

Article

Russia and Siberia: Russo-Chinese Relations in the 17th Century.

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In the previous articles about the development of Russo-Chinese relations in the 17th century¹⁾, we already mentioned that, following the campaigns to the Amur by the detachments of V. Poyarkov and E. Khabarov, reports of the fur riches and fertility of the Daurian lands²⁾ spread throughout Siberia. Although these reports were often fictitious and exaggerated, peasants from various regions of Siberia flocked to these new lands, which were attractive primarily because they were still beyond the reach of the voivode's administration³⁾. This

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- 1) See: "The Meeting of Russians with Manchus on the Amur River" (The Aoyama Journal of International Politics, Economics and Communication, No 116, Nov. 2025; "Russian and Siberia: The search for a way to China in the early 17th century" (The Aoyama Journal of International Politics, Economics and Communication, No 112, May 2024); "Russia and Siberia: Russian People' s Entry into Transbaikalia and the Amur Region" (The Aoyama Journal of International Politics, Economics and Communication, No 110, May 2023).
- 2) "*Daurian land*" was the name for the territory where the *Daur*s lived. The *Daur*s were Mongol-speaking peoples who lived until the middle of the 17th century on the Amur River from the Shilka River to the Zeya River, its left tributaries. They had a highly developed agriculture. After the beginning of the confrontation with the Russian state, the Manchus were resettled on the Sungari River. Currently, more than 130 thousand *Daur*s live in China.
- 3) *Voivode* - a military leader, senior in the army, appointed from among the representatives of the nobility. From the 16th to the first half of the 18th century - an official who managed the administrative territory of the Russian state.

allowed them to farm for a time, perhaps several years, without taxation, solely for their own needs. A small stream of peasants slowly made their way to Transbaikalia. Some settled on the lands already there, while others traveled as far as the Amur River, taking up farming there. As a result, by the 1660s in the western part of the Amur region, there were small peasant settlements unknown to either the Russian authorities or the Manchus.

During this period, the Russian authorities took no active steps to finally consolidate the territory of the Amur region for the Russian state. The situation began to change only in the mid-1660s. This change was associated with social unrest in Ilimsk⁴⁾, led by the Cossack pentecostal Nikifor Chernigovsky.

In Russian documentary sources, the name of Nikifor Chernigovsky appears in 1634, when he was captured during the Smolensk War, fought between the Russian state and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Having declared in 1635, during a captive exchange, that he did not wish to return to Poland, Nikifor Chernigovsky was sent to serve in the military in Vologda. In 1637, he was sent to serve in the Yeniseisk ostrog⁵⁾, and in 1649, he was transferred to the Ilimsk ostrog, where, from a rank-and-file Cossack, he rose to the rank of Cossack pentecostal by 1656. While still in Vologda, he married the daughter of a Lithuanian immigrant, and by the late 1650s, he had sons Fyodor and Anissim and a grandson, Prokofy.

In late June 1665, in Ilimsk Uyezd⁶⁾, rebellious peasants killed the *voivode*, Lavrenty Obukhov, provoked by his cruelty. Military servicemen (mainly Cossacks) joined the peasants, and N. Chernigovsky led the rebellion. After the voivode's murder, the 84 rebels decided to head for the Amur, plundering

4) Ilimsk, or Ilimsk ostrog, was a strategically important fortified point that controlled the portage (land crossing) from the Angara River basin to the Lena River basin. In 1648, it became the center of the newly created Ilimsk Uyezd (see below).

5) *Ostrog* - a small wooden fortress with towers (blind and passable), ditches and other defensive fortifications. The walls of the fort could be in the form of vertically dug sharpened logs, but they could also be "gorodny" - a chopped wall, sometimes - double, with a space filled with stones.

6) *Uyezd* - a territorial and administrative unit, the basis of the administrative division of the Russian state.

Russian villages along the way and taking all food, weapons, and ammunition. However, it is worth noting that in some cases, if the owners made no attempt to conceal their demands, the rebels compensated them with furs for the stolen property. On the Chechuy portage⁷⁾, the land route between the Lower Tunguska and Lena rivers, the rebels left a petition (*chelobitnaja*)⁸⁾ addressed to the sovereign with the *prikazshik*⁹⁾ Ivan Burlak, explaining the reason for their actions, describing all the crimes of the murdered *voivode* Obukhov, and assuring the authorities that they remained loyal servants of the sovereign and would continue to serve.

Leaving for the Amur, the *Chernigovites*¹⁰⁾ took with them what they could not obtain or manufacture there themselves: household utensils, tools, weapons and ammunition, flour and grain. But grain was needed only for the first time, perhaps for the first year, because the *Chernigovites*, unlike the previous “visitors to Dauria” – participants in the campaigns of V. Poyarkov and E. Khabarov – had initially planned to independently develop these lands, establishing arable land and growing grain.

In the autumn of 1665, Nikifor Chernigovsky's detachment reached the Amur, where the rebels built the Albazin fort on the site of a town abandoned by a Daurian *kniazec*¹¹⁾ named Albaza in 1650, when E. Khabarov's detachment was approaching. The first news of this came from the *prikazshik* Larion Tolbuzin, who was in charge of Nerchinsk and several other forts in Transbaikalia. Tolbuzin reported to the Yeniseisk *voivode* and replaced

7) *Portage* – an isthmus between two rivers or two other reservoirs, where ships and their cargo were dragged from one to the other along a dry path.

8) *Chelobitnaja* petition – a document of a pleading nature that existed from the 15th to early 18th century, it was used to address representatives of various categories of the population straight to the Tsar.

9) *Prikazshik* (clerk) – an administrative position of the first level appointed by voivodes from among the commanding staff of military serving people in Russian fortified points (*ostrozhki*) to control the collection of *yasak* (fur tribute) from the aboriginal population, or to observe various duties made by Russian peasants.

10) *Chernigovites* – people of Chernigovsky, those who were with Chernigovsky as his subordinates.

11) *Kniazec* ("little prince") – this is how the Russians called the chiefs and other leaders of the aboriginal clan groups, distinguishing them from the bulk of their people.

Afanassy Pashkov¹²⁾, previously the *voivode* in Transbaikalia, in 1662. When Tolbuzin arrived in Nerchinsk *ostrog*, there were only 75 military servicemen. In 1663, some of his small subordinates fled to the Amur, joining N. Chernigovsky's detachment. As a result, by 1665, only 46 servicemen remained under Tolbuzin's command. Moreover, they had already served for six years without receiving the sovereign's salary. Only in 1666 did the treasury arrive in Dauria, and provisions – mainly bread and salt – were delivered.

A shortage of personnel, difficulties collecting *yasak*¹³⁾, and a lack of grain that did not grow in Nerchinsk made service in this region difficult. In this situation, the arrival of Nikifor Chernigovsky's detachment on the Amur, if his men were able to establish arable land, would have given the Nerchinsk administration many advantages. Perhaps this is why business ties began to develop between Nerchinsk and Albazin.

Nikifor Chernigovsky was also interested in establishing contact with the Nerchinsk administration, as his men had nowhere else to obtain gunpowder and lead. Thus, he and the rebels managed to gain a foothold on the Amur, rebuild a fort, and enter into dialogue with the tsarist administration. As expected in Nerchinsk, the rebels established arable land and began growing grain. This thoroughness – an emphasis not only on collecting *yasak* but also on growing grain – led to Tolbuzin's support for Albazin (it was the Nerchinsk administration that would later petition for clemency for *Chernigovites*). Grain cultivation laid the foundation for Albazin's further prosperity, which was cut short by the military conflict with Manchu China. Soon, "sovereign's arable land" – land from which grain went to the state treasury – was established in Albazin.

In 1669, Larion Tolbuzin was replaced as Nerchinsk *prikazshik* by Danila Arshinsky, a *boyar son*¹⁴⁾ from Tobolsk. Tolbuzin's merit can be credited with

12) Afanassy Pashkov, founder of the Nerchinsk *Ostrog* (fortress). From 1650 to 1655, he was the voivode of Yeniseisk *ostrog*. In 1656, he was sent with a regiment to Dauria, where in 1658 he founded the Nerchinsk *ostrog*, where he remained the *voivode* until 1661.

13) *Yasak* is a natural tax, dan, a tribute levied by furs.

14) *Boyar son* – an estate that existed in Russia at the end of the 14th – the beginning of the 18th centuries. In the 16th –17th centuries, *boyar sons*, along with the nobles, were included in the number of "service people in the homeland" and carried out compulsory

establishing permanent ties with the Albazin, an important point in the Russian exploration of the Far East. While in Ilimsk *ostrog*, Nikifor Chernigovsky's men were referred to as "thieves and fugitives", Tolbuzin's reports referred to Nikifor Chernigovsky as a *prikazshik* – a person, that is, appointed by the authorities. D. Arshinsky retained this attitude toward the Albazinthians.

The reasons for this attitude toward the Albazinthians are mentioned in Larion Tolbuzin's "skaska"¹⁵⁾, which he gave in Moscow to the *Siberian Prikaz*¹⁶⁾ in 1670. According to this document, the Albazin fort offered excellent opportunities for developing arable land. At the time, there were only five arable peasants, each of whom received assistance from the administration in the form of a horse, a cow, and some agricultural tools, as well as a tax exemption for ten years. The development of arable land in the Albazin area would make it possible in the near future to provide Transbaikalian military service people with local grain. The established, permanent connection between Nerchinsk and Albazin took six days on light vessels, and the return journey, upriver, took three weeks.

In addition to farming, the Albazinthians began actively collecting *yasak* from the local population, which soon led to a clash of interests with Manchu China. Attempting to establish diplomatic relations with the Emperor of the Manchu Dynasty, the Nerchinsk *prikazshik* D. Arshinsky sent ambassadors to China in 1670, led by Ignatius Milovanov. A few months later, Milovanov returned to the Nerchinsk with the Manchu envoy Mugotei, who carried a letter addressed to the Russian Tsar. The letter stated that N. Chernigovsky and his Albazinthians were attacking the local tribes of *Daur*s and *Duchers*, who were subjects of the

service, for which they received estates, were registered in tenths in the counties and constituted the local cavalry. In the 17th century, numerous *boyar sons* did not always have the opportunity to get an estate and became a contingent for the formation of regiments of the "new system" – soldiers and dragoons, in Siberia – for service in the Cossacks. In a number of cases, *boyar sons*, having no means of subsistence, were forced to become dependent people (like slaves).

15) *Skaska* (then) was a written report of events, compiled at the certain location. Siberian servicemen, returning from campaigns, reported everything they had seen during these campaigns to the *voivode's* office or to the Siberian Prikaz in Moscow.

16) *The Siberian Prikaz* (Order) was the central body (like a later ministry) that ruled Siberia in the 17th century.

Manchu Dynasty. Initially, the Chinese Emperor intended to send his troops to Albazin, but upon learning from D. Arshinsky that the Russian Tsar's people were living there, he decided to refrain from military action for the time being.

Along with D. Arshinsky's *otpiska*¹⁷⁾, a *chelobitnaja* from 82 Albazians was sent to Moscow, listing their services to the sovereign and requesting that they all be enrolled as military servicemen. This *chelobitnaja* also specified the distance from Albazin to the Chinese state: a three - week ride on horseback. The *chelobitnaja* stated that there were many arable lands around Albazin and along the Amur River. According to the Albazians, it was possible to travel from Argun River to the Albazin alone to settle 300 peasant families, which would make it possible to dispense with the need for grain shipments to Transbaikalia from Western Siberia. Below Albazin on the Amur River, as stated in the same *chelobitnaja*, "there are countless arable lands". In their *chelobitnaja*, the Albazians ask for cannons and muskets, gunpowder and lead, as well as a salary in cash, grain, and salt.

When Semyon Vishnyakov was appointed *prikazshik* of the Albazin *ostrog* in 1673, the number of military service people in the *ostrog* had already reached 109. By then, the *ostrog* was a traditional Siberian fortification of vertically installed pointed logs. Towers were erected at the corners of the walls facing the Amur River. A third tower, serving as a guard tower, was located inside the *ostrog*. Taking over the affairs from N. Chernigovsky, S. Vishnyakov received the income and expenditure books for the grain, the sable tax collection books from merchants and *promyshlennye lyudi*¹⁸⁾, and the *yasak* books for several years. At this time, two Tungus *amanats*¹⁹⁾ were held in the Albazin *ostrog*. Having handed over the affairs to S. Vishnyakov, N. Chernigovsky

17) *Otpiska* — an official letter, a document drawn up by representatives of a lower authority for their immediate superiors or during correspondence between administrative officials of the same level.

18) *Promyshlennye lyudi* — people who were engaged in the trade — hunting for fur-bearing animals, its production or the organization of such a business, sometimes on a large scale, attracting dozens of people for this at their own expense.

19) *Amanat* is a hostage taken from a tribal group by military serving people and was in a Russian fortified point. The capture of *amanat*, usually the son, younger brother or nephew of the *kniazec*, guaranteed the payment of *yasak* by the ancestral group. In this case, the relatives themselves came to such a point with *yasak*.

continued to appear for some time in documents related to the campaigns of Nerchinsk military service people and *yasak*-paying people against the Mongol *Tabunite* tribe.

However, as early as 1675, Nikifor Chernigovsky is again mentioned in documentation as the Albazin *prikazshik*. In 1675, *Daur* people from the Gana River (the Genhe River, a right tributary of the Argun River, near its confluence with the Shilka River, where the Amur River forms) arrived in Albazin. They lived in a territory dependent on the Chinese state, suffered all manner of oppression from the Chinese, and complained to the Albazin *prikazshik* that they could not live under Chinese rule and wished to resettle in Russian territory. Therefore, they petitioned the Russian sovereign to be under his rule. The *Daurians* requested that military service people be sent from Albazin so that, when they marched from Chinese territory to Albazin, if Qing Empire soldiers attacked them, they would defend them from the Chinese. Having received this request, Chernigovsky marched to the Chinese settlements on the Gan River, taking with him 300 servicemen and *promyshlennye lyudi*. The outcome of this campaign, unfortunately, is unknown.

All this time, the situation regarding N. Chernigovsky's and some of the Albazinians' responsibility for the murder of the *voivode* L. Obukhov, remained unresolved, which weighed heavily on both the Albazinians themselves and the Moscow government. It set a telling example for potential rebels – the authorities were unable to restore the order they needed in the remote outskirts.

It is known that in 1673, N. Chernigovsky sent another *chelobitnaja* to Moscow addressed to Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich, asking for forgiveness, outlining all the successes the Albazinians had achieved in their service to the sovereign over the past period. For a long time, the government was at a loss as to how to resolve the situation: the murder of a *voivode* was a grave crime against the state, requiring severe punishment. But Albazin's remoteness prevented the proposed measures from being implemented: sending a significant military contingent from Moscow or another major city to detain the rebels would have been a very costly undertaking. At the same time, there was no guarantee that the participants in the punitive expedition would not defect to the rebels.

The government found an original solution. The aforementioned *chelobitnaja* from N. Chernigovsky arrived in Moscow in February 1675. Earlier, during the trial of the crime committed (the murder of a governor, the robbery of the local population, resistance to the authorities, and the flight to the Amur), all participants in these events had been sentenced to various punishments. But March 17th was a holiday – the tsar’s name day, the feast day of St. Alexius, a man of God and the patron saint of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich. In honor of this event, all participants in the rebellion were pardoned. In actual fact, this only became known in Albazin in 1689, when Krasnoyarsk *voivode* Dmitry Rimsky-Korsakov received a charter from Moscow from Tsar Feodor Alekseevich (son of Alexei Mikhailovich), who had died in May 1682.

When Nikolai Spafariy, sent by the Russian government as ambassador to Beijing, arrived in Albazin in 1675, the Albazinitians told him of their plans to expand the *yasak* territory in the Amur region. N. Chernigovsky had died by this time, and Fyodor Yevseyev was the *prikazshik* of the Albazin ostrog. The Albazin military service men planned to march down the Amur to the Zeya River and impose *yasak* on the local population – the horse and reindeer-breeding *Tungus*²⁰⁾, who, according to the Nerchinsk were “under the rule of the Bogdoi Tsar²¹⁾”. But Spafariy instructed them to abandon such plans actions to avoid complicating relations with China. The Albazinitians subsequently accused Nikolai Spafariy of forbidding the *Tungus* people from being taught anything, thus handing them over to Chinese control. However, despite Ambassador Spafariy’s instructions, the Albazinitian *prikazshik*, F. Yevseyev, acted on his own and, in the summer of 1676, sent military service people to the Zeya River, reporting this to Pavel Shulgin, the *prikazshik* in Nerchinsk.

N. Spafariy’s mission ended in failure: although he reached Beijing,

20) “*Horse Tunguses*” and “*Reindeer Tunguses*” —the Russians divided the *Tunguses* according to their economic structure. *Horse Tunguses* led a lifestyle reminiscent of the nomadic Mongols. *Reindeer Tunguses* were nomadic hunters and fishermen of *taiga* forests who relied on reindeer for transportation.

21) *The Bogdoi Tsar (Bogdykhan)* - this is how Russian people for a long time called the ruler of an unknown state located beyond the Amur River, not realizing that they were talking about the Chinese emperor.

he was unable to obtain an audience with the emperor and establish trade relations with the Qing Empire. As a result, for a long time in the Amur region, Russia and Qing China engaged in a rather prolonged and, to a certain extent, passive movement toward each other. Neither Moscow nor Beijing had any real information about each other, and the information they received was highly distorted. Nevertheless, while Russia, with some activity, attempted to find routes to China, primarily to develop trade relations, the Qing Empire, following its policy of self-isolation, sought to prevent any contact with Russia.

Furthermore, it should be noted that, when establishing its rule in China, the Qing Dynasty viewed the Manchu lands as a fiefdom, off-limits to the Chinese population. The arrival of Russians in the Amur region in the mid-17th century was seen by the Qing Dynasty as a threat to its patrimonial interests and immediately decided to prevent any rapprochement between its borders and Russia. Meanwhile, Manchu rule at this time did not yet extend over the entire territory of modern-day Manchuria, and a de facto rapprochement between the two states was still a long way off. Even in 1678, the northern border of Manchuria was officially recognized by the Qing Dynasty along the so-called “Willow Palisade” – a system of field fortifications and guard posts, built by then by order of the Kangxi Emperor, surrounding the territory of Mukden Province. The “Willow Palisade” consisted of a continuous system of willow stakes driven into the ground in two rows, with deep ditches in front of them. Outposts were built and guards were posted along the line. Passes were required for passage in both directions.

This line, over 900 kilometers long, ran from Shanhaiguan in the southwest, reaching Weiyuanpu in the north and Fenghuangshan in the south. The remaining territories in northeastern Manchuria were considered external territories and were not incorporated into the empire. Thus, from the “Willow Palisade” to the Amur River, there remained between 600 and 800 kilometers. These data are confirmed by Russian sources of the same time. In the supplement to the Tobolsk edition of the book called “The Large Drawing” (1673) indicated that Chinese guards were located beyond the Amur, two weeks’ journey from Albazin.

On May 17, 1682, the new *voivode*, *stolnik*²²⁾ Fyodor Voeikov, arrived in Nerchinsk. He brought 2,000 rubles to pay the military service people of all the Daurian forts. Of this amount, 1,000 rubles were sent to Albazin. However, the Albazians assumed that the entire sum was intended for them alone. Voeikov himself believed that 1,000 rubles was sufficient for the Albazin military service people, since they had recruited surplus men into the Cossacks without the sovereign's decree. As a result, the Albazians refused to hand over the *yasak* they had collected over the previous period. Due to the escalating conflict, *voivode* Voeikov was forced to personally sail to Albazin, where he argued with the Cossacks, declaring that, according to the sovereign's decree, there should be only 100 men, and that they should be paid accordingly. Those who were accepted into the garrison beyond that number, without the sovereign's decree, were offered the service of the Bogdykhan. Nevertheless, to defuse the situation and pay the Albazians, F. Voeikov was forced to borrow 500 rubles from merchants, after which the sable treasury was handed over to the *voivode*.

In 1683, new fortifications (*ostrog*) were built in Albazin, significantly more extensive than before. The height of the new walls, consisting of a palisade – logs dug vertically into the ground close together – was 5.3 meters. The new *ostrog* had five towers. The number of Russian settlements around Albazin increased; now, along the Amur from the Shilka River and Argun River to the mouth of the Zeya River, there were more than 20 Russian settlements where grain was grown and furs were harvested. The local population – *Daur* and *Tungus kniazeces* – also began to accept Russian citizenship, including Gantimur²³⁾, who later played a prominent role in Russo-Chinese relations.

22) *Stolnik* – in ancient Russia until the 17th century – a courtier, with a rank below the boyar, appointed from representatives of noble families and holding the highest positions in the administration; originally a courtier who served at the princely or royal table.

23) Gantimur was the *Knyazec* of a group of equestrian *Tungus* from Transbaikalia. Initially, he and his clan lived in the Nerchinsk region. In the mid-1650s, he and his *Tungus* left for the right bank of the Argun River, into the territory of the Qing Empire. In 1667, with related clan groups numbering 7,000-8,000, he returned to Nerchinsk. In 1684, he and his son, Katanay, converted to Orthodoxy. Gantimur

This activity on the part of the Albazinians did not go unnoticed by the Manchu authorities. The Manchus, seeking to secure their lands, gradually strengthened their northern borders. Emperor Kangxi began building fortresses in northern Manchuria, gradually advancing his garrisons toward the Amur. His troops began ravaging Russian settlements, first on the right tributaries of the Amur, and then on the Amur itself and its left tributaries. As a result, the Dolon and Selembin *ostrogs* were burned in 1682, and the Zeisk and Tugirsk *ostrogs* in 1683. Thus, the emerging disputes between the Albazinians and the Manchu authorities over control of the Amur tribes led to military clashes.

The Russian authorities were forced to take measures, strengthening administrative control over the Amur region. In 1677, the Yeniseisk Razryad ²⁴⁾ was formed, comprising the Yeniseisk and Nerchinsk Uyezds. In 1682, the independent Irkutsk Uyezd was separated from the Yeniseisk Uyezd, and the Albazin Uyezd from the Nerchinsk Uyezd. These new districts were also part of the Yeniseisk Razryad.

Receiving alarming information from Transbaikalia regarding developing relations with China, the Moscow government began to consider the need

received the name "Peter", and his son, Katanay, the name "Pavel" . In 1685, both departed for Moscow, accompanied by representatives of the Nerchinsk administration. Gantimur, already in his old age, died on route to Moscow in the town of Narym (on the Ob River, at the confluence of the Ket' River). Katanay-Pavel was received with honor by the Russian government—by decree of March 16, 1685, he was registered as a nobleman on the privileged "Moscow" list. He and his descendants were granted the right to be called princes, exempted from paying yasak, and assigned a special salary. In 1901, they were granted a coat of arms, included in Part 17 of the "General Armorial of the Noble Families of the All-Russian Empire." Gantimur's descendants continued to rule the equestrian clans of the *Tungus* people of Transbaikalia until 1917. Among Gantimur's descendants, the most famous are Georgy Katanayev (1848-1921), Lieutenant General, head of the Cossack section of the West Siberian Military District headquarters, local historian, public figure, and participant in the White movement; and, through his mother, the artist Vassily Kandinsky (1866-1944). In January 1998, one of the last princes of the Gantimurovs, Vladimir Innokentievich, who moved to Australia from China in 1952, and died in Brisbane, Australia.

24) *Razryad* – large military-administrative unit created on the outskirts of the Russian state by combining some *uyezds* (districts) for operational management of the territory and solving military problems that arise, a prototype of the future *gubernia* (province).

to strengthen its armed forces in the border uyezds. Discussions with the Siberian *voivodes* (Tobolsk, as the main *voivode* in Siberia, and Yeniseisk, as the *razrad voivode*) led the authorities to the idea of gathering military service people from Siberian garrisons and forming a 1,000-man Daurian Regiment. Since the Siberian garrisons were constantly short of military service people, the *voivodes* were forced to recruit for the regiment those who had not previously served, from among the younger relatives of servicemen and from the *wandering people*²⁵⁾ who had arrived in Siberian cities from the European part of Russia. But even this method proved extremely difficult to staff the regiment. As a result, the authorities initially decided to reduce the regiment's recruitment to 800 men, and then to 500. The Yeniseisk voivode, Prince Konstantin Shcherbaty, was tasked with providing the Cossacks of the newly formed regiment with weapons, ammunition, and the sovereign's monetary and grain stipend. Afanassy Beiton, a boyar son from Tobolsk, was appointed to command the newly formed regiment. However, the detachment was only able to set out from Yeniseisk in the autumn of 1684.

Meanwhile, as early as 1683, clashes between the Albazinians and Manchu troops occurred on the Amur. Large Manchu forces, arriving on the Amur that year, built a fortress opposite the mouth of the Zeya River, making it a stronghold for further advance up the Amur to Albazin. Albazin *prikazshik* Ivan Voiloshnikov reported this to the Nerchinsk *voivode*, *stolnik* Fyodor Voyeikov, who in turn forwarded the news to the Irkutsk voivode, Ivan Vlasov. Voiloshnikov wrote that on July 17, 1683, 20 Cossacks and 46 *promyshlennye lyudi* were sent from Albazin to the Bureya and Amgun Rivers. On August 10, 10 of them returned to the Albazin and reported that, having passed the mouth of the Zeya River, they had encountered Chinese soldiers the following day. It turned out that these soldiers were traveling in boats toward Albazin and Nerchinsk. According to the Albazinians' count, there were 567 boats. These boats contained a large number of Chinese soldiers with cannons and various firearms. The Chinese soldiers did not allow the Albazinians they encountered

25) The “wandering people” were a category of the population of Muscovite Russia whose members were not registered with any class and were free to move around the state. They did not bear state obligations and lived by hired labor. In Siberia, they were one of the main sources of recruitment for the contingent of military service people.

to reach Bureya and captured them, confiscating their weapons.

After a day and a half in Chinese captivity, these 10 men managed to escape from guard duty and fled to Albazin for 14 days. The remaining members of their expedition remained in Chinese captivity. The escapees delivered an important message to Albazin: according to the Chinese themselves, a Chinese army of 16,000 men was marching along the mountain route to Albazin and 15,000 horsemen to Nerchinsk. The Chinese had three Russians as interpreters, men who had once fled from the Lena to the Amur. According to the Albazinthians, these traitors spoke Chinese well. The traitors told the Albazinthians that the Chinese were carrying a large quantity of provisions in buses, enough to last them three years. However, the actual attack on Albazin by Chinese troops occurred somewhat later.

According to Chinese sources, the Manchu military forces' campaign on the Amur was prompted by Russian attacks on Chinese borderlands. Indeed, Russian reports indicate that the Albazinthians were active on the Amur and its tributaries, the Zeya and Bureya. Thus, Ambassador Spafariy was right to object to the Albazinian campaigns on the Zeya, fearing that this would damage relations with the Chinese.

The appearance of Manchu troops on the Amur and their construction of fortifications at the mouth of the Zeya marked the beginning of systematic preparations for the Qing army's campaign against Albazin, which took place in 1685. The emperor appointed an experienced military commander named Lantan to command the Manchu troops on the Amur. Moreover, according to their version, the Manchus were not to kill any of the Albazinthians' defenders, regardless of whether they resisted. According to a later Chinese version, the Manchu command was to convey to the Russian people the Emperor's decree: because the Emperor possessed boundless humanity, he did not intend to execute the defenders of Albazin and was releasing them all so that, sensing the mercy shown to them, they would no longer oppose his command and would not disturb the borders of the Qing Empire. After this, the Manchu troops were to return to their previous bases.

In June 1685, Manchu troops appeared before the walls of Albazin. As reported in 1683 by the Albazinthians who had escaped from Manchu captivity, the Manchus arrived by the rivers on ships and by land on horses, bringing

with them not only cannons but also various equipment for storming the city. The Albazin *ostrog* found itself under siege. According to military service people, the enemy army numbered at least ten thousand. The besiegers possessed a large amount of artillery: the Albazinians counted over two hundred cannons, of which 150 they called “regimental” (regimental artillery) and 50 large “breaching” cannons with cannonballs weighing twenty, fifteen, and twelve pounds²⁶⁾ (8, 6, and 5.8 kg, respectively).

A small group of arable peasants from Albazin managed to reach Yakutsk on July 27. The peasants conveyed a report from the Albazin *prikazshik*, Alexei Tolbuzin, to the Yakutsk voivode, Matvey Krovkov. Their account indicated that the Manchu army numbered 5,000 infantry, armed partly with handguns. The Manchus arrived by ship, and more than 8,000 armored horsemen, equipped with bows. The besiegers’ artillery consisted of 250 guns.

The Manchus initially negotiated with the Albazinians, offering them surrender. They did so through three Russians (apparently the aforementioned traitors), who had defected to their service for various reasons and even held command positions in their army. Sent as ambassadors on June 11, these traitors, in addition to negotiating and delivering three “sheets” in Russian, Manchu, and Polish to the Albazin *prikazshik*, were also to carry out sabotage – to set fire to the fort’s fortifications in the event of an assault. This became clear after the Albazin *prikazshik*, A. Tolbuzin, after negotiations with the Manchu ambassadors, ordered one of them, Fedka (Fedor) Petrov, to be tortured. Under torture, he revealed the planned sabotage. The *prikazshik* even considered executing Fedka, but changed his mind and left him in the prison hut, shackled in a stock²⁷⁾. Later, when the Manchus captured Albazin, F. Petrov was elevated to a higher rank: as stated in a Russian document, the Bogdoi (Manchu) chieftains made him, Fedka, a boyar by their faith.

The ambassadors revealed the Manchus’ general intentions. It turned out that after capturing Albazin, they planned to head for the Nerchinsk and Selenginsk *ostrogs* and subjugate not only the Amur region but all of Transbaikalia. But since the emperor’s decree delivered by the ambassadors

26) Russian pound approximately 410 g.

27) A stock usually had a short, thick log to which a prisoner is chained with a metal chain.

had no effect on the Albazinians, the commander of the Manchu troops himself arrived at the city and reiterated the decree's contents. Having failed to achieve any results this time, Commander Lantan carefully inspected the *ostrog* fortifications and then returned to his camp.

Following this diplomatic action, *prikazshik* Tolbuzin sent his envoys to Nerchinsk for aid, requesting military service people (at that time, Albazin had only 450 men "of all ranks"), weapons, and ammunition. He himself began preparing to repel the assault. On his orders, second walls were erected inside the fort, and the spaces between the two fort walls were filled with earth and stones. He sent the documents received from the Manchus to Yeniseisk's *voivode* Prince Konstantin Shcherbatov for subsequent forwarding to the Tsar in Moscow. In Albazin, he ordered the burning of the courtyards outside the fort walls.

The Manchu troops also prepared for the assault. Within 10 days, they had prepared wooden shields to cover their artillery, and wicker shields to protect their infantry. Earthen ramparts were constructed around the fort walls, upon which the Manchus positioned cannons, allowing them to fire upon the fort from three sides. Their ships were anchored opposite the fort to prevent the possible arrival of Russian reinforcements by water.

The assault on the Albazin *ostrog* began on June 29. On the first day, the fort was subjected to artillery bombardment from morning until evening. Powerful siege weapons pierced the *ostrog's* log walls. The church and granaries were also breached by cannonballs. In addition to artillery, the besiegers used "fire arrows" 1.5 to 2.5 arshins (1.1 to 1.8 m) long, launched from special launchers. These arrows set fire to the Albazinians' houses, the church, and the *ostrog* walls.

By the beginning of the siege, the Albazinians had three cannons, four cannonballs, about three *puds*²⁸⁾ of gunpowder, and about two *puds* of lead. Only the Cossacks, of whom there were 200 among the Albazin defenders, had firearms. The peasants and *promyshlennye* lyudi in the fort had no guns. Despite such careful preparation, the Manchus' assault on the *ostrog* was repelled. The

28) *Pud* (pronounced as "pood") - an outdated unit of mass measurement of the Russian system of measures. It was used in Russia before the transition to the decimal system of measures. Pud =16.38 kg.

defenders suffered heavy losses, with over 100 men killed. The destruction of the *ostrog's* fortifications and a shortage of ammunition left the *ostrog* garrison in a hopeless situation. In this situation, 10 days after the assault began, *prikazshik* A. Tolbuzin, at the request of the Albazin defenders, was forced to negotiate the *ostrog's* surrender with the Manchus, on the condition that the Albazinians be released from captivity.

The *prikazshik* sent two Cossacks, Ivashka Semenov and Vaska Zakharov, to the enemy camp for negotiations. Upon returning, the envoys conveyed to Tolbuzin the Manchu leaders' offer: after the *ostrog's* surrender, those willing to transfer to the Bogdoi Tsar's service would be granted substantial pay, while those unwilling would be released to their own Tsar. In response to this proposal, *prikazshik* Tolbuzin decided to stall for time, asking the enemy to give him three days to surrender: he likely held out hope that help would arrive from Nerchinsk, which he had sent for before the siege of the *ostrog*. But the Manchus demanded immediate surrender, apparently because having guessed the Russian commander's plan, they conveyed through envoys that if the fort's surrender did not occur by the end of the day, they would kill everyone.

After this, Tolbuzin decided to approach the Manchus himself for a meeting. He and the Cossacks accompanying him were again offered the chance to serve the Manchu Emperor. Tolbuzin declined the offer and asked to be released to their sovereign. The Russian commander remained in the enemy camp for more than three hours after midday, conducting negotiations. Ultimately, he received confirmation from the Manchu command of their previous promise to release the remaining defenders of Albazin and allow them to retreat to the Russian-controlled territory.

Simultaneously, the Manchus informed the envoys of their further strategic intentions. They recommended that the Albazinians, after surrendering the *ostrog*, go to Yakutsk rather than Nerchinsk, as they would be defeated there. The Manchus had already dispatched their troops to the Transbaikalian *ostrogs*, which, together with the allied Mongol horsemen, numbered over 20,000. The goal of these actions was to push the Qing Empire's border to Lake Baikal, and further east, to the Yakutsk. Subsequently, during negotiations in Nerchinsk, the Manchus would continue to talk about the need to establish a border along the Lena River to the Yakutsk *ostrog*.

When the surviving Albazinians, numbering approximately 350, were leaving the *ostrog*, the Manchus again announced to them the Imperial Decree of the Qing sovereign's great clemency. Commander Lantan, who led the Manchu army, declared to the Russian people that they should not invade the borderlands again and acknowledge the Qing Emperor's mercy, whose compassion is so great that he considers the entire Celestial Empire one family and cares for all peoples equally, as if they were his own children. Therefore, the Emperor did not order their execution, even though they deserved it.

Although most of the defenders of Albazin rejected the Manchu authorities' offer to join their service, a fairly large group of military service people – more than 50 – yielded their offer and voluntarily entered the Qing Emperor's service. It should be noted that the descendants of these people, while maintaining Orthodoxy but now completely assimilated by the Chinese, continued to live in isolated villages in the border regions on the right bank of the Amur as late as the 1930s.

Russian sources indicate that the Manchus released only Russian people from Albazin. Non-Russian Albazinians were detained. The Manchus seized what remained after the shelling. The property of the *ostrog's* inhabitants: the remaining grain reserves, gunpowder and lead, agricultural implements, and over 2,000 horses and cattle. All buildings, residential and non-residential, the church, and the remains of the fort walls were burned. The *amanats* in Albazin were released. However, the Manchus took prisoner the non-Russian wives of military service people and farming peasants, numbering up to 40, and their children of various ages, numbering over 60. According to the existing agreement, the weapons and *amanats* were to remain with the Albazinians.

Despite the fact that the Manchus warned the Albazinians of their further plans to capture Russian *ostrogs* in Transbaikalia and recommended that the Russians retreat to the Lena River, the defenders nevertheless set off for Nerchinsk after the Albazin's surrender. The Manchus partially carried out their threat by sending a portion of their forces after the Albazinians. Moving a large detachment of several hundred men without supplies was difficult, so some of the Albazinians subsequently separated from the main force. At the mouth of the Urka River, a left tributary of the Amur, the detachment split. Some continued going west to Nerchinsk *ostrog*, while others went to Yakutsk

ostrog, up the Urka River, then across a portage to the Nyukzha River, along which they traveled to Olekma, and then on to the Lena River. About 120 men, almost half of the original detachment, followed this route.

Along the way, those retreating toward Nerchinsk were overtaken by Manchu troops, advancing on boats along the river and on horseback along the bank. They pursued the Albazinians only to the confluence of the Shilka and Argun rivers and did not pursue them further. However, A. Tolbuzin was overtaken by several Russian traitors, who reported that the enemy was advancing toward Nerchinsk by water on ships and over the mountains on horseback, carrying artillery and siege equipment.

Concerned about the Manchus' actions, Tolbuzin left five military service people at the confluence of the Shilka and Argun rivers to observe enemy movements. The scouts he left behind observed the Manchus for two days: they saw approximately 40 mounted troops and observed the position of covered guard posts on the other bank of the Argun.

On July 10, the retreating Albazinians arrived in Nerchinsk. Already on July 15, the Nerchinsk *voivode* I. Vlassov sent a reconnaissance detachment of 70 Cossacks to the burned Albazin. The returning scouts reported that the Manchus had left Albazin, and that they had not destroyed the grain sown around the *ostrog*, although their commander had ordered them to burn it. Vlassov immediately dispatched the recently arrived detachment under the command of the Cossack *golova*²⁹⁾ Afanassy Beyton was sent from Yeniseisk to Nerchinsk. Following him, after giving them some time to rest, was A. Tolbuzin and his Albazinians. Those dispatched were tasked with building a new *ostrog* on the site of the burned one and harvesting grain. A. Tolbuzin was appointed as the senior commander. A. Beyton was instructed to report to Tolbuzin. The Nerchinsk voivode reported his actions to Yeniseisk *voivode* Prince Konstantin Shcherbatov. According to I. Vlasov's report to Yeniseisk, Albazin now contained 516 military personnel and 155 *promyshlennye lyudi* and arable peasants.

The Nerchinsk voivode recommended that Tolbuzin build a new *ostrog*

29) A *Cossack golova* (literally "head") was a member of the command staff, commanding between 300 and 600 Cossacks. During the reign of Peter the Great, the rank of head was equivalent to that of lieutenant colonel or colonel.

lower than the previous one, choosing a location where it would be difficult for the enemy to besiege it and where a well could be dug for water – the previous *ostrog* had no well. However, the Albazinians still built the new *ostrog* in the same location. It was constructed according to all the rules of European fortification art. The new *ostrog* was an earthen fort with reinforced walls, which made it possible to withstand artillery fire from attackers. This subsequently predetermined the success of the earthen *ostrog's* defense.

The Albazinians continued building the walls until the cold weather set in. This time, the walls were not constructed with a vertical palisade, but with a double *gorodnya* (horizontal frame) with the space between the walls filled with earth. They were erected to a height of 1.5 *fathoms* (over 3 meters) and 4 *fathoms* (around 8.5 meters) wide. The plan for the completed fortification was sent to Moscow. However, the artillery situation was little better: Albazin had only five copper cannons and three *zatinnye pishchals*³⁰⁾. For ammunition, the Albazinians had 30 puds of gunpowder and 30 puds of lead. Regarding increasing the garrison's size, voivode Vlasov was only able to send eight newly recruited³¹⁾ military service people to Albazin – Nerchinsk was also undermanned, and the threat of Manchu attack remained. As before, the Nerchinsk voivode informed the Yeniseisk *voivode*, Prince K. Shcherbatov, of all his actions.

The following year, the Manchus learned of the Russians' return to Albazin and their construction of new fortifications, after which they decided to lay siege to the fortress again. They received this information from a captured Russian who belonged to *promyshlennye lyudi*. General Lantan, the previous commander of the Manchu army besieging Albazin, was summoned to the emperor on April 17, 1686, and was ordered to exterminate all Russians. But first, they were to be informed of the emperor's decree that they, as citizens of another state, were harassing the empire's borders. If they did not submit to the large army, they would be exterminated. The commander of the Manchu army received orders immediately after the capture of Albazin not to destroy

30) *Zatin* – the inner side of the fortress wall, the shaft from which the defense comes (from "behind the back", that is, "behind the wall"). *Zatinnye pishchal* (musket) – artillery, installed on the wall or tower.

31) Newly recruited – that is, those just accepted into service.

the *ostrog*, but to reserve it for their own needs, and to march on Nerchinsk. After the capture of Nerchinsk, the Manchu army was to return to Albazin, where they would spend the winter. The Manchus were also to preserve the grain crops, which could be used for their army.

Meanwhile, in 1686, the Albazinians continued to fortify their *ostrog*. By June, the walls were completed. Only the *ostrog's* towers remained uncovered. A well had not been dug. However, the Nerchinsk *voivode* later informed the ambassador³²⁾, *okolnichy*³³⁾ Fyodor Golovin³⁴⁾, approaching Irkutsk that various people in Albazin had a year's supply of grain. Water shortages were also not expected.

A new siege of the Albazin *ostrog* began on July 7, 1686 – Manchu troops once again surrounded the *ostrog*. As in the previous year, a large enemy force approached the *ostrog* on ships, while cavalry approached through the mountains. As in the previous siege, the Manchus had a large amount of artillery, including artillery intended for shelling the fortifications. Ships carrying armed men were stationed on the river upstream and downstream from Albazin, and the *ostrog* was surrounded by infantry and cavalry along the shore. Cannons this time were installed not only around the *ostrog* walls on the left bank, but also on the opposite bank of the Amur. As a result, the Manchus launched an attack from all four sides. Tolbuzin managed to send a message to Nerchinsk about the enemy's approach and the shelling of the Albazin *ostrog*.

32) F. Golovin's embassy is described below.

33) *Okolnichy* was a court rank in the Russian state before Peter I. In the hierarchy, it was second only to the rank of boyar.

34) F. Golovin came from the ancient boyar family of Khovrin, whose ancestors, according to genealogical books, were from the Greco-Crimean Byzantine family of Comnenus. A member of this family moved to Moscow in the late 14th century. Members of this family served as grand ducal and royal treasurers in the 15th and 16th centuries. In January 1686, at the initiative of Prince Vassily Golitsyn, a favorite of Peter I's elder sister, Tsarevna (Princess) Sophia, who reigned at the time, he was sent to the Amur as an extraordinary ambassador. He subsequently became one of Peter's closest associates. During the Azov campaign of 1696, he commanded the vanguard of the galley fleet. He participated in Peter's Grand Embassy of 1697. In 1699, Peter promoted him to Admiral General, and in 1700, to Field Marshal General. In 1699, he became the first Knight of the newly established Order of St. Andrew the First-Called. Until his death in 1706, he directed Russian diplomacy and served as Chancellor. He was one of the first in Russia to be elevated to the rank of Count.

By the summer of 1686, the number of Albazin's defenders had increased slightly, now numbering 826 military service people, *promyshlennye lyudi*, and peasants with their wives and children, who faced off against a Manchu army, numbering thousands. They faced a five-month siege.

On the fifth day of the siege, Alexei Tolbuzin was mortally wounded by an exploding cannonball and died soon after. Afanassy Beiton assumed command. The attackers surrounded the *ostrog* with an earthen rampart. To the north, they built an embankment from which an artillery battery fired at the fortress. From the south, the Manchus also attempted to build a similar tower, but the Cossacks burned it and undermined the next one.

Since the Manchus had moved their ships in the fall to locations safe from the spring ice drift and built shelters for the winter, it was obvious the enemy had no intention of leaving. They built a high earthen rampart and a ditch around Albazin, and they dug a ditch and installed three rows of forts of fortified walls. Earlier, the Manchus had built two wooden ramparts: one, a "tar" one³⁵⁾, was burned by the Cossacks, and the other, built of raw wood, was undermined and destroyed. The Manchus made extensive use of these ramparts in their assaults. But the Cossacks responded with vigorous action, launching five sorties. During these assaults, the enemy suffered heavy losses, coming under artillery fire from the defenders of Albazin.

In October, several Albazinians, sent with a report and for help to the Nerchinsk *voivode* I. Vlasov, managed, with great difficulty, to overcome dense Manchu guards (they lay for eight days on an island in the Amur below Albazin), to reach Nerchinsk. The journey from the aforementioned island, where they were hiding, to Nerchinsk took three weeks. They reported to the Nerchinsk *voivode* that the stockade had sufficient grain supplies (enough until Easter Sunday). The defenders were supplied with water (the lack of a well was a factor). Since the Cossacks had built deep dugouts for their habitation, the constant artillery bombardment from the besiegers did not result in serious losses among the Albazin defenders. The Albazinians suffered more serious, but still moderate, losses during their forays.

35) A tar rampart is a defensive structure constructed (heaped) from coniferous trees and branches, which contain large amounts of resin. Because of this, it is highly flammable.

According to the Manchu military leaders, in all the clashes involving hand-to-hand combat, their units achieved crushing victories over the Russians. In their reports to the emperor, they wrote that, having completed the complete encirclement of the Albazin *ostrog* and begun constructing high embankments on both sides to mount their largest cannons, the ruler of the Russian state, the White Tsar (note that the journey to Moscow took over a year, and Tsarevna (Princess) Sophia reigned at the time), finding himself in a difficult situation due to exhaustion, sent his ambassador to the emperor, admitted his guilt, and offered capitulation. He allegedly requested that the siege of Albazin be lifted, after which he would immediately dispatch an ambassador to demarcate the borderlands. The White Tsar's envoy mentioned in the Manchu documents was Ambassador Fyodor Golovin, whose task was to resolve the confrontation that had arisen on the Amur between the Russian state and the Chinese empire. However, preparations for his embassy's dispatch had already begun in Moscow in late 1685. This was due to the government of Tsarevna Sophia's inception of preparations for the Crimean campaigns (which took place in 1687 and 1689), which could have led to a full-scale war with the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the Russian government sought to stabilize the situation on its distant eastern borders.

Having received this message from his Amur army commander, the Kangxi Emperor ordered his envoy to the Manchu camp at Albazin and ordered the siege to be lifted. The Manchu army received the order to lift the siege on November 30, 1686. By this time, their losses had amounted to approximately 1,500 men. But the army commander was unable to carry out his emperor's order: the river ice had already trapped the Manchu ships. The Manchu troops ceased their assaults, but the siege effectively continued, as the Manchus nevertheless prevented the Russians from leaving the fortress. They only retreated from Albazin in the spring of 1687, when the ice melted, but not far – their army was stationed four *versts*³⁶⁾ from Albazin. Apparently, this was due to the desire to prevent the fortress inhabitants from sowing grain.

By this time, the Manchus had already lost approximately 2,500 “military men” and many “working Nikan [Chinese] peasants.” But the number of

36) *Versta* is a Russian unit of distance measurement, equal to 1066.8 meters. It was used before the introduction of the decimal system in the USSR in 1927.

defenders in Albazin had also been seriously reduced by the incessant summer and autumn artillery bombardment of the *ostrog* and the assaults that took place during that time. By the time the Manchu troops received the order to lift the siege, only about 150 defenders remained alive in Albazin, of whom only 30 men and 15 adolescents were capable of guard duty. The rest were weakened by severe wounds and severe scurvy.

The heavy losses suffered by the Albazinians during this time led to another peculiarity. Since a priest had died in the *ostrog*, the defenders' commander, Beyton, did not dare bury the dead without a funeral service. By his order, the bodies of the Albazinians were placed in dugouts. As a result, they appeared to be buried, but above ground, which, by the sovereign's decision, later made it possible to perform the funeral rite. Meanwhile, the surviving Albazinians, along with Beyton himself, found themselves in an incredibly difficult situation: the strong smell of decomposing bodies permeated everything.

Archaeological excavations of the Albazin fort conducted in 1991–1992 confirmed everything A. Beyton had written. Researchers discovered a dugout, which had become a mass grave for the *ostrog's* defenders. In the corner of the dugout was a brick oven measuring 2 x 1.5 meters. The rest of the room was occupied by the neatly arranged bodies of the Albazinians. Archaeologists counted the remains of 57 people, including women and children. Of these, only a few died from bullets and arrows; most died of hunger and disease. In subsequent years, other similar “morgues” were discovered during excavations.

While lifting the siege, the Manchu command attempted to obtain information about what was happening in Albazin. They offered to assist the defenders with their doctors, who were to treat the sick Albazinians. But A. Beyton, as already mentioned, who assumed command after the death of A. Tolbuzin, guessed their plan and refused their help, declaring that “by the grace of the great God, all the military service people in Albazin are healthy.” And to confirm his words about the favorable situation, he ordered the last flour in the *ostrog* to be collected and baked for the enemy a large wheat cake. This cake, weighing one *pud*, he sent to the Qing commanders for Easter, which they “accepted with honor.” But illness took its toll, and by May 1687, only a few remained alive in Albazin (66 people). And now the threat of famine became a serious problem for the Albazinians.

Nevertheless, on May 6, 1687, the Manchu troops complied with the emperor's order and retreated 20 *li* (about 10 km) from Albazin, where they set up camp. On May 23, Beyton asked the Manchus for permission to sow grain near the *ostrog*, but Langtan refused, arguing that the Russian ambassador had not yet arrived and the lands had not yet been demarcated. Thus, the Albazinians' food situation began to deteriorate sharply. In the autumn of 1687, the Nerchinsk *voivode* somehow managed to send 100 *puds* (1,600 kg) of grain to Albazin, but this did not fundamentally improve the situation.

The following year, famine forced A. Beyton to sow grain without the consent of the Manchus. In May 1688, the Manchu commander-in-chief, Langtan, received orders from Beijing to take 1,500 of his troops and reconnoiter the Russian situation. On July 10, he and his army halted 10 km from Albazin and, taking with him 500 lightly armed men-at-arms, hastily rode to the Albazin fortifications. According to the Chinese version, the general rode around the *ostrog* and, after inspecting its fortifications, saw that the ruined areas remained intact, but over 1,000 *qings* (approximately 6,670 hectares) of grain had been sown around the *ostrog*. This is an incredible and highly questionable area of sown grain, given that the Albazinians now numbered only a few dozen people, who had long suffered hunger and disease and had very limited seed for sowing. Moreover, the purpose of undertaking such a large undertaking was pointless.

Then, according to the Manchu version, Lantan summoned the foreman "O-mu-se-fa-li" (apparently a reference to Afanassy Beyton) and others from the *ostrog* and began to rebuke them for disobeying the order not to sow the fields. The Russian foreman made no reply, only bowed. Since the emperor's decree was merciful, Lantan did not punish any of the Russians and returned to his camp. But the next day, he ordered his troops to mow down all the grain and throw it into the river.

Meanwhile, in his report sent to Nerchinsk on September 9, 1688, A. Beyton informed the Nerchinsk *voivode* I. Vlasov of the dire situation in Albazin: enemy attacks had ceased, but there was nothing to eat or drink in the *ostrog*, and people were dying of starvation. Many constantly complained to Beyton about hunger and asked to be allowed to go to Nerchinsk. A. Beyton himself had been ill for six weeks by that time and feared that he did not have

long to live. Nevertheless, Beyton still survived and continued to command the *ostrog* until the very end of the defense of Albazin, although he could only move on crutches due to hunger and illness.

Only on the eve of the signing of the Treaty of Nerchinsk did the Manchus give the Albazinthians the go-ahead to grow grain. On June 23, 1689, General Lantan arrived at Albazin with part of his army and found that the *ostrog* wall remained unrepaired and only a third of the fields were sown with grain (Chinese sources do not specify the extent of the plowing at this time). He summoned the Russian foreman, “O-li-dy-e-ma” (a Cossack appeared before the general as the foreman in place of the ailing Beyton) and announced that a year ago they had destroyed the grain crops because the Russian ambassador had not arrived; now it was known that he had already arrived, so they would not touch the sown grain. They were allowed to wait until it ripened and then harvest it. And again, according to the Chinese document, the Russian foreman and all those with him were pleased and bowed.

As a digression, let's touch on the history of F. Golovin's embassy. After several months of preparation, the embassy departed Moscow on January 26, 1686. The embassy's convoy consisted of 270 carts loaded with ammunition, various goods, and provisions. A detachment of 507 *strelets* (armored gunmen) also departed with Golovin. By then, 35-year-old F. Golovin had already proven himself a bold and prudent leader. He knew several foreign languages, including Latin.

On March 24, 1686, F. Golovin's convoy arrived in Tobolsk, where his father, *boyar*³⁷⁾ Alexei Golovin, was governor at the time. He helped his son organize further travel along the rivers (Irtysh, Ob, and Ket). Moreover, before the start of navigation, F. Golovin was recruiting Cossacks for his detachment from among all those who wished to join. He continued recruiting Cossacks further along the route to Transbaikalia, gathering a total of 1,400 men. At the end of May, the detachment set out along the Irtysh River on

37) *Boyars* – since the 15th century became the highest rank of serving people. They formed the Boyar Duma (Supreme Council), held the main administrative, judicial and military positions, headed state institutions, served as voivodes etc. The title was abolished by Peter I in the early 18th century in connection with the liquidation of the Boyar Duma and general reorganization of the nobility ranking.

23 vessels with all supplies and 25 cannons. It is worth noting that the first Yakutsk *voivode* was F. Golovin's grandfather, Pyotr Golovin. It appears that the Golovin family had already been connected to service in Siberia for three generations.

After another wintering on the Angara, the following year Golovin's detachment crossed Lake Baikal and reached the Udinsk *ostrog* by September 11, 1687. In January 1688, they had to withstand a siege of the *ostrog* from the Mongol khans, whose actions were provoked by the Manchu authorities, were attacked. However, the Mongol attacks were repelled.

Nerchinsk was chosen as the site of the negotiations. Around its walls the Manchus had concentrated a 15,000-strong army with extensive artillery, while Golovin's regiment and the Nerchinsk garrison combined numbered no more than 2,000. It should be noted that the Manchus, who had seized power in China, had not previously negotiated with foreign powers. Negotiations began on August 12, 1689. They were held not in Nerchinsk itself, but in a field in tents prepared half a kilometer from the *ostrog*. The Manchu representatives, Prince Songgotu, the emperor's uncle Tong Guegan, and General Lantan, who had led the siege of Albazin, attempted to use the military contingent they had brought with them to exert moral pressure on the Russian ambassadors. Furthermore, the Portuguese Jesuits Thomas Pereira and Jean-François Gerbillon, who were present at the Manchu embassy as translators by order of the emperor and were hostile to the Russians, were to assist the Qing ambassadors. The negotiations were conducted in Latin. This is where F. Golovin's knowledge of Latin came in handy: he was able to periodically catch these translators freely interpreting the Russian ambassadors' words.

Overall, the negotiations were very difficult. The Manchu insisted that the Qing Empire should receive all the territories up to Lake Baikal, and further east, a wide strip of territory along the coast of the Sea of Okhotsk all the way to Chukotka. It is highly likely that the Manchus only had an idea of these territories from Russian maps that had once fallen into their hands. F. Golovin categorically rejected these demands. Things even reached the point where both sides were ready to break off negotiations. Meanwhile, Nerchinsk was effectively surrounded by Manchu troops, ready to storm the *ostrog*. But unexpectedly, the Manchu side began to gradually yield, and on August 27, a

treaty was signed.

It is highly likely that the Manchu ambassadors were forced to sign the treaty, abandoning their initial demands, due to the changing foreign policy situation for the Qing Empire in the territories near the Amur and Transbaikial regions. In 1688, the Oirat ruler Galdan Khan, leading a 30,000-strong *Dzungar* army, invaded Khalkha (Northern Mongolia) and routed the army of Tushetu Khan Chimeddorji. On October 8, 1688, Tushetu Khan appealed to the Qing Emperor Kangxi, asking him to launch a punitive expedition against Galdan. War was brewing between the Qing Empire and the powerful *Dzungar* Khanate. In this situation, relations with distant Moscow became secondary for the Qing Empire. It is likely that the emperor's ambassadors received corresponding instructions from Beijing.

As a result of the abruptly concluded negotiations, F. Golovin was able to reject the Manchus' claims to the Okhotsk coast and also to defend Russian territories in Transbaikalia. However, due to the threat of vastly superior Chinese forces, and most importantly, in his desire to normalize relations with the Qing Empire for the sake of profitable trade, he was forced to cede lands located along the Amur River. The first border demarcated between the two states was to run along the Argun River, and from its confluence with the Shilka River, where the Amur begins, the demarcation line extended north to the Stanovoy Range – a mountain range that formed the watershed between the Lena and Amur River basins – all the way to the Okhotsk coast.

According to the treaty, all Russian settlements on the right bank of the Argun were to be relocated to its left bank. The Russian authorities were required to liquidate Albazin and clear the entire left bank of the Amur of its Russian population. Both sides also pledged not to erect any buildings on the former Albazin territory. They also pledged to return any defectors who crossed the border. An agreement was reached to organize trade through the newly established border crossing, where the city of Kyakhta later emerged, which was of interest to the Russian side.

For the Russian side, it was important that, according to the treaty, Transbaikalia, with its center in Nerchinsk, remained Russian. By that time, the Russian authorities already knew that silver ore had been discovered near Nerchinsk and that the first silver smelting had even been carried out. One of

the goals of the Russian advance eastward – the search for silver sources – had been achieved.

The favorable terms of the treaty, concluded in such a difficult situation, were accepted largely due to the heroism of the defenders of Albazin. Having suffered negative military clashes with the Russians at Albazin, as well as earlier, at Kumar *ostrog*, the Manchus opted for concessions. However, the resulting treaty was subject to numerous discrepancies in versions written in different languages (Manchu, Russian, and Latin) and did not define the exact border except along the Argun River. As a result, the demarcation of part of the lands along the Okhotsk coast was postponed.

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