**Resources, environment and frontier order: Russia’s expeditions of forest resources on both sides of the Yalu River before the Russo-Japanese War**

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The forest ecological environment changes in the Yalu River Basin in modern times have both endogenous dynamics and the stimulation, collision and embedding of a series of exogenous factors. The Qing government in the face of frontier crisis and border disputes under the double pressure, the Yalu River forest management measures experienced by the “ban” to “reward” the transformation process. The rich forest borderland also attracted the Japanese and Russian forces in the Yalu River on both sides of the forestry expansion, they in the name of “scientific” expedition, in the Yalu River border for a large number of “exploration” activities, this led to the imperial narrative of the “discovery” of the Yalu River forest. The Japanese-Russian forest game gave rise to imperial colonial occupation, resource exploitation, and “commercial exploration” expeditions on both sides of the Yalu River. The Yalu River basin gradually became the centre of the imperial game from a forest borderland. The origin of the Russian forest expedition was the result of the attraction of the resource value of the Yalu River and the competition for imperial power.

For about ten years, from 1895 to 1904, Russia sent numerous expeditions to the border of the Yalu River under the name of geographic investigation, “borrowing land to build railways”, and the establishment of “barriers” by Emperor Nicholas II, Russian Geographical Society, the Ministry of Staff, and the Ministry of Finance, with the high participation of the Imperial Staff Officers, members of the Geographical Society, botanists, geologists, zoologists, orientalists, foresters, cartographers, surveyors, journalists, and other groups of people, they examined the prospects for forestry development and military geography on both sides of the Yalu River. They travelled on both sides of the Yalu River as “agents of the empire”, not only as the advance troops of Russia’s military expansion in East Asia, but also providing dynamic data and intellectual support for the continuous adjustment of Russia’s Far East policy, as well as contributing intellectual raw materials to the scientific research of imperial Russian forestry, botany, geology, and natural history.

Along with Russia’s forest expeditions along the Yalu River border, Russia’s simultaneous “management” of the Yalu River forest business, and the development of forests on both sides of the Yalu River became a focal point of Russia’s affairs from then on. From the acquisition and invasion of forest concessions on both sides of the Yalu River to the successive establishment of East Asia Industrial Company and Far East Forestry Company, the scale of the Yalu River forest business was gradually expanded. As a result, Russia gained the forestry profits and strategic land along the border between China and North Korea, forming a “green barrier” in East Asia. Russia wanted to use Northeast China as its basic “sphere of influence”, the Yalu River forest border as a buffer zone, and the Yalu River Forestry Company as a stronghold, thus conflicting with Japan’s colonial demands to move northward, expand its profits, and take possession of Northeast China. At the same time, the Russian military activities under the cover of the Yalu River forest business led to the unrest in East Asia, the political struggle within Russia reached its peak, and Japan put forward the Russo-Japanese Forest Negotiation centred on the “Manchurian-Korean Exchange Theory”. With the change of the current situation, the Yalu River forest business operated by Russia became an important means for the Japanese war faction to stir up the war sentiment, and Japan succeeded in shaping the international public opinion of the “Russo-Japanese War Theory” by this means, also found the “opportune” moment for war through the issue of the Yalu River forest. The Japan-Russia game ultimately led to the outbreak of war for multiple reasons, but the Yalu River forest issue was also an important inducing factor.

From cross-border timber to cross-border people, it implies the flow of people, commodities and intelligence information using the Yalu River forest as a carrier.The Yalu River forest played a key role in the changes in the ecological environment and the reshaping of the frontier order in modern Northeast China. Starting from Russia’s inspection activities of forest resources on both sides of the Yalu River before the Russo-Japanese War, we can find the dynamic process of the Yalu River forest being continuously affected by imperial power. The Japanese-Russian entanglements and disputes around the Yalu River forest borderlands were essentially a contest of national power centred on the negotiation of forest sovereignty. The international competition behind the multiple identity symbols of the Yalu River forest resources, the ecological consequences of the desire for natural resources and the attempts to domesticate nature have constructed the special status of the Yalu River forest in the Northeast Asian frontier order. From the perspective of the Yalu River forest, we can rediscover the triggers of the Russo-Japanese war, and then examine the dynamic process of international order, ecological environment, capital production, colonial imagination and national discourse construction shaped by forests.