

Liability without Suzerainty: Making Sense of Qing China's Alarmism during the Korean Trespasser Crisis of 1862-75

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Introduction

In 1864, Zhang Baotai, a Qing subject from Jianchang Prefecture in Rehe¹ was arrested by Russian officials for illegally trespassing in Mokuowei 摩潤崴, a Russian borderland area in Northeast Asia co-terminous with both Qing China and Chosŏn Korea. He was handed over to the Qing, and the official of Jilin Province interrogated him. Zhang confessed that he was searching for a silver mine and that he hoped to work with Russians because he had heard that they were experts in silver mining. He had drawn a map of Kanchuanbeishan 砍椽背山 in Hunchun 琿春, a Qing city bordering both Russia and Korea and then crossed the border and reached Mokuowei on his way to Jixinhe 棘心河 area in search of Russian speakers. Here at Mokuowei, he discovered four huts (*wopeng* 窩棚) and Korean couples who told him that there were about fifty of them and that they were reclaiming lands. However, while he was moving toward Jixinhe the next day,

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1 Also known as “Jehol” in western language, Rehe is located about 250 kilometers northeast of Beijing.

two Russian functionaries chased after, stopped him and requested his map. They took him to Mokuowei but they struggled to communicate and he finally was sent back to Hunchun². The Qing functionaries charged him for two major offences: first, he had trespassed on foreign territory without the Qing government's official permission and, second, he had contacted foreigners. He had also secretly drawn a map of the Kanchuanbeishan area, but since he had already destroyed it this did not hold him accountable for legal charges. Consequently, Zhang was first sentenced to exile but, in the end, only to caning.³

The case of Zhang Baotai illustrates the Qing court's concern about its subjects' unauthorized encounter with foreigners as well as their infiltration into foreign territory. Zhang was penalized on the basis of his crossing the border and attempting to contact Russians for his silver mine search. As Peter Perdue indictates, demarcating a border and mapping the state were intended for controlling the people that belonged to its bordered territory.⁴ However, in Zhang's case, note that the Qing officials had held him account only for his failed attempt to encounter Russians, while taking no issue with his contact with the

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- 2 The document (see footnote 3) states that he was sent to the Office of Hunchun Regiment Colonel (Hunchun Xieling Yamen 琿春協領衙門).
- 3 *Qing ji Zhong Ri Han Guan xi Shi liao* 清季中日韓關係史料 [The Documents on Sino-Japanese-Korean relations in the late Ch'ing dynasty], Taipei Shi Nan'gang qu : Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo [Academia Sinica, Institute of Modern History], min guo 61, 1972. (Hereafter, QJZRHGX), Document No. 1-2-1-01 (4, 9a-11b); No. 1-2-1-02 (13, 22b-23b); No. 1-2-1-03 (14, 24a-25a).
- 4 Peter C. Perdue, "Boundaries, Maps, and Movement: Chinese, Russian, and Mongolian Empires in Early Modern Central Eurasia," *International History Review* 20, no.2 (June 1998): 265. Although on page 271 he discussed the case of the Torghut Mongols who migrated back to the Qing Empire in 1771 after their long journey to Zungaria west to the Volga river in 1616 as the only one exception to the Qing's border control, my study reveals that they were ample cases of violation of prohibition against border crossing in its northeastern borderland.

Korean sojourners in Mokuowei. This points to a possibility that the mid-nineteenth-century Qing court was more concerned about its subjects' unauthorized contact with Russians than with other foreign subjects. In addition, through this case, the Qing government became aware of Korean sojourners' presence in Russia's northeastern territory.

Viewed from a contemporary perspective, the unauthorized Korean settlers in Russian territory should have been an issue only for the Korean and Russian governments, not the Qing Chinese. However, the Qing court showed anxiety, claimed the Korean border crossers' settlement in Russian borderland illegal, and persistently requested its Korean counterpart to take actions against them. Paradoxically, the Qing court took issue with illegal Korean border crossers to Russia, while admitting that it could only restrict traffic that went through the Chinese territory. This demonstrates that while the Qing court could in theory exercise its authority over the border crossers from Chosŏn Korea, it was, in practice, far from possible. Later, we shall see that Russia rejected the Qing's justification for its intervention on the issue of Korean settlers.

Previous scholarship on the unauthorized migration of Koreans in the nineteenth century has focused on one of the following aspects: institutional changes in the Qing administration in Manchuria,⁵ the origin of the Korean diaspora in Inner Asian regions, and the Russian Empire's annexation of Primorsky Krai (沿海州, C. Yanhaizhou; K. Yŏnhaeju) and its development. In terms of time periods, they generally have given more attention to the Guangxu reign (1875-1908) not only for its relative longevity compared to the Tongzhi reign, which only lasted for 13 years, but also due to a notable institutional change – the establishment of the Three Eastern Provinces (C. Dong San Sheng 東三省) in 1907.⁶ Instead of introducing here the contents of all

5 Mark C. Elliott, "The Limits of Tartary: Manchuria in Imperial and National Geographies," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no.3 (2000): 603-46.

6 Hong Sung-Hwa [Hong, Sŏnghwa], "Ch'ŏngmal Tongsamsŏng Changbaekpu

the previous literature at once, I present its most relevant elements in the following discussion.

Continuity and Change in Manchuria in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

Conventional scholarship holds that tribute and border relations in nineteenth-century Northeast Asia were historically significant for two reasons: first, it was in the late seventeenth century during the Kangxi reign (1662-1722) when the Qing court was introduced to the western notion of borders due to its encounter—and ensuing conclusion of the Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689—with the Russian Empire. Seonmin Kim states in her article that it was after establishing a border with the Russians that the Kangxi Emperor had ordered to map his empire as an important step toward accomplishing the ultimate goal of clarifying all the borders in his imperial domain. This empire-wide project required inspections of its imperial frontiers, including Manchuria. Interestingly, although the Qing government had assigned Mukedeng⁷ to a mission to its northeastern borderland, hoping to clarify the border between Qing China and Chosŏn Korea, his mission was only the beginning of the efforts for establishing a border with the Chosŏn. In

Sŏlch'i wa Kukkyŏng Insik ūi Pyŏnhwa (The Establishment of Changbai Prefecture and the Change of Perception of Borders in the Late Qing Dynasty),” *Chungguksa yŏn'gu* 63 (December 2009): 137-165.

7 Mukedeng's mission was aimed to conduct survey on the Changbaishan. This mountain had a very special meaning for the Manchus because they believed it as the birthplace of their ancestors. Thus the Qing court was more than eager to incorporate this holy site into its imperial frontier. For more details, see Seonmin Kim, “Ginseng and Border Trespassing Between Qing China and Chosŏn Korea,” *Late Imperial China* 28, no.1 (2007): 48-52; also see Seonmin Kim, *Ginseng and Borderland: Territorial Boundaries and Political Relations between Qing China and Chosŏn Korea, 1636-1912*, Oakland, California: California University Press, 2017.

short, the boundary between the Qing and Chosŏn remained porous well into the nineteenth century.⁸

Especially, during the border negotiations between the two countries from 1711 to 1713, the tributary relationship had been strategically exploited by the Chosŏn court, often to the detriment of the Qing. Unlike the Manchu imperial court that claimed ownership of the Changbaishan and wished to have it officially recognized by its Korean counterpart, the Chosŏn had no interest in doing so. Thus, Kim argues that the Chosŏn court exquisitely took advantage of this tributary relationship in which the Chosŏn was virtually a semi-autonomous subject state of the Qing Empire by remaining somewhat indifferent to, if not calculatingly resisting, the Qing court's investigation of its northeastern borderland slated for demarcation.⁹ However, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the tributary relationship was manipulated by the Qing court as it served as a pretext, if not a legitimate claim to suzerainty over Chosŏn Korea.¹⁰ The tributary system is without doubt significant for understanding the diplomatic relationship between Qing China and Chosŏn Korea and even for understanding how the Qing court had expressed its concerns about the unauthorized migration and settlement of Korean sojourners in Russian borderland, Primorsky Krai.¹¹

8 Seonmin Kim, "Ginseng and Border Trespassing," 43-52.

9 *Ibid.*, pp.51-2, 55.

10 For more detail, see Kirk W. Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties, and Trade: Qing Imperialism and Chosŏn Korea, 1850-1910* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2008).

11 For more on Qing-Chosŏn Relations in the Late Nineteenth Century, see Nianshen Song, *Making borders in modern East Asia: The Tumen River demarcation, 1881-1919* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Yuanchong Wang, *Remaking the Chinese empire: Manchu-Korean relations, 1616-1911* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018); Alyssa Park, *Sovereignty Experiments: Korean Migrants and the Building of Borders in Northeast Asia, 1860-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019); Key-Hiuk Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order: Korea, Japan and the Chinese Empire, 1860-1882* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

Second, another interesting fact is that even after the establishment of a series of new institutions, including the Qing-Chosŏn Patrol System of 1847, whose principal aim was to prevent unauthorized migration and settlement of civilian people in the off-limits area located between the Eastern Willow Palisade (Shengjing Dongbian 盛京東邊) and the Yalu River in the early nineteenth century during the Daoguang reign (1821-50), the Qing control over this forbidden location remained limited.¹² Although there were no institutional arrangements to reinforce control over this borderland area in the Tongzhi reign, which is the focus of this essay, Bumjin Koo's thesis reveals one very important aspect relevant to my further discussion: the Qing had explicitly expressed its desire for cooperative efforts with the Chosŏn court to restrict migration and settlement of people in its northeastern borderland.¹³ The Manchu court remained concerned about potential diplomatic troubles caused by the encounter of the two populace. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Qing court once again raised the specter of potential diplomatic crisis with Russia due to contact between Koreans and Russians, which the Qing deemed very likely to lead to disputes or conflicts.

In short, it is safe to say that, even if the Qing court made continuous efforts to monitor and prevent unauthorized trespassing at its northeastern border, my study shows that the Qing control over its border with the Chosŏn was very limited, thereby rendering it extremely permeable throughout the Tongzhi reign.¹⁴ Moreover, within the tribute

12 Koo Bumjin [Ku, Pŏmjŏn], "Sipkusegi Sŏnggyŏng tongbyŏnoe Sanjang ūi kwalli wa Cho-Ch'ŏng kongdong hoech'o" [Qing Control over the Forbidden Area between the Eastern Willow Palisade and the Yalu River in the Nineteenth Century and the Qing-Chosŏn Joint Patrol System], *Sarim* 32 (2009): 282-300.

13 *Ibid.*, 286-7.

14 As was indicated by one of the anonymous reviewers, Kim Seonmin's research proves that the Qing government made significant efforts for border patrolling in the riverbanks along the Tuman River in the late eighteenth century under the auspices of Emperors Qianlong (r. 1736-1795) and Jiaqing (r. 1796 – 1820) by

system, the Chosŏn was subject to a relatively lower hierarchical position as a semi-independent vassal state in relation to the Qing. Last but not least, the Qing court used the rhetoric of potential diplomatic conflict due to encounter of different peoples to justify its request for the Chosŏn's cooperation in enforcing the border.

Russia's Annexation of Primorsky Krai in 1860 and the Korean Trespassers in the Tongzhi Reign (1862-75)

With the conclusion of the Treaty of Beijing with the Qing in 1860, the Russian Empire added Primorsky Krai as its new Northeast Asian borderland.¹⁵ Now, Russia not only newly became bordered with Qing China and Chosŏn Korea, but also, and more importantly, was another actor to join the international relations of Northeast Asia. As part of its efforts for strengthening its grip on the new territory, the Russian government established a fortified naval port in Vladivostok¹⁶ and developed it as an advanced base for future territorial expansion. The Russians also built guarding posts in the vicinity of both the Ussuri and Tumen Rivers to clarify its border with neighboring countries.¹⁷

presenting a wealth of evidence drawn from *Hunchun fudutong yamen dang* 琿春副都統衙門檔 (Archives of the Office of Hunchun Garrison Lieutenant General). However, the Tongzhi reign appears to be beyond the scope of Kim's article. See Kim Seonmin [Kim Sŏnmin] 김선민, "18 segi huban Ch'ŏng-Chosŏn ūi pŏmwŏl munje wa kyŏnggye kwalli: Kim Sunjŏng · Pak Huch'an sagŏn ūl chungsim ūro" [Trespassing and patrolling of boundaries between Qing and Chosŏn in the eighteenth century], *Minjok munhwa yŏn'gu* 72 (2016): 91-127.

15 Kim Youngsin [Kim, Yŏngsin], "Ch'ŏngjo ūi chŏngch'aek pyŏnhwa wa killim chiyŏk ūi sahoe kyŏnggye pyŏnmo" [Political Change during the Qing Dynasty and Socioeconomic Change in the Jilin Region], *Dongbuga yŏksa nonch'ong* 37 (2012): 57.

16 Vladivostok appears as Haishenwei 海參崴 in Chinese sources and is still transliterated this way in Chinese today.

17 Sim Hŏnyong, "Che 3 chang. Rŏsia Hanin ūi Yŏnhaeu iju wa chŏngch'ak"

The Russian government hoped to colonize this newly acquired Northeast Asian frontier area just like the far eastern part of Siberia, but it did not take long for it to learn that its ambitious plan was a far cry from being feasible. The main reason for this was that Slavs were not able to adapt well to the local environment and climate of Primorsky Krai and thus the Russian government's promotion of their migration and settlement in this Northeast Asian area ended up in a fiasco.¹⁸

As a consequence, the Russian state had to search for other people to settle and participate in its colonization of Primorsky Krai. Thus, the Russian officials lured the Koreans to move into their newly annexed territory to do the reclamation work for them. As for the Korean people, they voluntarily migrated to the Russian borderland, hoping to lead better lives due to the harshness of the living conditions in Chosŏn Korea in the mid-nineteenth century. The overall local circumstance of Primorsky Krai was not significantly different from the northern part of Chosŏn from which most of the Koreans had come. They had generally engaged in agriculture in Hamgyŏng province also, so farming in Primorsky Krai involved little change in their livelihood. Furthermore, these Korean migrants were no single male sojourners in search for short-term profit, but rather came as families who were planning to settle down in this new land. Thus, many of the Korean migrants were able to successfully settle in Primorsky Krai.¹⁹ And they proved to be

[Ch.3 The Migration and Settlement of the Korean Diaspora in Yanhaizhou, Russia] in Yun, Injin et al., *Tongbuga ūi iju wa ch'ogukkajŏk konggan* [Migration in Northeast Asia and Transnational Space] (Seoul: Ayŏn Ch'ulp'ansa, 2010): 95-6.

18 *Ibid.*, 96. In addition, these European migrants were often unable to find a place to settle down where they could also afford a livelihood at the same time. Furthermore, the Russian government's policy of prohibiting the migration of non-Orthodox followers was also pointed out as the cause for its failure of colony-building in Primorsky Krai.

19 *Ibid.*, 96.

a useful labor force for the Russian government that desired to restore fertility to the degraded and marginal lands.²⁰

Two points should be noted because they will be helpful for examining the relevance of the issues that the Qing court raised against the Korean migrants in Russian territory. First, most of the Korean migrants settled in the southern part of Primorsky Krai, close to the area bordering Chosŏn Korea, and they rarely had any contact with the early Slavic settlers, the Cossacks²¹, who took root in the northern part of Primorsky Krai. Second, although the Russian government gradually became concerned about the Korean immigrants mainly because they had generally settled along the border with Chosŏn Korea, it was only in the late 1870s when the Russian state began to aggressively “encourage” its people to migrate and settle in its Northeast Asian frontier.²² Thus, since the Tongzhi reign had already ended in 1875, the increasing number of Korean settlers in Russian territory would not have yet caused any diplomatic problem for the Qing court. Nevertheless, the Tongzhi reign was marked with the Qing officials’ incessant raising the specter of imminent diplomatic troubles caused by conflicts between the Korean and Russian settlers.

**(Not so) Dangerous Encounters :
Korean Trespassing and Illegal Settlement
in Primorsky Krai, Russian Far East**

On March 19, 1867, Fuminga 富明阿, the General of Jilin Prefecture (*Jilin Zhangjun* 吉林將軍) submitted a memorial to the Zongli Yamen

20 *Ibid.*, 112-3.

21 As one of the anonymous reviewers has indicated, there was a Cossack settlement in the region. Moreover, in his article, Sim has also considered the settlers to be of Slavic origin.

22 Sim Hōnyong, “Che 3 chang,” 96; 107-8; 114-5.

stating that he had received a report from Wuleixinga 烏勒興阿 the Ningguta garrison lieutenant general (*fudutong* 副都統) that the Russians had been luring Koreans into the Jixinhe 吉心河²³ area, located in Primorsky Krai, to reclaim the land. In his report, he had stated:

I arrived at the mouth of Hunchun River and spotted about 200 Korean people riding on a wagon, rushing due east. I chased after and asked them to where they were headed. Among them, one who could speak some Chinese replied: ‘Currently Russia is calling for thousands of Koreans to come to Jixinhe area to reclaim land. Since military service is repeatedly imposed and taxes increased even more [...] life is indeed very hard. Thus we had no choice but to abandon our homes and escape, hoping to save our lives.’ It seemed to me, however, that since there were too many of them and they were lured by the Russians to cross the river in the first place, it could cause even bigger trouble if I had immediately attempted to stop them on the spot. And so the Koreans hurried to Jixinhe.”²⁴

The Ningguta garrison lieutenant general (*fudutong*) also entertained a strong suspicion that it was the Russians who inveigled the migrants; he also believed that unless the migrants, who appeared to trust the Russians, were stopped, a conflict between Russia and China might break out. Nevertheless, the number of Koreans lured by the Russians was substantial, and they continued to cross over to the Russian territory. It appears that the chief concern among Qing officials, in-

23 Although “Jixinhe 棘心河”, that we have seen as I introduced the case of Zhang Baotai at the beginning of this essay, was transliterated using the character “棘” instead of “吉,” I suspect that they are both indicating the same location because they are both pronounced identically as “Jixinhe.”

24 *QJZRHGX*, “Russians’ luring of Koreans to Reclaim Land (俄人招引韓人開墾),” Document No.1-2-2-01 (36, 50a-50b), 20 March 1867.

cluding Ningguta, was the apparent difficulty in knowing the motives of Russians and Koreans, regarded as “barbarians” by the Qing.²⁵

Fuminga not only expressed that he was also concerned about the Korean migration to Jixinhe, Russia that he had become aware of by the report from the Ningguta garrison lieutenant general (*fudutong*), but also declared to have him give orders to the Hunchun regiment colonel (*xieling* 協領) so that the soldiers stationed at the guarding posts along the Tumen River and frontier area pay closer attention and find a way to control the border without causing any disturbance.²⁶ However, Fuminga’s action did not resolve this issue of unauthorized Korean migration into the Russian frontier area.

Two years later, on March 11, 1869, Fuminga once again presented a memorial to the Zongli Yamen, reporting that people from Chosŏn Korea had crept into Russia and approximately a thousand of them had settled together in areas such as Yanchuhe 巖杵河, Jixinhe 棘心河, and so on. In this official document, he cited a report that he had received two weeks ago from Nemujin 訥穆錦, the Hunchun regiment colonel (*xieling*), stating:

- (1) On the twenty-seventh day of eighth month, after receiving an official document of order, I went to Mokuowei 摩濶威 to meet with the Russian Official of Border Affairs (*jiewuguan* 界務官), a newly established official position by the Russian government, and to discuss the negotiations between us two countries. However, since the official concerned was in Haicanwei 海參崴 (Vladivostok), dealing with official affairs, I was not able to meet him. Soon as I went on my way, I saw forty to fifty people, who came as families, from Chosŏn Korea and were all passing through Zhulunhe 珠倫河 area

25 *Ibid.*, 20 March 1867.

26 *QJZRHGX*, Document No. 1-2-2-02 (37, 51a), 20 March 1867; No. 1-2-2-03 (44, 57a), 24 March 1867; No. 1-2-2-04 (50, 60a), 9 April 1867.

and moving toward the Yanhai 沿海^{27, 28}.

Here, as the unlined part in sentence (1) shows, the fact that the Russian government did indeed establish new local official branches could be reconfirmed through this Chinese official document. In addition to a naval port in Vladivostok, the Russian state also established several guarding posts mainly for military purposes.²⁹ Interestingly, the Hunchun regiment colonel (*xieling*) then also expressed the same difficulties and restriction to his actions just like the Ningguta garrison lieutenant general (*fudutong* 副都統) did as we have seen above: the language barrier and limit on his authority due to territorial boundary between China and Russia.

Asking them what was going on, I used body language, but it was no use. Since we were not able to understand each other's language, there was no way that I could figure out the reason for their migration. Furthermore, because I was in Russian territory, I was not in the place to curb them.³⁰

Thus, the Hunchun regiment colonel (*xieling*) changed his plan and instead sent his subordinate to find out about the situation.

(2) Thus I immediately came back to the castle and sent Jierhonga 吉爾洪阿 the commandant of fleet-as-clouds cavalry (*yunqiwei* 雲騎尉) and others to the Yanhai area to closely investigate and soon received the following report, stating: “Currently there are about a thousand people – families –

27 Yanhai 沿海 literally means “coast” or “coastal area.”

28 *QJZRHGX*, Document No. 1-2-2-06 (92, 111a-112b), 30 November 1869.

29 Sim Hōnyong, “Che 3 chang,” 106.

30 *QJZRHGX*, Document No. 1-2-2-06 (92, 111a-112b), 30 November 1869.

from Chosŏn living together in both Yanchuhe and Jixinhe areas located in Yanhai. Recently, there has been a ceaseless wave of border crossings.³¹

Interestingly, just as Sim's article cited above drew on Russian primary sources, the sentence (2) in this official Chinese document also shows that the Koreans migrated to and settled in Russian borderland in families. The Qing officials were also aware that issues taking place inside the Russian territory were beyond their control. However, they still attempted to persuade the Russian officials to consider the tributary nature of Qing-Chosŏn relationship—that its people were also Qing subjects and their migration into Russia were issues belonging to the Qing court. Nevertheless, the Qing court's claim was adamantly opposed by the Russian ambassador. The disagreement could be seen as stemming from the incompatibility between two disparate paradigms, one based on the tributary relations and the other, on what the Chinese documents refers to as “international law”—equal, not unilateral, agreements among sovereign nations. The Chosŏn was not among this community of equally vested nations; it belonged to Qing China as something of an appendage, at least in the Qing's view.

Nemujin continued his statement. This time he expressed his apprehension, claiming that the increasing number of Korean settlers in Russia could lead to their insurrection or other forms of illegal collective acts. However, he did not make any speculations as to the purpose of the Russians' acceptance of Korean border crossers.³² Instead, he perceived Koreans' resettlement in Russia as something of a threat not just to Chosŏn Korea or Russia, but to the entire sinosphere. Before submitting his memorial, Fuminga built upon Nemujin's report and added:

31 *Ibid*, 30 November 1869.

32 *Ibid*, 30 November 1869.

But it is hard to understand why the Chosŏn court neglects and does not make any issue of this, letting its people cross the border and migrate to another country as they please. It is hard to say that there would be no trouble if these two countries face an issue caused by both of them getting out of their latitudes. Thus, this could be a big problem for the future of the Chinese civilization (C. *zhong-hua* 中華).”

His statement demonstrates that the Qing officials were concerned about the encounter between Koreans and Russians, suspecting that this could lead to conflicts between the two and that it would severely damage the Qing’s state interest. In fact, my reading of other official Chinese documents concerning this issue reveals that the point raised by Fuminga was reiterated by other Qing officials, thereby proving itself to be a shared apprehension among Qing functionaries.³³

However, to its dismay, it did not take long until the Qing learned its limit on curbing the Korean migration. Since this article focuses on the diplomatic correspondences included in the collection of Zongli Yamen documents concerning the three countries, China, Korea, and Russia, it seeks to find the answers to what were the limits on the Qing court’s desire and effort for enforcement of border control as expressed in these official letters. As the documents reveal, the Qing court needed its neighbors’ cooperation to fully control movement across borders. However, the Qing’s desire for border control was limited by either conflicting interest with the Russian officials’ develop-

33 *QJZRHGX*, Document No. 1-2-2-09 (194, 252a-253b), 4 January 1872; 1-2-3-21 (94, 115a-b), 7 December 1869 (Emperor Tongzhi’s Edict); 1-2-3-22 (95, 116a-117b), 8 December 1869; 1-2-3-23 (96, 118a-b), 9 December 1869; 1-2-3-24 (97, 119a-122b), 26 March 1870; 1-2-3-26 (104, 135b-137a), 24 October 1870; 1-2-3-38 (122, 163a-164b), 19 March 1871; 1-2-4-12 (192, 250a-250b), 2 January 1872 (the Qing’s letter to Vlangali, the Russian Ambassador); 1-2-4-13 (194, 252a-253b), 4 January 1872.

ment plan for Primorsky Krai or the Korean border patrols' unwillingness to assist the Qing court.

On September 28, 1870, in his memorial directed to the Zongli Yamen, Fuminga expressed his dual-sided troubles caused by uncooperative functionaries of both Chosŏn Korea and Russia. The Russians had no interest in evicting the Korean border crossers from their land and the Korean frontier officials would make excuses to avoid responsibility and not take them back to Korea. Fuminga had attached the response letter from the Chosŏn king expressing his gratitude to the Qing emperor for ordering his frontier officials to discuss with the Russian functionaries to have the Korean border crossers sent back so that the Chosŏn frontier officials could gather them all. The Chosŏn king had also stated that he would have his border guards wait until all the Korean subjects were returned.³⁴ Here, the Chosŏn king's willingness to resolve the unauthorized Korean migration appears to have been passive, since he would just wait until the Russians hand them over to his officials. He did not explicitly express his desire or will to directly negotiate with the Russians concerned with this matter.

The response from Russians was likewise lackluster. To the same memorial, Fuminga had also attached the correspondences with the Board of Rites, the General of the Jilin Prefecture, citing some reports that he had previously received from his inferiors. In his report, Nemujin, the Hunchun regiment colonel (*xieling*), stated that he himself had visited Mokuowei in Primorsky Krai (C. Yanhai) to meet the Russian Official of Frontier Affairs (C. *jiewuguan*) to persuade him to chase away all the Korean border crossers, to which the Russian replied: "Russia has no interest in inviting these people, but even if we built a guarding post to stop them, too many who would still sneak in whenever they see the chance, so there is no way we could evict them all. Thus when spring comes and the weather gets warm, they shall be moved to Suifen area and be assigned work." This was only the begin-

34 *QJZRHGX*, Document No. 1-2-4-03 (100, 127a-130b), 28 September 1870.

ning of the Qing court's setback in restricting the border crossing of Chosŏn people to Russia.³⁵

Russia's token passivity gradually took a more brazen air in what seems to be a *de facto* refusal to send the migrants back. Later on the sixth day of the fifth month in the same year, when Fuminga again ordered his men to see whether or not the Korean border crossers had been deported and the Chosŏn frontier officials had taken them all back, he received another report from Qing functionaries based in the frontier, Xiangtai 祥太 and others. This report stated the following:

I traveled to Yanhai and did a lot of legwork in secret to investigate the movements of border crossers from Chosŏn. (1) A Russian proclaimed that "since Russia had been regularly providing these people from Chosŏn gathered in Yanhai with food, a compensation payment must be made for the expense if they were to be repatriated." (2) And I have never seen a frontier official from Chosŏn taking back with him a single one of them, and even now there are still families openly migrating to Russia; the Russians carry the young people to other places with boats, whereas older people are sent to Suifen by land to be settled there.³⁶

Thus, three days later, Fuminga ordered the regiment colonel (*xieling*) concerned to go immediately to the frontier of the two countries and meet and persuade both the Chosŏn and Russian functionaries but deal with this issue according to the situation. He also directed: "Come up with a proper plan concerning how Russia would chase away the border crossers from Chosŏn Korea and how the Chosŏn would take them and be certain to report truthfully so that this could be reportable to the superior official." As a Qing official in charge of the northeast-

35 *Ibid.*, 28 September 1870.

36 *Ibid.*, 28 September 1870.

ern frontier, Fuminga was becoming extremely concerned as the number of the Korean border crossers in Russia continued to increase, but more so after learning of the uncooperative behaviors of both the Russian and Chosŏn officials. As the sentences (1) and (2) show, the Korean officials had not taken any of its people back to Chosŏn, while the Russians now went as far as to request a compensation for handing the Koreans over. About three months later, Nemujiin the regiment colonel (*xieling*) presented a report to Fuminga:

I took my soldiers with me and went to see this border patrol myself and asked him, “Did you order to bring back all the Korean people (families, 男婦子女) from Russia?” Then, the border patrol concerned replied through translation: “Although we would like to bring back all the Korean people lured by Russia, (1) the Russians have not yet approved it. (2) Moreover, not only that these Koreans are not all from the Kyŏngwŏn prefecture, but also, more important, (3) neither have I yet received the King’s edict. For these reasons, I cannot dare to bring them back in the near future.”³⁷

The Nemujiin regiment colonel (*xieling*) continued to address in his report that once again he had taken his soldiers and this time went to Mokuowei to meet with the Russian Official of Border Affairs (*jiewuguan*) in person and mentioned the previous document requesting the eviction of border crossers in order to have Chosŏn take them back. The Russian Official of Border Affairs (*jiewuguan*) replied with the help of translation: “As for the Korean people lured by Russia, they were all sent to the Suifen area to engage in cultivation according to the directive previously received from the Russian Governor of East Siberia and thus the cost incurred by that must be reimbursed.” Nemujiin

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 28 September 1870.

claimed that, as soon as he gently reprimanded him, the Russian Official of Border Affairs (*jiewuguan*) responded: “I could never conduct this issue. Moreover, the Russian Minister to Beijing has already informed the Chosŏn King on this matter. Therefore, it is not a concern for you all from Hunchun.” Nemujin attempted to convince him again, but to no avail.³⁸

From the two reports cited and discussed above, Fuminga re-confirmed how difficult it was to work with the Chosŏn and Russian officials responsible for border control. In the report in which Nemujin communicated with a Korean official, the sentences (1), (2), and (3) altogether directly indicate that he could not cooperate due to his limited authority. Later, we will see that Fuminga regarded this as a weak excuse to avoid responsibility. As for the responses of the Russian official, Fuminga, and later, other Qing officials, not only expressed discomfort but also interpreted such message as a threat.

The response from the Chosŏn side was equally discouraging. In stark contrast to the promise made by the Chosŏn king to take back all the Koreans in Russia, the Korean border patrol of the Kyŏngwŏn prefecture replied that he had not received the King’s order when the Hunchun regiment colonel (*xieling*) came to meet him: “Even if Chosŏn Korea wanted to take it its people back, Russia would not allow us to do so. And not all of them are from the Kyŏngwŏn prefecture.” To this, Fuminga complained in dismay:

Considering that the Chosŏn king has already issued a directive to the functionaries of its northern frontier, how could a response such as his order was not effective everywhere simultaneously and so could not bring them back because they are not all from the same *pu* (prefecture). Thinking about the presumptuous tone of his language, I can’t get the hang of what he has on his mind.³⁹

38 *Ibid.*, 28 September 1870.

Adding fuel to the fire was the apparent difficulty in finding out the motives behind the attitudes of Russia and Chosŏn. After carefully examining the entire statement of the Russian Official of Border Affairs (jiewuguan), Fuminga complained that it was hard to figure out whether or not the Russians had actually informed of the expense for the possible repatriation. He again expressed his frustration at the present situation, in which both Chosŏn and Russia were attributing the responsibility to each other.⁴⁰ Fuminga's disappointment and frustration over the officials of the two countries led him to construe their intentions in a negative light. And there was more: later, the Chosŏn king indeed had to send a letter to the Qing court apologizing on behalf of his functionaries for their lack of cooperation.

Upon receiving Fuminga's memorial, the Zongli Yamen soon issued a memorial to the Board of Rites, requesting to send a correspondence to Chosŏn to resolve the issue of Korean refugees who had absconded to Russia. In this memorial, the Zongli Yamen directly recited rather than paraphrasing the contents of the reports that Fuminga had cited in his memorial. However, toward the end of its memorial, the Zongli Yamen cited a letter from the Chosŏn king and provided an analysis of Chosŏn's attitude and behavior for dealing with the Korean border crosser issue:

And the Chosŏn King also stated: 'After respectfully (*gong* 恭) waiting for the people concerned to be returned and receiving them one by one, I shall resume enforcing border control.' This means that the Chosŏn court cannot prevent its own subjects from escaping to a foreign country and that only when the foreign state returned its people that it gathered could it at last take them back. ...It falls on Chosŏn to confirm what the Russian official had claimed: 'We had

39 *Ibid.*, 28 September 1870.

40 *Ibid.*, 28 September 1870.

the Korean border crossers to engage in cultivation and thus its related expenses must be compensated and that this has already been notified to the King.’⁴¹

Thus the very next day, the Board of Rites sent a memorial to the Zongli Yamen that it would like to submit in place of Fuminga, the *Jilin Zhangjun*, a request for an official document to be sent to the Chosŏn king to take back his people, since it did not take back those who crossed over to Russia in secret yet.⁴² As a result, the following day the Grand Council (*Junjichu* 軍機處) issued a memorial of which most its contents were simply a recitation of other reports and memorials except for a paragraph at the end that contained a call for an immediate attention to the situation, an implicit acknowledgement of their inability to control human traffic, and a sly innuendo aimed at the Chosŏn court. Of note here is the Council’s comment on the Chosŏn court, suggesting that it “avoid unnecessary correspondences and see the mercy of our court showing pity for the little country.”⁴³ This shows that the Qing officials had already been suspecting that the Chosŏn court might not be capable enough to discuss and resolve this matter with the Russians.⁴⁴

41 *QJZRHGX*, Document No. 1-2-4-04 (101, 131a-132a), 6 October 1870.

42 *QJZRHGX*, Document No. 1-2-4-05 (102, 132b), 7 October 1870.

43 *QJZRHGX*, Document No. 1-2-4-06 (103, 133a-135a), 8 October 1870.

44 I appreciate the anonymous reviewer who questioned whether the Qing expected the Chosŏn to directly engage with other foreign countries, including Russia, and if so, how it would have maintained its suzerainty. This case stands out because the Qing court did exactly all that; that is, the Qing was aware that it could be held accountable for any trouble caused by the Koreans in Russian territory and its officials were also reluctant to directly counter their Russian counterparts. As a result, the Qing officials hoped and attempted to preemptively prevent such an issue without getting involved. As for its suzerainty, the Qing definitely had no interest in relinquishing it. However, this case proves that the Qing was now forced to find ways to make its suzerainty over the Chosŏn retainable. If not, then its suzerainty could only be a liability, since it could not have its influence

Their speculation was correct. In another memorial submitted to the Zongli Yamen two months later by Yufu 毓福, another General of the Jilin Prefecture, the Chosŏn functionaries requesting the handover of refugees were met with refusal by the Russian Official of Border Affairs (*jiewuguan*).⁴⁵ To this, the memorial states, the Chosŏn king wished that the Qing would not mistake him for deliberately evading his duties of border control and submitted a statement of its own in form of official correspondence, adding that it was a groundless falsification by the Russians, who claimed that he had already been informed of having to compensate for the expenses earlier mentioned in the correspondence between Russians and Qing officials, to which the Chosŏn was not privy. The King added that unless his subordinates were able to cross over to the Russian territory to round up the Korean subjects, he will continue to seem neglectful of his duties.⁴⁶ Now the Qing officials decided to discuss this matter directly with the Russians.

On December 30, 1871, Yirong 奕榕, the General of Jilin Prefecture, presented a memorial to the Zongli Yamen, stating that the Russians had moved the Korean border crossers to the area of Xiazi 匣子. Interestingly, as he approached toward the end of his official letter, he introduced his survey of a former incident in which the head of the Russians had abruptly replied that their carrying off of the Korean trespassers⁴⁷ to Suifen 綏芬⁴⁸ area was none of the Qing functionaries'

over Korea acknowledged by Russia while still being held responsible for what Koreans might have done wrong in Russian territory. The Qing government, thus, had to figure out how to have its suzerainty over the Chosŏn recognized by its imperialist counterparts while evading responsibility for the Koreans' wrongdoings either on Chosŏn territory or on Russian soil.

45 *QJZRHGX*, Document No. 1-2-4-08 (110, 142a-143a), 11 December 1870.

46 *QJZRHGX*, Document No. 1-2-4-09 (115, 154a-156b), 6 February 1871.

47 I appreciate the anonymous reviewer who advised me to translate all terms referring to the "Koreans who illegally crossed the border to enter and settle in Russian territory without the Chosŏn government's permission" as "trespassers." Although several different terms are employed in the archives—for instance, "*nanmin* 難民, *yumin* 流民," which could be translated as "refugee, migrant," re-

concern in his response letter to Hunchun regiment colonel (*xieling*) who had previously requested for the repatriation of the Koreans. He then stated that unless these refugees had secretly sneaked into Russia through Chinese borderland,⁴⁹ there could be no way to stop them.⁵⁰

Also, in its official correspondence sent few days later to Vlangali, the Russian Ambassador, the Qing's Zongli Yamen stated that not only had the Beijing court previously issued directive to the Hunchun regiment colonel (*xieling*) to request the Russian border patrol to return the Korean trespassers, but also, and more important, specifically explained its cause for intervention in this matter:

They (the Koreans in Russia) have already crossed the border secretly and thus some unscrupulous thugs could have mixed into them. It is hard to guarantee that they would not cause any trouble as they move through the intersecting borders of China, Russia, and Chosŏn. [...] we must seamlessly enforce border control in order to prevent any complications.⁵¹

The Qing's demands went unheeded. On January 4, 1872, this time

spectively—I agree with the reviewer's point that the terms are all reflective of the Qing government's negative view of such Koreans and thus think it best I translate them all as "trespasser."

48 Suifen is Chinese name for "Razdolnaya River."

49 Here, I assure all readers that the term "Zhongguo 中國" was used in the document instead of "Da Qingguo 大清國" meaning "the Great Qing. I appreciate the anonymous reviewer who questioned whether the term "Zhongguo 中國" instead of "Da Qingguo 大清國" was actually used in the document or it was due to my translation; the reviewer also advised me to discuss the significance of this shift in terms, from "*Da Qingguo*" to "*Zhongguo*," employed in the document. Unfortunately, that would be beyond the scope of my research conducted for this article.

50 *QJZRHGX*, Document No. 1-2-2-08 (191, 248a-249b), 30 December 1871.

51 *QJZRHGX*, Document No. 1-2-4-12 (192, 250a-250b), 2 January 1872.

the Zongli Yamen sent an official letter to Yirong 奕榕, the General of the Jilin Prefecture, first informing that the Russian minister had sent a letter with a threatening message and then directing him to reinforce border control in order not to give the Russians any good excuse for offense. What the Zongli Yamen translated as a threatening message was the part where the Russian Official of Border Affairs (*jiewuguan*) had implied that whether or not Russia returns the Koreans had nothing to do with Nemujin the Hunchun regiment colonel (*xieling*), a Qing local official, and that if he would like the Koreans all returned, then he must compensate for the cost for taking care of them so far. Zongli Yamen further stated in the letter that the frontier functionaries must make every effort to strictly control the border and if they see any Korean attempting to secretly cross over to Russia through Chinese territory, they should immediately curb him in order not to provide the Russians with any pretext to hurt Qing's state interest.⁵²

Nine days later, Vlangali, the Russian Ambassador, sent a letter to the Zongli Yamen. It said that it would be very difficult for Russia to approve and implement the expulsion of Korean refugees for there was no base in the treaty between Qing China and Russia. Vlangali's letter started with his understanding of the Qing court's purpose for raising concerns and requesting for the eviction of border crossers from Chosŏn Korea. However, it explicitly stated that returning Koreans to Chosŏn was by no means in line with the treaty concluded with Qing China. It went on further, stating:

I am certain that Your High Official (*gui wangdachen* 貴王大臣) would also be aware that Russia and Chosŏn Korea have not concluded treaty yet and that this issue has also not yet be clarified even in within the treaty with Your Country. Avoiding its neighboring countries, Chosŏn Korea is the only country beneath the heaven that has not yet

52 *QJZRHGX*, Document No. 1-2-4-13 (194, 252a-253b), 4 January 1872.

participated in negotiations.⁵³

In the underlined parts of Vlangali's letter to the Zongli Yamen, Russia informed the Qing not only of its lack of treaty with the Chosŏn, but also that there was no agreement with the Qing pertaining to the issue of Chosŏn. Thus, Russia dismissed Qing's rationale – its tributary relations with Chosŏn Korea – for intervening in the Korean migration issue. In addition, Russia refused to return the Koreans to the Chosŏn by also citing humanitarian reasons:

Since these people have already lived in Russia and obeyed the Russian laws, there is no difference compared with Russian people in receiving care (*tixu* 體恤) from Russia. (3) Your High Official should also be well aware of our official's intention to peacefully settle the issues such as the wars that Korea fought against France in the fifth year of the Tongzhi reign (1866) and last year, the United States (1871).⁵⁴

Interestingly, Vlangali supported and legitimized Russia's claim by also having recourse to the notion and logic of international law and world order. Although by then these institutions were not completely new to the Qing either, but within the content of their logic the Qing had no base to justify its claims to intervene in the issue of Korean border crossers in Russia.

(4) Even if there were unscrupulous people (*yumin* 莠民) or anyone who escaped to avoid the state law, there is no way for Russia to be acquainted with any of such cases and that this truly because usually there was no encoun-

53 *QJZRHGX*, Document No. 1-2-4-14 (198, 256b-257b), 13 January 1872.

54 *Ibid.*, 13 January 1872.

ter with the Chosŏn. ...(5) Since it does not coincide with the current (*xianxingzhi gongfa* 現行之公法) International Law around the world, Russia is currently tolerating such a neighboring country but will come up with a solution because there is no need to jeopardize our frontier.⁵⁵

As the sentences (4) and (5) convey, Vlangali may have just been explaining the fact that there was no officially-concluded treaty between Russia and Chosŏn Korea. However, this probably was his warning that the Qing had no legal right to interfere because it could only be an issue between Russian and Korea. Thus, although this might not have been too surprising for the Qing that had already been aware of the territorial limit on its authority, it had to reconfirm that its effort to control the migration of Korean border crossers to Russia by resorting to its tributary relations with Chosŏn Korea could only be fruitless.

Conclusions

It is worth noting that the Russians and Qing were working within their own sense of the world and of law and that the significance of the Treaty of Nerchinsk, which the two imperial powers concluded in 1689, should not be overestimated or exaggerated to any extent. However, as if a major turning point, it is undeniably in its aftermath that the Kangxi (r.1662-1772) emperor sponsored state projects for clarifying borders with its neighbor, especially mapping of the empire. Just as the European rulers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries became aware of the importance of demarcating the boundaries of their states for consolidating their political powers, especially control over its people and resources in the territories, so did Kangxi in the sev-

55 *Ibid.*, 13 January 1872.

enteenth century. This led to the drawing of the borders, but also, and more important, mapping of the imperial domain in order to officially confirm the boundaries of the empire and, more specifically, sphere of influence or control.⁵⁶

However, although the Kangxi court made efforts to draw a fine borderline in its northeastern frontier coterminous with Chosŏn Korea, its mapping project in this Inner Asian borderland virtually failed. Thus the frontier area between Qing China and Chosŏn Korea remained very ambiguous and even porous. There were high rates of border crossings even afterwards.⁵⁷ Of course, this does not mean that they were not certain about the ownership of the rest of other parts of their territories. For this reason, the Qing officials persistently raised the issue of border control, as though it was mutually understood what the border was.⁵⁸ It is important to note that in the case of the Northeastern borderland, although the border was neither clearly demarcated nor enforced, the state still desired and attempted to control the migration of people. And my research has illustrated a series of those incidents as we have seen above.

Despite such ambiguously defined borders with a conflicting attitude of the Qing court emphasizing border enforcement in Northeast Asian frontier, this borderland where the three countries met were “bordered without borders.” Even if the borderline between Qing China and Chosŏn Korea stayed unclear, the Qing Officials issued orders to prevent Koreans from secretly sneaking into Chinese territory. And this point was reiterated in the documents that I have examined for this research, stating that the Qing border patrols were directed to arrest and deport all the Koreans who secretly came to China even for just a stopover to go to Russia, the end destination.⁵⁹

56 Hong Sung Hwa, “Ch’ŏngmal Tongsamsŏng,” 140-3; 154-8; Kim, Seonmin, “Ginseng and Border Trespassing,” 35-9.

57 Hong Sung Hwa, “Ch’ŏngmal Tongsamsŏng,” 161.

58 Seonmin Kim, “Ginseng and Border Trespassing,” 53.

However, more interesting was that the Qing court was the most concerned about the illegal Korean border crossers in Russia. Put in simple terms, the Qing played the role of a pseudo-international border patrol in the Northeast Asian border zone. The Qing court explicitly expressed that the reason for its apprehension for the ever increasing number of Korean settlers in Russia was the potential conflict between the Koreans and Russians which it deemed very likely to lead to a diplomatic issue for which the Qing might be held responsible. This issue raised by the Qing illustrates the following points: first, the purpose of controlling people after defining a border was not only limited to practical ones such as collecting taxes, conscripting male population into the armed forces, but also, the enforcement of border control was for avoiding undesired diplomatic issues that could jeopardize state interest. Especially taking into consideration that the Chosŏn was semi yet independent state in relations with the Qing, the Qing court's intervention in the issue of Korean migration to Russia is reflective of the tributary system-centered world view which the Qing continued to hold.

The Qing court in the Tongzhi reign (1862-1875) explicitly expressed that the reason for its apprehension over the mounting number of Korean settlers in Russia was the potential conflict between the Koreans and Russians, which it deemed very likely to lead to diplomatic issues for which the Qing might be held responsible as in the aftermath of the French and American Invasions of Kanghwa Island in Chosŏn Korea in 1866 and 1871, respectively.⁶⁰ Yet this time when the Qing officials approached the Russian ambassador Vlangali to dis-

59 *QJZRHGX*, Document No. 1-2-1-04 (98, 123a-125b), 9 August 1870; 1-2-2-09 (194, 252a-253b), 4 January 1872; 1-2-3-09 (57, 67a-70b), 9 June 1867; 1-2-3-26 (104, 135b-137a), 24 October 1870; 1-2-3-27 (105, 137b), 25 October 1870; 1-2-3-30 (108, 140a-140b), 14 November 1870; 1-2-3-35 (114, 151a-153b), 5 February 1871; 1-2-3-38 (122, 163a-164b), 19 March 1871; 1-2-4-13 (194, 252a-253b), 4 January 1872.

60 Wang, *Remaking*, 122-31.

cuss the matter, they were reminded of Korea's independent status and there were no grounds for them to stake a claim to the Korean migrants in Primorsky Krai. Therefore, its tribute relationship with the Chosŏn proved itself to be only a "liability without suzerainty," since the Western countries could now use it against the Qing to hold it accountable for what its tribute state Chosŏn did while denying its control over Koreans. And since it was during the Korean Trespasser Crisis of 1862-75 that the Qing became aware of this inconvenient reality, this is probably why its alarmism showed no signs of subsiding throughout the Tongzhi reign; learning that even its tribute relationship with Korea—although long considered the legitimate ground for intervening in issues concerning Koreans—could not be the key to putting an end to the potential trouble caused by the Korean trespassers in Russian Far East, the crisis would have loomed large, and perhaps even larger than ever, in the minds of the Qing rulers and officials.

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Submission Date: 12.28.2021.
Accepted: 07.06.2022.

Completion of Review: 07.05.2022.

<Abstract>

**Liability without Suzerainty:
Making Sense of Qing China's Alarmism
during the Korean Trespasser Crisis of 1862-75**

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The Tongzhi reign (1862-1875) was marked by the Qing officials' continuous voicing of concerns about Korean trespassing and illegal settlement in Primorsky Krai, part of Russia's Far Eastern borderland. In fact, the Qing court in Beijing had been taken accountable by the French and American governments for the damage caused by the Chosŏn defense forces when the two Western countries invaded Chosŏn Korea in 1866 and 1871, respectively. The Westerners considered the Qing to be responsible for its tribute state's acts on the grounds of their tribute relationship. Nevertheless, when Qing China attempted to preemptively spare itself from another diplomatic issue, this time with Russia, by asking both the Chosŏn king and the Russian ambassador to cooperate in repatriating Korean residents in Primorsky Krai, Russia refused to acknowledge China's tribute relationship with Korea as its "ticket" to intervene in the matter concerning Korean trespassers. Therefore, although the Qing's alarmism during the Korean Trespasser Crisis of 1862-75 first started for fear of facing another diplomatic issue with another Western imperialist power, Russia, it might not have continued incessantly if it weren't also the time during which the Qing was taught that its ties with Korea could be but a "liability without suzerainty." That is, it could be held responsible for its tribute state Chosŏn's actions but was denied control over Koreans, not to mention

unable to directly deal with the issue of Korean trespassers in Russian Far East which were the cause of potential trouble facing the Qing.

Keywords: Primorsky Krai, Tribute Relationship, Zongli Yamen, Vlangali, Korean trespassers

〈국문초록〉

권한은 없고 책임뿐: 1862~75년 조선인 불법침입자 사태 당시 청조는 왜 우려를 표명했는가

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청 동치제의 재위기간 (1862-1875) 내내 조선인들의 러시아 연해주(프리몰스키 크라이)로의 불법 이주 및 정착에 대해 청조 관리들은 끊임없이 우려를 표명했다. 사실, 청 조정으로서의 일전에, 즉 병인양요(1866)와 신미양요(1871) 직후 프랑스와 미국 정부가 조선군이 자국민들에게 입힌 피해에 대해 대신 배상해 줄 것을 요구 받은 기억이 생생했을 것이다. 당시 프랑스와 미국은 청과 조선이 맺고 있었던 조공관계를 근거로 청에게 배상책임이 있다고 여겼던 것이다. 그런데 청조가 또다시 그리고 이번에는 러시아와의 외교적 마찰을 빚게 될 것을 우려해 조선국왕과 러시아 대사에 연해주에 거주 중인 조선인의 쇠환에 협조해 줄 것을 요청했을 때 러시아는 이를 거절하면서 청과 조선의 조공관계에도 불구하고 청조는 러시아 영토 내 조선인 문제에 대해서 일체 간여할 수 없음을 분명히 했다. 결국 1862~75년 연해주에 정착한 불법 조선인 침입자 사태에 청조가 우려를 표명하게 된 이유는 우선 조선인으로 인해 청조가 서양 제국주의국가와 흑시라도 겪게 될지 모르는 잠재적인 외교문제에 대한 불안감과 더불어 청조로서는 당시 자신들이 조선과 맺고 있었던 조공관계가 ‘권한은 없고 책임만 따르는’ 일종의 족쇄와도 같은 것임을 깨닫게 되는 계기였기 때문이다. 즉, 청조가 잠재적인 불안 요인인 연해주의 조선인 문제를 직접 나서서 해결할 수 없게 되자 이는 결국 사태의 지속으로 이어졌고 자연히 청조로서는 계속해서 우려를 표명하게 되었던 것이다.

주제어: 연해주 (프리몰스키 크라이), 조공관계, 총리아문, 블랑가리, 조선인 불법침입자