

*Dear Colleagues,*

*The following is a draft of a chapter of my dissertation, which is tentatively titled “Taming Tiger Country: Colonization and Ecology in the Russian Far East.” The dissertation will examine connections between settlement, environmental change, and national conflicts in Primorye (a.k.a. Primorskii krai, or the Maritime Province) between 1860 and the early 1930s. The first chapter of the dissertation will be devoted to outlining settlement efforts in Primorye and the development of agriculture. Chapters on specific aspects of the region’s natural environment—forests and hydrology, terrestrial fauna, mineral resources, and its marine and inland waters (below)—and a chapter (possibly two) on the early Soviet era will follow.*

*Since this chapter will fall somewhere in the middle of the dissertation, I have included some general information on the conquest and settlement of the region which I plan to cover in earlier chapters and which I hope this will give some sense of the context. Looking forward to your comments and questions,*

*Mark*

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**“Settling the Seacoast: Ecology and National Conflict in Primorye (the Maritime Province)”**

**Introduction**

Primorye is, in many ways, defined by water. With the Sea of the Japan to the east and south, the Amur River to the north, and the Ussuri to the west, only a small neck connects the province to mainland Asia (see appended map). Out of the mountainous spine of the Sikhotealin range flow innumerable waterways, great and small, swelling periodically with spring floods, monsoon rains, and typhoon inundations. Broad, shallow Lake Khanka, the largest freshwater lake in northeast Asia, empties into the Sungacha River and thence into the Ussuri and the Amur. Khanka lies at the center of extensive marshlands, home to fish, turtles, and legions of migratory birds. Primorye and its coastal littoral contain an abundance of both freshwater and saltwater animals. Here the lines between biomes are blurred, especially in the

highly productive estuaries of Primorye’s major rivers, first and foremost the Amur. Annual spawning runs of salmon and other migratory fish unite the marine and inland environments, bringing millions of these animals deep into Primorye’s interior.

The Russian Empire acquired this world of water through the Peking Treaty of 1860. The Aigun Treaty, finalized two years before, had granted Russia the lands known as the “Priamur,” later called the Amur District, which included the upper Amur to its confluence with the Ussuri (at present-day Khabarovsk) together with the left (north) bank of the river below that point.<sup>1</sup> The area south of the Amur and east of the Ussuri—at various times called Ussuriland, the South-Ussuri region, or Primorye—was to be a joint possession, ostensibly to guard against European (primarily British) seizure of these lands. The wording of the Aigun Treaty was ambiguous regarding the status of Primorye; Qing officials believed it remained a Chinese possession. However, and Russian officials—foremost among them Nikolai Murav’ev-Amurskii, the architect of the treaties—saw a chance to acquire Primorye as well, and travelled to southern Primorye to stake their claim. Although the British investigated the Primorye coastline in the 1850s (naming present-day Vladivostok “Port May”), it was Russian personnel who first surveyed and catalogued the coast with an eye to settlement. The Peking Treaty finalized Russian control over Primorye, permanently blocking China’s access to the Sea of Japan. This diplomatic coup for Russia became known in China as one of the “unfair treaties” forced upon the Qing Empire during its last decades. Subject to dispute following the Sino-Soviet split, this border was finalized only in 2004.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Confusingly, the “Priamur Governor-Generalship,” established in 1884, also included Primorye, along with Sakhalin Island and for Kamchatka. These territories were known as the “Far Eastern Vice-Regency” between 1903 and 1905.

<sup>2</sup> John J. Stephan, *The Russian Far East: A History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 46–49; A. A. Khisamutdinov, *The Russian Far East: Historical Essays* (Honolulu: A.A. Khisamutdinov, 1993), 7–10; W. Bruce Lincoln, *The Conquest of a Continent : Siberia and the Russians* (New York: Random House, 1994), 190–196.

But politically boundaries do not always translate into lived reality. Although Primorye was officially part of Russia after 1860, its ecological and demographic makeup was not initially dissimilar to neighboring northern Korean or Manchuria. Making the land and sea “Russian” was a priority for administrators through to the end of the tsarist era. But how could this be done? Can nature be “russified”? In part, this meant laying claim to Primorye’s abundant natural resources while seeking to exclude the claims of other groups. The province’s coastal waters and internal rivers seemed to offer an immense source of wealth if only they could be harvested. Settlement of the coastline followed a pattern similar to that of inland areas, reflecting a combination of official and unofficial migration. Here too, making use of natural resources—in this case fish, seaweed, mollusks and other marine life—signified ownership, while non-Russian (mainly Japanese, Chinese, and to a lesser extent Korean) involvement in the maritime economy seemed to pose economic and political threats. This competition ultimately precipitated concerted state-led efforts to populate the shoreline and to wrest fishing and cargo industries away from non-Russians.

There were gradations of “Russianness,” however; the administration welcomed subjects—like Finns and Balts—who were not ethnic Russians but deemed Russian enough in the circumstances of the Far East, especially because of their seafaring experience. The impetus to make the shore and sea Russian was more urgent after the Russo-Japanese War, which seemed to confirm fears of a “yellow peril” and which, through the Fishing Convention of 1907, gave legal standing to Japanese fishing in Russian territorial waters. How best to confront the Japanese threat was not at all clear during the years leading up to the First World War, with advocates of small-scale fishing squaring off against proponents of large, state-supported capitalist industries.

The state of Primorye's maritime environment was a recurrent feature in these discussions. Scholars, state servitors, and other observers time and again conflated foreign resource use with irresponsibility and overuse of natural resources, while Russian control seemed to offer a more rational route to sustained prosperity. How was this environment affected by Russian colonization? The attention that ecological problems received in the decades after 1860 permits us to shed light on questions of environmental change, but also complicates this task, as these discussions generally revolved around politically-charged resource conflicts. I argue that "Russian" settlement ultimately had mixed implications for Primorye's marine environments. Some degradation did occur, both directly because of the activities of Russian colonists and because their creation of ports and markets contributed to pre-existing utilization by non-Russians (primarily Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese). However, Russian settlement of the Primorye coastline was primarily aimed at acquiring marine resources from foreigners and toward protecting these resources if expedient to this goal. The question of managing and protecting the province's marine ecology became an important feature of both economic development and national self-assertion. Because of the central role played by the state (both tsarist and Soviet) in settlement and development of Primorye, much of my analysis focuses on the ideas and policies of regional administrators, especially those associated with resettlement efforts. Even more than inland areas, settlement of Primorye's coastline—much of which was unfavorable to Russian-style agriculture—and utilization of its marine resources derived from a political and strategic calculus in which competition over natural resources and protection of aquatic environments became a central point of conflict.

## Land, People, and Early Settlement

Primorye's aquatic world, like its land, was neither a "wilderness" nor a cultivated landscape in 1860. It lay on the fringe of the Pacific economy before Russian settlement, but was very sparsely settled. For Primorye's native peoples, the Nanai (Gold) and the coastal Nivkhi (Giliak), fish were the key to their material existence, comprising the bulk of their diet and even the raw material for their clothes, which were woven out of fish skins. Fishing was less important for the hunter-gatherer Udeghe/Orochi of the interior, but still significant. Both Chinese and Japanese traders and fishermen had long been present in the area. Japanese boats had plied the waters of the 'northern seas' for centuries, though fisheries here were exploited on a limited scale until the second half of the 1800s. Native groups had sent tribute to Chinese emperors—typically in the form of furs and other items—since the Ming Dynasty, if not earlier. The Qing (Manchu) leadership, however, constrained Han Chinese migration into Manchuria and present-day Primorye until the end of the nineteenth century in order to maintain the ethnic purity and frontier hardiness of their homeland. A line of willow trees known as the "willow palisades" demarcated the border, beyond which only a handful of exiles, hunters, and ginseng-traders resided.<sup>3</sup> Though Primorye area still lay within the Qing patrimony, its Chinese population was probably very small. Estimates are contested, especially given the political significance of the question, but it seems that there were likely not more than 3-5000 Chinese in Primorye and the Priamur as of 1860, only 872 of whom were considered "settled," compared to some 11,000 natives.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Robert H.G. Lee, *The Manchurian Frontier in Ch'ing History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), 20-3, 45.

<sup>4</sup> V. M. Kabuzan, *Dal'nevostochnyi krai v XVII - nachale XX vv.: istoriko-demograficheskii ocherk* (Moscow: Nauka, 1985); A. S. Vashchuk et al., *Etnomigratsionnye protsessy v primor'e v XX veke* (Vladivostok: DVO RAN, 2002).

Early travelers to Primorye were impressed by the abundance of aquatic life on the coast, in the Amur basin, and in coastal rivers. Richard Maak, a naturalist who travelled to the Amur region in 1855 and again in 1859-60 under the aegis of the Russia Geographical Society (RGO), noted the great size and quantity of the fish, which were so numerous that in some cases they could be caught by hand.<sup>5</sup> N. Aliab'ev, who travelled in the region in the late 1860s, marveled at rivers so full of fish that they could be heard bumping on the bottom of one's boat, with some specimens weighed up to 160 kilos (352 lb.).<sup>6</sup> Nikolai Przheval'skii, who visited Primorye between 1867 and 1870, wrote "[the river] in the literal sense teems with fish. The abundance of the latter is so great, that they are often killed by the wheels of steamboats. Fish jumping out of the water often drop into boats and sometimes even onto the decks of steamships."<sup>7</sup>

The scale of native fishing practices was also impressive. The Nanai used detachable harpoons attached to fish-bladder floats, or, for smaller prey, fishing nets, some of them quite massive. Nivkhi, on the Sea of Japan coast, used a variety of nets and weirs to catch salmon runs. During spawning season, English traveler George Ravenstein wrote, natives would stretch enormous hemp nets across a river, held in place by cork floats, lead weights, and trestles, with only one opening. "At this opening the Goldy [Nanai] lies in wait with his ordinary fishing net, and the number of fish he is thus enabled to take, with little trouble, is enormous."<sup>8</sup>

Przheval'skii's account was similar. He claimed that Nanai fished with nets up to 90 *sazhen* (630

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<sup>5</sup> Richard K. Maak, *Puteshestvie po doline reki Ussuri* (St. Petersburg, 1861), 14; Richard K. Maak, *Puteshestvie na Amur, sovershennoe po rasporyazhenniu sibirskogo otdela russkogo geograficheskogo obshchestva v 1855 godu* (St. Petersburg, 1855).

<sup>6</sup> N. Aliab'ev, *Dalekaia Rossiia: Ussuriiskii Krai* (St. Petersburg: Obshchestvennaia pol'za, 1872), 60–1.

<sup>7</sup> Nikolai Mikhailovich Przheval'skii, *Puteshestvie v Ussuriiskom krae, 1867-1869g.* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo geograficheskoi literatury, 1947).

<sup>8</sup> Ernest George Ravenstein, *The Russians on the Amur: Its Discovery, Conquest, and Colonization, with a Description of the Country, Its Inhabitants, Productions, and Commercial Capabilities ...* (London: Trübner and Co., 1861), 375.

feet) across that could catch 28,000 fish at a time, while wounding many others.<sup>9</sup> Aliab'ev also witnessed similar large-scale fishing but he instead emphasized its wastefulness. The Nanai, he wrote, fished in the “most barbaric way,” using long nets that catch some fish but fatally wound thousands, which died needlessly.<sup>10</sup> Such critiques of native fishing practices were less common in later decades, when allegations of overuse shifted to other ethnic groups.

The first Russian settlements on the coast were oriented toward naval security (Nikolaevsk on the lower Amur, Vladivostok in the Sea of Japan) or as part of the general effort to colonize the territory with peasant settlers. They reflected both the empire's immense diversity and the difficulties involved in colonizing a distant frontier. At least two villages comprised of Russian peasants appeared on the coast near Vladivostok, one (Fudin) in 1860, another (Shkotovo) in 1865. Unfortunately for these settlers, in 1868, a group of “*manzy*” (as Chinese were known in the Far East) attacked Shkotovo and another village before occupying Askol'd Island near Vladivostok, where rumor had it that gold had been discovered. A pitched battle ensued between the Chinese and Siberian flotilla sailors, thereafter known as the “*Manzy War*,” leaving several casualties and many perpetrators sentenced to hard labor.<sup>11</sup>

In the late 1860s and 1870s, Old Believers from the Siberia and the Amur Region settled several areas in Primorye's interior, include along Avvakumovka River near its mouth at Ol'ga Bay. Some discharged military servitors, who were offered land and financial incentives to settle in South Ussuri krai, also settled in this area. Korean migrants, fleeing famine in their home country, settled the area around Pos'et Bay at Primorye's southern tip, beginning in 1864. The

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<sup>9</sup> Przhval'skii. *Puteshestvie v Ussuriiskom krae*, 90.

<sup>10</sup> Aliab'ev, *Dalekaia Rossiia: Ussuriiskii Krai*, 61. It is worth noting that the fish may not have actually been killed by the fishermen. Aliab'ev seems to have believed so because they did not return and because the natives did not know where they went, but it is likely that these were simply spawning fish making a one-way trip upstream.

<sup>11</sup> T.Z. Pozniak, “Politika Rossiiskoi vlasti v otnoshenii immigrantov na Dal'nem Vostoke vo vtoroi polovine XIX - nachale XX V.,” in *Dal'nii Vostok Rossii: problemy sotsial'no-politicheskogo i kul'turnogo razvitiia vo vtoroi polovine XIX-XX V.*, Trudy Instituta Istorii, Arkheologii i Etnografii DVO RAN 13 (Vladivostok: Dal'nauka, 2006), 43–59.

Governor-General of Eastern Siberia, M.S. Korsakov, and other officials welcomed Koreans, who were highly productive agriculturalists in a region that depended on food imports. Koreans were offered land, tax exemptions, and Russian subjecthood (if they arrived before 1884). Nevertheless, overall populations in Primorye and the Priamur remained low, with less than 17,000 Russian subjects in 1881. Although offered generous land allotments, exemption from military service, and other benefits, the long journey and expense of resettlement meant that few subjects from European Russia made undertook the voyage to the Far East. With good agricultural land remaining around Lake Khanka and the Ussuri River to observe the trickle of over-land migrants, most of Primorye's coastline lacked permanent settlements.<sup>12</sup> A commission appointed by the navy in 1868 to report on economic resources of Primorye and the Amur region observed that fishing was only conducted on a limited scale, even in the Amur estuary, where an “enormous quantity” of fish virtually guaranteed success for even less adept fishermen. The authors maintained that the industry would remain small until the overall population of the territory increased, and did not suggest that a new approach was necessary in the near term.<sup>13</sup>

This was not for lack of effort. Beginning in the early 1860s, Governor-General Korsakov and the Military Governor of Primorye, Rear Admiral P.V. Kazakevich, looked for ways to increase the Russian population, particularly along the coast. Development of Primorye's abundant marine resources was, in this view, a means to an end—a way to lay claim to the territory and to supply the Siberian flotilla (later known as the Pacific Squadron).

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<sup>12</sup> Ya.A. Babrenko, “Rasselenie krestianstva v Iuzhno-ussuriiskom krae vo vtoroi polovine XIX v.,” *Rossii i ATR* no. 3 (2009): 104–5; Iu.V. Argudieva, “Etnicheskaia istoriia staroobradtev Primor'ia,” *Zapiski Obshchestva izucheniia Amurskogo kraia* no. 33 (1999): 146; S.A. Vlasov, *Istoriia Dal'nego Vostoka Rossii: kurs lektsii. Vladivostok: Dal'nauka, 2005* (Vladivostok: Dal'nauka, 2005), 45.; L. V. Aleksandrovskaiia, *Opyt pervogo morskogo pereseleniia v Iuzhno-Ussuriiskii krai v 60-kh godakh XIX veka : dokumental'no-istoricheskoe povestvovanie* (Vladivostok: Obshchestvo izucheniia Amurskogo kraia (OIAK), 2003), 8.

<sup>13</sup> Russian State Naval Archive (hereafter RGA VMF) F. 410, op. 2, d. 4179, 5.



In 1862, Kazakevich wrote to Governor-General Korsakov to press for “rapid formation of a maritime settlement [*morskogo zaseleniia*]” in Peter the Great Bay and on chain of islands off Vladivostok. Southern Primorye’s excellent natural harbors, favorable climate, and lush vegetation, he wrote, offered ample resources for would-be settlers, and its rich fisheries could supply the Chinese and Japanese markets if property developed. Kazakevich suggested offering coastal lands to retired, low-ranking servicemen in the Baltic fleet, with the treasury supplying transportation and loans. He also recommended resettling fishermen from the Baltic and White seas to the Far East. This, he argued, could buttress Russian settlements in Vladivostok, Ol’ga Bay, and on the Suifun River, laying the groundwork for the development of fishing and commercial fleet.

Little, apparently, came of Kazakevich’s suggestion, and in 1866 he wrote the Governor-General again to emphasize the point. The “current residents of South-Ussuri krai,” he wrote, hailing exclusively from the central provinces of Russia, were “unable to make use of their favorable position and derive[d] almost no benefit from the riches that with which nature has endowed the local rivers and seacoast.” He stressed that it was absolutely necessary to attract at least twenty families of fishermen from the Archangel region and to settle them around Pos’et and Vladivostok. Lying so close to China and Korea, there was a very real threat, Kazakevich believed, that Primorye would become a “second China,” if the pace and direction of settlement was not altered. Only directed migration of settlers could “make the *krai* Russian” and could prevent such a scenario.<sup>14</sup>

Kazakevich attracted a small group of Astrakhan fishermen to Nikolaevsk, apparently believing that these fishermen, accustomed to catching beluga in the Caspian and lower Volga, could transfer their skills to the rich sturgeon fisheries of the Amur. While successful at catching

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<sup>14</sup> RGA VMF F. 909, op. 1, d. 44, 16-17, 42ob-43ob.

fish, they were unable to find accessible markets and soon abandoned the trade. Kazakevich's successor, I.V. Furugel'm, succeeded in importing a group of Finns led by a sea captain named Fridol'f Gek. The Finns settled the east shore of Ussuri Gulf, opposite Vladivostok, but their efforts to break into the cargo trade foundered when their ship sank. Gek, along with a Polish exile, Michael Yankovsky, founded settlements on the Sidemi peninsula southwest of Vladivostok. Gek abandoned his farm after Chinese bandits (*Hong-huzi*, or "Red Beards"), who menaced much of Primorye through the mid- nineteenth century, murdered his wife and abducted his son, though he did stay in the region to command the first coastal patrol ship in the Sea of Japan, the *Storozh* (*Guard*). Yulius Bryner, a Swiss merchant based in Vladivostok (and actor Yul Brynner's grandfather), took over Gek's share of Sidemi. Both Brynners and Yankovskys ultimately prospered, the former through trade and the latter through raising deer and horses. While their wealth was exceptional, it is emblematic of the effort to "make the *krai* Russian," especially during the first decades of Russian rule, that two of Primorye's most successful settlers were a Swiss runaway and Polish rebel.<sup>15</sup>

### **Seaweed and Sea-Borne**

Concerns about populating Primorye's shores persisted, as the sea remained indisputably the domain of Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans, only a minority of whom were subjects of the tsar.<sup>16</sup> The most important maritime industry during the 1860s and 1870s was in fact not fishing,

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<sup>15</sup> L. V. Aleksandrovskaia, *Opyt pervogo morskogo pereseleniia v Iuzhno-Ussuriiskii kraii v 60-kh godakh XIX veka : dokumental'no-istoricheskoe povestvovanie* (Vladivostok: Obshchestvo izucheniia Amurskogo kraia, 2003), 9–20; L. V. Aleksandrovskaia and Obshchestvo izucheniia Amurskogo kraia. Primorskoe kraevoe otdelenie, *Odisseia Fridol'fa Geka : dokumental'no-istoricheskoe povestvovanie* (Vladivostok: Obshchestvo izucheniia Amurskogo kraia 1999); Anatolii Rekk-Lebedev, *Dal'nevostochnaia Lifliandiia : estontsy na Ussuriiskoi zemle* (Tallinn: Eesti raamat, 1989), 10.

<sup>16</sup> Chinese residents of Primorye who had been in the territory before 1860 were allowed to stay in perpetuity, though they retained their rights as citizens of the Qing Empire. An 1882 law put Chinese in the Far East the

but rather harvesting the abundant seaweed of Primorye's bays and inlets, which offered relatively easy income. In 1863-6, one *pud* (36 lb.) of dried seaweed could fetch 40 kopeks in Vladivostok markets, and roughly 70 kopeks (0.28 *lan*) in China. One of the few Russian merchants engaged in the trade during the 1860s found his efforts yielded 60 percent profit.<sup>17</sup>

Along with trepang (sea cucumbers), shrimp, and mollusks, the seaweed harvest attracted thousands of migrants annually from China and Korea. A Cossack brigade commander reconnoitering a small section of Primorye's southern coastline in July 1869 found some 400 permanent inhabitants, most of whom were Chinese or Udeghe-Chinese metis. This population swelled to 1000 during the seaweed harvest, which, he reported, netted some 450,000 *pud* (roughly 8300 tons) of seaweed annually worth some 300,000 silver rubles, alongside herring and salmon fishing.<sup>18</sup> Przheval'skii estimated that between 3000-4000 migrant workers descended on Primorye's shores each spring. Official exports of seaweed from Vladivostok climbed through the 1870s to nearly 238,000 *pud* by 1879.<sup>19</sup> While the city gained from this bustling trade, the preponderance of Chinese and Korean labor on the shoreline raised concerns. In 1868, for instance, the commander of the Siberian flotilla warned of a "flood" of Chinese "migrants and proletarians [*vykhodtsev i proletariiev*]" coming to Primorye for seaweed harvesting and other trades.<sup>20</sup>

Some suggested that this trend boded ill for the health of Primorye's shorelines. In an 1881 report, Vsevolod Krestovskii, a writer and former secretary of the Russian Siberian flotilla,

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jurisdiction of Russian courts. Those who could prove they had been residents before 1860 were granted passports for an indefinite period along with recognition of occupation and residence. A second category, designed for temporary laborers, included more restrictive passport and visa regulations. See Pozniak, "Politika Rossiiskoi vlasti v otnoshenii immigrantov na Dal'nem Vostoke vo vtoroi polovine XIX - nachale XX V.," 44-47.

<sup>17</sup> A.T. Mandrik, *Istoriia rybnoi promyshlennosti Rossiiskogo Dal'nego Vostoka (50-e gody XVII v. - 20-e gody XX v.)* (Vladivostok: Dal'nauka, 1994), 40.

<sup>18</sup> Russian State Historical Archive (hereafter RGIA) F. 1315 op. 1, d. 3, 201-202ob.

<sup>19</sup> RGIA F. 1273, op. 1, d. 409, 245.

<sup>20</sup> RGA VMF F. 410, op. 2, d. 4178, 10ob-11ob.

warned of the Chinese and Korean threat to Primorye as a whole and to maritime industries in particular. Seaweed took two years to reach full size and so, according to Krestovskii, some large seaweed traders (*krupnye promyshlenniki*) divided bays and inlets into successively-harvested plots in order to give each section at least two years' rest. Unfortunately, Krestovskii claimed, not all harvesters followed this prudent rule exactly and some disregarded it completely. He warned that such methods were harmful to the future of the industry, since the "algae was exhausted before its full development and unable to properly attach itself to the soil with its roots." Thus, in "those places where [it is] exploited incorrectly, it is unable to regrow a few years. It is said that in former years the Korean coast was, no less than ours, rich in seaweed, but now there is none at all: all was destroyed as a result of the incorrectly conducted industry, which therefore was forced to turn further north, to our shores." Krestovskii spoke of a double loss—both of natural riches and of Russian silver, which Chinese migrants took with them. Only with the development of a "Russian coastal population" could Russians themselves take over this trade, which would bring millions of rubles annually into state coffers. Krestovskii recommended dividing seaweed and salmon fisheries into rental plots, offering free access to "pure [chisto] Russian *promyshlenniki* and Russian coastal settlers," and enforcing the two-year fallowing for seaweed grounds. Without such measures, he argued, Primorye would risk the "complete destruction" of its seaweed and salmon industries, as had already occurred in Korea.<sup>21</sup>

It is difficult to gauge the impact of the seaweed trade. Localized exhaustion of the plant may have occurred,<sup>22</sup> but output for the region as a whole was stable, from an average of 257,000 *pud* annually in the 1880s to over 300,000 *pud* between 1890 and 1896, roughly similar to the

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<sup>21</sup> RGA VMF, F. 410, op. 2, d. 4046, 245-247.

<sup>22</sup> Ferdinand Ossendowski, for instance, a Polish mining engineer, later wrote of an entire bay denuded of seaweed and other life by Japanese fishermen. Ferdinand Ossendowski, *Man and Mystery in Asia*, ed. Lewis Stanton Palen (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1924), 106.

quantities described by Przheval'skii. Though the seaweed “crop” remained a concern, the desolation that Krestovskii predicted did not occur, and the trade continued to thrive well into the twentieth century.<sup>23</sup> In the 1920s, for instance, seaweed remained abundant even in waters of Peter the Great Bay near Vladivostok. Exports from the Far East in 1921 were estimated at 92,000 pud, most of which originated in southern Primorye.<sup>24</sup> Although this suggests some decline after 1900, in this case the invective directed against non-Russian “exploiters” probably did not match their actual impact on marine ecosystems.

Concerns regarding foreign involvement extended to fisheries as well. In September 1881, the head of the Vladivostok city administration (MVD) wrote to the military governor of the oblast, Major General I.G. Baranov, complaining that Japanese merchants had an effective monopoly on salmon fishing in nearby Mongugae River. He charged that peasants, who had rights to fish in the river, made deals with the Japanese, who exported the salmon to Japan. As a result, he claimed, Vladivostok-based fishermen were unable to operate in the river, threatening winter provisioning. The matter was finally resolved the following summer when the military governor ordered the arrest of the offending peasants for unlawful fishing practices.<sup>25</sup> The various “temporary” fishing rules promulgated between 1880 and 1915 also reflect an effort to limit foreign operations in Russian waters. The Governor General's office issued the first regulations for Primorye and the Priamur in 1880, imposing duties on fish and other marine products, including (after 1885) duties on seaweed. In 1885, the rules were modified to favor

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<sup>23</sup> Mandrik, *Istoriia rybnoi promyshlennosti Rossiiskogo Dal'nego Vostoka (50-e gody XVII v. - 20-e gody XX v.)*, 40.

<sup>24</sup> Far Eastern Republic, *Fisheries of the Far Eastern Republic*. (Washington, D.C.: Special Delegation of the Far Eastern Republic in the United States of America, 1922), 10; M.I. Tselishchev, *Ekonomicheskie ocherki Dal'nego Vostoka* (Vladivostok: Knizhnoe Delo, 1925), 51.

<sup>25</sup> Russian State Archive of the Far East (hereafter RGIA DV), F. 1, op. 4, d. 651, 1-4, 12.

Russian producers. No duty was imposed on fish transported to internal markets, and Russian fishermen using Russian-built ships enjoyed discounted export rates.<sup>26</sup>

Duties, regulations, and punitive measures could not make the sea “Russian,” however; only settlers from elsewhere in the empire could accomplish this. Following the establishment of a sea route between Odessa and Vladivostok in 1880, the Governor General of Eastern Siberia, D. Anuchin, proposed to transport settlers by sea at state expense to the Far East. Soon the Volunteer Fleet—comprised of ships purchased from Germany during the Anglo-Russian war scare of 1877—began moving settlers from Odessa to Vladivostok via the Indian Ocean. A South Ussuri Resettlement Office was established in 1883 under the leadership of *amurets* Fedor Busse to coordinate this effort. Most sea-borne settlers were agriculturalists from Ukraine or the Russian Black Earth provinces, but the Fleet also offered a new means to import “fishermen-settlers” to settle the coastline.

Beginning in 1891, Busse headed an initiative designed specifically to bring capable seafarers from European Russia at the request of the governor-general of the recently established Priamur province, A.N. Korf. Well-acquainted with the conditions of the Far East, Busse had served on the staff of the East Siberian Governor-General and Primorye Military Governor beginning in the 1860s, and he was the first chairman of the Society for the Study of the Amur Region (OIAK). He, like others in the administration, was well aware that Russians had little presence on Primorye’s shores and remained a minority in maritime trades. Reflecting on his efforts and the tasks that lay ahead in 1896, he acknowledged the long-standing dominance of Chinese and, to a lesser extent, Korean seafarers in the region.

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<sup>26</sup> Office of the Priamur Governor Generalship, *O rybnom promysle v Primorskoï oblasti i na ostrove Sakhaline* (Khabarovsk: Tipografiia Kantseliarii Priamurskago General-Gubernatora, 1903), 2.

Busse's first concern was the harvest of seaweed, crabs, sea cucumbers and other organisms concentrated in coastal bays and inlets. With the construction of ports and an increase in commercial shipping, the price of seaweed fell and the trade expanded, bringing in more migrants every year. The Russian presence also increased demand for small-scale cargo haulage, one filled by Chinese junks owing to the dearth of capable Russian seafarers.<sup>27</sup> As a result, in the cargo trade the Chinese were "masters of a Russian sea," which was all the more troubling since they represented an unreliable element whose presence was harmful to both "the economic development of Russian settlements and trade, and also to the prestige of the Russian government among the non-Russian [*inorodcheskogo*] population." It would be even more dangerous in wartime, Busse argued, since experience in the cargo trade offered the Chinese many good pilots and scouts, while their junks gave them the means to land troops on the shore. Moreover, they exhibited the "well known malevolence of the yellow race toward Europeans" while their "proclivity for treachery" would always govern their actions. Thus, the Resettlement Office should focus its efforts on settling *pomor*y (seafarers) on the South Ussuri coast in order to displace (*vytesnit'*) the Chinese. Busse doubted that this could be done without government support. Chinese junks cost less to build and staff than European ships, he argued. He pointed out the case of two South-Ussuri peasants who, in 1880, bought a cargo schooner, but who were forced to abandon the trade in the face of Chinese competition. For this reason, Busse maintained, "rational fulfillment of such a plan," required that the state create "Russian shipping and to protect it with various benefits."<sup>28</sup>

In April 1890, the Resettlement Office began to offer fishermen-settlers loans of up to 850 rubles per family, along with free logging rights in coastal forests and other benefits. Busse

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<sup>27</sup> RGIA F. 391, op. 1, d. 1152, 187.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 186-188.

found a willing partner in the governor of Astrakhan province, who arranged for the transportation of 15 *pomor*y (seafarer) families to Vladivostok in 1891. The Resettlement Office provided these first families, who were intended to attract more migrants with tales of the bountiful East, with an additional 3000 rubles worth of fishing equipment, much of which was damaged on the voyage from Odessa.<sup>29</sup>

Upon the migrants' arrival, Busse and his assistant, Prince L.A. Kropotkin, discovered that the *Astrakhantsy* were not ideal colonists. Instead of settling in the areas designated for fishing, the newcomers chose a riverside location in an area Busse knew was unsuitable to settlement, not the least because it was occupied by Koreans. It soon became clear that the "*pomor*y" had neither interest nor ability in fishing. They had, Busse discovered, simply been poor peasants from the black earth region near Astrakhan who had worked only briefly as unskilled workers in fishing artels. They had intended to farm, not fish, in Primorye. Nevertheless, the Resettlement Office demanded that they not "deviate from their assignment," and forced them to settle near fishing grounds, which they did by the June of 1891. Their inexperience showed in the autumn, however. While local peasants availed themselves of a plentiful salmon, the *pomor*y "could not even feed themselves, never mind [store] reserves of *keta* [chum salmon] for sale."<sup>30</sup>

The failure of this initiative did not dissuade the Resettlement Office from its goal of seizing Primorye's coastal fisheries and cargo trade from the Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans, especially in the wake of the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). Although Russian planners continued to underestimate Japan, they were cognizant of the potential threat. Shortly after the

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<sup>29</sup> RGIA F. 1273, op. 2, d. 294, 18ob.

<sup>30</sup> State Archive of Primorskii Krai (hereafter GAPK) F. 1, op. 1, d. 32, 54-64. Aleksandrovskaia suggests that the governor of Astrakhan was well aware that he was not sending actual fishermen and just wanted to rid himself of some poor workers, but I was unable to confirm this. See L. V. Aleksandrovskaia, "Osvoenie poberezh'ia Iuzhno-Ussuriiskogo kraia," *Zapiski Obshchestva izucheniia Amurskogo kraia* no. 30 (1996): 27.



war, Pavel Unterberger, a long-time *amurets* who later became Military Governor of Primorye and then Priamur Governor-General, wrote that the war's "unexpected" results made it imperative to secure the coastline for Russia in order to prepare for any scenario.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, MVD and military units requested guidelines and logistical support in preventing Japanese and Chinese from engaging in "predatory" fishing and logging along the Sea of Japan coast.<sup>32</sup>

Busse warned that waiting for already existing settlers from central Russia to take up fishing and cargo transportation would not solve the question of maritime dominance in the near term. He suggested instead importing settlers from the Baltic, who were "excellent sailors" and who could potentially "secure for Russia the adjacent sea, which the yellow race now dominates."<sup>33</sup> This idea soon gained the support of Alexander Krivoshein, at the time head of the Land Section of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD). Krivoshein, like Busse, saw great danger in the "preponderance of representatives of the yellow race along the coast of the sea of Japan," and their dominance of fishing and cargo trades, which could prove troublesome in times of complications. To correct the imbalance, Busse was permitted to seek settlers from the Baltic region. Besides their seafaring skills, Krivoshein wrote, Balts were skilled seafarers and fishermen, accustomed to a harsh climate, persistent and relatively cultured. Unlike the Astrakhan *pomor*y, they were "trustworthy in a moral sense," and capable of successfully fulfilling the task set before them. As for the fact that they were not ethnic Russians, Krivoshein wrote, "the Ministry believes that when placed face to face with Chinese and Japanese, they will naturally join with the Russian population and, with time, will merge with it completely [*vpolne s nim sol'iutsia*]."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Russian State Military-Historical Archive (hereafter RGVIA), F. 99, op. 1, d. 87, 1.

<sup>32</sup> RGIA F. 1, op. 4, d. 973, 12-14.

<sup>33</sup> RGIA F. 391, op. 3, d. 1152, 189; GAPK F. 1, op. 1, d. 32, 94.

<sup>34</sup> RGIA F. 1273, op. 1, d. 294, 18-19ob.

In 1899, the Resettlement Office offered willing parties from the Baltic regions of Estland, Livland, and Courland up to 1000 rubles toward settlement along the Sea of Japan, much more than the 135 rubles available to agricultural migrants. To ensure the fishermen-settlers did not go the way of the Astrakhan *pomory* and turn to farming, they were granted a maximum of 15 *desiatins* (roughly 40 acres) per family, which was deemed insufficient for an independent farming household. Settlers also enjoyed a 10-year exemption from duties and granted free use of state forests during that time period. Significantly, these provisions did not extend to those employing foreign workers, a measure almost certainly designed to exclude the Chinese and Japanese from expanding their presence in maritime industries.<sup>35</sup> This second initiative brought more success than the first. Within the year, some 75 Baltic fishermen arrived to settle on the coast, and their numbers swelled during the following years. As Anatolii Lekkerbedev has pointed out, the Estonian and Latvians earmarked for settlement to the Far East were in fact not “natural sailors.” Agriculture, not fishing, was their main occupation, in part because their landlords had exclusive rights to coastal waters, requiring others to pay for usage. It was land hunger and state benefits, not the prospect of rich fisheries *per se*, that drew Baltic peoples to the Far East. Nevertheless, in Primorye these communities did turn, at least in part, to fishing and cargo transportation.<sup>36</sup>

The settlement of Estonians and Latvians on Primorye’s coast points to flexible conceptions of “Russianness” on this distant frontier. Busse and Krivoshein used the same language to describe Russian-European unity in the face of the “Asian” threat, suggesting an acceptance of racial categories that perhaps seemed more important than linguistic or religious

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., op.1, d.294, 20-24.

<sup>36</sup> Rekk-Lebedev, *Dal’nevostochnaia Lifliandiia*, 11–13.

markers.<sup>37</sup> Several years later Unterberger, in discussing how to confront the “Yellow Race,” made a point of excluding “other yellows” like Tatars and Kirgiz from settlement and work restrictions, but only because they were so few of them in the Far East.<sup>38</sup> The fate of Korean settlers suggests shifting understandings of race and allegiance in Primorye. Welcomed into the empire during the 1860s and 1870s, they were initially the darlings of administrators—hard-working, sober, productive, willing to learn Russian and—in some cases—to convert to Orthodoxy. Moreover, unlike the Chinese or Japanese, they did not seem to represent an irredentist power. What Terry Martin, in his discussion of Soviet nationalities policy, has called the “Piedmont Principle” was less relevant in the Korean case in the nineteenth century. However, after 1905 the Koreans were increasingly conflated with other ethnic groups, especially the Japanese, and were of course ultimately deported in 1937.<sup>39</sup> The experiences of Koreans, Balts, and other groups in Primorye point to the ways in which “human gardening” could interact with regular gardening, in the sense that administrators to match people and resources for the sake of the empire.

### **Primorye’s Fisheries after 1905**

By the turn of the century, a nascent “Russian” maritime economy had developed along much of the Primorye coastline, with settlements of Orthodox Russians and Ukrainians, Old Believers, Finns, Balts, and the odd Baltic German in a strip stretching from Pos’et Bay in the south to Ol’ga Bay in the north. Populations, however, remained sparse. As of 1896, about 4000

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<sup>37</sup> See especially David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Toward the Rising Sun :Russian Ideologies of Empire and the Path to War with Japan* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001), 34-41, 181-187.

<sup>38</sup> RGIA F. 391., op. 3, d. 1137, 71ob-72.

<sup>39</sup> Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 312–319; Babrenko, “Otnosheniia russkikh krest’ian i koreitsikh pereselentsev na iuge Dal’nego Vostoka vo vtoroi polovine XIX - pervoi treti XX vv.”

settlers inhabited districts abutting the coast, many settled on rivers that emptied into the sea rather than on the shore itself.<sup>40</sup> An immense stretch of coastline between Ol'ga Bay and the Amur remained relatively unpeopled. At 1903 conference on settlement matters in the Ussuri region, one representative spoke of an “evil fate” hanging over colonization of the coast, which had “hitherto... occurred without any success.”<sup>41</sup>

Resettlement officials, naturalists, and journalists increasingly turned to the idea of a foreign threat to “Russian” aquatic life around the turn of the century. In 1899, A.A. Rittikh reported to the Committee for the Siberian Railway that, according to local inhabitants and officials, fishing grounds were previously much richer, attracting “whole flotillas of foreign [*inozemnykh*] fishermen,” but “[the sea] is now exhausted, and the hunt has moved north.” Rittikh asserted that salmon fisheries were hardest hit; whereas previously Peter the Great Bay had teemed with fish, foreigners had exhausted it almost entirely.<sup>42</sup> He counseled greater regulatory oversight and enhanced settlement measures. Similarly, A.P. Sil'nitskii, at the time an official with the Governor General's chancellery, reported that Koreans on the Ussuri were impeding peasant fisheries. The peasants alleged that Koreans fished in a predatory (*khishchnicheskii*) manner, clogging up the river with various fishing implements and catching so many fish that they polluted the river with unused carcasses.<sup>43</sup> Publicist D.A. Shreider also railed against Japanese and Chinese fishing practices. He claimed that in 1894, the Japanese had extracted some 60,000 rubles worth of fish from Russian shores, while the Chinese had taken 126,000 rubles in seaweed. No traveler in Ussuri *krai*, he wrote, would get used to “the picture

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<sup>40</sup> Primorskii oblastnii statisticheskii komitet, *Naseleennia mesta Primorskoii oblasti v 1896 godu*, ed. I.S. Kolbasenko (Nicol'sk-Ussuriisk: Tip. F.V. Misiury, 1899), 3–4.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Aleksandrovskaia, “Osvoenie poberezh'ia Iuzhno-Ussuriiskogo kraia,” 30.

<sup>42</sup> A.A. Rittikh, *Pereselencheskoe i krest'ianskoe delo v Iuzhno-Ussuriiskom Krae* (St. Petersburg, 1898), 17–8. Rittikh, it should be noted, advocated only controls on Japanese and Chinese fishing; by no means did he seek to limit the industry as a whole.

<sup>43</sup> A. Sil'nitskii, *Kulturnoe vlianie ussuriiskoi zheleznoi dorogi na Iuzhno-ussuriiskii krai* (Khabarovsk: Tip. Kantseliarii Priamurskogo General-Gubernatora, 1901), 70.

of reckless embezzlement [*raskhishchenie*] of those gifts which nature has so generously provided....it would be better to change the word ‘exploitation’ [*eksploatatsiia*] (of natural wealth) for the term ‘extermination’ [*istreblenie*].”<sup>44</sup>

The presence of Japanese fishermen in Russian waters was not a recent development, but the matter became more threatening after the turn of the century. Already in 1903, the office of the Ministry of State Domains (MGI) for the Priamur and Primorye, which oversaw fisheries after 1898, prefaced fishing regulations by stating the necessity of countering Japanese economic influence. Using Russians as front men, Japanese fishing concerns had imported their own tools and labor to exploit these rich fisheries. The MGI argued that this sort of “capitalist industry” gave no benefit to local Russian and native populations, since “foreign *rybopromyshlenniki* [proprietors of fishing enterprises] often used approaches and methods that deprived the industry from local fishermen,” threatening to ruin the Russian fishing economy “in its infancy.” The regulations stipulated that Russian subjects alone were permitted to fish on the lower Amur, though anyone could process the fish onshore, and they were forbidden to resell their plots to foreigners. The MGI promulgated very detailed rules regarding fishing methods. Fishermen used a great variety of nets and lines for operating in different areas, whether in coastal waters, in the Amur estuary, or in narrower waterways. Singled out for special attention were Japanese and Nivkhi gill nets. Gill nets, which are typically staked into a river bed, stretching across a water channel, can capture an enormous quantity of spawning fish very quickly. Legally, these nets were required to leave the deepest part of the channel “free for the passage of fish” and multiple nets could not be placed within two *versts* (roughly 2 miles) of one another. Though they

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<sup>44</sup> D. I. Shreider, *Nash Dal'nii Vostok. (tri goda v Ussuriiskom Krae)* (St. Petersburg: A.F. Devrien, 1897), 256.

received greater latitude in some areas, peasants and natives were absolutely banned from using Japanese-style nets.<sup>45</sup>

Later rules also prohibited catching an “excessive quantity” of fish (the quantity was undefined), and targeted waste and inefficiency. Thus, the practice of catching fish for roe while discarding unused carcasses was banned on pain of fines and confiscation of fishing implements. The employment of foreign workers was also a concern. Peasants, who had free access to the waters adjacent to their settlements, were unable to use hired labor in exploitation of marine resources. Fines for employing foreign subjects could reach 100 rubles, four times the sum charged for hiring Russians.<sup>46</sup>

There is little to suggest that such regulations had much effect on fishing along Primorye’s coast, except on the odd occasion that they could be enforced. The Finnish sea captain Gek on several occasions confiscated the implements of Japanese fishermen operating Russian waters, but such successes were rare.<sup>47</sup> The regional division of the Department of Agriculture and Land Management (GUZZ) continued the refrain that the Japanese were “almost the sole masters [*khoziaievami*]” of the coastal fishing industry, and that Japanese fishing practices had a “predatory, unlawful character,” as they were operating illegally within river mouths, preventing fish from ascending to their spawning grounds upstream. The result, according to GUZZ, was not only a reduction in the amount of available fish, but also the threat of depriving “our *inorodtsy*, living upstream, of their food reserves.” GUZZ compared Japanese actions around Primorye to those of American whalers and cod fishermen in the far north, whose approach to natural resources and native populations showed “a predatory character

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<sup>45</sup> Office of the Priamur Governor Generalship, *O rybnom promysle v Primorskoï Oblasti i na ostrove Sakhaline*, 4-5, 9.

<sup>46</sup> State Archive of the Russian Federation (hereafter GARF) F. 3773, op. 1, d.1., 4.

<sup>47</sup> Aleksandrovskaiia, “Osvoenie poberezh’ia Iuzhno-Ussuriiskogo kraia,” 27.

[*khishchnichestva*] and which [was] aimed at the destruction of natural resources and the exploitation...of the locals.”<sup>48</sup>

A junior naval officer named Kurtukov, sent on behalf of the Resettlement Office to investigate settlement conditions on the lower Amur, spoke of the practice of fishing by with large weirs [*zaezkami*], which caused “more [fish] die than go to human use.” Kurtukov singled out Japanese-style weirs in particular. “There is really nothing so terribly barbarous,” he wrote, since the nets “collect not only those fish that the fishermen needs at that moment, but also others.” Kurtukov also lamented that Russian fishermen (who he claimed were predominantly Jews) acquired fishing parcels (*uchastki*) from the crown, then rented them at inflated prices to the Japanese. As a result, Russia was the “most zealous supplier of the Japanese quartermaster” right up until 1905. He expressed high hopes for Nivkhi on the Amur, however, who regularly caught up to 10-20,000 fish daily for two months to feed themselves and their dogs. To this end, Kurtukov recommended “rational schools” to win the Nivkhi’s loyalty and to enlighten them with the “light of truth, but not the Church’s truth, which the Giliaks [sic] fear, but that which should be an asset of all peoples, regardless of religious cult.”<sup>49</sup>

Unterberger, who served as Priamur Governor-General from 1906-1910, also singled out the Japanese for their profligacy. He argued that the extraction of salmon from Russian waters by the Japanese had “taken on such scale and character that it must inspire apprehension for the future.” He too spoke of the “predatory nature” of Japanese fishing, by which he meant both wastage and overuse, since they they caught more fish than they could process and left much of the catch to spoiled. Unterberger claimed there were ominous signs that the salmon stocks were in decline, including annual reports from settlers to that effect. To underline the danger,

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<sup>48</sup> RGA VMF, F. 417, op. 1, d. 3795, 62ob-63ob.

<sup>49</sup> RGIA F. 391 op. 3, d. 626, 1-3, 9-10.

Unterberger pointed to the example of Peter the Great Gulf, where during the previous 20-30 years “abundant reserves of *keta* [chum salmon] were exterminated almost completely.” “We see the same thing,” he wrote “on the coasts of Japan and Korea.” Unterberger also cited the Chinese practice of gathering trepang using diving bells, which he also deemed predatory, as “in this way even the small [sea cucumbers] are caught, without having reached full size.” Once again, he pointed to the shores of Japan and Korea, where “the trepang [have] completely disappeared.” Unterberger’s alarm must be viewed with some skepticism, given his strong anti-Asian sentiments. He openly advocated deporting Chinese, Japanese, and even Koreans, famously saying that “we didn’t occupy this region so it could be colonized by yellows.”<sup>50</sup> However, Unterberger represents but an extreme example of a general tendency to invoke nationalist or racist language in defending Primorye’s natural resources.

As these accounts indicate, writing on natural resources in Primorye (and in Russia more broadly) often turned to the idea of “predation” (*khishchnichestvo*), which could encompass the charges of “barbarism,” waste, illegality, immorality, or greed. In this regard, native peoples and “nature” occupied a very similar rhetorical place. They were, in a sense, children of nature, requiring protection from foreign depredations or education to correct “barbarism.”<sup>51</sup> With the aid of reason, they could be more productive subjects and brought into the Russian fold, just as reason could protect nature and utilize it for the good of the Russian state. Most sources use the term “non-Russian” (*inorodtsy*) for Nivkhi, Nanai, and Giliak peoples and “foreigners” (*inostrantsy*, *inozemtsy*) or “aliens” (*prishlye*) for Koreans, Chinese, and Japanese. Though

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<sup>50</sup> P.F. Unterberger, *Priamurskii krai, 1906-1910 g.g.*, Zapiski Imperatorskago russkago geograficheskago obshchestva po otdeleniiu statistiki (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia V.O. Kirshbauma, 1912), 143–150.

<sup>51</sup> On this question, see especially Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 73–94; Bruce Grant, *In the Soviet House of Culture: a Century of Perestroikas* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).



native groups were clearly “non-Russian,” they seemed to lie closer to Russianness than “foreigners,” who represented a political, economic, and ecological threat.

Fears of ecological degradation in Primorye’s fisheries were not wholly rhetorical. Many sources suggest that there were at least localized declines in fish catches. Vladimir Arsen’ev, who was more even-handed in allocating blame for environmental degradation, echoed Unterberger when he blamed the Chinese for over-exploiting Primorye’s trepang. In the diary of his 1906 expedition, he noted (and underlined), “In China, the trepang are all caught. The trade goes on only in Ussuriiskii Krai.”<sup>52</sup>

Stocks of sturgeon-type fishes—both the Amur sturgeon (*Acipenser schrenckii*) and the larger kaluga sturgeon (*Huso dauricus*) had become more scarce by the end of the nineteenth century. In contrast to seaweed or trepang harvesting, this was a trade dominated by Russians. According to Maak and L.I. Shrenk, another naturalist who visited Primorye in the 1850s, sturgeon existed in large numbers not only on the Amur, but also on its many tributaries. At that time, the Ussuri and Lake Khanka were teeming with sturgeon of up to 30-50 *pud* (about 1080-1800 lb.), allowing the local population could engage in profitable commercial fishing. Przheval’skii had marveled at the fact that such enormous fish could exist in the shallows of Lake Khanka (whose maximum depth is around 30 feet).<sup>53</sup>

In 1894, however, N.A. Kriukov, an agronomist with the Governor General’s office and one of the foremost authorities on the Far Eastern economy, reported that there were

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<sup>52</sup> V.K. Arsen’ev, “Polevye dnevniki ekspeditsii V.K. Arsen’eva 1906 goda maket izdaniia,” *Zapiski Obshchestva izucheniia Amurskogo kraia* 36, no. 1 (2002), 41. Arsen’ev, though critical of both Russians and non-Russians on questions of conservation and “predation,” was also one of the first to recommend forcibly resettling Koreans and Chinese away from border regions. See Stephan, *The Russian Far East*, 212.

<sup>53</sup> P. Rusanov, “K zapreshcheniiu lova osetra i kalugi v basseine reki Amura,” *Ekonomicheskaiia Zhizn’ Dal’nego Vostoka* no. 9 (1927): 77.

“significantly fewer” sturgeon on the Amur and Ussuri than in the past. Notably, Kriukov did not only blame non-Russians for the decline, but rather a widely used and “barbaric” sort of net, known as a *samolov*, which fatally wounded far more fish than it actually caught. Pointing to the experience of the Volga and of Lake Baikal, Kriukov argued that “predatory methods of fishing can quickly destroy natural riches... one cannot leave fisheries, the people’s wealth, to the arbitrariness of that same people [*na proizvol etogo samogo naroda*].” Instead, it was necessary to “care for the people’s descendants, so that they are not forced to live only on the memories of fish.”<sup>54</sup>

There are other indications of a decline in sturgeon stocks, including fishing regulations for Primorye and the Priamur, promulgated between 1899 and 1901, which reflect concern for this species in particular. Sturgeon fishing during spring spawning season was banned (unless conducted with a simple hook) in order to conserve fish reserves. The ban extended to the entire length of the Amur, the Ussuri, and Lake Khanka, and applied also to the sale and purchase of sturgeon and its roe. Certain lakes and small rivers near the Amur estuary were declared off-limits (*zapovednye*) to all forms of sturgeon fishing. Catching undersized sturgeon—Amur sturgeon (*Acipenser schrenckii*) of less than 16 *vershoks* (roughly 28 inches) and kaluga sturgeon (*Huso dauricus*) of less than 24 *vershoks* (42 inches)—was banned year-round, a measure that was reaffirmed in 1915 in order to avoid the “rapid destruction of sturgeon-type fishes.”<sup>55</sup> An official from the MGI cautioned in 1908 against resettling fishermen from Astrakhan because

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<sup>54</sup> N.A. Kriukov, *Nekotorye dannye o polozenii rybolovstva v Priamurskom krae*, *Zapiski Priamurskogo Otdela IRGO* 1 (St. Petersburg: Tip. Imperatorskoi akademii nauk, 1894), 46-7, ii.

<sup>55</sup> Office of the Priamur Governor Generalship, *O rybnom promysle v Primorskoii oblasti i na ostrove Sakhaline*, 21-2; GARF F. 3773, op.1 d.1. Amur sturgeon can reach nearly 10 feet in length, kaluga more than 13 feet. John R. Paxton and William N. Eschmeyer, eds., *Encyclopedia of Fishes* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1998), 76.

their skill with catching sturgeon was of little use when “these species are greatly exhausted [*sil'no istoshcheny*] in the Amur.”<sup>56</sup>

Given the value of sturgeon (black) caviar, it is no surprise that stocks declined. According to Vladimir Arsen'ev, peasants on the Amur and its tributaries pursued sturgeon fishing almost without exception. Kaluga caviar could bring in immense sums—Arsen'ev estimated 1500-3000 rubles per year was possible. The MGI reported that one peasant on the lower Amur gathered 2800 rubles worth of caviar in one season alone, an astronomical sum. As for the former riches of Ussuri and Lake Khanka, one observer wrote, by the mid-1920s they had simply become “a thing of the past [*otoshli v oblasti predanii*]”. Though both sturgeon species survived through the twentieth century (they are now extremely rare, but still exist in the wild), settlement of the Amur and Ussuri basins seems to have brought about rapid and long-lasting reduction in their populations.<sup>57</sup>

Salmon fisheries, by far the most important in Primorye's coastal and inland waters, present a more equivocal picture. Statistics on Far Eastern fisheries are sparse before 1906, and even later seldom differentiate by region or species, so decline in one might be offset by another when taken in aggregate. Nevertheless, there are a few indications that salmon stocks around Primorye did experience some decline during the early twentieth century. The quantity of salmon reaching inland waterways almost certainly declined after roughly 1900, judging by changes in the Nanai household economy, which had previously been heavily dependent on

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<sup>56</sup> RGIA F. 391, op.3, d.1129, 176.

<sup>57</sup> V.K. Arsen'ev, *Voенно-geograficheskii i voенно-statisticheskii ocherk Ussuriiskogo kraia, 1901-1911 g.g.* (Khabarovsk: Tipografiia shtaba Priamurskago voennago okruga, 1911), 131; M. L Krykhtin and V. G Svirskii, “Endemic Sturgeons of the Amur River: Kaluga, *Huso Dauricus*, and Amur Sturgeon, *Acipenser Schrenckii*,” *Environmental Biology of Fishes* 48, no. 1/4 (1997): 231–239; Rusanov, “K zapreshcheniiu lova osetra i kalugi v basseine reki Amura,” 77–8.

salmon runs.<sup>58</sup> Catches on northern Sakhalin opposite the Amur estuary, peaked in 1912 and declined rapidly through 1916.<sup>59</sup> A 1923 study concluded that “fish exhaustion” on the lower Amur “appear[ed] fully, positively threatening,” since while roughly 21,000 *keta* (chum salmon) were caught in 1909, yields dropped rapidly to 11,500 in 1913 and a low of 700 in 1916. The greatest drop, however, was in 1914, suggesting that a fall in production may simply have been due to the fact that so many workers had been drafted.

On the other hand, herring fisheries, which should have been similarly affected by the loss of labor power, expanded through to the 1920s, perhaps to offset the reduction in salmon stocks.<sup>60</sup> Japanese fishing firms did not notice a depletion of salmon in Russian waters by the mid-1930s, though by this time most had moved to fishing in open (rather than coastal) waters.<sup>61</sup> Given that salmon fisheries in the Far East as a whole, including on the lower Amur, thrived throughout the Soviet era, it seems unlikely that fishing had the same long-term effect on salmon that it had on sturgeon. However, it may have reduced salmon runs in southern Primorye and the Amur basin, as many observers suggested.

### **Toward Industrial Fishing, 1908-1914**

Thus, the actual state of Primorye’s fisheries is not one of unambiguous overall degradation. That ecological questions received as much attention as they did probably had more to do with geopolitical concerns than proto-environmentalism. The Russo-Japanese Fishing Convention of 1907, part of the Treaty of Portsmouth that ended the war between the two powers, gave Japanese fishermen the right to operate in Russian territorial waters with the

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<sup>58</sup> Shira Sasaki and Kokuritsu Minzokugaku Hakubutsukan, *Human-Nature Relations and the Historical Backgrounds of Hunter-Gatherer Cultures in Northeast Asian Forests: Russian Far East and Northeast Japan*, vol. 72 (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2009), 21.

<sup>59</sup> A.T. Mandrik, *Istoriia rybnoi promyshlennosti Rossiiskogo Dal’nego Vostoka (50-e gody XVII V. - 20-e gody XX V.)* (Vladivostok: Dal’nauka, 1994), 51.

<sup>60</sup> Tselishchev, *Ekonomicheskie Ocherki Dal’nego Vostoka*, 49.

<sup>61</sup> Barbara Wertheim, “The Russo-Japanese Fisheries Controversy,” *Pacific Affairs* 8, no. 2 (June 1935): 196.

exception of inland waterways, river mouths, and inlets. They bought the rights to fishing parcels at annual auctions held in Vladivostok. But Japanese dominance of Far Eastern fisheries went beyond the letter of the convention because Japan's fishing fleet was far larger than the Russian, and because Japan remained the largest accessible market for sea products.

Consequently, the years after 1907 saw redoubled efforts to populate Primorye's shores. The construction of the Trans-Siberian railroad, mostly completed by 1904, facilitated this initiative somewhat. The newcomers (*novosely*), tended to be poorer than the "old-timers" (*starozhily*) who had established themselves in the region, and were typically forced to occupy lower-quality lands. How to best settle *novosely* on coastal lands (especially north of Ol'ga Bay) was a key source of disagreement within the Resettlement Office and other administrative departments. These debates reveal a great deal about the state's approach to marine resources and economic development in Primorye during the twilight of the empire. They also illustrate how the language of conservation could be employed to imperial ends.

As before the war, the primary goal was enabling Russian subjects to utilize marine resources, even if this meant some ecological impact. A senior resettlement official, S.I. Shilkevich, summed up this "use it or lose it" mentality well when he wrote:

In no case can we ignore the consideration that allowing wide access to capital creates predatory exploitation. The phase of predatory exploitation is, to a degree of course, unavoidable in a new territory...and without a doubt it is better to come to terms with the loss of a known percentage of natural capital [*prirodnikh kapitalov*] because of predation [*khishchnichestvo*] than to lose that capital, along with territory that contains it."<sup>62</sup>

Accepting the necessity of "predation" for the national good was one thing; making it a reality was another matter entirely. The Fishing Convention presented further obstacles to the development of coastal fisheries, as it undermined previous efforts to displace the Japanese from

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<sup>62</sup> RGIA F. 391, op. 3, d. 1152, 82-3.

Russian waters. Consequently, administrators sought ways to make use of areas not exploited by foreign fishermen, such as the river mouths and inlets from which the Japanese were technically banned.

In 1906, the Ministry of Finance sent its fisheries expert, N.V. Sliunin, to investigate the situation in Far Eastern waters. Sliunin advised more intensive settlement of Primorye's northern coastline, where rich fisheries lay mostly unused. He believed that previous settlers had occupied bays in which there were few fish, or where there were lands fertile enough to abandon fishing as a main source of income. He noted that one community of Baltic settlers, for instance, had done just this, depending on agriculture rather than the sea. What was needed were "real fishermen," Sliunin wrote, and a program which would "*by confidential means* offer wide assistance to Russian *rybopromyshlenniki*." He recommended extending further financial aid fishermen-settlers, believing that it would be repaid many times over through the development of marine fisheries.<sup>63</sup>

How best to carry this out spurred some debate among officials charged with resettlement. In May 1907, a confidential proposal was circulated containing rules for coastal settlement, which would continue to allocate Russian subjects, except Koreans and Chinese, the right to settle along the shoreline, maintaining the 15 *desiatin* allotment. Settlers were limited to hiring one foreign worker for every Russian male. If they employed too many foreigners, their fishing tools could be confiscated. The state would retain rights to certain productive areas of the shoreline and along coastal rivers, "development of capitalist production," including the herring fisheries north of Ol'ga Bay. In this way, there could be a substantial Russian population while allowing the possibility of capital-intensive industry.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> RGIA F. 391, op. 3, d. 262, 54ob. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>64</sup> RGIA F. 391, op.3, d.1167, 2.

These particular provisions elicited few objections, but others raised a number of questions at a commission on resettlement matters later that year. First, it was pointed out that without adequate surveying, immediate settlement of the coastline was unrealistic. Arsen'ev's surveying expeditions in 1906 and 1907 shed light on parts of the northern coast, where he found Chinese homesteads (*fanzhy*) scattered across the difficult terrain, but this only provide a glimpse of an immense area.

Second, some resettlement officials also believed that developing fisheries required a shift away from relying on peasant-fishermen. On the one hand, the commission recognized the necessity of colonizing the coast with a denser "Russian" population, of which migrants from the Baltic would form the core. This was especially urgent since the Japanese had already been "creeping about" among the existing settlers. Others, however, doubted that small-scale fishermen could effectively compete with the Japanese. The fisheries overseer for the lower Amur, for instance, claimed that smallholders had impeded the formation of at a nascent capitalist enterprise on the in his jurisdiction. He also emphasized that any settlement plan had to provide regulation and enforcement of salmon fishing in light of scientific observations regarding their spawning cycles; overfishing in coastal rivers could have deleterious effects on the industry even with a small number of settlers involved. Ultimately, there were too many questions to finalize the future of coastal settlement, and the commission left the matter unresolved.<sup>65</sup>

Meanwhile the Resettlement Office continued to solicit "fishermen-settlers" from European Russia and the Baltic provinces. The head of the Resettlement Office in 1908, G.V. Glinka, invited "people familiar with fishing and marine trades" from Estland, Novgorod, Kurland, and other provinces to settle the eastern borderlands. Glinka also contacted Cossack

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 31-5.

atamans, inviting those on the Don and in the Urals to move to Primorye at state expense. He suggested that they could establish a “special marine Cossack host for the protection of Russian waters” and to prevent their “peaceful seizure [*zakhvat*] by foreigners.”<sup>66</sup> Scouts (*khodoki*) arrived in Khabarovsk by train in May of that year and, according to Resettlement Office officials, were enthusiastic about relocating to a region richer in fish, citing declining yields in their own regions, but soon problems appeared. A pair of scouts joined a village, then proceeded to block off an entire channel with nets, breaking a basic fishing rule and necessitating intervention from the local forest guard (*lesnichii*).<sup>67</sup> Other would-be settlers expressed concern regarding a lack of local markets for the fish and the difficult conditions of settlement. Cossacks from the Don requested the right to fish in the state fisheries at Cape Vasse on the lower Amur, but as the treasury valued this area as a lucrative rental plot, the Resettlement Office rejected the request outright. The official overseeing the scouts’ visit believed that parceling out valuable plots for small-scale operations might destroy what little Russian “capitalist” fishing operations existed, and thereby would deliver the industry “fully into the hands of the Japanese.”<sup>68</sup>

Most scouts home unwilling to advise their communities to resettle. In the wake of this initiative, Shilkevich recommended a shift in emphasis. While Primorye was attracting a slow trickle of fishermen who, Shilkevich maintained, should still receive government support—he recognized that “the artificial effort to attract to the krai fishermen has, for the time being, no soil under it.” Russian fishermen, he wrote, were unable to lead the life of “a Giliak [sic] or a Tungus,” living solely off the fruits of nature. They needed opportunities to sell their fish, which in turn required better communication routes, larger local markets, and all manner of equipment, from salt to icebreakers, for which the only available source remained the Japanese. In light of

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<sup>66</sup> RGIA F. F. 391, op.3, d.1129, 7-10.

<sup>67</sup> *Lesnichie* were responsible for enforcing forestry and fishing rules within their jurisdictions.

<sup>68</sup> RGIA F. F. 391, op.3, d.1129, 124-125ob, 168, 175-175ob



the immense difficulties involved, Shilkevich questioned the wisdom of expending state funds on relocating peasants. In order to ensure that the “natural riches of a Russian territory” were used “by Russian people.” Instead, he recommended more cooperation with capitalist *promyshlenniki*, who would confront the challenges of building a fishing industry in the Far East if it was in their financial interest. The state could offer incentives and invest in infrastructure, like large refrigerated steamships, with the goal of export of fish to European markets. This would, in turn, give a strong stimulus to the toward the development of industry “and its liberation [*osvobozhdeniiu*] from Japanese influence.”<sup>69</sup>

Although resettlement of peasant-fishermen continued, by 1910, more voices were calling for a capital-intensive industry staffed by a Russian labor force, while continuing to take measures to preserve fish populations. At a commission on resettlement, meeting regularly throughout 1909 and 1910, representatives from the Resettlement Office and the MGI observed that despite regulations stipulating that foreign workers could only be employed in processing the fish, 80 percent of fish caught in the lower Amur went to Japan in raw form. The problem, the commission members decided, was that without “large, capitalist production,” Russian fishermen sold their fish piecemeal to Japanese buyers. Not only did this take much local industry out of Russian hands, it deprived European Russia and the Far Eastern armed forces of an “abundant, healthy, and cheap source of nourishment.” Thus they sought further measures to populate the coastline with fishermen to serve in large industries, as only this could combat the “seizure [*zakhvat*] of the fishing industry by Japanese buyers,” freeing the lower Amur from Japanese capital.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 171-172ob.

<sup>70</sup> RGIA F. 391, op. 4, d. 513, 39, 42ob.

While “capitalist” development was the preferred option, the commission also favored an approach that would insure long-term prosperity. It was deemed necessary to send ichthyologists to investigate the state of the coastal fisheries so that development could occur within reasonable limits. Against the threat of fisheries exhaustion, the commission recommended regulation of “capitalist industries,” and raised the possibility of fish farming and, in areas “especially important for the protection of fish,” a full ban on fishing. Their stated goal was now to create a “solid, working, primarily agricultural population” that could serve as a labor pool for larger industries. Echoing Kriukov’s warning about leaving the people’s wealth in their own capricious hands, the commission cautioned against creating fishing-only resettlement plots could leave settlers without sustenance if marine resources were exhausted, which seemed entirely possible.<sup>71</sup> Governor-General Unterberger stressed the necessity of settling the mouth of the Amur only with “Russian people experienced in fishing,” so that “capitalist enterprises will have the necessary quantity of fishermen from the local, and not from the alien [*prishlago*], population.” Unterberger also advocated limits on the new industries that would “guarantee the conservation of fish resources,” and to forbid it in places where it might harmfully affect the migration of fish into the Amur.

In the years after the Russo-Japanese War, Primorye’s administration slowly shifted their approach from one directed toward individual households of Russian subjects to one aimed at state-supported development of capitalist industries. As in previous decades, the ultimate goal was ousting non-Russians (principally the Japanese) from coastal industries, while utilization of natural resources was a means to this end. Concern for Primorye’s fisheries mounted in the early twentieth century in part because it justified measures against non-Russians. A “capitalist” fishing industry, regulated by the Enlightened state, could offer a more rational and sustainable

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 77-78ob, 45.

option, and one that would more effectively compete with foreign fishermen. Not until the 1930s, however, were the necessary financial, scientific, and human resources available to fulfill this task.

A half century of Russian rule in Primorye yielded a complex picture. Russian subjects of various ethnicities, together with foreigner merchants and migrant workers, produced a diverse demographic tapestry. The province's abundant marine resources came under increasing pressure from various directions. Russian subjects settled (or were settled) along the coast in an effort to utilize the economic potential of these ecologically productive areas. Chinese residents and migrants, together with those from Korea, predominated in maritime trades in the first years after 1860. The Russian presence likely catalyzed further immigration from these latter two countries, both because it provided new ports and markets for expanded trade and because it contributed to the Qing Empire's decision to gradually lift its ban on migration to Manchuria between 1860 and 1902.<sup>72</sup> The expansion of Japanese fishing activity around Primorye occurred independently but was no less significant.

The impact of maritime industries was also mixed. Populations of some species— notably sturgeon and probably salmon—were affected, in the case of sturgeon more or less permanently. As a whole, Primorye's aquatic environments proved remarkably resilient, not unlike those in the north of European Russia.<sup>73</sup> In large part, this was likely a result of the limited scale of the exploitation in the Far East. It is notable that the regional administration was so concerned with limiting the activities of foreigners in Russian waters, though by most

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<sup>72</sup> Lee, *The Manchurian Frontier in Ch'ing History*, 103–4.

<sup>73</sup> On this question see D. A. Aleksandrov et al., *“More - Nashe Pole”: kolichestvennye dannye o rybnykh promyslakh Belogo i Barentseva morei, XVII - nachalo XX v.* (St. Petersburg: European University at St. Petersburg, 2010).

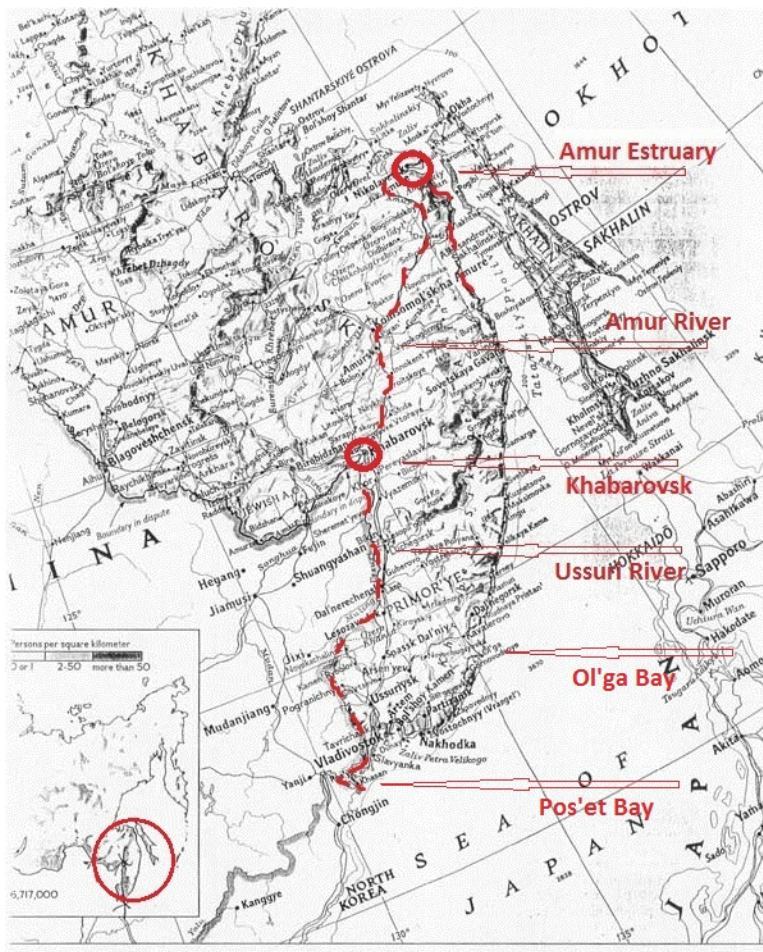
accounts enforcement of its many regulations was lacking. Concern with ecological degradation and long-term development was, however, intertwined with the general condemnation of “predatory” fishing and gathering practices and the drive to make Primorye’s sea and rivers “Russian” by displacing Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese.

In his classic study of environmental change in colonial New England, William Cronon noted the importance of English conceptions of “improvement” and utilization of land as the basis for property rights, a view wholly at odds with those of mobile Native American groups.<sup>74</sup> In Primorye too, making use of resources implied ownership, hence the anxiety surrounding foreign economic dominance on the sea and the urgency of settling the coast. Conversely, the charge of *overuse* seems to have implied forfeiture of access to those resources. This continued to be the case through the turmoil of civil war and foreign intervention, and with the development of a Soviet fishing fleet in the 1920s and 1930s.

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<sup>74</sup> William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), esp. 54–81.

**Appendix 1 – Map of Primorye**



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