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MARITIME HISTORY AND IMPERIOLOGY: JAPAN'S "NORTHERN FISHERIES" AND THE PRIAMUR GOVERNOR-GENERALSHIP

EISUKE KAMINAGA

INTRODUCTION

Maritime history is a booming area of interest among Japanese historians, many of whom focus on sea areas in Southeast and Northeast Asia. As for the latter, existing studies limit themselves to economic (above all, commercial) relations between China, Korea, and Japan. Few historians have written the history of Okhotsk or the Japan Sea from a maritime perspective, involving the Russian Empire. This chapter is devoted to developing this approach.

To combine maritime history with imperiology, it is necessary to consider relations between the problems of regional economies and imperial governance. Imperial peripheries often suffered from a dilemma: the imperial government wanted the peripheries to develop quickly, but could not provide them with the necessary resources for this purpose because of their remoteness. As a result, peripheries, often authorized to make independent, operative decisions, had no alternative but to rely upon neighboring countries to obtain resources. However, this solution often provoked strategic or security concerns for the imperial government. There are several examples of this dilemma in the Russian Far East at the turn of the twentieth century, that is, problems of Chinese immigrant labor, port-franco, and Japanese entrepreneurs' control over regional fisheries. The Priamur Governor-Generalship tackled these dilemmas. The central mass media of the Russian Empire often exaggerated economic rivalries between the border regions, portraying the rivalries in a primordial manner. Nevertheless, the borderlands of the Russian Far East largely maintained mutually beneficial, economically

cooperative relations with neighboring countries, which innovated constantly and adapted to changing conditions.

The issue of the “Hokuyo” fisheries (the Japanese fisheries in the Northern Pacific near Russian/Soviet waters) and conflicts around them provides a typical example of this constant innovation and adaptation. Previous studies of this issue stressed the rivalries between the parties involved in both countries: fishermen, regional authorities, entrepreneurs, fishery companies, politicians, and even public opinion. Whilst not denying the relevance of these tensions, it is important to introduce another analytical model addressed to Russo-Japanese relations.

In both Japan and the Soviet Union/Russia, the process of consolidation of the Priamur fishery system has hardly been studied. Japanese historians’ indifference to this issue seems to be caused by the small scale of the fishery production in those waters at that time. Japanese contemporaries remarked on Russia’s constant attempts to exclude Japanese fisherpersons.¹ In Russia, there have been several studies on this issue. A. T. Mandrik, in his “A History of Fishery in the Russian Far East” (1994), which is a general history from the eighteenth century to the 1920s,² admits the nationalization of fishery by the Priamur governor-generalship without question, never regarding it as one of the possible options in fishery policy. A. I. Alekseev and V. N. Morozov, in their “The Exploitation of the Russian Far East” (1989)³ provide a general history of the region in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This book includes a valuable comparison of fishery techniques and financing between Russia and Japan,⁴ but I do not agree with the authors’ opinion that the Japanese authorities worked

¹ Karafuto teichi gyogyo suisan kumiai [The Karafuto Association of Fixed-Net Fishing], ed., *Karafuto to gyogyo* [*Karafuto and Fishing*] (Toyohara, 1931); Narita Yosaku, *Karafuto oyobi kita enkaishuu* [*Karafuto and the Northern Part of the Maritime Region*] (1905); Roryo suisan kumiai [The Marine Products Association of the Russian Territories], *Roryo gyogyo no enkaku to genjo* [*History and the Current Situation of Fisheries in the Russian Territories*] (Tokyo, 1938).

² A. T. Mandrik, *Istoriia rybnoi promyshlennost’ rossiiskogo Dal’nego Vostoka* (Vladivostok, 1994).

³ A. I. Alekseev and V. N. Morozov, *Osvoenie russkogo Dal’nego Vostoka* (Moscow, 1989).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

out a coherent policy on Japanese fishery in the Russian Far East.⁵ A collection, "A History of the Russian Far East" (1991),⁶ maintains that several entrepreneurs held a monopoly in the Russian Far East fishery industry in the late nineteenth century and ignores structural changes in this industry at the time. As a whole, these studies tend to describe the governor-generalship's fishery management not as a continuing process of trial and error but as a stable strategy.

Particular diplomatic negotiations were held in order to regulate the Russo-Japanese fishery relations at that time. In these talks, diplomats from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs represented Japanese interests, including those of the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, and their Russian counterpart was the Priamur governor-general. This system allowed him to make rapid, operative decisions, bypassing St. Petersburg's bureaucratic formalities and considering urgent local needs. This is why this chapter focuses on the governor-generalship's strategies.

From its establishment in 1884 to the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904, the Priamur governor-generalship aimed to restrict foreign (i.e., Japanese) fishing and, at the same time, promote Russian fishing, though excluding the fishing of the indigenous population. At a first glance, restrictions on Japanese fishery would seem to have benefited Russian regional fishing. In fact, however, Japanese fishing in the Russian Far East waters during this period showed stable growth. In other words, the more the Russian authorities tightened their control, the more Japanese fishing developed. There is no paradox here because the Russian authorities implemented these regulations in a limited manner and, in some cases, even bridled Russian fishing. For example, according to a writer of that time, Japanese poachers increased because of strict limitation of Japanese fishing. Reports by the governor-generals will help to understand the mutual reliance of Russian and Japanese fisheries.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁶ A. I. Krushanov, ed., *Istoriia Dal'nego Vostoka SSSR v epokhu feodalizma i kapitalizma: XII v. – fevral' 1917 g.* (Moscow, 1991).

DEBATES AT THE Khabarovka CONFERENCES
IN 1885-1886 AND THE CONSEQUENCES

In 1885 and 1886, almost immediately after the introduction of the Priamur governor-generalship, the first governor-general Baron A. N. Korf convened conferences of governors and other local leaders (officials, scholars and entrepreneurs)⁷ in Khabarovka (the future Khabarovsk) to work out policies for the rapid exploitation of the region.⁸ These conferences consisted of sessions, one of which focused on fishing. Its participants regarded full-scale progress in the region's fisheries as possible in the near future. They almost unanimously argued that the export of fishery products and their domestic consumption, which would make the region prosper, had been hindered by the lack of specialists, labor force, capital investment, and salt for the preservation of fish.⁹ To overcome this situation, they requested the Priamur governor-generalship to investigate rock salt near Nikolaevsk. In their view, sea salt imported from China and Japan was cheaper than rock salt shipped from European Russia, but sea salt was impure and too bitter for pickling.

There were two methods of taxing fisheries and this was another agenda of the fishery session: taxation as a rent for inshore fishing grounds or tax imposition upon the weight of fishery products. The former was easier to implement, but gave no incentive to develop uncultivated fishery grounds. The participants in the session supported the latter, the existing way of taxation, on the grounds that it would help officials to grasp the situation of the fisheries and would not block access to newcomers. Remarkably, these participants took a positive attitude towards foreign newcomers and approved the policy that Russians would be given priority over foreigners only for new fishery grounds. This limited priority that the Russians enjoyed did not mean the exclusion of foreigners from their fisheries at all.

⁷ *S'ezd gubernatorov i drugikh predstavitelei* (Khabarovka, 1885), pp. 33-34.

⁸ *S'ezd gubernatorov...*; I. Nadarov, *Vtoroi s'ezd gubernatorov i drugikh predstavitelei v gorode Khabarovke* (Vladivostok, 1886).

⁹ *S'ezd gubernatorov...*, pp. 26-27.

The report on the next Conference of 1893 showed that the governor-generalship tried to realize the proposals made by the 1885-1886 conferences.¹⁰ Governor-general Korf's report to the emperor, covering the years of 1886-1891¹¹ and his brochure¹² confirm that the governor-general repeated the view of the conferences in 1885 and 1886. The report gave a brief overview of fishing in Lake Baikal and of Japanese fishing in South Sakhalin. In this report Korf remarked that the Priamur fishery as a whole, even including Japanese fishing for Japanese consumption, was still on a small scale. Concerned about the possibility that lax monitoring would lead to excessive fishing and resource depletion, he requested a rigorous surveillance system.¹³ For sustainable growth of fishing, Korf proposed to build fishing villages with immigrants from inner Russia, as well as to ship qualified salt from there. He noted that the settlement of fishing immigrants had actually started in that year (probably after 1891) in response to an advertisement by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.¹⁴ The topographical work by Korf also maintained that the main problem was the lack of quality salt and labor.¹⁵

Korf's penchant for a fundamental solution of the problem was caused by the underdevelopment of the region's fishery. Market-oriented fisheries (not for home consumption) in Priamur at that time were comprised of salmon fishing in the entire region, kelp gathering in the Maritime and South Sakhalin, herring fishing primarily in South Sakhalin, and sea cucumber collecting, but all these were small in scale. For example, according to relatively reliable sources, Japanese fishing in South Sakhalin was on a scale of 51 fishery grounds, 72 large fishing nets, 41 fishing boats, 1,423 fisherpersons, and a total production of 500

¹⁰ *Trudy III Khabarovskogo s"ezda* (Khabarovka, 1893), "Vvedenie."

¹¹ *Vsepodanneishii otchet Priamurskogo general-gubernatora s 1886 g. po 1891 g. Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del.*

¹² A. N. Korf, *Kratkii ocherk Priamurskogo kraia po ofitsial'nym dannym* (St. Petersburg, 1892).

¹³ The damage which excessive fishing in the Baikal riverine system had caused to its fishery reserves had already been known among policy-makers.

¹⁴ *Vsepodanneishii otchet ... s 1886 g. po 1891 g.*, p. 33.

¹⁵ Korf, *Kratkii ocherk*, pp. 30-31.

thousand salmon in 1991. This amount differed little from that in the early 1880s.¹⁶

DEBATES AT THE Khabarovsk CONFERENCE IN 1893 AND THE CONSEQUENCES

In the early 1890s, in the lower Amur near Nikolaevsk-in-Amur, Japanese fishing entrepreneurs started salmon fishing and additionally purchased salmon fished by Russians or indigenous habitants.¹⁷ The Japanese undertook the management of several fisheries with the military governor's official permission. This operation extended to the whole Maritime region.¹⁸ At the same time, the new fishery regulations in 1890 set marine preserves at many river mouths.

The governor-general and the military governors attended the Khabarovsk Conference in 1893,¹⁹ the agendas of which were broader than those of the 1886 conference. The conference discussed how to regulate salmon fishery in the lower Amur and other fisheries in the Maritime region and South Sakhalin. Concerning the former, the participants argued for the long-term lease of fishery grounds instead of imposing obligations on fishery entrepreneurs. The fishery session of the conference agreed to give absolute priority to Russian entrepreneurs' benefit. Opposing the existing one-year lease system, most of the participants from the business circles requested the long-term (12 years) lease of fishery grounds, together with sites for salting.²⁰ Moreover, several participants criticized the existing system of obligatory

¹⁶ Karafuto minsei sho [The Karafuto Civil Administration], *Karafuto nanbu suisan yosatsu chosa hokoku* [The Report of the Preliminary Investigation of Fisheries around the South Sakhalin] (Toyohara, 1907), pp.72-73.

¹⁷ *Vsepodanneishii otchet Priamurskogo general-gubernatora generala ot infanterii Grodekova 1898-1900 gg.* (Khabarovsk, 1901), p. 82.

¹⁸ *Obzor Primorskoi oblasti za 1891 god* (Prilozhenie ko Vsepodanneishemu otchetu) (Vladivostok, 1892), p. 10.

¹⁹ *Trudy III Khabarovskogo s'ezda*, p. 47.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

procurement of fish by entrepreneurs from the Nivkhs for the sake of the latter's welfare.²¹

Kelp gathering and sea cucumber fishing in Sakhalin and the Maritime region were aimed at export and therefore occupied an important position in the Priamur fishing industry. The debates on the kelp gathering at the conference focused on the problems of labor supply and tax charge, with the assumption that Russia could compete with Japan in this area if a right set of policies were adopted. Russian fishery entrepreneurs were obliged to hire some convicts in Sakhalin, the core area of kelp gathering in Priamur at that time. This administrative obligation was extremely unpopular among entrepreneurs. Few of these convicts worked diligently and the procedures for their employment were complicated.²² In contrast, the Japanese brought their experienced Japanese fisherpersons to Sakhalin at relatively low wages. Russian entrepreneurs worried about their uncompetitive position. At that time, the tax charge for the export of one pud (about 16.39 kg) of salted salmon was seven kopeks for foreigners and five kopeks for Russians. The entrepreneurs insisted on an increase of ten kopeks in these charges for foreigners on the grounds that the Japanese were immune from taxation by the Japanese customs.²³ Officials, but not entrepreneurs, initiated the debates on sea cucumber fishing. They found it necessary to improve the custom system of fishery export and to ban the use of diving gear.²⁴ The 1893 conference showed that the local entrepreneurs began to be seriously concerned about their Japanese rivals and requested the governor-generalship to take measures to raise their competitiveness.

Despite the business circles' protectionist demand, in his report to the emperor covering 1893-95,²⁵ Governor-general S. M. Dukhovskoi proposed to attract Japanese fishing to North Sakhalin to exploit new

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

²² "Zapiska Kuptsa Ia.L. Semenova o morskoi kapuste (Prilozhenie XVIII)," *Trudy III Khabarovskogo s'ezda*, pp. 123-125.

²³ *Trudy III Khabarovskogo s'ezda*, pp. 45-46. The Japanese certainly enjoyed immunity from taxation on the shipment of sea products from Sakhalin up to 1898.

²⁴ *Trudy III Khabarovskogo s'ezda*, p. 46.

²⁵ *Vsepodanneishii otchet Priamurskogo general-gubernatora 1893, 1894, 1895 gg.* The preceding reports by governor-generals had only shown statistics of the general tax amount, while this report provided the statistics of fish catches in round numbers.

fishery grounds and the abundant food supply for Aleksandrovsk's convicts. This report designed the locations of the new fishery grounds with sites for salting and beneficial tax charges.²⁶ Strangely enough, the fact that Dukhovskoi's proposal was carried out²⁷ has been ignored in Japanese historiography. Thus, the myth that the Russian authorities were always restrictive against Japanese fishing was created. Moreover, the report by Dukhovskoi shows that the 1893 conference's request to raise the tax charge for foreigners for exporting salted salmon per pud from seven to ten kopeks had not been realized. In the same report, Dukhovskoi remarked on the need for professional assistance to develop fishing.²⁸ This request resulted in the establishment of the Priamur National Property Agency, in charge of forestry and fishery administration, under the control of the Ministry of Agriculture and National Property.²⁹ Thus, we observe the discrepancies between the protectionist fishery entrepreneurs and the governor-generalship in search of the general development of the whole Priamur fishery, even encouraging the active involvement of Japanese fishers.

THE TURNING POINT IN FISHERY ADMINISTRATION

In the summer of 1898, more than 1,000 Japanese fisherpersons took an active part in salmon fishing operations near Nikolaevsk, where very few Japanese fisherpersons had fished previously.³⁰ The increase of Japanese fisherpersons was a universal phenomenon across the Priamur

²⁶ *Vsepodanneishii otchet... 1893, 1894, 1895 gg.*, p. 96.

²⁷ According to Japanese sources, new fishery grounds under official management were in operation at the projected location, Tymrovo in North Sakhalin, in 1896 and the Japanese fishery entrepreneurs fished and purchased fish there. See Noshomu sho suisan kyoku [The Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, the Department of Fisheries], ed., *Roryo saharin to gyogyo chosa hokoku* [The Report of Fisheries around the Russian Sakhalin Island] (Tokyo, 1900), pp. 84-85.

²⁸ *Vsepodanneishii otchet... 1893, 1894, 1895 gg.*, p. 98.

²⁹ *Priamurskoe upravlenie gosudarstvennykh imushchestv, Uchrezhdenie upravleniia gosudarstvennymi imushchestvami v Priamurskom krae* (Khabarovsk, 1897), p. 14.

³⁰ Noshomu sho suisan kyoku, ed., *Suisan boeki yoran zenpen* [The Overview of Marine Products Trade] (Tokyo, 1903), p. 627.

region. Increasingly more Japanese fisherpersons rushed to Sakhalin after 1896. While there had been 84 areas, 113 large fishing nets and 2,158 fisherpersons in 1895, by 1899 the number of fishery grounds had increased to 227, and there were 244 nets and 4,346 fisherpersons.³¹ Though it is difficult to identify the reasons for this rapid development of Japanese fishing, perhaps this was caused by the improvement in fishing nets, expanding demand for sea products in Japan, the development of uncultivated grounds, and meteorological conditions.

In his report for 1896-1897,³² Dukhovskoi illustrated the decline in kelp gathering and sea cucumber fishing because of the Sino-Japanese War and bad weather. At the same time, continues Dukhovskoi, the war did not affect the other areas of fishery thanks to open ports in Japan. According to him, the Priamur fishery had made steady progress, as was shown by the increase in tax revenues by 150 percent in three years, 1893-95. Fishery entrepreneurs had emerged not only in the Maritime region but also in Kamchatka. An entrepreneur from Astrakhan attempted to salt fish with the latest technology in Sakhalin. In addition, the governor-general presented a plan of the massive shipment of fishery products by the Volunteer Fleet utilizing ice storage.³³

Changing his previous attitude towards foreign fishing, Dukhovskoi began to regard long-term lease of fishery grounds as a forced evil, saying: "Although I understand some benefits of long-term lease,³⁴ I have no other choice under these circumstances where there are not many fishing populations for its vast fishery grounds and where there are consequently few competitors among relatively few Russians and East Asian fisherpersons."³⁵ Nevertheless, he also worried about the unconditional priority on Russians, considering the possibility to falsify fishery ground leases by foreigners in the name of Russians. In fact, some Japanese had already begun this practice with the help of their Russian

³¹ Karafuto minsei sho, *Karafuto nanbu...*, pp. 72-73.

³² *Vsepodanneishii otchet Priamurskogo general-gubernatora general-leitenanta Dukhavskogo 1896-1897 gg.* (St. Petersburg, 1898).

³³ *Vsepodanneishii otchet...1896-1897 gg.*, pp. 48-49.

³⁴ As partly explained above, this manner of lease facilitated inshore transportation and promoted the exploitation of uncultivated fishery grounds. This is why the Sakhalin authorities often entrusted Japanese fishing entrepreneurs with official transportation.

³⁵ *Vsepodanneishii otchet...1896-1897 gg.*, pp. 48-49.

collaborators in Sakhalin. Dukhovskoi concluded his report by expressing his hope for the emergence of willful competitive entrepreneurs, such as Denby and Semenov, who were the leading fishing entrepreneurs in the Russian Far East and had been allowed to take a ten-year lease on several fishery grounds in Sakhalin.³⁶ However, this did not mean that the governor-general began to attempt to exclude foreigners from Far East fishery. He worried about the Russian entrepreneurs' technical and commercial weakness.

In November of 1899, the Priamur governor-generalship issued a new temporary regulation for regional sea fisheries, composed of 59 articles. Prior to this regulation, in July of that year, the governor-generalship had already promulgated a new tentative fishery regulation applied only to the Lower Amur, which prohibited not only all foreign fishing activities but also the employment of foreign labor engaged in all fishing activities. These two regulations in 1899 tremendously influenced Japanese fishery in the Priamur. The main purpose of the November regulation was to give Russians the unconditional priority over foreigners in the lease of fishery grounds and the obligatory employment of Russian laborers. The Priamur National Property Agency actually stated that the regulation was designed to protect Russian entrepreneurs against foreign rivals.³⁷

Understandably, this regulation faced a fierce opposition from the Japanese fishery entrepreneurs engaged in fishing in the Priamur, especially in Sakhalin. The Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs entered into negotiations with the Russian authorities. These negotiations resulted in a temporary compromise before the beginning of the fishing season of 1900 and the Priamur governor-generalship agreed to postpone the application of several articles of the regulation in southern Sakhalin until the end of 1902.³⁸ Nevertheless, the Priamur general-governorship enforced the regulation of July 1899 applying to the lower Amur. After this, the Japanese fishery entrepreneurs in the lower Amur had no alternative but to buy fish from Russian and indigenous population.

³⁶ *Vsepodanneishii otchet...1896-1897 gg.*, pp. 51.

³⁷ *O rybnom promysle v Primorskoï oblasti na ostrove Sakhaline (Zapiska Priamurskogo upravleniia gosudarstvennykh imushchestv)* (1903), p. 25.

³⁸ Kaminaga Eisuke, "Saharin to suisangyo (1875-1904) wo meguru funso [Conflicts over Fisheries around Sakhalin (1875-1904)]," *Suravu Kenkyu/Slavic Studies* 20 (2003), pp. 294-296.

In November 1901, the Priamur general-governorship issued a new temporary regulation regarding the entire regional fishery, which aimed to prohibit foreigners from all kinds of fishery operations in the region except southern Sakhalin for the time being. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan objected to this regulation, leading the Priamur governor-generalship to compromise and postpone its enforcement for a few years.

Why did the Priamur governor-generalship change their fishery policy within only a few years? G. A. Kramarenko, a Sakhalin fishery entrepreneur who originated from Astrakhan, wrote in his book of 1898 that it was too difficult for the Russian entrepreneurs to compete with foreigners without preferential treatment by the authorities in Sakhalin.³⁹ At the same time, the military governor of the Maritime Region said in his report of 1898 that the over-exploitation by the Japanese along the Tatar Strait and the lower Amur had resulted in the latest thin years, which had driven the people of Nivkh into difficulties.⁴⁰ In his report to the Tsar for 1898-1900, Governor-general N. I. Grodekov wrote, "Salmon fishing for export to Japan was the only substantial industry in Nikolaevsk-in-Amur, relatively populated in this region,"⁴¹ but "the Japanese exclusively operated the fishery and the Russians only bought and processed fish till the season of 1898 after the Japanese had first undertaken it in 1893."⁴² Moreover, "the Japanese entrepreneurs had hardly been funded by the Russians and had brought their labor from Japan."⁴³ Grodekov appreciated the effect of the regulation for the lower Amur, promulgated in July 1899: "New entrepreneurs have already emerged in Nikolaevsk, where fishery production has improved in quality and in quantity. In addition, they have smoothly supplied the local population with fish now. Things are going so well."⁴⁴

³⁹ G. A. Kramarenko, *Rybnye promysly na reke Amure i ostrove Sakhaline* (Astrakhan, 1898), p. 6.

⁴⁰ *Obzor Primorskoï oblasti za 1898 god (Prilozhenie ko Vsepodanneishemu otchetu)* (Vladivostok, 1900), p. 12.

⁴¹ *Vsepodanneishii otchet... 1898-1900 gg.*, p. 81.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS IN SAKHALIN AND KAMCHATKA

Despite Grodekov's view, restrictions on foreign (i.e., Japanese) fishing turned out to be harmful to the regional Russian fishing in Sakhalin and Kamchatka. As mentioned earlier, the governor-general announced a moratorium on enforcement of this regulation in Sakhalin before the fishing season of 1900 as a response to the request of the Japanese government, but he opposed any further compromise.⁴⁵ After 1901, responding to the Japanese fishery entrepreneurs' request, the Japanese government hastily drafted a tariff barrier against Russian fishery products and an almost prohibition of employment by Russians of Japanese labor. If these measures were carried out, they would have devastated the Russian fishery.

The governor-general and the Japanese Government reached a season-long compromise at the beginning of the 1901 season. They agreed to freeze each new action and the governor-general promised one season's moratorium on the enforcement of this regulation in Sakhalin. Both sides repeated this action before 1902 and 1903. This compromise was inevitable since fishing in Sakhalin relied much more on Japanese labor and market than fishing in the lower Amur did. The Sakhalin colonization of those days inevitably relied upon fishing, while the initial project of agrarian colonization of Sakhalin based on convicts' labor proved to be impossible due to the meteorological conditions. As the Sakhalin military governor reported in regard to 1899-1901, some convicts and settlers earned their living through fishing and sale of fish to the Japanese. The governor proposed to create more employment by developing fishing.⁴⁶

At the turn of the century, fishing in Kamchatka saw rapid development for only a few years and this fishing progress also included Japanese salmon poaching and American cod poaching. The Maritime military governor in charge of Kamchatka made a detailed analysis of these circumstances in his report for 1900 and 1902. He stated:

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-90.

⁴⁶ *Obzor ostrova Sakhalina za 1899 g. (Prilozhenie k vsepodanneishemu otchetu)* (St. Petersburg, n/d), pp. 46-47; *Obzor ostrova Sakhalina za 1900 i 1901 god (Prilozhenie k vsepodanneishemu otchetu)* (Aleksandrovsk na ostrove Sakhaline, 1902), p. 87.

“With the number of Japanese engaging in our regional fishing growing every year, the conditions surrounding the fishery have represented a substantial change. The current fishing regulation to all the Priamur is designed to promote Russian subjects’ fishing. It is nevertheless difficult to apply the regulation in Kamchatka in my view, for it is impossible to recruit a mass of Russian fisherpersons instead of Japanese ones, considering past results. Accordingly, strengthening our surveillance on their fisheries, we should make an attempt to keep them under control and to collect expected taxes from them, while we should promote the further colonization of Russian subjects.”⁴⁷

Hereupon, the Maritime military governor rather abandoned the objective of promoting Russian subjects’ fishing. Rapidly varying conditions surrounding regional fishing did not allow the Russian authorities to apply a uniform regulation over the whole Priamur.

After the late 1880s, both participants of the Khabarovsk Conferences and the governor-generals talked about fisheries in the Priamur as a whole. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, with the number of Japanese engaging in the Priamur fishery growing every year from the 1890s, conditions surrounding fishing had already varied regionally by the turn of the century. As a result, the regulation of November 1899 as a uniform principle was difficult to apply to Sakhalin or Kamchatka, although the principle was that Russian subjects should enjoy favored treatment over foreigners.

CONCLUSION

The report of the Priamur National Property Agency issued in 1903 revealed that the basic administrative directions for the Priamur fishery was the “nationalization” (more properly, it means “Russianization”) of the industry, that is to say, the encouragement of Russian entrepreneurs’ fisheries and the employment of Russian labor. The report additionally concluded that foreign entrepreneurs had already

⁴⁷ *Obzor Primorskoj oblasti za 1902 god (Prilozhenie ko Vsepodanneishemu otchetu)* (Vladivostok, 1905), pp. 5-7.

completed their role of accelerating Russian fishing since the regional Russian fishing has taken firm root, to a certain extent.⁴⁸

The report of the fourth Khabarovsk Conference held in the same year also stated that their immediate agenda was “nationalization.” There was another argument that the region still needed foreign labor to encourage Russian fishing. However, pointing out that Russian fishing in the lower Amur had achieved a successful outcome in “nationalization” set this opinion aside.⁴⁹

To be sure, the “nationalization” policy was one of the prearranged administrative plans after the late 1880s, but it was not of high priority over the comprehensive, steady development of fisheries or tax revenue enhancement until the late 1890s. There was an important turning point in the fishing policy of the Priamur Governor-Generalship at the turn of the century. As I have previously stated, the military governors of Sakhalin and Maritime were already at that point concerned about the possibility that their new regulation would have a worsening effect on Russian fishing. In fact, after enforcing the regulation of July 1899 in the lower Amur, there were more and more Japanese poachers in Kamchatka.

Thus, the Russian authorities were never consistent in their “nationalization” policy, especially in regard to the exclusion of Japanese entrepreneurs and labor. Moreover, the policy that had gone into effect did not necessarily play its expected role. I neither mean that there was no stable direction in fishery policies pursued by the Russian authorities, nor that Japan enjoyed unchallenged supremacy in Priamur fishing. I only suggest that the Russian authorities devised their administrative measures in fishing through a trial-and-error process, rather than through a set of previously arranged principles.

This chapter combines maritime and imperiological approaches to analyze the fishing regulations implemented by the Priamur governor-generalship. Viewing imperial frontiers from the seas surrounding them gives a clearer understanding of the mutual interactions and interdependence of adjacent imperial frontiers. This leads to recognition of the

⁴⁸ *O rybnom promysle*, p. 36.

⁴⁹ *Trudy IV Khabarovskogo s'ezda, sozvanogo Priamurskim general-gubernatorom D. I. Subotichem 1903 g.* (Khabarovsk, 1904), pp. 7-8.

mega-systems of empires, which Alexei Miller proposes in Chapter 1 of this collection.

The Priamur governor-generalship devised fishery policies only by trial and error. There were compelling reasons that prevented it from ready-made policies. As explained in this chapter, one fundamental reason for this was the dilemma of imperial borderlands experiencing an urgent need for resource mobilization and fearing dependence on neighboring countries. The Priamur governor-generalship was forced to tackle this dilemma under several disadvantageous conditions, such as the vast uncultivated coastlines, the small Russian population, and the large demand for sea products in Japan. On the eve of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, the governor-generalship abandoned pursuit of the “nationalization” policy, and consoled itself with partial sanctions against Japanese entrepreneurs, coordinating moreover these actions with Japanese ministries. The Priamur governor-generalship’s decision to maintain the status quo did not imply its immobility. In some cases, this attitude was motivated by its preference for cooperation with Japan, in other cases by its risk-evading behavior. In this context as well, the Priamur governor-generalship’s fishery policy was characterized by eternal trial and error.