Chapter 3

The Problem of Kazakh Subjection and the Russian-Qing Relationship in Central Asia

Introduction

One turning point in the Kazakh-Qing relationship, which was officially recognized by the Qing in 1757, can be found in the Qing expedition against the Jungars. As touched on in the previous chapter, the Jungar Empire was extremely active within Central Asia during the mid-eighteenth century. Not only did the Jungars fight with the Qing to the east, they also expanded their influence westward and, crossing the Kazakh Steppe, southward. In addition, the Jungars applied pressure to the Russians in both Siberia and the area of the Urals. Consequently, both the Russian and Qing empires struggled to deal with the Jungar presence in Central Asia.

However, this situation changed with the collapse of the Jungar regime in 1755, from which point forward the Kazakhs and other powers of Central Asia found themselves directly threatened by the Russian and Qing empires. At the same time, the Russians and Qing suddenly came into direct contact with one another at the border in western Siberia. Both Russian and Qing relations with the Jungar regime before its collapse are clearly related to trends exhibited by the powers of Central Asia following that collapse, thus these two periods should be considered together.

In spite of this background, studies into Russian-Qing relations have largely focused on the ratification processes of the Nerchinsk and Kyakhta treaties and other problems related to the two empires’ shared eastern border. Regarding the Russian-Qing relationship as it pertained to Central Asia west of the Jungars, the Qing mission to the Russians during the Yongzheng period is well-known, but, other than the compilation work of Bantysh-Kamenskii, not much scholarship exists regarding the subject beyond Soviet era treatments written by such authors as B. Gurevich and V. Moiseev. This Soviet work, also including I. Zlatkin’s writings on how the Jungar issue affected Russian-Qing relations, made thorough use of unpublished sources to organize historical facts and, while of a partial nature, these writers also produced compilations.

1 For an outline of the Jungar regime, see J. Miyawaki, Saigo no yūboku teikoku: Jungar bu no kōbō (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995).
of documents they collected themselves. Such works, including “International Relations in Central Asia” [MOTsA] and “Russo-Jungar Relations” [RDO], are well-worth inspection. However, as we saw in chapter 1, the scholarship of this period tended to focus on Russian conflict with the Qing Dynasty and in the post-Soviet period it is necessary to view these authors critically.

Chinese research, on the other hand, tends to take a negative view of Russian diplomatic actions with the Jungars from 1756, describing them as “interference in the domestic affairs of China.” Furthermore, the contemporary scholar Li Sheng is unable to overcome a one-sided interpretation, particularly regarding the Kazakhs, by failing to address their relationship with the Russians and merely insisting that the Kazakhs “submitted” to the Qing Dynasty.

As pointed out by A. Voskresenskii in his examination of the Eurasian Russian-Qing connection, Central Asian affairs became a major theme in the two empires’ diplomatic dealings from the eighteenth century on. It is therefore necessary to reevaluate the Russian-Qing relationship within this Central Asian context – paying particular attention to negotiations regarding the territory of the Jungars. Such a reevaluation will not only lead to a better understanding of the Russian-Qing relationship but will also shed light from another perspective on the international relations of Central Asia.

For this purpose, the current chapter will seek to illustrate problems that arose regarding the Jungars as well as problems arising within the territory to their west by analyzing diplomatic documents sent between Russia and the Qing Dynasty. In the first half of the chapter, I will outline various negotiations pursued by the empires, especially focusing on proposals made to Russia by a Qing diplomatic mission in 1731. I will also describe how these negotiations are related to later Russian-Qing relations within Central Asia. In the second half of the chapter, I will examine problems related to the subjection of the Kazakhs and other Central Asian powers, which had previously been under the control of the Jungars, that arose following the subjugation of the Jungars and the hunting down of Amursana during the 1750s. This framework of Russian-Qing negotiations regarding jurisdiction will be seen again regarding later issues

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