seeking to capture the lucrative trade mentioned in the document. This document could very easily have been the single factor that prompted the Russians to seek friendship with the Chinese.

³⁷Chin, 37. Van-Li (Wan-Li is also known by his reign title Shen-tsung and his personal name Chu I-Chun.

³⁸The authenticity argument stems from the fact that the letter was not recorded in the meticulous Chinese records. Any written response to a foreign country should have been significant enough to be included in the official records. Ibid.

The Russians, having discovered that the Ming dynasty favored peaceful trade, declined to cement the relationship with further diplomatic missions. They were exceptionally wary of the Chinese's openly friendly manner and completely suspended their attempts to trade and communicate. They reasoned that the immense distance to China was too far for merchants to trade profitably and there were other dangerous considerations as well. The currently used route through the territory of the Atlin Khan was lined with hostile and warlike natives, and other tribes like the Buriats, Turgus, Kalmuks and Kirgiz harassed travelers and shipments east of this region. Generally the risk of successfully bringing a caravan unscathed through this wilderness was immense.

To overcome this difficulty Russia concocted a more ambitious plan. She planned to depend upon her friendship with the Atlin Khan and her subjugation of the Sungars to establish a successful three-party trade. This scheme allowed Russian nearly all of the benefits of direct trade with the Asian giant but provided less risk to participating merchants. In addition, by sending the men of the Atlin Khan into Chinese territory, Russia completely eliminated the opportunity for the Chinese to take action against Russian trading parties.

Russia was able to initiate this plan in 1632, when the Atlin Khan required Russian aid to maintain his kingdom. In exchange for Russian assistance, the Khan gratefully agreed to the Russians proposal and granted Russian traders the right to trade and deal freely with his own merchants for Chinese goods. By 1638, this profitable business had grown remarkably and the Mongol traders honored Russian requests to travel to Russian

frontier towns with their goods. Segra and Bayan were among the first settlements to be visited and became brisk trade centers for silver, damask, cattle and cotton. This practice rapidly increased and became a regular occurrence. Tomsk, a major Russian trade center, eventually became the Mongols' final destination and their regular caravans provided a steady and lucrative trade in Chinese goods.³⁹

In 1543, this profitable business was halted. The overthrow of the Ming dynasty earlier in the year resulted in turmoil and destroyed the delicate trade arrangement Russia had established. Deprived of the security of her regular shipments, Russia was forced to suspend trade operations until the political conflict in China quieted. But the ten years of trade with the Atlin Khan had altered Russia's outlook. Her Siberian ostrogs were no longer viewed as simple hunting or defensive stations but rather as frontier centers for trade.⁴⁰ Irkutsk was the first frontier ostrog to demonstrate this change in policy.

Established in 1632, the settlement of Irkutsk marked a crucial turning point for Russia--the change from a policy of exploration to one of conscious colonization.⁴¹

Although the settlement's primary function, like earlier ostrogs, was to provide pelts for the Tsar's coffers, Irkutsk was to become a true settlement from which Russia could

³⁹Chin, 28-29.

⁴⁰Ostrogs consist of a walled compound containing two or more cabins or underground huts called Zimivies. The Irkutsk ostrog was the largest in the region. The 1684 ostrog (rebuilt after being destroyed by fire) had four walls measuring four thousand feet and eight watchtowers on the walls. It surrounded a powder house, two jails (one for the heretics and one for criminals), hostage quarters, and the voevoda's house. Nearby, approximately five hundred feet away, stood the gorod (city), the married men's quarter, and other religious buildings. Frank Alfred Golder, Russian Expansion on the Pacific 1641-1850, (Cleveland, Arthur H. Clark Co., 1914), 26.

⁴¹Dmytryshin, Russia's Conquest of Siberia, xl.

spread across the remainder of Siberia. Advantageously situated within the Verkhoyansk mountain range, Irkutsk would perform the role of Russia's first administrative center in Siberia. The Olekma river, a tributary of the Lena, provided easy access deep into the mountains and encouraged hunters and trappers to expand eastward. The Lena, in contrast, provided free movement to Irkutsk from the broad Russian steppe, greatly simplifying the flow of goods and people between Irkutsk and Moscow. Naturally, the settlement was hampered by the immense cost of shipping in supplies and the difficulty of communicating with the Russian capital, but these difficulties were easily overcome through the self-reliance and ingenuity of Irkutsk's colonizing population.

Irkutsk was settled by three diverse yet similar groups. First, was a small contingent of government officials assigned to oversee the area's development and the annual harvest of fur. A slightly larger group consisted of Russian hunters and trappers that were drawn to the wilderness for adventure, wealth, or freedom from harsh Russian justice. The largest and most influential group was comprised of Russian Cossacks.⁴²

Rugged and ruthless, the hearty lifestyle the Cossacks developed made the nation particularly well suited to the rigors of exploration and extremely valuable as a naturally

⁴² The Cossacks, although primarily of Russian heritage, had developed a unique culture. Formed from social misfits; rebellious peasants, hardened criminals, deserting soldiers and even adventurous third and fourth sons of boyars; the Cossacks became a fierce nation of hardy, callused warriors and skilled hunters. They were hardened by the difficulties of steppe life and tempered by individual trials of determination and bravery. They survived the difficult steppe by raiding unsuspecting trade caravans and villages for women, iron goods, and tools, which instilled in the Cossack mentality the right of plunder. Yet within the Cossack society, equality was the primary factor. Every man held voting rights, the right to speak and to act in any fashion (as long as his actions did not infringe upon the rights of other Cossacks). John Foreman, Russia on the Pacific and the Siberian Railway by Vladimer (pseud.) (London: S. Low, Marston and Company, limited, 1899), 47-50.

trained fighting force. At the turn of the seventeenth century, the Russian Government reached an uneasy truce with these roving bands of warriors. They agreed to allow the Cossacks full autonomy in all tribal matters in exchange for rejoining the Russian empire as armed warriors and protectors of the throne. But utilizing these wild, rugged men was extremely difficult. Russian Cossacks could not be bound by Russian law and practiced their marauding lifestyle without restraint on both newly discovered natives and established Russian subjects.⁴³

Irkutsk, like every frontier settlement, faced the same difficulties controlling the wild and dangerous Cossacks. Months from Moscow laws and retribution, Russian officials lacked the authority and the brute force required to restrain the lawless men. By their nature, the independent Cossacks categorically refused to be bound by laws and seldom accepted orders. Their resistance to the authorities prompted Russian hunters to also ignore traditional laws. As a result, a combination of Cossack lifestyle and group survival dictated local law and justice. The Voevoda, by authority from Moscow, presided as the sole administrator and decided both the verdict and the sentence to be administered. Normally penalties were lenient primarily due to the voevoda's personal interest in maintaining pelt quotas. Men killed or seriously wounded decreased the profitability of Irkutsk and decreased the voevoda's income. Flogging or minor mutilations were the most common punishments, although occasionally capital punishment was

⁴³Ibid.

required. Murder was commonplace in wild Siberia, but even the horrendous crime of killing a superior officer seldom resulted in capital punishment. Instead, these violent offenders petitioned the Voevoda for hazardous duty--generally exploring unknown wilderness areas and subduing resisting natives. Since this duty enhanced the productivity of the ostrog, petitions of this nature were normally granted.⁴⁴

Tribute gathering was particularly well suited to these violent men. By the Tsar's order, any means necessary was authorized to ensure the natives accepted Russian suzerainty, including death. Every few years a tribute train departed Irkutsk. It consisted of a large armed party and a Prikazchik, a petty official appointed as acting Voevoda. This group would travel throughout the territory requesting tribute from the local natives. Consenting natives immediately surrendered hostages to the Cossacks and produced the required tribute. However, occasionally a native tribe would refuse. In these instances, the Cossacks would immediately attack without another word, never offering the natives a chance to reconsider. The offending natives were slaughtered to the last man, the village razed and all women and children captured and divided among the marauding Cossacks as plunder.⁴⁵

By 1637, Irkutsk was well established. The ostrog was well supplied and fully operational. The local natives were subdued and a steady stream of fur shipments was dispatched to Moscow. The immense wealth of the area had enriched every inhabitant and

⁴⁴ Golder, 23.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 27

gained Irkutsk an unparalleled reputation. Hundreds of Russians flooded toward the settlement seeking to make their fortune. Hunters, trappers, craftsmen, and a multitude of women and children arrived in pursuit of their dreams, rapidly expanding Irkutsk's population. In a few short months, the influx of people reached and then overwhelmed the area's natural capacity. The surrounding area rapidly became depleted of game and plant life. Food supplies became dangerously short and starvation threatened the existence of the Russian settlers.⁴⁶ Desperately, the Irkutsk Voevoda searched for a feasible solution.

An Irkutsk resident detected a promising solution. He had discovered three upper branches of the Lena river, the Aldan, the Ucher and the Ludoma, in 1636. The wildlife located on these three rivers could provide only temporary relief to starving Irkutsk, but natives and traders who explored the area learned of a promising water system further South across the Savoy mountains. That system could possibly provide supplies for Irkutsk. It was rumored that in this distant land, cattle and horses roamed in large herds. Grain grew in large fields on the banks of the river. Ermine, fox, sable and other rich fur bearing animals prospered in staggering numbers. The natives, called the Dahurs, were a quiet, peaceful people that welcomed traders and hunters that passed through their lands. The area was even rumored to be located close to China and participated in active trade with the Asian giant in silks, silver, gold and pearls.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Liu Hsuan-min, "Russo-Chinese Relations up to the Treaty of Nerchinsk," Chinese Social and Political Science Review 23 (1939-1940), 393.

⁴⁷Golder, 32.

The rumors grew gradually in the telling until even the Voevodas of Irkutsk, Petr Golovin and Matvei Glebov, could not ignore the possibility of the river basin's existence. In 1641, they authorized a full investigation into the rumors. Three separate expeditions were dispatched. Each was instructed to either confirm or deny the reports of silver, cattle and furs in the river basin across the mountains. The first, Perofiyev (1641) located a traveling band of Tungus hunters that had traveled through the region and along the Shilka river. His questioning revealed that the natives owned silver and blue painted articles that were probably acquired from China. Unfortunately, Perofiyev returned to Irkutsk without personally confirming this information. Moskvitin (1642) was also able to confirm the Shilka's existence. Tungus traders, traveling from the Shilka, confirmed the existence of plentiful grain and silver to be gained from the region, and indicated they had personally witnessed the bounty of the area. Moskvitin, too, could not personally substantiate the facts he reported. The onset of harsh winter turned him back while he was attempting to cross the high mountains. The third expedition was led by Bachtayarov in 1643. Fully equipped for a laborious mountain crossing and assisted by a native guide, Bachtayarov and his men set forth for the Shilka. Unfortunately, Bachtayarov was completely incompetent and jeopardized both the expedition and his men with his faulty decisions. His mission returned to Irkutsk a complete failure.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Ibid., 34.

Golovin and Glebov were heartened by these inconclusive yet encouraging reports and decided a major expedition was required to decide the issue, but they were replaced by Vasilii Pushkin and Kiril Suponev before they could send another expedition. The two new voevodas, however, decided to follow their predecessor's plans. Late in 1643, a large expedition was organized to claim the area for the Russian throne. This force consisted of 133 men, including 112 Cossacks, fully armed and provisioned for an extensive journey. Pushkin even authorized the expedition to take several canon to ensure the expedition's success. Vasili Poyarkov, the expedition's leader, was given explicit instructions to proceed carefully and gather small amounts of tribute from the area's natives as a sampling of the region's bounty. In addition, Poyarkov was to discover if China maintained a presence in the area and determine if the basin was attached to the Chinese empire.⁴⁹ Unfortunately, Poyarkov was uninterested in diplomacy. He viewed the expedition to the Shilka river as the means to develop his personal fortune rather than the opportunity to provide a favorable first perception of the Russian empire.

Poyarkov's journey east was extremely difficult. Hampered by the heavy canon and cumbersome supplies, he became caught in the severe Siberian winter. The rugged Savoy mountain passes separated his forces and forced Poyarkov to abandon the majority of his supplies to descend to safety. Nearly frozen and half starved, Poyarkov decided to set up camp in mid-December. Deep snow prevented foraging and it soon became

⁴⁹ George Vjatcheslau Lantzeff, Eastward to Empire: Exploration and Conquest on the Russian Open Frontier to 1750 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1973), 155-56.

apparent that the expedition would starve long before spring without assistance. Poyarkov, in desperation, approached the nearby Daur natives and requested sustenance. The natives charitably welcomed Poyarkov and his men and offered part of their own winter cache to assist the visiting Russians through the hard winter. Poyarkov returned to the Daur regularly, requesting and finally demanding additional supplies from the natives to support the expedition. Finally, the Daur were unable to fulfill the unreasonable Russian demands and sent them back to their camp empty handed. Poyarkov, angered by their refusal, ordered his men to attack the Daur and take the desired supplies by force.⁵⁰ Unused to the climate and exhausted by traveling through heavy snow, the Russians were easily defeated and repulsed by the Amur natives.

In desperation, Poyarkov made a fatal decision. He ordered seventy men to attack a nearby Daur settlement. The weak and exhausted men were easily beaten, but returned to Poyarkov's camp to find the gates barred and their entrance denied. Poyarkov had determined that the remaining supplies would allow only part of the expedition to survive, and had sentenced the returning men to a slow death through exposure and starvation. By springtime, forty of the seventy exiled men had died. The remainder survived through cannibalism.⁵¹

In the spring, Poyarkov reabsorbed these men into the main expedition and continued down river. He was preceded by stories of cannibalism and reports of his

⁵⁰ Golder, 36.

⁵¹ Lantzeff, Eastward to Empire, 157.

attacks against the Daur. Natives along the entire length of the Shilka and Amur rivers had heard of the “dirty cannibals” and were alert and defensive.⁵² Every tribe greeted the Russian aggressively, forcing Poyarkov and his men to quickly flee down river to the Amur mouth. Once there, Poyarkov forced a local Giliak tribe to provide his group with provisions for his return trip up the coast to the Ulja river. In comparison with his frightening journey down the Amur, Poyarkov’s return voyage was uneventful. He wintered at the mouth of the Ulja before continuing inland. Traveling along the Maja and the Aldan rivers, he finally returned to Irkutsk, on June 12th, 1646, with his tale of the Amur.

The Russians considered Poyarkov’s expedition successful. Although not profitable, his eyewitness accounts of plentiful game and furs, caches of oats, peas, barley and millet along the banks of the Amur showed promise and implied the possibility of a reliable food source for Irkutsk. Poyarkov’s report that many natives in the basin claimed to be under Manchurian protection and the clear evidence of extensive Chinese trading in silver, copper and blue painted items indicated that China had a strong presence in the area.⁵³ Yet, Poyarkov reported, the Amur would be easy to conquer despite the allegiance to China. He estimated a force of three hundred men would easily subdue the natives. He concluded that three ostrogs with fifty men stationed at each could easily

⁵² Golder, 36.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 35.

hold the area while a roving band of 150 could collect tribute and ensure that peace was maintained.⁵⁴

While Russia was satisfied with the results of Poyarkov's expedition, Poyarkov had eliminated the possibility for a peaceful acquisition of the basin. Through his poor decisions and callous treatment of both his men and the Amur natives, Poyarkov ensured the animosity of the Amur natives. The native population abhorred the barbaric actions of the Russians and were repulsed especially by their cannibalism. This antipathy of the natives coupled with the fact that Poyarkov's seven-thousand-verst trek had gathered only 480 sable pelts, and lost 80 men (two-thirds of his expedition) illustrates the failure of Russia's expedition.⁵⁵

By the time Poyarkov returned to Irkutsk, the Voevoda, Pushkin had been replaced by Peter Golovin. Golovin was completely uninterested in pursuing the riches of the Amur. He was devoted to rejuvenating Irkutsk and solving the food difficulty through hard work. He firmly believed that four separate expeditions into the area had been a waste of time, resources and manpower that could be better utilized in the Irkutsk area. Golovin emphatically refused to consider further explorations and completely ignored the existence of the Amur.

⁵⁴ Sebes, Joseph S. J., "The Jesuits and the Sino-Russian Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689): Diary of Thomas Pereira, S. J." (Rome: Institutum Historicum S. I., 1961), 18.

⁵⁵ Foreman, 107.

This brief respite lasted until 1649. During this year, Russia made two large strides toward establishing contact with the Chinese empire. First, Russia dispatched an ambassadorial mission to the Tsetsen Khan of the Khalkas. Although the Russian representatives were primarily interested in discussing silver mines in the Khan's territory, they utilized the situation to supplement Russia's limited knowledge of the Manchu dynasty.⁵⁶ Russia's limited information regarding the Manchu dated to 1618. In this year, Petlin reported that he had experienced difficulties as he traveled to and from Peking because of the ongoing battles between the Ming and the Manchu. Later, during the mid thirties, the Russians had filled a large Manchu goods order and provided weapons, primarily guns, to the Mongols for delivery into Manchu hands. At the time the request was considered routine, but it soon became obvious that these weapons were used in the collapse of the Ming dynasty.

It was not until the members of the Tsetsen Khan mission returned to Russia that more concrete information became available. The messengers reported fully on the state of affairs in the budding Manchu empire and brought physical evidence of the Chinese desire to communicate. One of the Russian messengers, Zabolotsky, returned with a letter

⁵⁶Baddeley indicates that Baikov was illiterate and so the documents in the Russian record are written by another individual. In addition, Baikov did not hand in a ledger of goods for his trip, and there is no indication that he kept an official book or documents of his trip. There is also no record that indicates that a clerk was attached to the mission to keep these documents for him. It seems plausible to conclude that Baikov's official report was recreated after the mission, nearly a year after the original events occurred. Several versions of his trip have been recorded but since none can be traced as an ongoing journal all are suspect. Above is the most widely accepted of all versions recorded by historians and seems to agree with the historical records. "Baikoff's Embassy 1653-1657," in Baddeley, 130-32.

meant for the Tsar. The document is recorded by Russian sources as the official correspondence of Djuhandi, the Son of Van-Li.⁵⁷

Unfortunately, Russian records are in error. Van-Li's eldest son succeeded his father during 1620, but only ruled for one month.⁵⁸ Since the Ming dynasty lost complete control over the northern regions of China, it is extremely unlikely that the son of Van-Li drafted correspondence to the Russian tsar in 1649. Vincent Chin, a Chinese historian, believes the document is a letter from a Manchu border official or a regional ruler familiar with the Russians' continuing efforts to establish trade. Since the name Djuhandi sounds more Manchu than Chinese, his conclusion seems accurate.⁵⁹

The text of the letter reads:

In the time of my father came merchants from the great Lord (Tsar) to trade; but now no merchants come to me. Now, when in my father's time, the Great Lord's people came, they saw the sun, but now in my time they do not come. If thy people should come to see me, they would be as bright as the moon in the sky, and if they come, I shall be very glad; and will be gracious to them. Thou hast brought me two elk horns, and I have given in return 700 pieces of silk and do thou bring me the best of things and I will reward you in greater degree and I have sent to the Great Lord and Zahi (?) thirty-two cups made out of stone. And the envoys of the Great Lord came to me, three men and I ordered those three men to be convoyed with honour out of my kingdom to the great river and sent to accompany them, 3000 men for one day's journey.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Van-Li ruled China until his death in 1620. His eldest son, Chu Ch'ang-lo, succeeded his father using the reign title T'ai-ch'ang. He ruled for one month before dying in 1620.

⁵⁸ Chin, 38.

⁵⁹ "Petlin and Mundoff," in Baddeley, 72-73.

⁶⁰ Chin, 38.

Russia's second stride was the re-infusion of interest in the Amur basin. Peter Golovin was replaced by a new official, Dimitri Franzbekov. Franzbekov, in contrast with the previous Voevoda of Irkutsk, enthusiastically supported exploration in the Amur and insisted it be given top priority. Almost immediately, he accepted the petition of an enterprising peasant, Yarka Pavlov Khabarov, to settle and explore the Amur basin.

Khabarov had been drawn to the Lena area by tales of easy wealth. A born businessman, he quickly built a profitable enterprise trading furs for imported provisions. When Franzbekov's interest in the Amur became clear, Khabarov quickly petitioned him for permission to explore the region. Khabarov insisted upon paying his own expenses, gathering his own men, and requested nothing but Franzbekov's approval. This venture seemed risk-less from Franzbekov's viewpoint and quite possibly could produce an enormous amount of wealth for both men.⁶¹

Khabarov departed in March of 1649 with one hundred and fifty men. More Cossacks eager for wealth joined his expedition as he traveled east. He easily crossed the mountains on the Olekma river. However, upon Khabarov's arrival into the Amur region, he found the countryside deserted. Khabarov and his men passed through three empty settlements each displaying evidence of recent population. Shortly after leaving the third, Khabarov was approached by three horsemen. When Khabarov indicated that they had

⁶¹ Golder, 38.

come as peaceful traders, the native horsemen replied, "Why are you trying to deceive us, we know you Cossacks."⁶²

Memories of Poyarkov's previous adventure were apparently very strong, and had been recently sparked by a small party, consisting of a Russian and three Tungus that had passed through the region. This group had recently visited the Daur and indicated five hundred Cossacks were coming with the intention of killing, plundering the villages and taking the children into slavery. Naturally the panicked villagers had fled to escape this Russian horde.⁶³

Despite Khabarov's best efforts the horsemen escaped, avoiding further questioning. In his effort to capture the riders, Khabarov located two more villages. In one of these, he found an old woman too elderly and frail to flee with the remainder of the population. Khabarov closely questioned her (she claimed to be the sister of Lafkai, leader of the local natives and of the horsemen that had confronted Khabarov) about the entire basin. Khabarov asked questions regarding the surrounding rulers, the natives' allegiance with China and the relative strength of Amur defenses. When the elderly woman refused to speak, Khabarov tortured her until she provided the requested information. Later, upon his return to Irkutsk on May 26, 1650, Khabarov discovered the information the woman provided was largely false.

⁶² Sebes, 19.

⁶³ Lantzeff, Eastward to Empire, 160-61.

Despite his initial failure, Khabarov was still confident of the Amur's possibilities. He informed Franzbekov (who relayed to Moscow), that six thousand men would be required to completely subdue the native settlements. Since the native population was enormous, he anticipated a sizable force would be needed to ensure control. (In 1662, the entire population of the Amur numbered about seventy thousand.) Meanwhile, he happily indicated that the region was rich enough to completely supply the Irkutsk area with all needed foodstuffs. He reported large caches of grain stored in deep camouflaged pits and vast numbers of wildlife and fish available for harvesting.⁶⁴ Even the transport of supplies was ideal. Two weeks of easy travel on the Zena River were all that was necessary to provision Irkutsk.

Khabarov departed upon his second journey into the Amur in 1650. Better prepared for the land and conditions, Khabarov resupplied his men and strengthened his company with cannon and horses. He engaged the Dahurs at Yaksa (Albazin), a fortified native town with triple ramparts and ditches, and ordered the natives to submit and pay tribute to the Russian tsar. The Dahurs calmly replied they were already bound to the Bagdoi Khan (the Chinese emperor) and refused Khabarov's demand.⁶⁵ Immediately, Khabarov opened fire upon the unsuspecting natives. The resulting battle lasted from noon till dark, eventually resulting in a Russian victory. The natives battled valiantly but in the end bows and arrows were no match for Russian firearms and canon.

⁶⁴ Foreman, 118.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 116.

Khabarov occupied Albazin and refortified its walls, making it Russia's fortified headquarters on the Amur. Khabarov then dispatched 135 men to pursue the fleeing natives. The soldiers followed the natives to their nearby homes, torched them and triumphantly returned with large amounts of booty, including 117 head of captured cattle.⁶⁶

After the skirmish, several onlookers who recorded the incident approached Khabarov. The individuals were dressed in expensive silk and clearly were unrelated to the Albazin natives. Unfortunately, Khabarov and his men had no knowledge of the visitors' language and were unable to effectively communicate. Khabarov offered gifts to the men as a gesture of good will, but he was unable to determine more about them and dismissed the unknown visitors without a second thought.⁶⁷

Using Albazin as a fortified base, Khabarov's men quickly spread throughout the region, collecting tribute at gun point. The Russians' methods were brutal. They killed the native population without hesitation, and for the least infraction. Khabarov seemed especially bloodthirsty. In his report regarding the subjugation of the village of Guigudar, population one thousand, Khabarov gleefully recorded, "with God's help . . . [sic] we burned them, we knocked them on the head. . . . [sic] and counting big and little we killed

⁶⁶ Golder, 43.

⁶⁷ These men were undoubtedly Chinese officials, most likely there to collect tribute from the Amur natives. Foreman, 116.

six hundred and sixty one.”⁶⁸ Using these methods throughout the Amur, Khabarov’s men gathered sables, hostages and other booty for transport to Albazin. By fall, Khabarov’s report boasted that grain to support Irkutsk for more than five years had been gathered and indicated the Amur natives could easily supply enough grain to feed twenty thousand if needed.

The natives naturally protested such treatment to the Chinese and requested immediate assistance. The Chinese dispatched an armed military force to address the situation. A single line regarding the resulting battle was recorded in the official Chinese record: “in the ninth year of Emperor Shun Chih (1652), Hai Se the Defense Commander at Ninguta, dispatched troops to attack them (the Locha)⁶⁹ at the village of Ujala, but he suffered a minor defeat.”⁷⁰ No further record of the first battle between Russia and China was recorded. The Russians, however, described the battle in great detail.

The Russians’ report indicated that they were greatly outnumbered at Ujala and the Chinese clearly held the advantage. However, because the Chinese commander ordered his men to capture the Russians rather than shoot to kill, the Chinese’ effectiveness as a military force was destroyed. A rain of deadly Russian fire demoralized the Chinese and forced them to retreat. The Russians claimed 676 Chinese casualties and

⁶⁸ Golder, 45.

⁶⁹ This was the term the Amur natives attached to the invading Russians. It is unclear at this point that the Chinese understood that the invaders were Russian and not a wandering Northern tribe that had not yet been contacted.

⁷⁰ Chen, Agnes Fang-Chih. “Chinese-Frontier Diplomacy: The Coming of the Russians and the Treaty of Nerchinsk,” Yenching Journal of Social Studies 4 (February 1949), 1311.

numerous war supplies, including muskets, cannon, provisions, powder, and 830 horses. Russian casualties, in contrast, were unbelievably light. The Russians claimed only ten killed and seventy- six wounded--an unbelievable victory.⁷¹

Despite their military defeat, the Chinese accomplished their main objective, to halt the harassment of the natives by the Russian Cossacks. The natives, following China's lead began a widespread revolt to drive out the Russian invaders. Threatened on all sides by discontented natives and undermanned for such an occurrence, Khabarov accepted the inevitable.⁷² In April 1652, Khabarov's expedition began retreating up the Amur, and eventually crossed the mountains to Irkutsk. The Chinese instructed the Daur and other local tribes to abandon their homelands and move further south into the Sungari region, to areas where the Russians had not penetrated.

As Khabarov returned to Irkutsk, other Russians prepared to enter the Amur region with big plans and ambitious dreams. Several expeditions entered the region and removed food and supplies for consumption at Irkutsk. In ten short years the Amur was stripped bare by the repetitive foraging expeditions of the Russians. Where natives had

⁷¹ E. G. Ravenstein, Russians on the Amur (London: Trubner and Co., 1861), 21. This information is questionable. Cossacks have a tendency to exaggerate the size of the enemy to promote greater glory. The Chinese force was most likely not quite as large as estimated. The total number undoubtedly included a sizable number of servants and bearers who did not participate in the battle. In addition, the Russians were better armed and positioned than Chinese.

⁷² John Armstrong Harrison, The Founding of the Russian Empire in Asia and America (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1971), 78.

cultivated fields and raised cattle, the fields had become deserts, the cattle killed as food for the Russian fires. The natives were scattered throughout the forest.⁷³

In 1654, the Russian government moved a significant military force into the region. Onufrii Stepanov, with a contingent of 370 strong fighting Cossacks, entered the Amur and rapidly traversed the region searching for obstinate natives. Three days travel down the Sunari river, Stepanov's force engaged an enormous force of hostile Chinese soldiers numbering three thousand strong. Outnumbered and lacking sufficient ammunition, Stepanov retreated to a favorable location at the mouth of the Khamarch River and prepared to wait through the long winter months. He ordered the Khamarch ostrog built and sent a raiding party of fifty men to seize grain and supplies from the nearby Giliak population. In a few months reinforcements led by Peter Beketov to assist in fortifying the new ostrog.⁷⁴

When Spring arrived so did the main Chinese army. Stepanov's report states ten thousand Chinese arrived and forced a three-week siege at Nerchinsk. The four hundred Russians were badly outnumbered, but fought with such ferocity and bravery, that they managed to hold off the enormous Chinese force. The Chinese managed to destroy a few boats that were stored outside the fort, but did no lasting harm to the ostrog itself.

Eventually, the Chinese ran short of provisions and were forced to retreat.⁷⁵ They

⁷³ Chen, 1311.

⁷⁴ Edmund O. Clubb, *China and Russia: the Great Game* (London: Columbia University Press, 1971) 23.

⁷⁵ The number of ten thousand Chinese is certainly exaggerated. This was probably done to impress the Tsar with the difficulty of Stepanov's position. Stepanov also indicated that this army had fifteen canon

instructed the nearby natives, the Ducheri who lived at the mouth of the Sungari, and the Giliack to burn their homes and relocate to a river out of the Russians' reach.

With the advantage of stealing from the native population gone, Stepanov was hard pressed to provision his men. Over the next few years, he was attacked repeatedly by the persistent Chinese. The Chinese Record describes the altercation with Stepanov as follows:

In the twelfth year 1655 Lieutenant-General Mingandali set out with his forces from Peking. He attacked them (the Lochi) at Ku-mar (Khumarsk) and other places with some success, but soon retreated owing to lack of provisions. In the fourteenth year, Sarguda, defense Commissioner at Ninguta, defeated them at Shangienuhe. The next year he again defeated them between the Sungari and the Khulhan rivers. . . . In the seventeenth year Bahai son of Sarguda, scored an overwhelming victory over them. Although successful in the battles, our troops withdrew without subjugating the Locha, who continued to make their appearance intermittently.⁷⁶

China finally defeated Stepanov on June 30, 1658. Russian records indicate that a Chinese force of 1400 soldiers attacked the Russians just below the mouth of the Sungari River. In a desperate and heroic battle, Stepanov was killed along with 270 of his finest Cossack troops. The remaining 220 men managed to escape the battle and flee northward. Of these survivors, 180 retreated into the surrounding mountains to become

and a large number of firearms. In addition, they were not official Chinese troops, but a mixture of men from many territories, including Duchers, Daur, Nikans and several others. Mancall, 27.

⁷⁶ Chen, 1312.

outlaws. Once again, the Chinese succeeded in halting the Russians' advance and had freed the entire lower Amur from the Russian invaders.⁷⁷

Unfortunately for China, the defeat of Stepanov was not the end of the Amur basin's problem. The Russian's military defeat was only a temporary measure. Because Russia still controlled the mountain valleys of the upper Amur, they maintained a solid foothold and were able to creep down the Amur's rivers and re-infest the lower basin. China's best hope for a lasting solution was a political agreement between the two empires. In 1670, The Chinese emperor sent a letter to Russia requesting that the atrocities committed by the Russian Cossacks be immediately halted and the native villagers be allowed to live in peace.

The Russians failed to honor this simple Chinese request. Nothing was done to suspend the Cossacks' collection of tribute, nor did Russia respond to the Chinese Emperor's letter. Instead, Russia misunderstood the Chinese concern, and assumed that the Emperor's letter was an invitation to begin trading negotiations. This

⁷⁷ There is a large amount of disagreement in the records. Two stories exist for this encounter. The first is the Chinese account and is generally considered to be the most accurate of the two. The second, taken from Russian source material indicates that a tiny Russian force of roughly four hundred faced an incredibly large army of three thousand. Two hundred seventy were killed and forty-seven escaped alive to flee up river. One hundred eighty men deserted before the battle began. Ravenstein, 32-33. Historians assume that the outlaws remained in the region and eventually joined forces with Tchernigofski in 1665 but little evidence supports this conclusion.

miscommunication, however, was not unusual for Russia. Her entire political history with the Manchu dynasty is filled with miscommunications, misunderstandings and incorrect assumptions.

CHAPTER 2: THE FIRST MISSIONS

The confusion and misinterpretation began with the Baikov mission of 1654. The Tsar, Aleksei Mikhailovich, selected Fedor Isakovich Baikov in February 1654, to initiate friendly relations with the young Manchu dynasty and organize the foundation for future large scale trade. To accomplish this mission, Baikov was charged with a number of smaller tasks to promote good will and continuing relations. The first of these congenial tasks was to personally hand the Emperor a letter from the Tsar welcoming Chinese traders to Moscow. Many lavish and expensive gifts were to accompany this document to bolster friendship between the two nations. Once Baikov had delivered these important offerings, he was to discover if Russian merchants, envoys and ambassadors were welcome in the Chinese capital of Peking. Finally, Baikov was to learn Chinese ceremonial rites and customs, especially when they pertained to ambassadors and political envoys, to insure future meetings between the nations would facilitate peaceful relations.⁷⁸

Baikov was also given a second, more covert mission--to discover sensitive military information about China. To enhance Russia's understanding of the distant and remote country and better prepare her for the possibility of hostile action, Baikov was

⁷⁸ Chin, 49.

instructed to take particular note of China's military, the type and size of weaponry, population size, economic stability, and numerous other issues used to determine the military strength. Baikov's instructions even included noting all possible entry routes into the country that could be used for either military or commercial means.⁷⁹

While Baikov accomplished these tasks, he was required to follow a rigid protocol. To insure that his position and authority were not demeaned, the Tsar instructed Baikov to refrain from bowing, groveling or kissing the feet of the Chinese emperor. Baikov was forbidden to perform any act that indicated that the Tsar was inferior or subordinate in any way.⁸⁰ The only exception to this stringent instruction was if the Emperor's hand was proffered. In such an instance Baikov could kiss the hand in the traditional European fashion.⁸¹ Unfortunately this ridged charge gave Baikov little latitude to adapt to the unusual and unanticipated Chinese customs.

Baikov began his mission in typical European fashion. He instructed an intelligent and savvy messenger, Setkul Ablin to proceed him into China. Ablin's task was to inform the Chinese that the Russian emissary was en route and ensure that adequate supplies and

⁷⁹ "1654 Instructions From the Prikaz of the Bolshaia Kazan to Fedor Baikov concerning his embassy to the Chinese Empire," in Dmytryshyn, Russia's Conquest of Siberia, 254.

⁸⁰ Chin, 49.

⁸¹ Baikov was instructed that he could, as in European courts, kiss the Emperor's hand but was strictly instructed that under no circumstances was he to kiss his feet or act in any other demeaning manner. "1654 Instructions From the Prikaz of the Bolshaia Kazan to Fedor Baikov concerning his embassy to the Chinese Empire," in Dmytryshyn, 288.

transportation were provided inside China's borders. Ablin departed Moscow with a small group of men and a few furs and gifts that they hoped to trade with in China.⁸²

Upon his arrival in China in 1655, Ablin was treated exceptionally well--too well for a simple messenger. China had misunderstood his purpose and had assumed that he was Russia's representative. The Chinese Record recorded that Ablin arrived to provide tribute and inquire of the Emperor's health and well being.⁸³ However because Ablin did not provide an official letter from the Tsar, he was dismissed. However, the Chinese were pleased with the Russians' effort to become civilized and honored Ablin as the first tribute embassy to reach China from Russia. They gladly accepted Ablin's meager gifts of furs and encouraged the Russians by sending gifts in return and entertaining Ablin throughout his stay. Ablin was given verbal instructions that the Tsar should send tribute every year. Ablin himself was given personal permission to return and trade freely with Chinese merchants as long as his merchandise was offered for trade to the Emperor first.⁸⁴ His mission completed, Ablin departed Peking several months prior to Baikov's arrival. Although he hoped to meet the Russian envoy en route, he returned to Russian territory along a different route. Ablin completely missed Baikov's entourage and was unable to warn him about the peculiarities of the Chinese court.⁸⁵

⁸² Chin, 50.

⁸³ Chin, 55.

⁸⁴ Chen, 1321.

⁸⁵ Chin, 54.

Baikov approached the Chinese border and arrived at Kuku-sui, the first Chinese city in Mongol territory. At this location, he was refused transportation, food, and other supplies because the Chinese officials had no knowledge of his arrival. The Chinese repeatedly indicated that they could not follow the customary procedure without first receiving authorization from the Emperor.⁸⁶ The Kuku-sui officials did suggest that the Russian group travel onward to Kapka (Kalgan), a Chinese town on the frontier. At this location, Baikov and his men again requested food and transportation, but they received the same answer. They could not assist him without written authorization. Kapka officials did, however, dispatch a message to Peking requesting permission to supply Baikov's entourage and assist him on his journey to the Chinese capital city. In a few weeks Baikov was completely supplied and allowed to continue toward Peking.⁸⁷

On March 3rd, Baikov finally arrived at the capital city and was immediately greeted by the Li Fan Yuan, the Chinese Privy Council.⁸⁸ Immediately, Baikov's difficulties began. When members of the Li Fan Yuan escorted Baikov and his entourage to the city gate, they instructed him to kneel before entering. Baikov refused explaining

⁸⁶ Chin, 50.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ The Li Fan Yuan was a special ministry set up to ensure China maintained superiority over their inner Asian allies. Acting primarily as a court of Colonial affairs, the Li Fan Yuan was responsible for ensuring that China's allies obeyed the proper protocol and provided suitable tribute. There is some dispute as to where and when he met the Privy Council. In later contacts the Privy Council met foreign groups near the border and prevented their approach to Peking if the proper protocol was not followed. However, none of the records indicate that this occurred. All versions recorded in Russian archives indicate that this first meeting occurred at the city of Peking. Perhaps the difficulties encountered by the Chinese in dealing with Baikov prompted the Chinese to alter their original procedures. Chen, 1322.

that these customs were not the Russian way and he and his men could not perform this ritual. The council members accepted his explanation and allowed the Russians to continue to their quarters without requiring further prostrations.⁸⁹

Once Baikov was settled, the Emperor sent Baikov a special delicacy of tea boiled with butter and mare's milk as a special goodwill gift. Baikov refused to accept this gift claiming the Russians were observing a religious period of fasting. Eventually, he was persuaded to accept the expensive delicacy and satisfy Chinese custom even though he returned the cup's contents untouched.⁹⁰

The next controversy arose as the Li Fan Yuan began the preparations to present Baikov to the Emperor. Chinese custom dictated that both Baikov's letter of introduction and his official gifts be examined to insure their suitability for presentation to the Emperor. After this ritual, Baikov would be escorted to the Emperor. Baikov, however, insisted that this was unacceptable. Proper European custom dictated that an envoy be received immediately. He was entrusted to personally deliver his documentation to the ruler and allow no one else to view it before this task was completed. Gifts were only exchanged after official greeting and discussions had taken place.⁹¹

The Li Fan Yuan were unable to reason with Baikov. He stubbornly refused to follow Chinese traditions. Unwilling to argue the point, the council used force to relieve

⁸⁹ Chen, 51.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Chen, 1322.

Baikov of his official gifts. Two days after this event the council returned, indicating Baikov's gifts had been received by the Emperor. Now the Li Fan Yuan requested that Baikov relinquish the Tsar's letter for review. Again, Baikov refused claiming his instructions required him to personally deliver the document. Dismayed, the officials relented and returned to Emperor empty handed. Five months passed without further contact with the Chinese officials.⁹²

Finally on the 12th of August, the Li Fan Yuan again visited Baikov. It had been decided, they informed him, that he could personally carry his letter to the Ministry. In preparation for this event, Baikov would be schooled in the complexities of the kowtow and court procedures. However, Baikov emphatically refused to perform the kowtow. The kowtow, he explained, was a gesture of subservience. His Tsar had expressly forbade him to perform such an action. The council threatened the envoy with death if he continued to refuse, but even this threat failed to sway Baikov's resolve. He steadfastly declared, "though the Emperor should order that I be torn limb from limb, yet will I not go to the Ministry nor give up to you the Tsar's gracious letter." The Chinese were

⁹² Between March 5th and August 12th, Baikov and his men were interred in a small courtyard and denied visitors and opportunities to trade. The only contacts outside of this compound were with court dignitaries who had received special permission to approach the Russian visitors. The Chinese maintained this was for two reasons. First, it ensured that the Russians would not be insulted or harassed during their stay in Peking, and second since Baikov was unwilling to provide documentation to prove his claim of a diplomatic mission, it ensured that Baikov could not trade. (China did not allow diplomatic missions to engage in wide-scale trading.) Ibid.

completely disgusted with Baikov's behavior. They unceremoniously returned the Russian gifts and ordered the envoy to depart immediately.⁹³

One day outside the capital city, Baikov realized that his mission was a complete failure. Quickly he sent a messenger, a lowly cook from his envoy, back to Peking to plead his case. Claiming it was his official instructions that caused him to refuse to relinquish his letter and kowtow, Baikov requested forgiveness and pleaded to be allowed to readdress this misunderstanding. He asked that the Emperor order him back to Peking, and assured the ruler that he would obey all commands in every respect. Once he had dispatched the cook with this message, Baikov continued on to the next sizable town, Kapka, to await a response.⁹⁴

The next day a courtier arrived to confirm the content of Baikov's message. Seven days later, he returned with the Chinese response. He explained that it was disgraceful for Baikov to continue onward to the next town. Instead, he should have waited for a response at the same location that he dispatched the cook.⁹⁵ The message he carried was similar in content. "He who behaves in such a manner cannot be in his right mind. He professes to have been sent from the great lord, from the orthodox Tsar but has not the slightest inkling how to show respect to a sovereign"⁹⁶

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Chin, 53.

⁹⁵ Chin, 53-54.

⁹⁶ "The Statenii Spisok," in Baddelcly, 152.

Baikov's actions, however, are not as benign as he wanted the Tsar to believe. A Dutch ambassador was in Peking during both the Ablin and Baikov missions and made a detailed report on the actions of both in his record. Nieuhoff, the Dutch representative, recorded the positive influence and reputation of Ablin, but could not do the same for Baikov. He indicated that Baikov was at fault for the negative Chinese response. Upon the Russian envoy's arrival, he and his delegation were allowed to travel freely, buying and selling whatever they wished. However after one month, the Russians' actions were so repulsive and reprehensible that the Chinese were forced to restrain them. Nieuhoff reports they repeatedly forced their way into brothels, were noisy, drunken, and disrespectful and were the focus of numerous scandals and disputes.⁹⁷

Even Baikov's heartfelt report of his attempt to appeal to the Chinese takes on a new light when retold by Nieuhoff. Nieuhoff recorded that the Russians were detained just outside the city walls because they had no passport from the Emperor allowing them exit. Baikov was forced to send people back to humbly apologize for the arrogant and disrespectful actions both he and his men committed during their visit. He was then required to beg to make amends so they could depart. These humble apologies were thus accepted by the Emperor.⁹⁸

Baikov's mission was a complete failure. Russia had learned little of Chinese customs and had failed to gain trading rights to solve their economic crisis. The mission

⁹⁷ Chin, 54.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

succeeded only in demonstrating the atrocious manners of the Russians and ensuring Manchu negativity toward a Russian trade alliance.⁹⁹

In 1658, shortly after this disastrous mission, a second envoy was dispatched to repair the damage caused by Baikov's ill-fated mission. Periliev and Setkul Ablin were tasked to reestablish positive relations and negotiate a lucrative trade agreement. To avoid the difficulties experienced by Baikov, Russia sent Ablin and Periliev as simple messengers, not envoys or ambassadors. This way, the messengers avoided the custom arguments Baikov encountered. As messengers, the two could kowtow and prostrate themselves, since they did not directly represent the persona of the Tsar. Russia also declared that if delivering the Tsar's letter directly to the Emperor was prohibited, Ablin and Periliev were authorized to relinquish it the proper Chinese authorities.

The team arrived in Peking in 1660, and immediately kowtowed and relinquished the Tsar's letter to the Li Fan Yuan.¹⁰⁰ Because Ablin and Periliev were polite, agreeable, willing to accept Chinese customs, they were well accepted and treated with deference and respect. Quietly, they dispensed their own personal gifts to influential Chinese officials to facilitate their right to trade for Chinese goods. The pair's trading rights were quickly approved, and they established a friendly and very profitable trade.

⁹⁹ At this time, Stepanov had entered the Amur region and was actively battling the Chinese. This certainly influenced the Chinese attitude toward the Russian ambassador and was a factor in his failure.

¹⁰⁰ Mancall, 57.

Unfortunately for Russia, this amounted only to private trade, authorized only to Ablin and his men as a gesture of benevolence.¹⁰¹

The Chinese were much less satisfied with the Russian government. The letter Ablin delivered was disrespectful, insulting and lacked humility and courtesy. The document's presumptuous air infuriated the Chinese and they lectured Ablin and Periliev on the letter's shortcomings to ensure that in the future such insulting practices would be avoided.¹⁰² The official Chinese response was recorded in the Chinese record as "the Emperor reciprocated the Tsar's friendship with the reply that " the tribute thou didst send we have accepted, and in return we send thee our gifts and favours." ¹⁰³

Ablin maintained good relations with China in the following years and profited greatly from his Chinese trading operation. He made one more trips in 1668 and left a lasting favorable impression with the Chinese traders. Unfortunately, Ablin's trips to Peking were strictly private ventures, and he made little progress establishing trading rights for Russia. China absolutely refused to allow state-sponsored expeditions to enter the empire and steadfastly forbade Chinese traders to make the trek to Moscow.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Albin's second mission which, occurred in 1668, was immensely profitable. In addition to acquiring a large amount of silk velvet tea and spice, Albin's mission made a favorable impression upon the Manchu. Albin dined three times in the Emperor's garden, was granted personal use of an interpreter to assist in the trading process, and was explicitly told that all Russian merchants were welcome in China and would receive "sustenance and all kinds of considerations." Mancall, 58.

¹⁰² The letter used the Russian calendar instead of the Chinese and the Emperor's titles were incorrectly listed. Naturally, both of these faults were unavoidable. Even in the mid 1660's, Russia lacked a working knowledge of the Chinese calendar and official contacts had not returned with the proper list of the Emperor's official titles. Chin, 57.

¹⁰³ Chin, 58.

¹⁰⁴ Chin, 60.

The failure of these early envoys can be primarily attributed to China's world view.

Unlike European nations, China's isolation caused them to believe that the world was divided into two distinct parts, the civilized and the barbaric. The civilized world encompassed all of the enlightened Chinese empire and extended beyond territorial boundaries to all people accepting the suzerainty of the Chinese Emperor. The rest, regardless of achievement, were viewed as lowly barbarians. The Russian tsar, as a northern prince, naturally was an uncivilized barbarian. The Chinese were willing to accept these barbarians into the civilized world. They demanded only a reasonable tribute, absolute acceptance of the Emperor's authority, and performance of all Chinese traditional customs and rituals. The Chinese fervently believed that the barbarians beyond China's walls needed only to be shown the proper path and they would join the ranks of the enlightened. ¹⁰⁵

For the Chinese, enlightenment meant accepting the authority of the emperor. More than simply the country's ruler, the emperor was an integral part of Chinese life and religion. They believed that the emperor was the single contact point between heaven and earth. As the bridge between the mundane and the divine, he played a dual role, one as Tien-tzu, the son of heaven, and the other as the man--Luang-ti. As Tien-tzu, the emperor must ensure the virtue of the son of heaven in order to ensure the harmony of the marriage

¹⁰⁵ Williams, 194-95.

between heaven and earth. As Luang-ti, he must minimize the fallibility of human nature in order to protect the universe from dissonance.¹⁰⁶

To assist the emperor in balancing the delicate nature of these two roles, the Chinese had organized an exceptionally rigid and complex series of rituals. These rituals, the Chinese believed, protected both earth and heaven and were necessary to ensure harmony. The rituals surrounding an imperial audience, for example, were designed to ensure the persona of Tien-tzu was present rather than the fallible Luang-ti. This would ensure a positive outcome. To the Chinese, the centuries-old rituals were more firmly ingrained than any Christian belief. They firmly maintained that to alter the procedures would risk the destruction of both earth and heaven. The Russians, in contrast, examined the missions with European eyes. They saw very little difference between the missions of Ablin and Baikov. Both carried similar messages and performed similar roles. Only one major difference separated the two officials, rank.

In European politics, the fact that Baikov was an official envoy and Ablin was simply a humble messenger, is a significant difference. Baikov, as an official envoy, represented the government of Russia and wielded authoritative powers to establish policy and represent the Russian government in political discussions. Ablin however, was a lowly messenger. He, representing only himself, lacked the authority to do more than deliver an official letter and carry back a response. Considering this, the enthusiastic welcome the Chinese gave to Ablin was a shocking and unusual response. The fact that

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

Ablin willingly kowtowed while Baikov refused was viewed as insignificant. The Russians deduced the Chinese must be responding to the distinct difference of status between the two officials.

There were very few reasons for a country to respond emphatically to a lowly messenger. Russia concluded that China was utilizing Ablin to proffer an apology for past actions. If the Chinese had dismissed Baikov without fully realizing his status and mission of establishing trade, they quite easily could utilize Ablin to proffer an apology. By welcoming Ablin whole-heartedly, they could compensate for their earlier mistake.

While this conclusion explained China's unusual actions, it assumed several facts about Chinese political procedure. First, it assumed that the Chinese fully understood the nuances of status and official positions and the subtleties of their use. Second, it believed that Ablin's enthusiastic welcome signified China's desire to establish relations and establish trade. Third and finally, it meant that China's actions revealed that she had an excellent idea of Russia's rank, position, and power. With these basic assumptions about China's understanding of foreign relations, Russia prepared her foreign policy. While contemplating relations with China, Russia ignored the Amur. With Stepanov defeated and the prospect of creating a lasting relationship with China in the air, Russia decided to stop authorizing official missions into the Amur.

Although no more official missions entered the Amur, Russia was unable to stop refugees and criminals from fleeing into the region. In 1665, Nikiphor Romanov Tchernigofski, a Polish exile wanted for the murder of the Voevoda of Ilimsk, had fled

into the Amur to escape punishment. Traveling with him was a band of eighty-four fugitives. This bold group braved battle with the Chinese forces to reinhabit Albazin, Khabarov's primary fort, and reestablish Russian dominance in the region. Tchernigofski and his followers mercilessly exacted tribute and established a chain of fortresses along the Amur. Once they were well established, the group petitioned the Tsar for full pardons and in 1669 indicated they would submit to the Tsar's authority. Because of their outstanding progress in the basin, the Tsar decided to grant the fugitives complete pardons and sent government officials to oversee the area.¹⁰⁷ In a short period of time, Albazin had grown to a strong force of three hundred men.

From Tchernigofski's fortress, the Russians crept downstream. They gradually became braver and more self-assured when it became apparent that the Chinese military force that had protected the southern basin had withdrawn. In a short period, Russia was again extracting tribute from the Amur natives with impunity. In fact, the Russians became so self-assured they openly attacked a Chinese tribute delegation sent by the Chinese emperor, Shan Chin, proclaiming their authority in the region.

China had difficulties of her own during this period. China was left with only one option to protect the basin from this persistent invader. Since her military was engaged in battling an open revolt to the south and could not be spared to settle the thirty-year-old territorial dispute, K'and Hsi, the new Chinese emperor, resorted to diplomacy to resolve

¹⁰⁷ Hsuan-min, 396-97.

the issue. He instructed the Military-Governor of Ninguta to send a letter to Nerchinsk in early 1670. The Chinese letter was simple. It complained of Russian encroachments on the Amur natives and the reprehensible behavior of the Russian traders who extorted them. Finally, the emperor indicated his displeasure at the Russian protection of a Chinese traitor by the name of Gantimer.¹⁰⁸

The letter was received by Daniel Archunski the Voevoda of Nerchinsk later that same year. The Chinese detachment assigned to deliver the message carefully translated the document and explained in great detail the Emperor's concerns.¹⁰⁹ Archunski apparently misunderstood the importance of this document. He probably felt that this letter was from a lesser prince, a Mongol tribesman, perhaps, complaining of the Cossack activities near his homeland.

Archunski had been instructed by Moscow that when contacting the lesser tribal groups, he was to request that they submit to the Tsar, impressing on them the overwhelming strength and greatness of the Russian empire. Following these instructions,

¹⁰⁸ Gantimer was a Tunguse prince who ruled in the region of Nerchia (Nerchinsk). He became dissatisfied with Russian demands in 1650 and moved his people to the right bank of Argun where he proclaimed his support of the Chinese rule. Throughout the Khabarov and Stepanov invasions, he steadfastly supported China and even assisted them in the battle at Kamarsk. But in 1666-1667, Gantimer abandoned the Chinese and joined the Russians. China labeled him a traitor and demanded his extradition. Russia, however, refused. Gantimer was a prominent chief and leader and greatly influenced the surrounding tribal leaders. His friendship and support of Russia not only smoothed the path for Russian control, but greatly degraded the allegiance of surrounding Tungus chieftains toward China. Baddeley, 428-429. China also desired the return of Gantimur's nephew, Tokultei. He had lived with the Targachuns, steadfast loyal subjects of China, and killed three Targachin men. To escape punishment, Tokultei fled to his uncle and Russian protection. Chen, 132.

¹⁰⁹ No indication of the explicit translation is made evident in his report to Moscow. Furthermore, no documentation exists to support the claim that Moscow had received a translation of the important document.

Archunski drafted a letter and entrusted it to Ignashka Milovanov, an illiterate Cossack, for delivery to the Chinese emperor. The letter read in part:

There are Tsars and Kings who own allegiance to the Great Lord Tsar and Grand Prince, Alexei Mikhailovich, Autocrat of all the Russias, Great, Little and White and the Great Lord graciously designs to extend them to his royal gifts and favour.

The Bogdoi Tsar (Chinese Emperor) would do well to seek likewise the favour and presents of the Grand Prince, Alexei Mikhailovich, Autocrat of all the Russias, Great, Little and White, and place himself under His Tsarial Majesty's protection.

And the Grand Prince, Alexei Mikhailovich, Autocrat of all the Russias, Great, Little and White, and lord and possessor of many kingdoms, will in that case send the Bogdikhan gifts and keep him in his gracious royal care, and protect him from his enemies.

At the same time the Bogdikhan would come under the Tsarial Majesty's, the Great Lord's, high hand for ever [sic] without fail, and present to him . the Great Lord, tribute and allow the Great Lord's people and his own, on either side, to trade freely.

And what the Bogdikhan decides let him forward to His Tsarial Majesty, the Great Lord, by those same envoys.¹¹⁰

The letter continues and informs the Emperor that Gantimer is too ill and elderly to be returned without the express permission of the Tsar, but does promise to restrain Cossack activities in the region.¹¹¹

Surprisingly, this haughty and disrespectful letter was extremely well received in Peking.¹¹² K'ang Hsi was encouraged by the prompt Russian response and the

¹¹⁰ Chen, 1324.

¹¹¹ Chin, 60.

¹¹² Because Kang Hsi accepted Archunski's disrespectful document without even a hint of anger suggests that the Emperor was unaware of the letter's true contents. Baddeley speculates that the Emperor never understood that the document demanded his fidelity. He believes the letter was translated by a clerk or Jesuit priest unwilling to raise the ire of the Emperor and who suppressed its more offensive passages. "Milovanoff's Mission to Peking, 1670," in Baddeley, 195.

willingness of the Russian messenger to kowtow and follow Chinese customs. He allowed Milovanov a personal audience, the first Russian so honored, and immediately began writing his own response to inform the Russians of his restraint and benevolence.¹¹³

...Long since, our hunters sent a humble address declaring that those who dwell on the Black River are lovchi, petty robbers, in no great strength, but that those lovchi maltreat our Djurdji and Takori {Dahurs}, and catch their sables, and, withal, they humbly report of Gantimur that, relying on those lovchi, he has fled to them and trusts them. They petitioned therefor that those lovchi should be punished. But I, Ruler of the World, hearing that those lovchi were thy subjects sent a man to find out what was true and what false. And that Danilo sent ten messengers with Ignatii, and when they announced that they had thy authority and were subjects of thine, I beleived them. But now, if thou desirest to dwell in peace, send us the refugee Gantimer. Also, in future, let none make any trouble on our frontiers, if this is done there will be peace; that is why I send this letter.¹¹⁴

The Emperor's presentation of the situation is a polite, political threat. In his correspondence, he indicated that Russia had violated the territorial rights of China in the Amur basin, and that China was fully capable and willing to retaliate against this Russian invasion. However, because political considerations have restrained his hand, the Emperor decided to allow Russia the opportunity to correct their transgression. As a result, the Chinese Emperor did not order retribution but instead informed the Russian tsar of the situation in order to provide him with the opportunity to correct the situation. Yet the

¹¹³ Ablin and Perliet were apparently denied this honor because of the disrespectful tone of the Tsar's letter. Yuri Nikolaevich Semenov, *Siberia, Its Conquest and Development*, translated by J. R. Foster (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1954), 110.

¹¹⁴ There are several translations to this letter. This one was done by the Jesuit priest, Verbiest. "Milovanoff's Mission to Peking (1670)," in Baddeley, 373.

Emperor's warning is very clear. The letter unequivocally states that the Amur is a Chinese holding and that the conditions that Russia must meet to remain within the Amur is a peaceful and harmonious relationship with the Amur natives.

Since this plainly worded note was the most recent communication between the Russian and Chinese empires, it is obvious that China assumed the next communication from Russia would deal at least peripherally with the Amur basin topic. Such a bold and authoritative declaration should be featured in the next communication, especially since every communication from China had concentrated on the Amur topic and highlighted their discontent with the Russian occupation.

The Russian viewpoint on the Amur basin subject was noticeably different. To them it was not a primary concern. Russian Cossacks had dominated most of the region for several decades and the few military skirmishes, while costly, were insubstantial in comparison with the vast quantities of expensive pelts shipped from the region each year. China's feeble efforts to remove the Cossacks were not especially threatening and unless a massive military operation was organized, it was unlikely that Russia would be forced out

of the Amur.¹¹⁵ It was into this difficult and conflicting political atmosphere that Russia would send their representative.

¹¹⁵ Russian officials would claim that they were unable to read the communications from China. Although this point may have some validity, especially in the case of the earlier documents from 1618 and 1649, (These early documents were received during a time when there was very little communication with Chinese-speaking peoples.) numerous individuals from Siberia and the Amur basin could translate these late documents with little difficulty. In addition, the great effort China underwent to ensure that the Milovanov letter was understood should have alleviated most of Russia's difficulties and ensured that Russia could develop at least a rudimentary foreign policy.

CHAPTER 3: THE MAKING OF A DIPLOMATIC MISSION

Russia's decision in 1674 to send an ambassadorial mission to China was prompted by economic factors and a belief in the ease of widespread trade with the Chinese. The vision of heavily loaded caravans filled with expensive Chinese silks, gems, and spices prompted excited officials to immediately begin preparations for the mission. In addition to the selection and organization of supplies and suitable gifts, and the rounding up the best qualified men in numerous fields--such as medicine, warfare, farming, etc.--to observe and record information, two vitally important tasks needed to be accomplished. First, a suitable ambassador had to be selected to present the proper image to the Chinese. And second, a set of instructions tailored to the fallibility of the selected ambassador and providing detailed explanations of the complexities of the mission needed to be created.

The choice of the ambassador was vital. The chosen individual would be the first official representative of Russia in the distant Chinese empire. The task of establishing a positive political relationship and negotiating trade was crucial to Russia's political stability. The tremendous importance of this mission for Russia demanded a unique and unusual individual--a person gifted with exceptional intelligence, education, and political experience to properly represent the throne in this important endeavor. Additionally, the

selected individual, as the official representative of the Tsar abroad, must present the proper bearing, appearance, and attitude to impress upon the Chinese the grandeur of the Russian throne. For this particular task, A. A. Matveev,¹¹⁶ the Tsar's close confidant, presented a young Moldavian diplomat, Nikolai Gavrilovich Miclesu Spafarii,¹¹⁷ for consideration to the post.

Spafarii was an extremely controversial choice to become the Russian ambassador to China. Numerous Russian officials complained that Spafarii was too young. At only forty years of age, Spafarii lacked the distinction to be taken seriously as a political negotiator.¹¹⁸ In addition, Spafarii was extremely inexperienced in Russian politics. Because Spafarii had arrived in Moscow in 1671, only four years earlier, without even the basic rudiments of the Russian language, Spafarii had not had the opportunity to distinguish himself through his negotiation skills. His position in the foreign office had been gained on the strength of his Greek and Latin abilities and the strong recommendations from Nikusi Panagiot, a Greek interpreter at the Porte, and from the

¹¹⁶ Artemon A. Matveev was the head of the Polosolskii Prikaz, the Russian foreign office that managed foreign affairs including the assignment of translators.

¹¹⁷ One well-known comprehensive biography had been written on Spafarii, P. P. Panaitescu, Nicolas Spathat Miclesu. *Melanges de l'ecole roumaine en France*, Pt. I (Paris, np. 1925). Mark Mancall's Russia and China liberally uses this work in its preparation of Spafarii's biography. Nicholi Miclesu is usually referred to as Spafarii. Mancall explains that this is a misuse of his title, spatar or spatharios, by previous historians. However, since all Russian documents and Spafarii himself in his letters and journal use Spafarii, it seems appropriate to continue the practice. Mancall, 324.

¹¹⁸ There is a dispute regarding Spafarii's age. In 1676, Spafarii stated that he was forty years old (thus born in 1636). But all known records including those by the Romanian chronicler Neculcea indicated his date of birth was about 1625. Due to the fact that there is no concrete proof of Spafarii's age, historians have generally accepted the 1636 date. This is primarily because Neculcea's early works are often inaccurate. This would make Spafarii seventeen when he completed his education in 1653. *Ibid.*, 324.

Patriarch of Jerusalem (residing in Constantinople), Dositheos.¹¹⁹ Spafarii's short residency and lack of practical experience in Russian diplomacy brought his ability to successfully navigate the complexities of political negotiation into question.

Practical considerations were, however, only part of the controversy. Spafarii's nationality (born in Moldavia) and low birth challenged his suitability. His family's Greek origins created a mild debate. It was his family's humble origins that caused the most concern. Spafarii's family was originally without a name, title or wealth. To obtain a more prosperous life, Spafarii's parents migrated to Moldavia and married into two wealthy and influential households, the Ghika and Duka families. After achieving noble rank through their newly acquired in-laws, Spafarii's family adopted a family name, Milescu, from an estate they procured in Basluisck.¹²⁰ Spafarii presented the appearance of wealthy and influential origins but he was still a member of the lower class and unsuitable for such an important position.

The arguments accumulated against Spafarii were for the most part simply political excuses. A non-Russian representative of the throne, while unusual, was certainly acceptable by Russian standards in the late seventeenth century. His inexperience could be overcome by assigning numerous advisors to the mission to assist him with the complexities of Russian politics. Youth, far from being a deterrent, was often considered an asset on long and difficult treks through the untamed wilderness. Yet despite these

¹¹⁹ Baddeley, 206.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 205.

asons, Spafarii was unpalatable to a large number of Russian politicians. The reason was Spafarii's friendship with A. A. Matveev.¹²¹

Artemon Matveev maintained a unique position in the Russian government. In addition to his influential position as head of the foreign affairs department, Matveev was closely related to the Tsar's family. As the favored uncle of Tsar Aleksei's second wife, Natalia Narishkin, Matveev enjoyed influence unnatural to his post. The Tsar usually sanctioned Matveev's recommendations despite protests from the remainder of his government and Spafarii was readily approved as the ambassador to China despite the outcry from the Miloslavskaiia faction of the government.¹²²

Matveev's relationship with Spafarii began shortly after he arrived in Moscow. Interested in developing a new policy that would allow for the formation of natural allies against a common enemy, Matveev required an assistant with information on the recent state of European affairs. He recruited the young translator and utilized his foreign background and European political ties to cement alliances against Turkey. This professional relationship quickly became personal. Matveev enjoyed the intellectual stimulation offered by Spafarii, and often invited him to socialize and discuss religious or historical texts. Spafarii eventually became a tutor for Matveev's son, Andrei. Naturally,

¹²¹ Ibid., 207

¹²² The faction that controlled the government during the reign of Aleksei's first wife, Maria Miloslavskaiia. Sergei M. Soloviev, Rebellion and Reform: Fedor and Sophia 1682-1689, vol. 25, History of Russia, translated and edited by Lindsey A. J. Hughes (Gulf Breeze, Fla: Academic International Press, 1989), 10.

when the lucrative position of Russian ambassador to China became available, Matveev strongly suggested the young Moldavian to the Tsar.¹²³

Matveev's influential support certainly assisted Spafarii in receiving the assignment but this aid should not overshadow Spafarii's natural and unique qualifications. Perhaps of all the other Russian diplomats of the period, Spafarii alone commanded the diverse skills necessary to complete the mission. First, Spafarii was highly educated. As a young man, his family managed to send him to the prestigious Greek Patriarchal School in Constantinople. Under the tutelage of Gabriel Vlasi, who would become the metropolitan of Naupaktu and Arta, Spafarii absorbed several languages, including ancient and modern Greek, Turkish and Arabic. His studies included a rigorous exploration of literature, history, and philosophy. Theology, Spafarii's passion, became deeply ingrained and he would spend much of his professional career addressing the heady issues of church dogma. When Spafarii completed the difficult program at Constantinople, he traveled to Italy to explore more mundane subjects that included natural science, mathematics, Italian and Latin.¹²⁴

Spafarii's amazing academic abilities brought him praise both from fellow students and instructors. Terms including "oti vir Poliglotus," "instruit aux langues," "vsem yazikam," "vir ac pius" and "in urbe imperatoria" were used to describe him. The patriarch, Dositheus, was so impressed by Spafarii's linguistic ability and his expertise in

¹²³ Mancall, 74.

¹²⁴ Probably Padua. Baddeley, 205.

theology that he exclaimed, "He is, as it were, a grandgraph, replete with universal knowledge."¹²⁵

Spafarii proved his command of religious theory and linguistic ability in his first few professional works. One of the Spafarii's earliest works was the difficult translation of the bible from Greek into Rumanian/ Moldavian. This enormous work became widely used during the seventeenth century before disappearing during the nineteenth.¹²⁶

Spafarii's second ambitious and most famous work centered upon the Calvinist movement of Europe. In an extensive document entitled Enchiridion, Sive Stella Orientalis Occidentali Splendens, hoc est Sensus Ecclesiae Orientalis, Scilicet Graecae, de Transubstantiatione Corporis Domini Aliisque Controversiss,¹²⁷ Spafarii examined the Calvinist treatise against Transubstantiation in great detail. In his work, he explained that the fundamental basis of the Calvinist movement was based upon the "Catechesis of Cyril," a religious address supposedly delivered by Cyril, patriarch of Constantinople. Spafarii's intensive examination proved decisively that the Catechesis was a forgery and the basis for the Calvinist movement heresy.¹²⁸

Spafarii's extensive years at European courts also provided him with the experience necessary to become the Russian ambassador. In 1653, when Spafarii was

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ The work was never published. Mancall, 71.

¹²⁷ The title is translated as Manual of the Eastern Star Singing on the West...being the Perception of the Eastern (Greek) Church Concerning the Transubstantiation of the Body of the Lord and other Controversies. Baddeley, 206.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

only eighteen,¹²⁹ he returned to Moldavia to work for the court. During the next eight years, Spafarii worked for several princes, including George Stephan¹³⁰ (until his banishment in 1658 for attempting to seize the throne) and George Ghica. During the two years Spafarii assisted Ghica, he was assigned as the commander of the cavalry. During this fateful appointment, Spafarii was entrusted with a thousand men and sent to settle several local quarrels between rival regions in Transylvania. His successful campaign resulted in his adoption of the name Spafarii, a military title referring to a horseman or sword-bearer.¹³¹

Following this successful military appointment, Spafarii became George Ghica's personal secretary, and then carried on his duties for his son Gregory. Between the years 1664 and 1668, Spafarii traveled to Brandenburg and accepted a position with Frederick Wilhelm, the Kurfurst of Brandenburg.¹³² A few satisfying years later, Spafarii departed to rejoin George Stephan, his first employer, and to accept a respected position as Stephan's official diplomatic representative throughout Europe. The untimely death of Stephen in 1669 left Spafarii again searching for employment.¹³³

The opening at Moscow in 1671 for an educated religious man was tailor-made for Spafarii. After receiving a recommendation from the church at Constantinople, Spafarii

¹²⁹ Or twenty-eight, depending upon the correctness of Spafarii's birth date.

¹³⁰ Mancall indicates his name was Stefan Georgits. Mancall, 324.

¹³¹ The name itself is derived from his official title Spatharios, a word meaning sword bearer and applied to the bodyguard of the Danubian Hospodars. Baddeley, 205.

¹³² Due to contradictions in his biographical information, the exact date is unknown. Mancall, 324.

¹³³ Baddeley, 206.

was accepted by the Posolski Prikaz, or foreign office. In Moscow, Spafarii's linguistical abilities shone. Despite arriving with no understanding of Russian, Spafarii was soon elevated to the position of First Interpreter to the Posolski Prikaz of the Moscow Razriad.¹³⁴ This position, which had never before been granted to a foreigner, acknowledged Spafarii's remarkable expertise in Greek, Latin, and several other languages. In addition, Spafarii was also the youngest interpreter ever employed by the Prikaz. Spafarii's natural abilities were astounding. As a reward for his excellence during his initial employment, the grateful office granted Spafarii a lifetime appointment of 100 rubles the day he was officially appointed to the department, December 14th, 1671.¹³⁵

Along with Spafarii's linguistic ability, educational qualifications and extensive political experience, Spafarii also possessed an esoteric, ethereal quality that made him especially well-suited to represent the Tsar on this important mission. Throughout Spafarii's unusual political career, his mannerisms and bearing were often remarked upon by the surrounding officials. For example, French ambassador extraordinary, Arnauld de Pomponne (the nephew of the celebrated port royalist), mentioned Spafarii favorably after meeting him in Stockholm. He exhorted Spafarii with noble titles including "Seigneur, moldave baron and gentilhomme."¹³⁶ Spafarii's unusual demeanor was a unique combination of brash assurance and noble mannerisms that immediately impressed all who

¹³⁴ Ibid., 207.

¹³⁵ Mancall, 73.

¹³⁶ Baddeley, 205.

viewed him. His educated speech provided an aura of knowledge and his self-assurance quickly allowed Spafarii to control the flow of conversation. These factors, embellished with the immaculate dress and impeccable refinement of the aristocracy, projected the impression of elegance and regal bearing. These three qualities--education, experience and posture, made Spafarii an excellent choice to represent the Russian tsar in China.

Like all humans, this skillful and ingenious scholar hid several character flaws that stained the brilliance of his accomplishments. An opportunist, Spafarii eagerly grasped every occasion to advance his own career. Unfortunately, he cared little for those around him. He routinely betrayed his friends, attempted to overthrow local governments, and lied whenever it was necessary to elevate his success, position, or political standing. Evidence even exists that Spafarii was a plagiarist and copied some of his best known works, including the world-renowned Rumanian bible, from other scholars.¹³⁷ One particular work, Spafarii's Atlas of China, proves conclusively Spafarii's tendency to plagiarize. Included with a sheaf of documents that chronicled his China mission, Spafarii's atlas was a conspicuously informative document. It gave detailed accounts of the southern Chinese terrain (a region Spafarii never visited) and the inner working of the Chinese government. In fact, Spafarii's atlas was nearly a word for word copy of a 1655 document of the same name. This early summary, written by a Jesuit priest named Jesuit Martini, was simply translated into Russian by Spafarii and claimed as his own work.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Spafarii, "Description of China," in Baddeley, 209-11.

Unfortunately, Spafarii was not simply a plagiarist. Behind the impressive education and political reputation, Spafarii concealed a darker, depraved ambition that often resulted in duplicity. During Spafarii's earliest political years, his criminal activities were limited to untraceable clandestine operations. Although no evidence exists, Spafarii's uncanny ability to maintain his high governmental position when first Stephan, then Ghika, were removed from authority in the Moldavian leadership, smacks of conspiracy.¹³⁹ This insinuation receives a great deal of strength in light of Spafarii's efforts to depose his third employer, Stephaitz.¹⁴⁰

Initially Spafarii was employed as Stepanitz's private secretary. However, after a short time, it quickly became apparent their relationship would be one of deep trust and friendship. Stepanitz was a kind master and held Spafarii's thoughts and opinions in high esteem. He continuously consulted Spafarii on matters of state and personal difficulties. Spafarii was regularly invited dine at Stephanitz's table and spent a considerable number of evenings in the prince's company drinking and playing cards. It was clear that Spafarii was a valued and trusted member of Stepanitz's household.¹⁴¹

Spafarii, however, was displeased with his subservient role. He gradually grew tired of Stepanitz and organized a movement to overthrow the kindly ruler. In his search

¹³⁹ If Spafarii was able to play an active role in the disposition of Stephen, he must have of been extremely cunning and clever to completely cover his tracks. Later he goes to rejoin Stephen and resumes a close relationship. It is questionable how Spafarii could maintain a excellent working relationship with the Ghikas while he was so friendly with Stephen. Baddeley, 205-06.

¹⁴⁰ Mancall refers to Stephaitz as Prince Ilias Alexandru. Mancall, 72.

¹⁴¹ Baddeley, 206.

for support, Spafarii sent letters, disguised in hollow sticks, to his friends in neighboring areas. One of these letters was intercepted by a loyal Besarabian administrator who immediately returned the damning document to Stephanitz's hands.¹⁴² There was no question of Spafarii's intent. His entire treasonist plan was outlined in his dispatch. Angrily, Stephanitz sent for the executioner, but relented at the last minute, canceling Spafarii's death sentence. Instead, Stephanitz instructed that Spafarii was to be disfigured. His nose was to be cut off to forever mark him as an untrustworthy traitor.¹⁴³

Fortunately for "chicken nose," as Spafarii became known, his former employers still looked favorably upon him. Immediately following his disfigurement, Spafarii found refuge with Gregory Ghika in Wallachia, who employed him as an agent in Constantinople during his initial recovery period. This kindness was cruelly repaid. During the turmoil created by the war between the pope and Poland, Spafarii betrayed Ghika's trust. By willingly following the d'abolical instructions of Shcherbak Kantakuzan, an ambitious schemer who eyed Ghika's position, Spafarii became an instrumental player in Ghika's displacement. With Ghika eliminated, Spafarii hoped to receive his reward from Kantakuzan. But he failed to receive the vacated position. As a result Spafarii was left without a job, patron or recommendation.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Mancall, 72.

¹⁴⁴ Baddeley, 206.

Another member of the nobility, Frederick Wilhelm, Kurfurst of Brandenburg, heard of Spafarii's credentials and offered to sponsor the intellectual. Under Wilhelm's watchful eye, Spafarii devoted himself to his studies and completed the Rumanian translation of the bible. He also underwent an unusual and experimental procedure to heal his disfigured face. German doctors removed quantities of blood and flesh from his cheek (presumably his rear cheek) and grafted the matter onto Spafarii's injured nose. Spafarii seemed content to remain for a time--at least until his nose became fully healed--before deserting Wilhelm's generous service.¹⁴⁵

Next Spafarii traveled to Stettin to work as Stephan's diplomatic agent to Stockholm. Here, he delivered his brilliant response to Calvin which redeemed his name and revived his sagging career prospects. It was simple bad luck that Stephan died in 1669. With few options left, Spafarii traveled to his home in Moldavia, and then to Wallachia before appearing in Constantinople before the patriarch.

For the Orthodox church, Spafarii must have presented a dilemma. On one hand the man was brilliant scholar, and a stout defender of the faith. On the other, he was an embarrassment. Caught several times undermining his employers and too untrustworthy to be tasked with mediating church business, Spafarii was too controversial to be absorbed into the church administration. The Russian request for a learned orthodox man was clearly the church's best solution to rid itself of Spafarii. The relatively isolated Russians would have heard little of Spafarii's exploits and the man was superbly qualified to fill this

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

distant position. The church wholeheartedly recommended Spafarii to the Russian government and illustrated his linguistical and educational merits in a glowing reference.¹⁴⁶

It seemed that in Russia Spafarii finally found the life he so desperately sought. In Moscow he was highly respected because of his exceptional education. Immediately, his work was brought to the attention of the Tsar, and as the single most productive member of the Prikaz, Spafarii received an increase in salary to 132 rubles. In a few short months, Spafarii was entrusted with translating all of Russian's secret correspondence.¹⁴⁷ In 1673, Spafarii's ecclesiastic experience put him in high regard. He was assigned to assume responsibility for the manuscripts and library of Greek Bishop Paissios Ligarides, who had recently fallen out of favor. Additionally, Spafarii translated for many of the official embassies, including during the Danish visit in 1674.¹⁴⁸ It seemed that his immediate cultivation of important and powerful friends, the Russians' appreciation of his linguistic skills, and their ability to trust him with important documents and diplomatic assignments stroked Spafarii's ego and encouraged him to fully embrace Russia as an adopted home.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Man. vol. 1, 74.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

Having chosen an ambassador, Russian officials turned their attention to the development of the mission's instructions. Tailored to compensate for Spafarii's shortcomings, the instructions were designed to be primarily a reference document. The document explained in amazing detail the ambassador's tasks, Russia's goals, and even attempted to anticipate the content of the upcoming meeting with the Emperor. It even provided properly worded speeches of greeting, and described proper etiquette while trying to anticipate difficulties and provide solutions for them to ease the negotiations. The instructions were, in fact, too complete. In the course of protecting Russian dignity and honor, the instructions removed the flexibility, judgment, and creativity of the Russian ambassador.

From the onset, the instructions written by the Posolskii Prikaz provided the basic structure of the mission. From men to supplies and gifts, this office decided the proper foundation necessary to make the mission a success. The Prikaz assigned two natives, Fedor Pavlov and Konstiatin Grechanin, to act as guides. Two writers, Nikifor Veniukov and Ivan Favorov, were assigned to remove the drudgery of daily records from the ambassador.¹⁴⁹ Jan Han, one of Moscow preeminate physicians and alchemist, was selected to discover new medicines and procedures used in the distant empire. One hundred twelve men were chosen in this way and fully outfitted with the stoutest pack mules, horses and camels Moscow could procure.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Chin, 63.

¹⁵⁰ "February 28, 1675 Instructions from the Posoloskii [sic] Prikaz to Nikolai G. Spafarii (Milescu) for his embassy to the Chinese Empire" in Dmytryshyn, Russia's Conquest of Siberia, 398.

The Prikaz also prepared an enormous pile of goods to be taken to China as trade goods and gifts. Fifteen hundred rubles of sable pelts were provided to exchange for a sampling of Chinese wares. A large number of goods, strings of pearls, sables, ermine, amber and other Russian wares were provided to be presented to the Chinese emperor as gifts of goodwill and friendship. The Prikaz even included an additional two hundred rubles of sable pelts and twenty pods of tobacco to be freely given the Chinese people at large in the Tsar's name.¹⁵¹

With the general logistics of the mission decided, the Prikaz officials turned their attention to formulating a comprehensive document for Spafarii's use. By attempting to foresee the pace, tempo, and direction of the upcoming negotiations, they provided Spafarii with the script and procedures he was to follow to achieve that vision. The officials recorded that upon reaching the first Chinese village, Spafarii was to seek out the officials or administrator and inform the man that he represents "the Great Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, Autocrat of all Great, Little and White Russia, Heir through Father and Grandfather, and Lord and master of many realms and lands in the East, West and North."¹⁵² After relaying that his expedition was to discuss affairs of state with the Emperor, the town official was then required to immediately provide an escort, food, transportation and guides to assist his journey to Peking.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 399.

¹⁵² Ibid.

As Spafarii traveled further into China, he was instructed to travel quickly, making inquiries on the state of Chinese politics. He should discover if other countries send ambassadors to China and note the reply. He was also to inquire about the customary procedures performed by ambassadors, and determine if personal audiences with the Emperor were commonplace or if official credentials were normally delivered in person. Above all Spafarii was to ensure that he was granted the same procedures as visiting ambassadors from other countries.¹⁵³

Upon reaching the capital city, Spafarii's first duty was to present his letter of credence to the Emperor. Naturally, the Russian officials preferred that he present it without the representatives of other countries being present, but if that could not be arranged he was to visit the Emperor's residence and bow before him on behalf of the great sovereign. Then he was to greet the Emperor using a carefully worded speech the Prikaz officials had prepared.

By the Grace of God, the Great Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, Autocrat of all Great, Little, and White Russia, Tsar of Moscow, Kiev, Vladimir and Novgorod, Tsar of Kazan, Tsar of Astrakhan, Tsar of Siberia, Sovereign of Pskov, Grand Prince of Smolensk, Tver, Iugra, Perm, Viatka, Bulgaria and Sovereign of others, Grand Prince of Nizhnii Novgorod, Chernigov, Riazan, Rostov, Iaroslav, Beloozero, Udorsk, Obdorsk, Kondinsk, Master of all northern lands, Sovereign of the Iversk lands of the Kartalin and Gruzin Tsars, Sovereign of the Kabardinsk lands of the Cherkass and mountain princes, Heir through Father and Grandfather and Lord and Master of many other realms and lands in the East, West and North, has commanded me to bow to you, Greatly Esteemed Bugdykhan, Master of the city of Kanbalyk and of the entire

¹⁵³ Ibid., 400.

Chinese Empire, and he has commanded me to inform you of His Tsarist Majesty's health, and to inquire about your health, the Khan.¹⁵⁴

Spafarii was to supplement this introductory speech with the Emperor's proper titles and official names. He was to have discovered them prior to his audience. When the Emperor responded to Spafarii's inquiry and asked after the Tsar's well-being Spafarii was to recite the following carefully worded passage.

When we left our Great Sovereign, His Tsarest Majesty, by the grace of God, our Great Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, Autocrat of all Great, Little and White Russia, and Heir through Father and Grandfather and Lord and Master of many realms and lands, East, West and North, was in good health, thanks to God's Grace, and was reigning over his great and illustrious lands of the great and renowned Russian Tsardom.¹⁵⁵

Following this brief exchange, Spafarii would present his letter indicating his authority to represent Russia. Spafarii would actually carry six letters to the Chinese empire. Three documents in Russian, Latin and Turkish proclaimed that the ambassador was a full ambassador and endowed with the full authority of the Tsar. The second set of three documents proclaimed him as a simple envoy. If received directly by the Chinese Emperor, Spafarii was instructed to present the letter proclaiming him ambassador in the

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 401.

Russian language. During a second lengthy speech that reiterated the Tsar's lofty position and expounded on his virtues of foresight, Spafarii was to present and explain that he had brought duplicates of his documentation in Latin and Turkish to assist the Emperor's officials in translating the Tsar's communication. The ambassador's final duty after the letter was duly presented and translated was to present the Tsar's gifts. They were to be delivered to the Emperor "with due observation of ceremony" and accompanied by yet another prewritten speech.¹⁵⁶

The Russian instructions were, however, geared toward the perfect encounter with the Chinese. If China responded as anticipated, this carefully planned scene ensured positive and friendly relations would sprout from this most auspicious and favorable of beginnings. But the Russian officials were not completely idealistic. They understood that the likelihood of the ambassadorial mission occurring as their utopian view projected was extremely unlikely. A contingency plan was prepared to address the difficulties Russian representatives had encountered in the past. First, the Russian officials felt that the Emperor would refuse to receive the ambassador's letter in person. He would probably insist on carrying out official business through his government councilors. In such an event, Spafarii was instructed to inform the Chinese officials that he emphatically refused to deliver either the Tsar's letter or the royal gifts to anyone but the Emperor.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 401-02.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 402.

After ensuring that the Emperor would be informed of his protests, Spafarii was to stress that the persona of the Tsar would be offended if his letter and gifts were not accepted by the Emperor's own hand. He was to clearly explain that all civilized countries maintained this practice and that Chinese envoys would receive similar honors when they journeyed to Russia. Spafarii was to continue this argument until either an honorable compromise that would not jeopardize the dignity and honor of the Tsar was reached or Spafarii's mission was in serious jeopardy.¹⁵⁸

In the event that Spafarii's efforts to adhere to European custom threatened the mission's success, Spafarii was instructed to tactfully retract his protests. He was instructed to relate that

he has been sent from the Great Sovereign, His Tsarest Majesty, to their sovereign Bugdykhan with His Tsarest Majesty's gramota [letter] of amity for the purpose of discussing matters urgent and vital to both sovereigns and that he must obey the will and instructions of his own sovereign, His Tsarist Majesty, but that in this matter he will conduct himself in accordance with the will of Bugdykhan, and whatever he decrees will be done.¹⁵⁹

After making this announcement, Spafarii was instructed to work closely with the Chinese officials. He was to present them the three letters that indicated his envoy status, explaining that the language difference would assist them in making a Chinese translation.¹⁶⁰ Spafarii was also allowed to deliver his gifts to these officials (if

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 402-03.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 403.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 403-04.

specifically requested to do so), but he should protest venomously and reiterate that this action was not in accordance with his mission's friendship and goodwill. Warned not to bow or discuss any of his ambassadorial business with the Emperor's councilors, Spafarii was permitted to address the business that was considered below the Emperor's station. These tasks primarily consisted of translating four letters that Russia had received during the last century and establishing official forms of reference between the two empires.¹⁶¹

Spafarii carried four documents to China. The first two predated the manchu dynasty while the last two were the remnants of the Baikov mission and the Chinese communication of 1670.¹⁶² The Tsar, unfamiliar with Chinese and Manchu, desired the letters to be translated into a readily understood language, preferably Latin, and returned to Moscow for analysis and deliberation. Spafarii was to request an explanation of the documents' contents and ascertain what actions the Emperor wished the Tsar to consider. The Prikaz officials recognized that several issues in the documents must refer to highly sensitive events, but they allowed Spafarii to respond, if circumstances allowed, on all controversial topics as long as he insured that there would be no injury to the name, honor, and dignity of the Tsar (or loss to his treasury).¹⁶³

Spafarii was also instructed to attempt to translate these documents privately, without the Chinese officials' assistance. If he succeeded, he was to request that the

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 404.

¹⁶² See chapter two for text of the letters from the 1618 mission and the 1649 communication collected during the mission to the Atlin Khan. Ibid. Chin, 68.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

Chinese officials translate the documents while he was present, to ensure that they were not altered. The letters were also to be corrected, and all phrases that contained derogatory statements or utilized the Tsar's titles erroneously were to be corrected.¹⁶⁴

Finally, after resolving the letter issue, Spafarii was to address the mechanics of future communication. He was to suggest the declaration of an official communication language that both side could readily understand. The Prikaz officials indicated that they preferred either Latin or Turkish, and suggested that one of these widely known languages be used as the basis for future communications. They also provided a list of the Tsar's official titles for use in future correspondence to alleviate uncertainty and confusion. Spafarii was to request the same from the Chinese officials and carefully examine it to ensure that the Emperor did not claim titles that were owned by the rulers of other neighboring countries.¹⁶⁵

Spafarii was also assigned an enormous list of minor tasks which included determining other more traversable routes between the two empires, compiling a list of Chinese goods available for Russian trade and numerous other small details related to the cost and requirements of establishing a caravan route.¹⁶⁶ But these issues were of importance only in the instance of a successful meeting. The Prikaz officials assumed that regardless of the intensity of the early disagreements over protocol, Spafarii's retraction of

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 404-05

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 405.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 407.

his position and willingness to accept the Emperor's customs would eliminate all forms of tension from the negotiation. They did not consider that one ramification of this strategy might be that Spafarii would seem discourteous and presumptuous and that his retraction, no matter how humbly it was presented, would alter the first impression that Spafarii's intractability created. Instead, Russian officials seemed to assume that once Spafarii agreed to work within the confines of Chinese customs, the incident would be forgotten and Spafarii would continue his negotiations unhampered by ill-feeling.

A second and more vital issue, the Amur basin dispute, would also create numerous difficulties for Spafarii. Completely ignored by the Prikaz officials, The Amur basin issue was a sensitive Chinese concern, but Spafarii's instructions made only a single reference to the explosive topic. He was instructed to attempt to negotiate for the release or exchange of any Russian prisoners that the Chinese were currently holding.¹⁶⁷ It is tempting to suggest that Russia was unaware of the Chinese interest in settling the Amur basin dispute due to their inability to translate Chinese communications on the subject, but this assumption is undoubtedly false. The Russian government was clearly aware of the Chinese concern over the Amur basin. As early as 1654, during the Baikov mission, Aleksei Mikhailovich demonstrated his understanding of the Amur basin problem. When Baikov failed to return promptly from his assignment in China, the Tsar feared that he may

¹⁶⁷ Spafarii was expected to negotiate a set policy on release of prisoners held within the Chinese empire. He was to request that the Chinese empire should release all Russian prisoners held within the Chinese empire without charging ransom and that the Russian government would do the same and ensure they would not be harassed in their journey homeward. Spafarii was, however, authorized to negotiate with the Chinese and pay a ransom of up to thirty rubles a piece if the Chinese government demanded payment. Ibid., 405-06.

have been taken prisoner as retribution for the continuing violence in the Amur. With Ablin's assistance a document was hastily drafted to address the situation. But before the letter could depart Moscow, news of Baikov's safe return to Russian territory preempted the letter's dispatch.¹⁶⁸

In 1670, Russia was again made aware of China's concerns. The letter delivered to Nerchinsk by an armed group of Chinese soldiers attested to the fact that China was still keenly interested in halting the violence and atrocities committed on the Amur. Spafarii's interception of the 1670 Chinese dispatch at Toposk certainly was accompanied by an account of how it arrived at the Russian border station, but Spafarii fails to mention the significance of the document in his letter to the Tsar.¹⁶⁹ This indicates that the Tsar either already was aware of the letter's contents from an earlier message posted from Nerchinsk or the information Spafarii gathered did not alter his briefing regarding the conflict.¹⁷⁰

Perhaps the reason the issue remains unaddressed in Spafarii's instructions is that Russia was incapable of controlling the Amur basin. The violent zeal with which the natives were ruthlessly controlled ensured maximum profits from the region and both

¹⁶⁸ Chin, 56.

¹⁶⁹ The letter arrived with sixty armed Chinese who remained until the letter's significance and contents were explained in full to Arshinsky. Spafarii does not even mention the prominent topic the letter addresses in his explanation to the Tsar. *Ibid.*, 61. Spafarii, "Spathary's Letter to the Tsar, dated 15th April 1675," in Baddeley, 244.

¹⁷⁰ Moscow knew of the letter's existence before Spafarii was sent to China. Spafarii had been instructed to have four letters translated by the Chinese, not three. Spafarii certainly must have received at least an oral briefing regarding the Amur basin. If he had not, this letter, which directly impacted the scope and direction of his mission, would have required further instruction from Moscow.

Russia and their authorities were unmotivated to enforce restrictions. The frontier Voevodas lacked sufficient forces and the inclination to demand the end of excessive exploitation. In addition, the region was inhabited by Cossack hunters and explorers who were nearly lawless and they barely tolerated the few restrictions the Tsar had placed on their freedom. Finally, none of the frontier dwellers would voluntarily give up their profitable and enjoyable lifestyle. Without the ability or inclination to solve the Amur issue, Russia chose to ignore it. Spafarii was instructed to claim that the Emperor's letters could not be translated and since the contents were unknown, Spafarii could not be expected to negotiate a settlement.¹⁷¹

Finally, the instructions themselves would present difficulties for Spafarii. The rigidly explained procedures and traditional Russian political procedures itemized in the document would be nearly impossible to obtain in the ancient Chinese culture. To make matters worse, Spafarii would interpret the document literally, ignoring the intention of the Russian officials to establish trade and friendly relations. His decision to adhere to the tenets of the instructions, ignoring the clause that allowed him to deviate from the document if his mission were threatened, assured conflict and limited his effectiveness as a negotiator.

¹⁷¹ "February 28, 1675 Instructions from the Posoloskii [sic] Prikaz to Nikolai G. Spafarii (Milescu) for his embassy to the Chinese Empire," in Dmytryshyn, 404. This is an idiotic strategy. The Chinese instructed that the letter be fully translated upon delivery and since the Milovanov letter was sent in reply, Russia obviously understood the Chinese complaint. Nonetheless, the Russians hoped that by stalling this issue they could establish a trade treaty before the Chinese discovered Russia's lack of control in the Amur.

Spafarii's mission was destined to travel the path of conflict. Hampered by a limited interpretation of his instructions, lack of information about key issues, and plagued by miscommunication and cultural discourse, Spafarii's mission was exceptionally difficult to complete. But the most difficult factor, Spafarii's argumentative and insulting approach, would prove to be the most damaging factor to the mission's success.

CHAPTER 4: SPAFARII IN ACTION

Spafarii's journey began on March 3rd, 1675.¹⁷² Departing from Moscow with his instructions, an impressive array of gifts, and an exorbitant number of guards, guides, translators, and advisors, Spafarii began to traverse the forty-seven hundred miles of wilderness to Peking. The majority of this vast distance was extremely tedious, especially travel through the Urals, and the flat plains of Siberia, but Spafarii used the time wisely. He mulled over the political situation, carefully examining previous Russian encounters with the Chinese and read accounts of European political experiences.¹⁷³ Although Spafarii contacted Moscow frequently, his letters and reports expressed only the hope of a successful mission and vague rumors gathered from the local population.

At Tobolsk, 1150 miles east of Moscow, Spafarii's mission gradually began to gain velocity. He decided to abandon the poorly developed frontier roads in favor of river travel. Spafarii choose to travel along the Irtysh river, then the Ob, the Yeneseisk, and finally the Selenga, near Lake Baikal. His decision to use water as his primary means of transportation would save his men months of bone-aching hours on horseback and quite

¹⁷² The story of Spafarii's journey to China is contained in Nikolai Gavrilovich Milescu Spafarii "Statenii spisok posolstva N. Spafariia v Kitai," and is the primary document for this chapter. Clarification of events and translations were taken from John. F. Baddeley's which translated two chapters from the original work and sections of Spafarii's Description of China.

¹⁷³ Spafarii, "Descriptions of China," in Baddeley, 245.

possibly place his mission ahead of schedule.¹⁷⁴ With the route chosen, Spafarii began to fill out his retinue. He selected six boyar sons, as allowed by his instructions, to accompany him. Six falconers along with their assistants were chosen to care for the Russian hunting falcons that would be presented as gifts to the Chinese emperor.¹⁷⁵ Finally, Spafarii designated several native guides, fluent in local dialects, to assist him in gathering rumors and information along the route. The natives, hunters and traders of the frontier regions would be better informed than the Russian government and Spafarii desired a realistic and current image of the Manchu dynasty.

Spafarii's reconnaissance information provided a wealth of accurate and useful data. However, since much of the information was hearsay or biased, Spafarii found it extremely difficult to form an accurate image of the Chinese situation. For example, one of his men, a dragonman, was gifted enough to speak both Chinese and Nikan. He informed Spafarii that the local Nikantsi tribe members claimed that the Manchu habitually lied. They explained that the Nikantsi were not willing members of the Manchu empire but had been conquered and were slaves.¹⁷⁶ Two disastrous battles with the Manchu had

¹⁷⁴ The actual route Spafarii would use was left undecided until he reached Tobolsk. His instructions stated that "Nikolai is to travel from Moscow to the Siberian town of Tobolsk, and from Tobolsk to the Chinese Empire through the Kalmyk uluses, having ascertained carefully which route are the most direct and the most suitable." In addition, Spafarii was entrusted to flesh out his entourage at Tobolsk. This was due to practical considerations. Since the official route had not yet been chosen and native speakers and guides for the area were scarce in Moscow, Spafarii was allowed to select several additions to his entourage. "February 28, 1675 Instructions from the Posolokii [sic] Prikaz to Nikolai G. Spafarii (Milescu) for his embassy to the Chinese Empire," in Dmytryshyn, 399.

¹⁷⁵ The falcons were sent as a response to a request of a Chinese lord, Ochurta who requested two Russian falcons. Spafarii chose eleven white birds and eight red for the journey. Spafarii, "Spafarii's Letter to the Tsar, dated 15th April, 1675," in Baddeley, 245.

¹⁷⁶ Spafarii, "Description of China," in Baddeley, 226.

shattered their people and resulted in widespread slavery. The Nikantsi also reported that only women and children remained in Peking. All the men had disappeared, and were fighting dissenters elsewhere in the empire. Based upon the Nikantsi complaints, Spafarii was unable to trust the information these men provided. In his official report, he indicated "God knows whom to believe, until He brings us to the capital."¹⁷⁷

Although Spafarii seemed to be carefully weighing his reconnaissance information, the rumors and stories he gathered in Siberia and the Far East colored his judgment and biased his opinion of the Chinese. During the weeks that followed, Spafarii would write in his journal that the Chinese are "desperately greedy, no better than Turks".¹⁷⁸ He is convinced that the Chinese are poor, weak individuals who are easily cowed and subdued. He states that "when I reach the frontier I shall see what sort of country it is, and what population and armaments they have--the latter I hear very poor."¹⁷⁹ In this same letter, Spafarii recorded that the Chinese emperor had fled to Dahuria in terror, and that the present would be a favorable time

to gain honor, for they and the Chinese Tatar are the worst of people and not warlike. And the Mongols are mightily afraid of the Cossacks. And I seem to see if providence but wills it, the fear of God (and of) the great Tsar fall upon the heathen of these countries so that they shall flee when no man pursueth.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Spafarii, "Chinese Frontier to River Naun," in Baddeley, 290.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Spafarii, "Letter to Mayveyeff from Yenseisk," in Baddeley, 259.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

As the available information grew so did Spafarii's confidence. Natives and Cossacks alike informed Spafarii that a major revolt was underway within China. In early July, 1675, Spafarii learned that several bands of rebellious Ming had successfully rallied against the Manchu and that the Manchu had failed to subdue the rebels not once but several times.¹⁸¹ Spafarii informed Matveyev on July 12th, that "the old Chinese have been gathering strength and beaten the Emperor's tartars several times." He also indicated that it was clear "the old Chinese will prevail as they have done in the past."¹⁸²

From Yeneseisk on July 18th, Spafarii wrote a letter to inform the Tsar of China's precarious position. He reported that groups of Cossack traders were held at Kalgin for three weeks while the Manchu searched for armed troops. Trade in the region had been exceptionally poor with little profit.¹⁸³ The reason, Spafarii concluded, was open war with the Nikansh kingdom (the old Chinese Ming supporters). Spafarii had heard that there had been two major battles utilizing forty thousand men. The Manchu had lost both of these enormous conflicts and searched for more troops to strengthen their sagging armies.¹⁸⁴ With the Manchu fully occupied, Spafarii estimated that only two thousand troops would be required to conquer the Dahur territory, the Amur region, and southward up to the Chinese wall. Spafarii stressed that now was the time to strike because the

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Spafarii, "Letter to the Tsar, From Yeneseisk, July 18th," in Baddeley, 257.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

“Emperor being at present extremely weak, was mightily afraid of the Cossacks and greatly upset by the war with the Nikansh.”¹⁸⁵

On the thirteenth of January, 1676, Spafarii reached the Chinese frontier, thrilled and elated at his mission's progress.¹⁸⁶ Despite the harshness of the Siberian winter, Spafarii and his men had traveled safely to the Chinese border and were well ahead of schedule. The long, difficult trip from Moscow had been accomplished in only nine months and the entourage was nearly intact. A few men had deserted, but despite the hardship and length of the mission, the majority were eager and willing to continue traveling on to Peking. Unfortunately, the rapid pace set so far on the journey was not sustainable. The difficulty of protracted winter travel showed plainly on the faces of Spafarii's men. Thin and exhausted, the men could not continue without a lengthy rest. The pack animals fared even worse. Spafarii's prolonged march had killed many of the animals and the remaining beasts were overburdened and overtaxed.¹⁸⁷ But Spafarii did not regret his decision. He had reached China four months ahead of schedule!!

As Spafarii and his men passed over the summit of the Targachin mountain chain that marked the Russian-Chinese border, they were greeted by a large group of heavily armed Chinese. Sixty of the stout men confronting them were clearly Chinese troops sent to protect the border from invading enemies. However, off to one side stood a smaller

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Spafarii, “Description of Dalai{-nor} and the River Argun,” in Baddeley, 283-84.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 282.

group of eight men, one clearly a Cossack from his dress. The Cossack was one of Spafarii's own men, Milovanov, sent forward several months ago to announce Spafarii's imminent arrival. The other seven were Kargachin Sotniks, minor Chinese officials.¹⁸⁸ Upon recognizing Milovanov, Spafarii boldly stepped forward and impatiently gestured for Milovanov to translate the Sotniks' speech.

The Sotniks' announcement was distressing. They explained that they were unprepared for Spafarii's arrival. Since he had not been expected for several more months, they were unable to equip his entourage immediately. Milovanov, the Sotniks explained, had arrived by the Albazin road and informed them that Spafarii would not arrive until spring. Naturally, knowing this information, the Sotniks logically believed that this large group, arriving by the Nerchinsk road and nearly four months before Spafarii's expected arrival, simply could not be the Russian ambassador and was most likely a hostile invasion force. In apology, they promised Spafarii's delay would be short and sufficient horses, oxen and carts would arrive during the next few days to fully equip Spafarii's large and unwieldy entourage.¹⁸⁹

Spafarii consoled himself during the unexpected delay by reexamining the promising future of his political mission. During his travels, Spafarii had learned from Cossacks and Amur natives that China was having serious internal difficulties. An

¹⁸⁸ Karagachin Sotniks are actually Torgachin border officials. Spafarii mistakenly called the nomadic people living in the outskirts of the Chinese empire Karagachin. Nikolai Gavrilovich Milescu Spafarii, "Spafarii's Letter to the Tsar of April 17th, 1676 taken from the Naun Villages by Milovanoff," in "Statenii spisok," 172.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

extensive military operation was in progress near the southern border. Rebellious supporters of the Ming dynasty, who were overthrown in 1644, had not yet been completely suppressed by the Manchu and a full-scale confrontation was underway. Spafarii was certain that with such a draw on the economy, China would surely welcome prospective traders from Russia and do so on Russia's terms. Spafarii anticipated the coming negotiations would be simple, leaving him rich and well-regarded in Russia because of the lavish and huge concessions he would extract from China for the pleasure of trading with the mighty Russian empire.

Unfortunately, from the first day on Chinese territory Spafarii's mission began to diverge from this pleasant delusion. The few days the Sotniks requested to properly outfit Spafarii's ungainly entourage stretched into eight. The entire region was searched for enough horses, oxen, and carts to properly transport the Russian visitor. One hundred ten saddle horses and 246 carts, each with horses or a brace of oxen, supplemented the weary Russian riding and pack animals.¹⁹⁰ Five more days of hard travel (until January twenty-third) were required before reaching the first sizable Chinese settlement, Naun--a location at which Spafarii would be delayed for three full months before continuing to Peking.¹⁹¹

The Chinese village of Naun was named for the nearby river. Although small, the city boasted reasonable facilities for visitors and provided Spafarii and his men with a large

¹⁹⁰ A large number of the camels Spafarii had brought as pack animals had died en route from lack of food and exposure to the chilly climate. Spafarii, "Description of Dalai{-nor} and the River Argun," in Baddeley, 282.

¹⁹¹ Spafarii, "Chinese Frontier to River Naun," in Baddeley, 287.

clearing near the main village to establish camp. As Spafarii's first official encounter with the Chinese, he was granted the opportunity to carefully confirm the reconnaissance information he had gathered along his route. But Spafarii failed to take this cautious step. Instead of examining the village's political structure and determining their role in overall Chinese politics, Spafarii decided the village officials were beneath his notice. Adopting a haughty air, Spafarii refused to respond to the questions of the lesser village officials and was barely civil to the village Voevoda. He responded contemptuously to the man's request for identification and ignored the official's questions regarding the purpose of his visit. Finally, Spafarii pointedly exclaimed "the Tsar's letters or your own sovereign's gifts and other affairs of state, no one of these things is any business of yours."¹⁹²

Spafarii's only effort to quell the population's questions was to indicate the Tsar was friendly and peaceful. When further questioned by the officials of Naun for proof of Spafarii's position, he flippantly replied "were I not authorized by Your Majesty, I should not show so bold and confident a front, nor should I be accompanied by so many people of varying ranks and positions."¹⁹³

Spafarii steadfastly refused to present a single piece of evidence confirming his lofty position, and in return was categorically denied the customary honors of food, transportation, and lodging. The Naun officials insisted that proof of Spafarii's

¹⁹² Spafarii, "Spafarii's Letter to the Tsar of April 17th, 1676 taken from the Naun Villages by Milovanoff," "Statenii spisok," 172-73.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 174. This attitude and brusqueness of speech is apparent throughout the journal whenever he is speaking to the Chinese.

ambassadorial status be rendered before Spafarii was provided with additional resources.¹⁹⁴ When both sides refused to retreat, the Chinese tried a different tactic. Approaching the problem diplomatically, the Naun officials explained that the Emperor had instructed that all visitors must present their credentials before receiving ambassadorial honors. They then tactfully reminded Spafarii of the many miles remaining between Naun and Peking, and stressed the numerous hardships and delays he would experience without ambassadorial status.¹⁹⁵ Eventually, Spafarii reluctantly yielded to this pressure, and cited in his official report the obstinate nature of the Chinese population and the fact that he would not be forwarded to Peking without yielding to the Chinese request.¹⁹⁶

Perhaps most surprising was the fact that the Naun officials had no interest in reading Spafarii's official correspondence. When Spafarii finally produced the Emperor's letter, all the Chinese present fell immediately to their knees, bowing before the letter and touching the document to their heads as a sacred object. Afterwards, Spafarii was awarded full ambassadorial honors without another question.¹⁹⁷ Unfortunately, Spafarii could not have foreseen this unusual Chinese reaction to the letter. He could not have known that the mere sight of the document was sufficient to ensure the security of his

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 174-75.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 175.

mission. However, Spafarii also made no effort to understand the Chinese position and clarify their requests for proof of his authority.

This bungling first impression created resentment and coolness from the Naun officials and they flatly assured him that they could do little for him to further his mission to Peking. Instead, they informed Spafarii that an extremely important man of high rank was traveling hastily to Naun to escort him to the capital. Since this high official was arranging food, lodging and additional transportation along the route, Spafarii could expect no more difficulties or delays to obtain supplies or transportation.¹⁹⁸ Since the Naun officials could no longer assist him, Spafarii had no choice but to wait for the high official to arrive.

As Spafarii waited, he was able to closely examine the everyday lives of Naun's population. He recorded in his journal that they were much like the Turks. They even celebrated hamina, "the celebrating, in the month of March, according to the moon, as the Turks... all their customs were Asiatic and Turkish--houses, food, drink, and clothes, all but their hats--saving that they do not hide away their women."¹⁹⁹ Spafarii made one astute observation during this period that could have greatly assisted his mission. He recorded that the Chinese "are humble in speech, simple in attire yet in that seeming humility is concealed a vast pride, for they believe that there are no better people in the

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Spafarii, "Chinese Frontier to River Naun," in Baddeley, 290.

world than they and that their manners and customs are superior to those of others.”²⁰⁰ Unfortunately, Spafarii failed to apply this observation to his negotiating approach. He continued to assume that the Chinese were inferior and eventually they would be forced to accept his position and requirements because of the internal difficulties the government faced.

Because of Spafarii’s insulting mannerisms, the Naun officials maintained their distance from the Russian ambassador. They occasionally visited, but their visits were far from friendly. They complained of Albazin Cossacks and their demands for tribute on Tungus natives, and hinted that Spafarii should present them with valuable presents as when the Emperor sent his official correspondence to Nerchinsk. But Spafarii’s haughty responses, continuous refusals to submit to the smallest request, and lack of understanding and compassion for the position of the Naun officials resulted in his alienation. Few individuals were willing to approach the Russian ambassador and as a result Spafarii lost the opportunity to learn Chinese protocol and customs and test the Chinese interest in establishing trade without the official repercussions that would result from a faux pas in Peking.

Spafarii did make one useful connection during his initial stay in Naun. Through liberal use of presents, Spafarii enlisted the assistance of an official secretary to translate the 1670 Milovanov letter. Spafarii wrote to the Tsar that the letter’s primary request was the return of the Chinese traitor Gantimur and was troubling only in the sense that its’

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

address lacked the Tsar's full array of titles. It had simply stated from "the Bogdikhan to the White Tsar, greeting!"²⁰¹ Spafarii went on to explain the Gantimur issue in great detail. He remarked that since Gantimur was the best of all the tributary Tunguses, being remarkably brave and leading a clan of three hundred men, it was unwise to return the man. Spafarii also insisted that Gantimur was opposed to being returned to China and would commit suicide if the Tsar insisted that he be returned.²⁰² Spafarii's analysis of the situation rationalized that the Chinese request was based on fear. He believed the Manchu were concerned because of the warlike nature of the Tungus tribes and they anticipated that since Gantimur and his clan lived very close to the frontier (at Nerchinsk) and because Gantimur held intimate knowledge of the region, he would persuade the Russian Cossacks to attack the Chinese.²⁰³

On February 26th, one full month after Spafarii's arrival in Naun, the Chinese representative arrived. Mala, or Askaniama, the official title used when addressing him, was greeted with great ceremony at the Naun village. This powerful man held the position of Shin-Lang, one of four vice presidents of the 3rd board, Li Pu, which governed official

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Spafarii had met with the man and assured him that he would never be returned to China. Ibid., 290-91.

²⁰³ Fortunately for Spafarii and Russo-Chinese relations, Spafarii's entourage was not afflicted with Spafarii's bigotry and sense of superiority. They continuously talked to the native populations of the land they traveled through and gathered information. This included translating the letters Spafarii carried and discovering the proper titles for the Emperor and other useful information on the land, people, trade goods, and history of China. Ibid.

ceremonies.²⁰⁴ It is doubtful that Spafarii recognized the influential position of the Askaniama. In fact, in Opisanie Kitaiskavo Gosudararsiva, Spafarii defines Mala's rank as a lowly clerk and plainly views him as a minor character on the political stage. He records that Askaniama is of the fourth rank of Chinese nobleman "who attend in both greater and lesser offices, one or two of them; and they in those offices or Boards, are as our Dumni Diaks inasmuch as the junior clerks write and the seniors correct after which the work is revised by the diaks and dumnis."²⁰⁵

Spafarii was warned of Mala's importance prior to his arrival. Several Naun officials suggested that he should go out to greet this important mandarin. They informed Spafarii that the Askaniama was one of the Emperor's nearest advisors and received all of the Emperor's orders directly.²⁰⁶ But Spafarii chose to ignore this advice and remained within his residence while Mala entered Naun. He reasoned that in all other countries, ambassadors, as representatives of kings, emperors and other omnipotent rulers, were visited by lesser men. They were allowed to defer only to the ruler they had come to see

²⁰⁴Mayer's Chinese Government indicates that there are a total of six boards from the following categories Civil Office, revenue, war, punishment, works and ceremonies. Mala's rank of Askaniama was one of four underlings that served the head of the board and thus held the power to influence the head of the department. Mayer also indicates that in the Chinese hierarchy, Mala's rank was equivalent to lower second class--roughly equal to the Russian Statski Sovietnik (state counselor). Ibid., ix.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶I would assume that the phrasing "received all of the Khan's orders" indicate that Maia is privileged with personal audiences with the Emperor and often reports directly to him without reporting to the head of the board of ceremonies. This suspicion is also supported by the appearance of the Emperor's private assistant who visits Mala several times while he is visiting with Spafarii in Peking. Spafarii, "Statenii spisok," 179.

and not lowly government officials. Spafarii did, however, acknowledge Mala's arrival. He sent a messenger to Mala's nearby compound to inquire of the health of the two boyarsons he had sent to Peking to announce his impending arrival. Mala graciously responded to this request and reciprocated the ill-mannered gesture with his own messenger and polite inquiry of Spafarii's health and well being.²⁰⁷

Shortly following this brief exchange, two Naun officials called upon Spafarii in his compound. The oldest of the Naun officials (unnamed), and the youngest, Mangutei, had brought further greetings from Mala. Mangutei, who had joined Spafarii in Nerchinsk, had traveled to Peking with Milovanov and had recently returned with Mala from the capital city, was well known by Spafarii and had been extremely helpful earlier in the mission. These two men, on Mala's behalf, requested that Spafarii visit Mala in his nearby compound to exchange welcoming statements. Mangutei carefully explained that while hastening to Naun to greet him, Maia had been thrown from his horse, seriously injuring his leg, and was unable to walk.²⁰⁸

Spafarii distrusted this innocent sounding invitation and refused. He indicated that he had witnessed Mala's arrival and had personally noted that the official was incapable of walking. However, since Mala had arrived at Naun in a cart and the Chinese had a custom

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 179-80.

²⁰⁸ Actually he had fallen from his horse while chasing a hare during a rest break. Ibid.

of being carried in chairs, Spafarii indicated that Mala could easily be carried to his compound for a visit.²⁰⁹ Mala refused.

The next day, the two officials returned with another message from Mala. He again requested that Spafarii come and visit him in his tent. The reason, Mala stressed, was that he had been given strict orders not to visit the Russian ambassador. Therefore, since several issues needed to be addressed before Spafarii could continue to Peking, the Russian ambassador must come to the Chinese compound.²¹⁰ Spafarii again refused and explained his rationale in great detail. Not only did such a suggestion breach established European custom, but the act itself would heap dishonor upon the Tsar.²¹¹

Later that same day, the Naun officials returned to Spafarii to deliver a consoling statement from Mala. Askaniama, they relayed, understood Spafarii's position clearly for he too faced the same difficulty. He could sympathize with Spafarii's fear of disobeying his Tsar's orders. Personally, he faced beheading if he disobeyed the Emperor. Therefore, Mala proposed a reasonable solution that would not violate either representative's instructions. He suggested that they use his secretary as an intermediary. Mala's secretary could pose his questions and carefully record Spafarii's responses for later examination.²¹² In this manner, the difficult preliminary discussions could be achieved. But Spafarii was not satisfied with this solution. He believed Askaniama had

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 180.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Spafarii, "Chinese Frontier to River Naun," in Baddeley, 293-94.

²¹² Spafarii, "Statenii spisok," 179.

been sent by the Emperor to welcome and address the preliminary issues with the Tsar's representative. To speak to a lesser individual would counter this intention and demean the Tsar's authority and position. Spafarii proclaimed that if he must meet with Mala before traveling to Peking, he had to do so face to face!²¹³

This reply prompted Mala to action. Spafarii had refused a logical and diplomatic solution to both of their problems. He immediately fired back an ultimatum. Spafarii was instructed to visit him in a nearby empty house, midway between the two camps. Mala named the building an office, to remove the stigma of personal property and assure that neither ruler's dignity was affronted. At this location, Mala would pose his required questions. If Spafarii refused this reasonable solution, Mala warned, he would write a scathing report to the Emperor indicating that Spafarii was as intractable and obstinate as Baikov.²¹⁴ Unfortunately, this attempt to cow the Russian ambassador failed. Spafarii stubbornly declared that he would not be ordered about like a commoner and refused to go near the convenient building.

By February twenty-eighth, both sides recognized the need to cool off heated tempers. Each offered the other substantial gifts in an attempt to salvage their mission. Mala offered the Russians cheese, vegetables, tea, and pears to supplement the bland

²¹³ Ibid., 181.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 183.

Russian supplies. Spafarii contributed a generous gift of liqueurs and medication for Mala's injured leg to illustrate his desire to avoid future hostilities.²¹⁵

Beginning the next day, March first, 1675, discussions began in earnest to resolve the location of the first meeting. Mala offered several solutions. He suggested that the Russian ambassador should pitch one of his own tents in an adjacent field where the two dignitaries could meet.²¹⁶ Or, if this proved unacceptable, the Chinese could prepare an area with their own tent, chairs, and table, all scrupulously equivalent. The two dignitaries could then approach along two paths and arrive at the same instant, thus assuring neither would gain advantage over the other.²¹⁷ A third proposal was to travel to a distant village where there were several buildings, all with very wide doors. The two dignitaries could dismount before one of these dwellings and enter the building simultaneously.²¹⁸

Spafarii refused each of these proposals in turn. He indicated that no Chinese suggestion would be acceptable until he personally had delivered the Czar's letter to the Emperor.²¹⁹ Later after serious consideration, Spafarii preferred his own solution to the situation. He suggested that they forget the entire issue and simply begin traveling to

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 181.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ Spafarii, "Chinese Frontier to River Naun," in Baddeley, 295.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Peking. The required discussions could be accomplished at the first halt along the road.²²⁰ This way no more time would be lost in Naun.

Unfortunately, this suggestion violated Mala's instructions. He had been tasked to discover Russia's true intentions in China. Had Russia come to discuss peaceful relations or did they conceal a darker, more sinister interest? Was Spafarii's purpose to scout China's military strength in preparation for a military invasion? Mala's objective was to discover the answers to these difficult questions by carefully interviewing Spafarii. Then, after receiving satisfactory answers he was to examine Spafarii's letter of introduction and official gifts. If Mala found Spafarii's gifts lacking or suspected Spafarii of duplicity, Mala was to turn the Russian diplomat back, barring his progress eastward, and insuring he traveled no further into China than Naun.²²¹

This assignment was endangered by Spafarii's steadfast refusals. Precious time was passing and Mala had discovered only Spafarii's intractable nature. He began to subtly threaten the Russian ambassador, indicating that he was required to make a full report to the Emperor. He warned that his account would detail every Chinese effort to accommodate Spafarii and describe the gracious goodwill heaped upon the foreign dignitary since his arrival at Naun. The narration would also record Spafarii's brazen

²²⁰ Spafarii, "Statenii spisok," 182.

²²¹ Spafarii, "Chinese Frontier to River Naun," in Baddeley, 295.

refusals and disagreeable behavior. Mala indicated that this report would be utilized by the Emperor to decide if Spafarii would be allowed to continue to Peking.²²²

Mala's threat was a genuine one. Spafarii had not acquitted himself favorably in Naun. He had been unrealistic and difficult. In addition, he had spurned the Chinese requests for meeting out of hand, despite the fact that several of their suggestions were completely acceptable by the provisions recorded in his instructions. In a letter to Matveev, Spafarii relayed the tribulations of his mission and cited the problems of dealing with the stubborn Chinese officials. He vaguely refers to several other occasions besides meeting Mala where similar difficulties were experienced. Spafarii indicates, "there were many other arguments between us (the Naun officials), too numerous to write in this letter."²²³

Spafarii's response to Mala's threat was immediate. Panicked, he promptly indicated that he was now prepared to meet with Mala. He stipulated that a Russian tent would be erected in the open ground between the Russian and Chinese compounds. He would enter the dwelling and make the final preparations for Mala's arrival.²²⁴ In this manner, Spafarii attempted to maintain the illusion that Mala was visiting him and deferring to his stronger position. Furthermore, Spafarii dictated that Mala would have to

²²² Spafarii, "Statenii spisok," 183.

²²³ Although Spafarii's journal, official reports and letters do not describe the difficulties Spafarii experienced and the confrontation he caused, it is clear from this statement that he understood how difficult he was being and how upset he was making the Chinese. *Ibid.*, 182.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 182-83.

wait until Spafarii was fully prepared to greet him and thus must wait nearby until invited to enter.²²⁵ This action insured that Spafarii would be viewed as having the superior hand and proclaimed his victory in the first clash of political negotiations.

In his journal, Spafarii rationalized his decision, not as fear but rather as a carefully planned decision to eliminate growing frustration and dissonance. He indicated that the Chinese had become extremely suspicious over his refusal to relinquish his letter of introduction. They had claimed the document must bear threats or other unfriendly messages. Under increasing pressure from his men to continue the mission and to quell the growing mistrust of the Chinese, Spafarii finally agreed to meet Mala. The fact that his requirements for this meeting exactly correspond with an earlier Chinese suggestion, indicates that he was actually capitulating to the Chinese threat despite his carefully worded explanation.²²⁶

With the initial argument decided, the two negotiators settled down to discuss the real issues. Unfortunately, the atmosphere had not lost its hostility. Both sides were suspicious and extremely wary of the other's motives. After several minutes of quiet, Mala bluntly announced that he was required to open the Tsar's letter and read it. He

²²⁵ Ibid., 183.

²²⁶ Ibid. Spafarii's instructions provide Spafarii no guidance on political meetings before he reaches the capital city. They only explain his response if his efforts to see the Emperor is thwarted. In this case, the most applicable information provided by Spafarii's instructions are to protect the Tsar's honor, and to capitulate to the desires of the Chinese emperor if the mission is threatened. because Spafarii was required to meet with Mala before continuing to Peking, Spafarii could accept a political meeting without violating his instructions. All three of Mala's final suggestions were based upon equality and ensured that the Tsar's sense of dignity would not be marred. Spafarii needed only to accept the most advantageous suggestion and avoid a lengthy and distasteful argument.

claimed the Emperor had instructed him to ensure that the letter was peaceful and contained no hostile threats or disrespectful passages. He informed Spafarii that if he was refused, he had no choice but to dismiss Spafarii and send him back to Russia in disgrace.²²⁷

Spafarii recognized this warning as a empty threat and flippantly replied that Mala had not shown Spafarii documentation to prove his authority. Spafarii did not believe that Mala had the authority to dismiss a full ambassador of the Russian tsar. In addition, Spafarii indicated that Mala's distrustful and hostile treatment of a personal representative of a foreign ruler was disgraceful, and severely questioned the wisdom of proposing peaceful relations with such a hostile country.²²⁸

Five days later, on March 6th, Mala introduced a new topic of discussion, the Amur Basin. Several times, Mala requested to know the Tsar's response to the Emperor's 1670 letter. That addressed the tribute problems created by the Russian Cossacks, and the disposition of the Chinese traitor, Gantimur. He wished to discover Russia's intentions

²²⁷ Spafarii, "Chinese Frontier to River Naun," in Baddeley, 295.

²²⁸ Of course Spafarii was unable to provide Mala with his documentation. Since he had been given two different sets of letters he would not be able to determine if he should had over the ones proclaiming his authority as ambassador or messenger. His instructions did not anticipate that the political discussions would begin when Spafarii was several hundred miles from the Emperor. Because Spafarii had not yet had the opportunity to present his documentation directly to the Emperor, a direct interpretation of the instructions required that no one else would be able to view them. "February 28, 1675 Instructions from the Posoloskii [sic] Prikaz to Nikolai G. Spafarii (Milescu) for his embassy to the Chinese Empire," in Dmytryshin, 399. Spafarii often becomes melodramatic in the course of writing to the Tsar. Several passages are clearly emphasized in the journal, almost always passages that exalt the Tsar and seem to be added into the writing as a precautionary measure to ensure the Tsar would not feel sighted by the manner and topic of the discussion. Since Spafarii penned this portion of his journal at least a week following the events, He easily could fabricate the flowery complements to the Tsar within the discussions. Spafarii, "Chinese Frontier to River Naun," in Baddeley, 296.

toward this region and discuss preliminary guidelines for negotiating peace. Spafarii, however, refused to discuss the Amur. He remarked that he knew nothing of the Amur situation and had received no instructions or authority to conduct peace negotiations.²²⁹

Spafarii freely admitted that he carried the Milovanov letter which outlined the Chinese grievances in the Amur. But, although he held the document, the letter was untranslated and its contents were unknown. He explained that one of his many tasks in China was to have the document, (and three other official documents from the last century) translated and establish a common language for future discourse. Because of this problem, he knew nothing of the Amur problem and could not address the issue officially.²³⁰ Naturally, Mala did not believe Spafarii's explanation, but he continued with his other tasks, leaving the issue for future debate.

Mala returned to the previous problem, Spafarii's credentials, and began to discuss his requirement to examine the Tsar's letter and the official gifts for suitability. Spafarii was again difficult. He refused to hand over the Tsar's letter, claiming he was instructed to deliver it directly to the Emperor. Spafarii did confide to Mala that he personally knew of the letter's contents and would stake his creditation on the fact that it contained no offending passages nor hostilities of any type. It simply indicated Russia's intent to foster peace and friendship. Mala requested that Spafarii put this assurance in writing. But

²²⁹ This seems to be a truthful argument. Spafarii was not given any official written instructions regarding the Amur basin problem. But since he managed to have a Naun secretary translate the 1670 letter, and discussed Gantimur's situation with the man during his voyage, Spafarii was well informed.

²³⁰ Ibid., 296-97.

Spafarii refused, indicating that he knew no Chinese and an assurance in Russian that the Emperor could not read would be worthless.²³¹ Spafarii then allowed Mala to examine the falcons, the only presents he carried that could not be easily hidden from view. He recorded that Mala seemed taken with the exceptional birds (they are very rare in China) and was particularly impressed with the white pair.²³² The remainder of his gifts he kept hidden and refused to display them to Askaniama.

The next day (March seventh), Mala returned to present his dilemma to Spafarii. He had been instructed to report to the Emperor, but he had little positive information to report. He had not read the Tsar's letter, and could not offer any assurances on the document's contents. He had not viewed the official gifts Spafarii carried, except for the falcons, and they alone were an insubstantial offering. Additionally, Spafarii had refused to provide information on any issue Mala proposed. Even Spafarii's verbal assurance of the letter's contents was unsatisfactory because he refused to make an official record. Mala stated the ambiguity of Spafarii's intentions left him without alternatives. Since, Spafarii had not complied with any of his requests, Mala did not have authorization to allow him to travel toward Peking. In addition, his orders did not permit him to dismiss

²³¹He indicated in his letter to the Tsar that the traitorous Russians in China would mistranslate his words to the Chinese and thus poison Russia's attempt to establish relations. Spafarii clearly did not desire to have an official written record. At this point, Spafarii knew for certain that Latin priests were in Peking and he could have easily complied with Mala's request by using Latin. Spafarii, "Statenii spisok," 191.

²³² Apparently only two of the white falcons remained by the time Spafarii reached China. Spafarii, "Tobolsk to Chinese Frontier," in Baddeley, 203.

the Russian ambassador.²³³ He was required to petition Peking for authorization to begin traveling toward the capital. When Spafarii failed to clarify his remarks of the previous day or offer more information for Mala's report, Mala dispatched a full explanation to the Emperor.²³⁴ Spafarii, Mala declared, would simply have to hope for the best.

During the next month, Spafarii and Mala became better acquainted while they waited for a response from Peking. Gifts were freely exchanged and the two diplomats developed a grudging respect for each other. Mala was particularly interested in the celebration of Easter, which the Russians observed by giving small gifts to the villagers. Spafarii personally presented several gilt eggs to the Chinese diplomat as special presents from the Russian entourage.²³⁵

Shortly following the Easter ceremony, Mala indicated that he had a matter of great secrecy to discuss with Spafarii. Mala provided undeniable proof that one of Spafarii's men, a translator originally born in China, was spreading lies ? out the Ambassador's assembly.²³⁶ Mala explained that the man, after trying several times to receive an audience with him, resorted to telling the townsmen and the Chinese clerks that Spafarii's group was little more than a front. The translator claimed that one hundred

²³³ Spafarii, "Statnii spisok," 191-93.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 192.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 193, 194-95.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 195-97.

thousand men stood ready in nearby regions for the signal to descend upon the Chinese to slaughter and pillage.²³⁷ Spafarii replied that this same man had come to him earlier in the week with a similar story. According to this individual, Mala's report had been a request for Chinese troops to descend upon Spafarii's group and kill every member of the entourage. Spafarii had ignored this tale and treated the man with contempt. Since no country would unnecessarily kill an official ambassador, the man was obviously mistaken.²³⁸

When confronted by Spafarii and Mala, the interpreter explained that he was interested in how the Chinese would respond to such a threat. Spafarii was furious and ordered the man to be tortured and executed, but Mala intervened. He asked Spafarii to spare the man, at least until he could be returned to Russia. Mala explained that China did not want Russian blood spilled on Chinese soil. Spafarii willingly complied with this request, but supervised several torture sessions before releasing the man to Milovanov's custody for transport to Albazin.²³⁹

For the prisoner the issue was over, but Spafarii had to quell the ugly gossip of an impending Russian attack. By April second, it was clear many of the Chinese in Naan believed the rumor. Mangutei, the young Voevoda, requested an audience with Spafarii and asked if he was expecting anyone from Russia. Spafarii indicated he was not

²³⁷ Ibid., 196.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid., 197.

anticipating anyone, but during the days that followed the question was repeated several times and became more and more insistent.²⁴⁰ Finally on the tenth of April, Spafarii suggested that perhaps the Tsar had sent a dispatch to him, or possibly the small group he had assigned to travel to Yakustsk to retrieve large walrus tusks had finally completed their assignments and returned to the entourage. Spafarii explained that both of these groups could not seriously be considered an invasion force, and were barely large enough to ensure safety.²⁴¹

On April twelfth, the mystery was solved. Three men were escorted into Naun to meet with Spafarii. One was an official courier from Moscow carrying a box of carefully protected medicines from the Tsar. He was accompanied by a boyar-son from Lena--his companion since Moscow--and a Tungus guide from Nerchinsk. After an hour detainment with the Voevodas of Naun to determine their motive, the three were allowed to speak to Spafarii.²⁴² These men indicated that the border Chinese were extremely agitated and afraid of their small group. Despite the fact that their entire group numbered less than twenty, the Chinese believed that this band was the promised invasion force and was bent upon destruction.²⁴³ Instead, the group proved to be a peaceful courtier detachment hurrying to catch Ambassador Spafarii to deliver medicines and prized walrus tusks.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 198-99.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 199.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid., 200.

The next day word arrived from Peking indicating that Spafarii and 150 men would be allowed to continue to Peking. Mala personally presented the good news to Spafarii. Because arrangements had been made for lodging and transportation all the way to Peking, the actual journey should be swift and effortless. Mala indicated they would begin traveling during the early morning of April seventeenth and both the Russian and Chinese camps should begin immediately preparing for the journey.²⁴⁴

With great haste, Spafarii's entourage and Mala's detachment departed Naun on the seventeenth. Traveling swiftly, the group made excellent time for nearly a week. Then minor problems began to plague the group. The group's original pace was too rapid for many of the horses, especially Spafarii's original pack animals which had not fully recovered from the stress of winter travel. A large number of cattle and horses died and the group was forced to stop often and rest the exhausted livestock.²⁴⁵ On the morning of April twenty-eighth, the group awoke to find that ten of Mala's horses had spooked during the night and were scattered throughout the countryside. The group was forced to wait the entire morning while the renegades were rounded up.²⁴⁶

The most eventful incident occurred as the group neared the great city itself. Mala halted the group and anxiously explained that an official van was approaching. Proper

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 204.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 208-09.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 209.

protocol demanded that Spafarii, his men, and his Chinese escorts dismount and bow as the van passed. But Spafarii had no intention of dismounting. Exhibiting his customary stubbornness, he refused to follow Mala's instructions--especially when he learned that the van contained only the Emperor's letter instead of an important personage. Spafarii did, however, make a concession. After arguing the point for several minutes, Spafarii agreed to ride off main road, down a short turnoff. This way he was not on the same road as the official letter and was exempted from performing the customary homage.²⁴⁷

During the tedious journey from Naun, Mala and Spafarii became better acquainted and spent many long hours in idle discussion. Mala used the opportunity to educate Spafarii on Chinese customs, proper protocol, and the Chinese viewpoint. He informed Spafarii that he must give up the Tsar's letter to the "officer of State" as soon as he reached the capital. The letter needed to be translated and its information analyzed before the document could be offered to the Emperor. Only after the Emperor had accepted the Tsar's letter could Spafarii be presented to him and the other tasks addressed.²⁴⁸ Spafarii disputed this custom with Mala for many miles, claiming that it was contrary to established European protocol and completely unacceptable. He ignored Mala's warning that without following Chinese customs he would be dismissed like Fedor Baikov and his mission would fail.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 217-18.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 218.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

Mala and Spafarii finally reached Peking on May fifteenth, 1675. As a foreign dignitary, Spafarii was assigned to a wide courtyard near the palace in which to establish his camp. This particular courtyard had been used previously by representatives from Holland and the Netherlands and most recently by the Portuguese. Although the grounds themselves were run-down and dilapidated, Spafarii was not overly dismayed with the state of his accommodations. The courtyard provided ample room to pitch the entourage's tents and Spafarii and his men were well used to their spartan accommodations after fourteen and a half months on the road from Moscow.²⁵⁰ Spafarii was however, extremely upset by the contingent of armed guards that ringed the Russian's enclosure. Although the Chinese indicated the guards were there to protect the Russians and ensure thieves and cutthroats did not prey upon the visiting group, Spafarii concluded the guards were really to keep a close watch upon his men and their activities, and to ensure that all contact with the Chinese was officially sanctioned.²⁵¹

Once Spafarii and his men were settled into their compound, Mala and his assistant visited the Russian ambassador to reopen the issue of the Tsar's letter. Mala explained that Spafarii should not be surprised that official correspondence was presented to the Li Fan Yuan before ambassadors were granted audiences with the Emperor. He carefully asserted that the official documents needed to be preexamined before being handled by the Emperor. It was necessary to ensure errors in greeting and impolite wording was

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 222.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 231.

removed before being viewed by the most powerful person in the Chinese civilization. He revealed that the custom of surrendering the letter was established centuries ago when the Emperor received a discourteous and insulting document.²⁵² Mala maintained that the custom could not be revoked and to alter it after all these years would not only insult the rulers and ambassadors of other countries--primarily the Portuguese and the Dutch-- but would compromise the honor and respect of the Emperor in the eyes of neighboring states.²⁵³ Mala concluded his explanation by comparing the present situation with a previous visit by Baikov twenty years before. He insinuated that like Baikov, Spafarii could easily be dismissed unless he willingly presented the document to the proper officials. In addition, Mala informed Spafarii that tentative arrangements were being made for a personal audience with the Emperor, but unless Spafarii immediately relinquished the letter, the audience would be canceled.²⁵⁴

Spafarii, ever obstinate, refused to accept Mala's prudent rendition of the current situation. Ignoring Mala's narration, Spafarii steadfastly reiterated his position. He felt that because accepting both the ambassador and the letter together was a world-accepted custom, to ignore the practice would greatly insult the Tsar and indicate that he was inferior to the Chinese ruler. To Spafarii, altering the Chinese custom could not be interpreted as dishonorable, because as he maintained, the Tsar was a greater ruler than all

²⁵² Ibid., 223.

²⁵³ Ibid., 224.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 225.

the others who had visited China. Since the other countries realized Russia's superior position in the world's hierarchy, they would not be insulted if the Chinese granted Russia's small request. Even more importantly, Spafarii argued, Russia was more important to China than the lesser European countries. Russia was a good deal closer than the Roman Caesar and the Turkish Sultan and could offer China economic as well as military benefits.²⁵⁵

In conclusion, Spafarii suggested that since the Tsar was invited to be friends by the Chinese emperor's 1654 message, the acceptance of the Tsar's letter according to European custom would intensify the Emperor's glory and strength. Friendship with so powerful a neighbor, Spafarii explained, would make China's allies rejoice and her enemies tremble.²⁵⁶ Unfortunately for Russia, Spafarii's desire was clearly exposed. If the Chinese revamped their customary protocol to suit the Russian entourage, Russia would gain a great deal of power and prestige in the negotiations to come and in their relative place in the European world.

The decided reluctance on the Chinese part to alter their customs and accept this logic infuriated Spafarii. Angrily, he outlined an ultimatum. The Chinese could either allow him to deliver his letter as he was instructed or dismiss him as they had threatened earlier. There was of course a third option. The Chinese could take the letter by force,

²⁵⁵Spafarii certainly must have realized that Russia does not rank ahead of the rest of Europe at this point in history. He was either embellishing the truth to reach his goal or he was embellishing his account of the argument to impress the Tsar and further bolster the Tsar's opinion of him. *Ibid.*, 222-23.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 223.

but Spafarii was violently opposed to this alternative and, as he informed Mala, an altercation would result in certain bloodshed.²⁵⁷ Mala chose none of these options. Instead, he decided to introduce the President of his board, Alikhamba, to the negotiations and patiently readdress points of difficulty with a higher authority.²⁵⁸

Mala also introduced a second man to the negotiations, a Jesuit priest named Ferdinand Verbiest.²⁵⁹ During the previous discussions, communications had been extremely poor. Spafarii spoke no Mandarin or Manchu and the few translators that accompanied him were largely illiterate and limited in vocabulary and understanding. Likewise the Chinese translators spoke different dialects than the Tungus guides and often faced serious difficulties exchanging the simplest ideas. Conversations had to be repeated three or four times to ensure the gist of the dialogue was understood. To solve this difficulty and introduce a more convincing negotiator into the argument, Mala brought Verbiest to Spafarii's compound.

Ferdinand Verbiest occupied an unusual position in the Chinese government. Acting as a confidential adviser, translator and honored guest, Verbiest was extremely well respected and fairly powerful for a foreigner. He had arrived in China in 1659 and had traveled extensively through the southern region as he converted the Chinese to Christianity. In 1660, the elderly Jesuit priest, Adam Schall, recommended the youngster

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 224-25.

²⁵⁸ Spafarii apparently did not know his name. The proper title is Alikha Amba. Ibid., 225.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 226.

to replace him as the head of the Mathematics board, a body that studied astrology, mathematics and other issues of science.²⁶⁰ In a short time, Verbiest became an indispensable and valued member of the young Emperor's inner council. He assisted the Emperor in learning Manchu²⁶¹ and instructed him in the inner-workings of the Mathematics board. As a valued confidant, the Emperor had personally confirmed Verbiest's rank and position in the Chinese court and he was clearly a privileged court favorite.²⁶²

Verbiest's arrival simplified the negotiations. With his assistance, discussions could be concluded in Latin without fear of misunderstanding or insult.²⁶³ Exact translations of official titles and documents were possible and the current dispute could be resolved without further language frustration. However, Verbiest's entry into the negotiations did not guarantee a solution.²⁶⁴ Mala discovered that even if Spafarii could be convinced to relinquish his letter, it was unclear whether he would be willing to

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Although the Emperor was Manchu by birth, he had been fostered in the capital and had undoubtedly been educated in the language of the Chinese government--Chinese instead of his native tongue. Ibid., 226-27.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ In fact this is what the government hoped for when they appointed Spafarii. His Latin skills were of the utmost importance because of the probabilities of meeting the Jesuits in China. Ibid.

²⁶⁴ In addition to his language ability, Verbiest brought his knowledge of the Chinese government into the discussion and provided invaluable information to Spafarii during the course of the negotiation. He informed Spafarii that Mala had lied when he indicated that the Emperor did not know of the difficulty of presenting the letter at the board. In fact, he informed Spafarii that three separate times he had witnessed Mala and the Alikhamba reporting the lack of progress. The Emperor had commanded that all the ancient records should be reviewed to see if a precedent existed for him to receive Spafarii's credentials himself. Ibid., 236-37.

kowtow. He desired assurances that if an agreement on the letter was reached, Spafarii would accede to the ancient act of homage. Spafarii classified the kowtow as a separate argument, and refused to discuss the topic until the disposition of the letter was settled.²⁶⁵

After fourteen days of heated debate, Mala presented the following solution.

The great Emperor, honoring the Tsar's majesty above all other sovereigns, his embassy beyond all other that have ever been here, has commanded to have a place prepared; and at that place will be gathered mandarins and most intimate counselors and to-morrow, at the first hour, horses will be sent and all the Tsar's gifts will be put on little tables which will be carried before you, either by your own people, or ours, as you may prefer. After that all three versions of the Tsar's letter will be carried in your fashion, whatever that may be, and when you reach the {forbidden} city, a place will be ready, facing the Emperor's throne; and there you will set down the letters; and the gifts will be set close by. The first Koliai²⁶⁶ will be there, he who rules the Chinese empire, who is moreover a relative of the Emperor, when you have handed over the Tsar's letter and gifts without a word, you will go back to your lodging; but be it known that in front of the Emperor's palace there is a stone column, on which is written the Emperor's name and when the Emperor's brother, or any other Mandarin comes to that column he has to dismount.²⁶⁷

Spafarii disliked the condition that he dismount at the pillar but agreed on the stipulation that it was "their inveterate custom, and they were not merely inventing it for

²⁶⁵ Spafarii, "Statenii spisok," 248.

²⁶⁶ A Kolia is the Emperor's immediate administrators--councilors of the first rank--and were the true administrators of the realm

²⁶⁷ Spafarii, "Spafary in Peking," in Bagdeley, 350.

his benefit, to make him go on foot."²⁶⁸ He insisted that he and his men be provided with horses in order to ride to that point. Finally, after confirming that the Kolai offered a higher honor than the Emperor's brother, Spafarii agreed to nearly all of Mala's conditions. The one remaining area of contention was the presentation of the gifts. In the end, Spafarii decided to allow the gifts to be carried before his procession on small tables so they were immediately at hand during the audience, but he accepted that no formal presentation would be allowed.²⁶⁹

This agreement left several items ambiguous. For example, the description implied that the Emperor would be present. For Spafarii to make his formal presentation facing the throne would seem sensible only if the chair were occupied. Secondly, the Chinese's presentation of the arrangements indicated that this procession would be a special consideration. Spafarii was being allowed to act in a manner different from other visiting dignitaries. In reality, the arrangements were identical--including Spafarii's location--to the practice established for lesser princes delivering tribute and offering fidelity to the Emperor.²⁷⁰ Third and finally, the agreement implied that although the Kolai would receive the letter, he would then immediately deliver it into the Emperor's own hand. The implication was that it would be handed to the Emperor during the same ceremony.

²⁶⁸ Spafarii, "Statenii spisock," 249.

²⁶⁹ Spafarii's agreement is unusually meek. He failed to provide an explanation of his reasoning. However, it is reasonable to assume that the Chinese provided him with an ultimatum and he concluded that unless he agreed his mission would end disastrously. Spafarii, "Spathary in Peking," in Baddeley, 350.

²⁷⁰ Spafarii, "Spathary in Peking," in Baddeley, 352.

On June fifth, Spafarii delivered the Tsar's letter to the Kolai. According to Spafarii's account of the event in *Statenii Spisok*, he and a small number of men rode to the Emperor's pillar and dismounted. With the official gifts and letter proudly displayed before them, the group traveled to the assembly. Spafarii ceremoniously presented the document and returned to his compound without a single comment.²⁷¹ Unfortunately this account of the events is extremely suspect.

In Spafarii's official journal, the page that describe the events of June fifth is missing. Chin suggests the page was torn out perhaps to protect the size of Spafarii's misunderstanding.²⁷² The Jesuit priest, Grimaldi, recorded the incident and indicated that the Tsar's letter was opened and read aloud during the assembly.²⁷³ To make matters worse, the Emperor was not present, and so the entire court heard the Tsar's greeting and message of goodwill before the Emperor had glimpsed the document. Despite these problems, Spafarii seemed pleased with the procession. His position seemed to be honored above other visiting ambassadors and Mala had promised an audience with the Emperor for the following day.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 249.

²⁷² During Spafarii's homeward journey, his men brought charges against him for his behavior in Peking. Because Aleksei died while Spafarii was abroad, Spafarii had lost his main supporter and the men could safely claim Spafarii was a traitor and blame him for the mission's failure. The true events of the meeting could be incriminating to an unsympathetic council. Chin, 102.

²⁷³ Filippo Maria Grimaldi. Spafarii, "Spathary in Peking," in Baddeley, 352.

²⁷⁴ Spafarii, "Statenii spisok," 251.

Now that the disposition of the Tsar's letter was finished, Spafarii turned his attention to the upcoming audience. As his first opportunity to greet and speak openly with the Chinese emperor, Spafarii wanted to ensure that this ceremony would follow closer along European lines. He asked Mala if the Emperor would request the status of the Tsar's health during the audience. Mala indicated that he felt the Emperor would ask after the Tsar's health during the audience, but if not, the Emperor would most likely take Spafarii aside for a private audience and inquire after the Tsar's health and several other things that had sparked his interest.²⁷⁵ Spafarii responded positively to Mala's reassuring statement. He commented that it would be acceptable if the Emperor asked about the Tsar's health after the audience, but it would be preferable if he did so during the event "when I see his eyes for the first time."²⁷⁶ He asked Mala if he could request for the Emperor to address the issue during the audience instead of afterwards.

Mala indicated that it would be unwise to make such a presumptuous request. He explained that it was urgent not to "damage the Khan's friendly inclination toward the Tsar."²⁷⁷ The Jesuit also confirmed this sentiment. He mentioned that formal requests were viewed suspiciously. It would be much better if the request were made informally through the Emperor's valet. Verbiest explained that the young man who had often entered Spafarii's compound to deliver messages to Mala and himself was the Emperor's

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 252.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 253.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

personal valet and messenger. He could be relied upon to present Spafarii's position fairly for the Emperor's consideration.²⁷⁸ Using this method, Verbiest explained, the young boy had requested and received permission for him to freely visit the Russian compound without restriction.²⁷⁹

The next day (June sixteenth), Spafarii and twenty men were taken to the enormous courtyard where the Emperor held audiences. In the Pavilion of Purple Light, while Spafarii waited for the Emperor to appear, Verbiest joined his party. He explained that he was assigned to assist Spafarii in understanding the required rituals and to instruct him on performing the kowtow. (Spafarii had refused to practice the maneuver whenever the Chinese attempted to instruct him on the proper form.) Spafarii and Verbiest watched as a large group of nearly fifty Chinese repetitively performed the kowtow. Verbiest explained that these men had just been made Mandarins by the Emperor and their ceremony had been scheduled to offer Spafarii the opportunity to observe the ritual kowtow before performing it in front of the Emperor.²⁸⁰

When Spafarii's audience began, he approached the Emperor with Verbiest and his twenty men arranged behind him.²⁸¹ Court attendants struck the ground three times with triple strokes. A bell rang, music played, drums sounded, and the order "bow down" rang

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Spafarii, "Spathary in Peking," in Baddeley, 556-60.

²⁸¹ This location was located 980 feet from the Emperor's position. Neither Spafarii nor his men could see the Emperor or even the location of his throne because of the overall height of the dais and the enclosure of the Pavilion of Purple Light. Ibid., 360.

across the courtyard. Instead of performing the slow, stately ritual the Mandarins had executed earlier, Spafarii bowed rapidly, refusing to touch the ground or slow his action. The surrounding officials were outraged and chastised the Russian ambassador. They implored him to honor the dignity of the Emperor, but Spafarii stubbornly declined.²⁸² He venomously refused to alter his method, indicating that the Mandarins are "the servants and slaves of the Emperor and are able to worship in this way--but we are not his servants and bow in our own fashion".²⁸³

Spafarii and Verbiest then proceeded forward, walking slowly and deliberately across the courtyard despite the continuous urgings by the Chinese officials to run. When finally they reached the receiving room, they were seated approximately fifty-six feet from the throne, where they could easily view the Emperor and the royal court. Mala joined Spafarii and quietly pointed out the Emperor's brothers and other high officials. Tea was shared and music played in the background but no official words were exchanged.²⁸⁴ The audience was clearly a formal event and Spafarii was supposed to be honored simply by sharing the Emperor's presence.

The discussions on the seventeenth of June began with heated complaints of the previous day's audience. Both Spafarii and Verbiest protested loudly to Mala, indicating that the treatment of the Tsar's embassy was beneath the dignity of the Emperor. They

²⁸² Spafarii, "Statenii spisok," 259-60.

²⁸³ Ibid., 259.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 261.

argued that the Dutch envoy had been better treated than Spafarii and was granted an immediate personal audience with the Emperor. The Tsar's stature and position required at least equivalent treatment.²⁸⁵ Mala responded that the previous day's audience was formal and primarily for appearances. Soon the Emperor would grant a personal audience and this grievance would be forgotten. In the meantime, Mala had arranged trading rights for Spafarii.²⁸⁶ Chinese traders would be allowed to enter the Russian's compound to negotiate and trade with the visiting Russians. The compound guards were responsible for maintaining comprehensive lists chronicling all goods taken in or out of the enclosure. Mala explained that the lists must be maintained to ensure that the Chinese traders did not attempt to cheat the Emperor's honored guests.²⁸⁷

At this point, Spafarii allowed Mala to examine the four official correspondences that Russia had collected over the last fifty years.²⁸⁸ He had attempted several times to receive an unofficial translation of these documents as he traveled to Peking, but the Chinese officials (save for the Naun secretary) recognized the documents as letters of the Emperor and refused. A partial translation Spafarii acquired from a semi-literate soldier was unreliable. Without a dependable translation, Spafarii's instructions indicated he was

²⁸⁵ Spafarii had brought the records of the previous Dutch and Portuguese embassies with him to review. Mala responded to his accusations by claiming the Dutch had lied in their account. Spafarii, "Spathary in Peking," in *Pedley*, 361.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.* Upon Spafarii's initial entry into Peking, he began an intensive argument over trading rights. The Chinese custom was to allow traders and caravans to trade openly. But official ambassadorial missions were denied this privilege. As political representatives, the Chinese argued, Spafarii and men were here to discuss affairs of state, not haggle prices and amass goods.

²⁸⁷ Spafarii, "Statenii spisok," 262.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 263.

to acquire one from the Chinese officials. However, Spafarii also felt the documents were the personal property of the Tsar and he refused to allow them to leave his possession. Mala was forced to call in an old Chinese scribe to cope and translate the documents. The two oldest documents were immediately translated and presented to Spafarii, but the newer more pertinent documents were simply copied. Their contents were not made clear to Spafarii until several weeks later.²⁸⁹

Despite these thorny issues and the suspicion it heaped on the Russian ambassador, the next few weeks passed quietly and without difficulty. Verbiest visited nearly every day, merchants were allowed into the compound to trade, and discuss goods, but they were searched upon their departure. Mala reported the Emperor was now deliberating and preparing his written response to the Tsar's letter.²⁹⁰ And as the days passed, he continuously made small requests to satisfy the Emperor's curiosity about the Russians. For example, the Emperor had seen one of Spafarii's paintings of Christian saints and asked if Spafarii had a painter with him who could paint the likeness of Chinese personages.²⁹¹ On another occasion, he asked if a Russian could demonstrate how to make slippers.²⁹² Several times, he requested that Spafarii's men be allowed to perform swimming demonstrations for the Emperor's amusement.²⁹³

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 266-67.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 267.

²⁹² He wanted a pair made from soft glazed leather (Moroccan leather) that was normally made into red or yellow Turkish style slippers. Spafarii, "Spathary in Peking," in Baddeley, 365.

²⁹³ Spafarii, "Statenii spisok," 291.

On July nineteenth, Spafarii was finally allowed to dine with the Emperor. He asked after the Emperor's health exactly as the Prikaz officials had planned. When the Emperor returned the question, Spafarii responded with the boastful speech his instructions required. The events that followed this official exchange are unfortunately lost. The Chinese viewed the occasion as minor and made no official records of the encounter. Spafarii, on the other hand, wrote several pages in his journal. But these enlightening pages are missing and details of the dinner are unknown.²⁹⁴

After this dinner, however, Spafarii rapidly lost favor with both the Emperor and the Chinese officials. Although this decision was not sudden, Spafarii was never well-liked in Peking. He was only tolerated as the Russian official ambassador. From the very beginning, Spafarii required coercion, flattery, wheedling, and excessive amounts of arguing to provide the simplest information or to agree to the smallest ritual. For example, it required Mala twenty-six days of pleading and arguing to view Spafarii's credentials and ensure that he was in fact an official Russian representative. Even during the period that Spafarii held the Emperor's curiosity, he was impossible. To the Emperor's request that Spafarii have a portrait made of himself, Spafarii replied that he was too tired and the Emperor would have to wait for the painting.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁴It is easy to anticipate that a conflict or confrontation must have occurred to account for the Chinese response. But it is entirely possible that Spafarii was well-mannered and submissive. The pages could have been removed to ensure that he could not be accused of demeaning the Tsar's dignity. The issue of the missing pages has never been fully examined and the reason for their absence remains a mystery. Spafarii, "Spathary in Peking," in Baddeley, 388. Spafarii, 296.

²⁹⁵ Spafarii, "Statenii spisok," 288.

As each day of Spafarii's six-month stay in China passed, Spafarii discovered new arguments to present to the Chinese officials or chose to flaunt a time-honored Chinese custom. The disrespectful and callous mannerisms Spafarii displayed at the formal audience were typical of his actions, and the Chinese officials gradually stopped hiding these petty arguments from the Emperor.

Spafarii's Cossacks did little to assist the situation. Numerous quarrels broke out between Spafarii's men and several of the guards and gatemens. Although initially not violent, the disagreeable actions of the Cossacks were mentioned to Spafarii as unnecessary and vulgar. Several men apparently escaped from the compound and wandered throughout the city without guard or escort. Spafarii blamed the incident on the restrictive provision that kept his men with the compound.²⁹⁶ To solve this difficulty, Mala arranged for Spafarii's men to be escorted into Peking in groups of twenty to trade and look at the vast city.²⁹⁷ But these supervised excursions were not enough for the riotous, barbarous Cossacks. They returned complaining that they had only been allowed to trade in one store and were denied the opportunity to visit entertainment

²⁹⁶ Ambassadors and other dignitaries were housed in compounds that enclosed their entire entourage. This ensured the diplomats' safety and ensured their isolation. Traders from neighboring countries, however, were allowed to trade freely and travel throughout the city at will. It was Chinese custom that traders be allowed free trade in the streets of Peking, but ambassadors, entrusted with official business, were carefully guarded and isolated. Spafarii concluded that the Chinese real motivation was to inflate the prices of their own goods while forcing the Russians to accept relatively low prices for theirs. The Chinese obviously resold the goods on the general market and lined their pockets with the profits. Spafarii, "Spathary in Peking," in Baddeley, 381.

²⁹⁷ Spafarii, "Statenii spisok," 300.

establishments. As a result, the Cossacks continued to escape through the compound's fence at night and create drunken disturbances in the streets.²⁹⁸

On the twenty-sixth, Mala requested that Spafarii address his men. It was becoming extremely difficult to hide the Cossacks' activities from the Emperor.²⁹⁹ Two days later, after no progress was made, Mala's supervisor, the president of the Ceremonies Board, informed Spafarii that his men were attacking the Chinese guards that ringed the compound and were beating them. These men then departed into the city to cause mischief. Spafarii openly lied to this official and implied that he had not heard of this problem before. He promised that in the future, his Cossacks would remain within the compound and not travel outside of it without their guards.³⁰⁰

By the thirteenth of August, the Chinese officials began to make departure preparations for Spafarii. He was instructed to travel to the palace to receive the Emperor's gifts to the Tsar. True to form, Spafarii flaunted traditional Chinese custom. He refused to fall upon his knees to accept the presents. He claimed that slaves and subjects accepted gratuities from their sovereigns in that manner and that it was unacceptable for him to accede to this custom.³⁰¹ No amount of reasoning, pleading or intimidation could alter his position. Spafarii was sent back to his compound while Mala and the other officials discussed Spafarii's latest departure from customs. Two days later,

²⁹⁸ Chin, 42.

²⁹⁹ Spafarii, "Statenii spisok," 300.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 301.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 307-08.

Spafarii was again brought to the palace and allowed to accept the gifts without kneeling. However, the Chinese's disgust and displeasure was clearly evident. The official gifts were piled at one side of the room and there was no ritual or ceremony involved. The Chinese did not hand the gifts to Spafarii and required his men to lift and carry each item back to the compound.³⁰²

Within two weeks of this occurrence, Spafarii was dismissed from Peking. On August twenty-ninth, Spafarii returned to the palace to receive the Emperor's letter for the Tsar and to hear the parting farewell. The Chinese implored him to kneel to hear the Emperor's written message, but Spafarii refused. The angry uproar of the Chinese officials at this refusal stunned Spafarii and he dropped to his knees in shock.³⁰³ The Kolai delivered the Emperor's message and Mala translated the dreadful news for Spafarii.

The Emperor does not choose to write any answer the Tsar for two reasons. First because you have been disobedient, refusing to accept the gifts for your sovereign lord on your knees, as do the other envoys of neighboring monarchs; nor indeed does anyone dare to impugn that custom; Secondly, even if the Emperor chose to write to the Tsar, his only real object is to have Gantimur sent here, and that was stated in his former letter...More that that--in future, we will have neither letter, nor ambassadors, nor envoys, nor merchants from the land of the Tzar. ³⁰⁴

³⁰² Ibid., 311.

³⁰³ Spafarii, "Spathary in Peking," in Baddeley, 403.

³⁰⁴ Spafarii, "Statenii spisok," 315. Spafarii, "Spathary in Peking," in Baddeley, 385.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS AND REALITIES

Spafarii's mission can only be labeled a failure. Since he was originally sent to China to accomplish two primary goals, establishing friendly relations to facilitate further communication and negotiating a trade agreement, his inability to accomplish either issue confirms that the entire mission failed to meet its objective. Spafarii's attempts to impose European protocol and procedures on the Chinese resulted in widespread animosity and resulted in his unceremonious dismissal from Peking. His efforts to lay the foundation for trade fared little better. Hindered by the Chinese dictum that political ambassadors were forbidden to trade, Spafarii's efforts to develop a dialogue on the subject were ineffective and he was unable to engage Mala in meaningful negotiation. But why was Spafarii unable to complete his mission? Was it due to an inherent incompatibility of two distinct cultures and political systems, or factors aligned more closely to the mission itself-- Spafarii's inflexible instructions and the lack of information on the Amur basin issue? Or could it have been the insensible, intractable, insulting nature of the Russian ambassador? While all of these factors heavily influenced the mission's outcome, it was Spafarii's conscious decision to spurn the Chinese, their customs, and the entire negotiation process that ultimately resulted in his removal from Peking.

In every international political confrontation, cultural differences play a major role. Incorporating small items, such as words without parallel meanings, or giant issues like opposing religious views, cultural differences account for the majority of difficulties experienced by political negotiators. But cultural confrontations are a daily challenge for a skilled ambassador, and a talented individual can compensate for nearly any extreme in viewpoint. Spafarii's mission should have been no different. Although the Chinese culture that Spafarii faced was radically different than his own, room did exist for compromise. On several occasions when it seemed that no agreement could be reached, the Chinese negotiator attempted to discover a solution that was acceptable to both parties. For example, at Naun, Spafarii refused to hand Mala his official correspondence so he could determine if unintentional offenses were made. Mala was willing to accept Spafarii's written assurance of the contents of the Tsar's correspondence.³⁰⁵ On another occasion, Spafarii refused to kneel, explaining that the action was beneath the Tsar's stature. (He also claimed that it was raining and the area where the Chinese officials desired him to kneel was extremely muddy.) The next day, Mala arranged for Spafarii to carry out his business without kneeling.³⁰⁶

Although some allowances were made to accommodate Spafarii, other customs were inviolate. The kowtow and the receipt of the official correspondence by the Chinese court were two events that could not be avoided. Despite Spafarii's lengthy arguments

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 187-88.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 306-07.

against them, he was required to perform these actions to accomplish his mission.³⁰⁷

Some question does remain about the malleability of these customs. If Spafarii had been more accommodating and willing to negotiate compromise earlier in his mission, what creative middle ground could Mala have arranged in the interest of peace and political harmony? The evidence indicates that China was extremely interested in ensuring that Russia's peaceful mission was successful. Since China desired peace in the Amur basin, Mala was obviously instructed to be as accommodating as possible to the Russian ambassador. In Naun, Mala's tremendous efforts to arrange first a meeting location and then means to accomplish his mission without violating Spafarii's instructions demonstrate the Chinese interest in concluding an agreement.³⁰⁸

In addition, two separate events support the conclusion that without Spafarii's demanding and insulting approach, the Chinese were interested in negotiating with the Russians. The first item developed from the Chinese actions immediately following the Emperor's declaration that all contact be severed. Recognizing that the Russian ambassador was the primary problem, the Chinese officials stripped Spafarii of authority and asked his men directly if they would accept the Emperor's letter and follow all Chinese customs. Ignoring Spafarii's warnings that to accept the document on their knees would bring dishonor to the Tsar, the men agreed to carry the Emperor's message.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁷Ibid., 249-50, 258-61.

³⁰⁸Ibid., 179-84.

³⁰⁹Spafarii, "Spathary in Peking," in Baddeley, 389. The next day Spafarii attempted to explain his actions of the past several months to his men by showing them his instructions. Unfortunately for

The Chinese officials' willingness to continue communications with Russia and their inventive idea of presenting the Russian Cossacks with official communications indicate that the primary stumbling block was not the Chinese, or the issues, but rather the Russian ambassador.

The issues themselves present the second incident. The pressing nature of the Russian desire to trade, and the continuing interest in the Amur basin conflict, prompted a second ambassadorial mission to China. This mission, occurring just fourteen years after the first, was tasked with a comparable assignment--establish trade and negotiate an end to conflict in the Amur basin. From the beginning, it was obvious that this mission would be very different from the first. Peter Golovin, Russia's chosen ambassador, adopted a less abrasive approach and attempted to be extremely reasonable when dealing with the Chinese. He was instructed to be eloquent and utilize friendly persuasion to accomplish his mission. The result was success. Golovin was able to negotiate a fledgling trade agreement and a peaceful settlement of the Amur basin.³¹⁰

Golovin's success however, indicated only that the Chinese had no reservations about negotiating with the Russians. It does not guarantee that if Golovin had been assigned the 1675 mission, he would have been as successful. Although the cultural climate changed very little in fourteen short years, the political atmosphere had become

Spafarii, the men believed that Spafarii had acted improperly during his mission and were no longer interested in following his leadership. They would bring formal charges of dishonorable conduct against him as soon as they reached Russian soil. Baddeley, 389.

³¹⁰Mancall, 141.

pressing. Russia was being steadily drawn into a European effort to eliminate the power of the Tatars and could not afford to continue her armed occupation of the Amur. The Amur basin dispute, not even considered an issue during Spafarii's mission, had become Russia's central concern in Far Eastern Politics. There were other differences as well. Golovin was not exposed to the rigid protocol and customs of the Chinese capital. Instead, he met Chinese negotiators at Nerchinsk and avoided the difficulties of an official presentation to the Emperor.³¹¹ In addition, the Chinese negotiators were not Chinese. They were Jesuit priests chosen especially by the Chinese officials to ensure that the cultural misunderstandings and difficulties experienced by Spafarii were avoided.³¹²

Many historians would argue that the rigid instructions, or the Russian's failure to address the Amur basin issue, played a vital role in Spafarii's failure. But despite Spafarii's rigid interpretation of the instructions and his failure to address the Amur basin issue, Spafarii seemed to be well accepted in China during the early portion of his mission. In spite of his insistence on maintaining Russian protocol, Spafarii did manage to receive an audience with the Emperor and establish a dialogue with high ranking officials. He received translated copies of the four official documents received during the last half century from China and established Latin as the official language for future communication. Spafarii even collected an impressive array of Chinese goods and gathered a great deal of information about the country for use in future contacts.

³¹¹ Ibid., 143-45.

³¹² Chin, 91-92.

Conceivably, Spafarii could have accomplished a trade agreement despite the absence of the Amur basin discussion and his adherence to his instructions.³¹³

True, Spafarii's instructions in their original form were limiting, strict and dogmatic. They presented little leeway and flexibility for negotiations, and could easily become an enormous barrier to a successful mission. But these instructions also contained room for interpretation. By taking certain liberties with the wording and paying close attention to Russia's intention, Spafarii's straight-laced instructions become extremely workable. Although little could be done regarding the lack of direction on the Amur basin topic, the customary demands and rituals of Russian protocol and customs could be neatly sidestepped. By liberally applying the clause regarding mission failure, Spafarii could have interpreted the increasing hostility over, for example, the decision of a meeting location in Naun or the argument over the early review of the Tsar's letter as threatening the mission's success and ignored the stringent requirements written in his instructions.

Unfortunately Spafarii was not the type to take liberties with interpretation. While the instructions were clearly written to maintain Russian custom and thus the Tsar's honor, the intention of the document indicated that the successful conclusion of the trade agreement and establishing positive relations were the higher priority. Spafarii's refusal to liberally interpret his instructions, and his determination to follow the exact letter of the document, eliminated his flexibility and destroyed his opportunity to carry on negotiation. But Spafarii's interpretation of the instructions were not the worst aspect of his mission.

³¹³ Ibid., 74-75.

Even a steadfast yet uncooperative individual could have successfully opened a dialogue between the two empires, and although it may have not established a trade agreement, a greater understanding of both countries' customs could have eventually been established. But Spafarii's mission was destined to travel the path of conflict. His insolent and superior manner created conflict beyond the disagreements caused by culture, and misinterpretation.

Spafarii's primary difficulty resulted when he became intractable, flaunting Chinese customs and refusing to listen to the arguments presented by Chinese officials. His behavior at the formal audience, for example, when he refused to kowtow properly or slow his substituted bow to a stately and dignified pace, not only demonstrated his insolent behavior, but insulted and disgraced the Chinese officials responsible for his actions.³¹⁴ His continuous refusals to accept reasonable compromises like the arrangement of the meeting place in Naun, or alternative measures to ascertain the contents of his official documents infuriated and frustrated the Chinese. Similarly, his lies denying knowledge of his mens' actions in Peking, and information regarding the contents of the 1670 Milovanov letter, created animosity and distrust. By mid-August, it had become clear to the Chinese officials that Spafarii was unwilling to compromise and his demeanor ensured that every issue would result in an argument. Even the most innocent requests had to be accomplished by veiled threats. For example, when the Emperor desired that Spafarii be

³¹⁴ Spafarii, "Statenii spisok," 260.

painted by a talented painter, Spafarii replied that he was too tired and was unable to accede to the Emperor's request.

Although the immediate results of Spafarii's failure was the loss of trading right and economic gain, Spafarii's mission had a much greater impact on the continuing Russo-Chinese relationship. Spafarii's mission had made a lasting impression with the Chinese. As Russia's first official ambassador, he had portrayed himself as an arrogant, demanding individual. His contempt for the Chinese and their culture was evident in every ritual he refused to perform. Those he did perform were completed in such a rude and insulting manner that the Chinese were shocked and horrified at his audacity. The visions of Spafarii performing the stately kowtow in three quick half bows would remain in the minds of the Chinese officials for decades.

Spafarii's negative impression was so great that nearly thirty years later, in 1712, the Emperor recalled Spafarii immediately when his ambassador was expected to rendezvous with a Russian envoy. He informed his representatives that "You will particularly mention to the messenger of the Emperor (i.e. of Peter the Great, whose envoy was expected to meet the Chinese embassy to the Ayaka Emperor of Turguts) that formerly when Mi-ko-lai of his kingdom came to China, his conduct was very perverse and reprehensible, but that you are far from intending to follow his example."³¹⁵ Obviously, Spafarii's actions remained an influencing factor on Chinese politics for several years. Although it is unlikely that Spafarii's mission alone could be held responsible for

³¹⁵ Baddeley, 102.

more than three hundred years of Chinese animosity and distrust, it is clear that his mission set the precedent for modern political attitudes.

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