The Northern Frontier of Mongolia in the 17th Century

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Abstract

The dissertation examined the formation of the northern frontier of Mongolia, which was transformed from the frontier lands of the Mongol world into the border lands of the newly established Russian Empire, in the result of the counteractions of the Qalqa Mongol polities toward the territorial expansions of the Muscovites in the 17th century and confirmed later in 1727. Considering the political disunity of Qalqa Mongolia of that time, the dissertation is divided into three parts respectively. In the first part was examined the relationship of the Altan qaγan’s polity with the Russian state. The Qongγoroi Kirgises allied with the Oyirad Dzungar polity in virtue of their close marital connections with the Čoros house, were conquered by Qalqa Mongols headed by Altan-qaγan Šoloi ubasi qungtayiji at the end of the 16th century and were forced to pay the alban tribute to latter. Almost at the same time from the north the Muscovites started their expansion toward Kirgis people. After 1623, when the Oyirads freed themselves from the Qalqa Mongol subjection, the Kirgises were forced to pay triple alban-tribute to Qalqa-Mongols, Dzungars and Muscovites simultaneously. Since the 1640 Great Code confirmed such condition of the Kirgises between Qalqa and Oyirad polities, both of them started to support the Kirgises against the Muscovites. Not accepting the traditional ejen-albatu system in the region (the Kirgis nobles themselves were not paying the alban tribute, but their subjects from the forest people, called kyshtym in Turkic, uriyangqai in Mongolian) the Muscovites were experiencing a failure, trying to oblige the Kirgises themselves with the yasak-tribute. With the capture of Lubsang qungtayiji Rinčin in 1667 the Altan qaγan’s polity was not over, as the previous scholars suggested. The Qotoγoyid noble Gendūn dayičing, recognized as the successor of the Altan qaγan’s throne, tried to bring back the Qongγoroi Kirgises under his control with the support of the Qalqa’s left wing’s Tüsiyetu qaγan. Qotoγoyid troops under his command attacked the joint Dzungar-Kirgis army near the Teletskoe Ozero (mo. Altan Naγur) in September 1687 and inflicted overwhelming defeat to them. But the defeats of his grand ally Tüsiyetu qaγan in the Qalqa-Dzungar war of 1687-1688, interrupted the Gendūn Dayičing’s plan. After the defeat of Dzungar leader Galdan Bošoγtu qaγan in 1696 Qongγoroi Kirgises were subjected to Tsewang Rabtan. But when the Galdan’s former general Danjin Rabtan submitted to Qing in 1702, Tsewang Rabtan decided to move them all far away from the Qing border, knowing that both Qotoγoyid nobles, as the successors of Altan qaγans and the Dzungar nobles headed by Rabtan had full right to pretend on the Qongγoroi Kirgises. The deportation of their Kirgis ‘ejens’ allowed the Muscovites to take easily under their control the remained ‘albatu’ of them consisted from the various ‘uriyangqai’ people with the territory of Qongγoroi.

Eastern Sayan and the North Western Khuvsgul region populated by Mongolic speaking Darkhad people were conquered by Senggün bayатур tayiji from the Altan qaγan’s state at the
beginning of the 17th century and became his domain. Due to the dynastic conflict between the two lineages within Qotoγoyid noble house Senggün tried to gain the support of the Muscovites, who were interested in the expansion of their influence in the region. He suggested to them collect yasak or fur tribute from the local people of the region alternately one by one together and even promised to submit to the Tsar if the latter will agree his suggestions and protect him against the Altan qaγan. But not strong enough as his powerful relatives, Senggün was not attractable goal of the Muscovites, who did not had enough power in the region to enter the internal conflicts between the Mongol nobles. Therefore, in the end Senggün started to provide aggressive anti-Muscovite policy and joined the party of the Qalqa Mongol nobles headed by the Tüsiyetü qaγan of the Qalqa’s left wing, who had a similar problem of the ‘lost’ subjects. In such conditions was formed the dual-tribute system in the Uda River region (the outskirts of the Nizhneudinsk city), where the various Mongolic and Turkic speaking people were living.

But the fragile balance in the region, where the dual-tribute system was established step-by-step, was broken by the attacks of the Russian Cossack parties on the subjects of Geleg Noyan Qutuγtu, the successor of Senggün, for continuing to pay the alban tribute to him. Therefore, he resettled the part of his subjects from the Uda River region, just like his father did once in 1651. And facing the problem to gather the alban tribute from the rest of his people, he decided to gather support from the most powerful Qalqa ruler Tüsiyetü qaγan. He presented his Khar-Darkhad subjects to the 1st Jebzundamba qutuγtu, the brother of latter, as šabi-subjects at the All-Qalqa assembly held in Küren-Belčir in 1686. But with the defeat of the Tüsiyetü qaγan in 1688, he lost his main support. The attempts of him to dialogue with the Russian authorities were interrupted by Dzungar attacks and he had to leave his home land. After the death of Geleg Noyan Qutuγtu, most of the old subjects of him from the Sayan and Uda region, once resettled by Geleg Noyan Qutuγtu to his encampments were subjugated by the Qotoγoyid jasay’s. From them were formed the Aru and Öbür Sirkiten Uriyangqai otoγs in the Qotoγoyid Degürgeči jasay’s banner and the Köbsügil nayur-un Uriyangqai banner during the Qing period. Only the Khar Darkhad people submitted to the 1st Jebzundamba qutuγtu stayed under the rule of the Jebzundamba qutuγtu’s šabi administration. For this reason, the Uda River region with the rest of the Geleg Noyan Qutuγtu’s subjects remained under the control of Russia during the border negotiations in 1725-1727. Ejen – the supreme lord of those people, Geleg-oyirad-qutuγtu was not playing any particular role in the region by that time long passed away.

In the second part of the dissertation was examined the relationship between the Tüsiyetü qaγan’s polity of the Qalqa’s left wing and the Muscovites. The previous scholars, who studied the incorporation of the Buryats to the Russian state, did not define the Buryat subjects, on the return of whom the Tüsiyetü qaγan was talking and made no difference between the various groups, who formed later the Buryat population of the Russian ruled Cis-Baikal and Transbaikal regions. Thus, I suggested my own view of the so-called ‘Buryat subjects’ problem in the relationship between the Tüsiyetü qaγan’s state and the Muscovites. Beginning from the mid-16th century, the Oyirads were driven out to the far west by eastern Mongols, and the former
‘Oyirads’ – the Buryats, known as ‘Qariyad’ to the Qalqa people were subdued by the Tüsiyetü qaγan of the left wing. But real direct rule over them was in the hands of the Sayin noyan’s nobles, who formally were subordinated to the Tüsiyetü qaγan. The Buryats previously belonging to the Oyirad confederation were put under the rule of the first Sayin noyan Tümeŋken/Buriyad sečen čögekür (Söökher and Šüükher noyon in the Buryat legends) on the eve of the Muscovite expansion in the Buryat lands. Not willing to pay double tribute to the Cossacks and the Qalqa nobles, the Buryats fled to Qalqa Mongolıa, with the help of their Qalqa Mongol ejens. It seems, contrary to a widespread opinion of the Soviet scholars, not all the Buryat migrants fled back to their homeland from the Qalqa, seeking for fair governance and lesser taxes under the Muscovite rule. Most of those Buryat migrants from various clans remained in the Qalqa and are still known under the name of Khariads, which was actually the general Qalqa designation of the all western Buryats. The Buryats, who remained in their homeland, were still paying the tribute to Mongol nobles. Detailed examination with the sources shows that Soviet and some Russian scholars due to the aim of ‘the ideology of the ruling class’ used the sources selectively to build a blameless picture of the free-willing incorporation of the Buryat people to the Russian state. Indeed the situation was more complicated and the Russian authorities at the local stages had no power until 1680’s. And could not disturb the collection of the alban tribute from the Buryats by Mongol tribute collectors, who were themselves the Buryats fled to Mongolia. Those Buryats, who were remaining in their homelands continued to consider themselves as the subjects of Qalqa nobles.

The Tunkinsk was the last fortress built in the Buryat land of the Cis-Baikal region to prevent and disturb the collection of the alban-tribute of the Qalqa Mongol nobles. The 10th son of the Tümeŋken Sayin Noyan, Gčin-a Drayšad or Kintasei of the Russian sources, was conducting very active Buryat policy and his son Čaγbidar Dalai sečen noyan continued it after the death of his father. At the same time their senior relative the Sayin noyan, whose encampments were located far from the Russian fortresses was interested in the trade with the Russians, rather than fight with them because of the Buryats. But Dalai sečen noyan could gather the support of Tüsiyetü qaγan and in 1685 with the help of latter tried to solve the longstanding problem by force, but was stopped and called back by the 1st Jebzundamba qutuγtu, who was always seeking the peaceful decision of the mentioned problem. The comparing analyze of the texts and the translations of the survived letters of Jinadasi and Dalai sečen noyan shows that followed attempts of the Qalqa nobles to solve the Buryat question in the ‘diplomatic’ way were failing due to the corrupted translations of those letters. Supposedly, Russian Cossacks were informing their central government not always correctly and some reports were corrupted deliberately. When the Dzungar leader Galdan Bošoγtu qaγan invaded the Qalqa Dalai sečen noyan preferred to submit to Galdan due to their traditional relationship, rather than to submit to Russian Tsar as the some Qalqa nobles did. Unlike the Manchu emperor, who ordered the Qalqa nobles not to quarrel with the Russians, the Dzungar leader was conducting support to Dalai sečen noyan on the Buryat question. But the followed death of Dalai sečen noyan and defeat of Galdan Bošoγtu
qayn compelled the remained relatives of this Qalqa noble to submit to the Kangxi emperor, who ended their longstanding struggle for Buryats in favor of the Muscovites.

The Selenginsk and the Udinsk fortresses built in 1665 were not representing the Russian authorities in the surrounding region till the end of the 17th century. The Selenginsk fortress was standing on the hostile territory of the Qalqa and Tabunangyud nobles. The ‘Buryat’ population, on the return of which the Qalqa nobles headed by the Tüsiyetü qayn were insisting, did not live on the eastern side of the lake Baikal. Only few Buryat fugitives of the Qalqa states were living at the delta of the river Selenga. Suffering the defeats both in the war against the Muscovites and the Dzungars, Qalqa nobles headed by Wčir erke qungtayiji, were forced to submit and sign the treaty of the submission to the Russian Tsar. Some of them, especially who had the troublesome relations with other nobles, tried to gain the full support of their new masters. One of them, Günjijab Mergen Aqai even converted to the Christianity. But facing the improprieties from the local Russian authorities he initiated the flight of them to Mongolia. Submitting to the Qing Empire, these nobles were forced to live in peace with the Russians and to leave their old encampments between the Selenginsk and the Udinsk fortresses westward of the Selenga River. Russian authorities resettled there, their old trusted subjects – the Buryats from the Atagan and Sartol clans, who paid the yasak tribute in the Selenginsk fortress, from the delta of the Selenga River. Due to the fact of their three years long subjection to the Russian Tsar these northernmost Qalqa nobles were forced to recognize the loss of their old encampments on the western side of the Selenga River up to the Udinsk fortress. During the Bura treaty negotiations, the Qing side accepted such condition of the case and the border line was provided much more to the south from the old encampments of the Qalqa nobles.

The third part of the dissertation dealt about the relationship between the Sečen qayn’s polity and the Russian state. The ‘Baryu’ and the ‘Buriyad’ people of the Qalqa’s Sečen qayn’s state originally were the subjects of the Yüngsiyebü nobles, who fled to Qalqa after 1627 escaping the Čaqar’s Ligden qayn. But soon, due to the various reasons, these migrants have lost their subjects to the Qalqa nobles. And the former subjects of them, the Baryu and Buriyad people were affected by Russian expansion in various levels in the 17th century. Some of them, the group of Buriyad people named Kori and Batur first faced the Russian expansion and fled from the lake Baikal back to Onon in 1640’s. Since they were not the old and real subjects of the Sečen qayn’s nobles, some of them were ready to change their new Qalqa ejens with the Russian Tsar. Therefore, in the end the ‘Buriyad’ group submitted to the Russian state in 1679 and 1680 and was resettled by the Muscovites to the Baikal Lake, preventing the deportation of them from the nobles of the Sečen qayn. It was caused also by the disunity of the group on the submission to Russia. From the Baryu groups, just few of them, the clans Togongkon and Odornut were paying symbolic yasak tribute to the Muscovites. The Ongkot people were forced to submit to Russia just in 1688 and in 1689 already fled from there. The descendants of two sons of the first Sečen qayn Šoloi, who had Baryu and Buriyad subjects, were providing single policy toward the Russian state. The common interests and one contradictor brought together
these Qalqa nobles to the ally with the Qing Empire, long before the submission of the Qalqa to the Qing Empire.

The ‘Tabunutskie ljudi’ or the Tabunut people of the Russian sources refer to the massive Mongol population of the Transbaikal region who were dubbed as the ‘Tabunangyud’ or the sons-in-law of the nobles, alluding that their nobles, the descendants of Böke Belgütei, due to the tight marital ties with the Qalqa nobilities had become their sons-in-law. They were bearing various names: Tabunangyud, Ongniyud and Abáya at different times and at different places. When some part of them, later called as Abáya and Abáyanar submitted to the Qing Empire between 1641 and 1666 escaping the Qalqa ‘imperialism’, they have remained in their old territory between the Onon and Kerulen Rivers and eventually came under the supremacy of the neighboring Qalqa nobles. But in the north they were taking the fur tribute from the Tungusic population of the Transbaikal region till the new players, the Muscovites arrived here. The clash of interests between the Tabunangyuds and the Muscovites certainly led to the bloody conflicts. But at the end, due to the Qalqa-Dzungar war, these conflicts were resolved in favour of the Muscovites. Seriously defeated and suffered heavy losses in the surprise attack of Golovin, the Tabunangyuds were forced to submit to the Tsar. Forfeiting the power of their old nobles the Muscovites signed treaty of submission just with the Tabunangyud sayids or common officials. Not agreeing with such conditions the old Tabunangyud nobles could manage the flights of their former subjects from under the Russian authorities. Presumably, due to their complicated relationship with the Qalqa nobilities, the Qing authorities decided to resettle most of them into the Čaqar’s 8 banners. But some of them were gathered by the Qalqa nobles of the Sečen qan ayımaγ and included into their banners. In 1720 about 700 men consisting from 3 Tabunangyud otoγs fled from one of those banners to Russia and were accepted there as the old subjects of the Tsar submitted to the Russia before the conclusion of the Nerchinsk treaty. But the main corpse of the former Tabunangyud community remained on the Qing side and their left territory was occupied by the Russian subjects and the Bura treaty confirmed it in 1727.

During the Dzungar invasion of 1688 number of people from the Sečen qay’an’s polity were forced to flee northward and submit there to the Russian Tsar. The descendants of Sir-a Dasi qatan bayatur, the 10th son of the first Sečen qay’an Šoloi headed by Erdeni Toyin Dayičing, captured by the Muscovites at the beginning of 1689. Although he was begging secretly Songgotu, the head of the Qing mission at the Nerchinsk treaty negotiations, his family was left unreleased and not requested from the Qing side. After the death of him and his wife, Kondok, the younger brother of him converted to the Christianity was transferred to the Irkutsk fortress, from where he fled to Mongolia in 1695. But lost everything, the subjects, properties and consequently the power, the descendants of Sir-a Dasi could not obtain their own banner in contrast to the descendants of other 10 sons of Šoloi. But there was one noble from the Sečen qay’an’s state who submitted to the Tsar of his own free will. The ambitious Qangdu güng, not agreeing with his noble relatives, who were seeking the possibility of the alliance with the Dzungar leader, decided to submit to the Russian Tsar and solve the long term conflict with his
relatives regarding on the appanage heirs, with the support of the Tsar’s administration. But after the defeat of Galdan’s forces, he was handed over to the Qing authorities as the fugitive, who broke the Nerchinsk treaty. During this turbulent period numbers of former subjects of the Qalqa Mongol nobles were ‘naturalized’ on the Russian side, while most of them were displaced from their old encampments allowing the Russian subjects freely occupy them. The 1727 Bura treaty just confirmed the existing situation.

The whole examination of the relationship between the Qalqa Mongol nobles of the three Qalqa polities and the Muscovite state showed the following tendencies. First, the frontier people who were affected by the Muscovite expansion were more important to the Mongol nobles than the land of them. When the Muscovites arrived and started to gather the yasak tribute from the subjects of the Mongol nobles and prevent the collection of the Mongol alban tribute from them, tried to make an agreement with them, suggesting the right to collect the prior the tribute. Then they resorted to the resettlement of their subjects inward to their encampments. The remaining people were still counted as the subjects of the Mongol nobles, from whom the regular alban was collected. Second, the building and the presence of the Russian fortresses were not seen by the Mongol nobles as the occupation of their land. Especially, on the eastern bank of the Baikal Lake, the Russian fortresses were standing amid the Mongol encampments. Due to the paucity of the troops in the fortresses, the Muscovites were not controlling the surrounding territories. According to the view of the Mongol nobles, the Russian fortresses were the places for trade, in which the Qalqa nobles were interested. Third, the later Qing-Russian border line was formed under the circumstances, conditioned by the Qalqa-Dzungar war of 1687-1688 and the followed Nerchinsk treaty between the Qing and Muscovites in 1689. On the both sides of this border line were living the representatives of the same people divided into two sides (the Turkic speaking subjects of Geleg Noyan Qutuytu, the Buryat subjects of Jinadasi Noyan, the Tabunangγud people and the Qori Buriyad, Baryu people of the Sečen qaγan’s nobles). Consequently, the formation of this border line can be characterized as mechanical and coincidental.