

Managing the Borderland

On June 10, 1727, the Chosŏn Ŭiju magistrate (K. *puyun*), Yi Sŏngyong, sent an express letter to Seoul, reporting that Qing subjects had trespassed in Chosŏn territory.¹ The letter said that several hundred people from Qing territory had appeared aboard boats on the Yalu River and tried to trade goods on the shore. Yi Sŏngyong sent his soldiers to investigate the situation and also dispatched people across the river to inform the senior commandant (*chengshouwei*) of Fenghuangcheng about this intrusion:

That night, I witnessed that the passengers of numerous ships came on shore and made a fire; I realized that these intruders would not be defeated by words. The Fenghuangcheng office sent sixty Qing soldiers to arrest the criminals. When we approached the intruders, who were well aware of the seriousness of their crime, they fiercely resisted and tried to find a way to escape. They attacked our soldiers, five of whom were hurt and drowned to death. We arrested only twenty-nine people; the rest of them ran away. . . . The discarded ships and other things turned out to belong to illegal traders and ginseng poachers from Shandong and Shanxi Provinces.²

The Chosŏn court immediately reported the incident to Beijing, highlighting the serious implications of the case: “Our small country [K. *sobang*] has been worried about the possibility of trespassing, since it is adjacent to the great country. The previously imposed regulation was certainly rigorous, but illegal crossings have recently increased, finally reaching the present extent.” The Chosŏn court demanded a clear response from the Qing government: “Illegal crossings have happened before, but there has never been a case such as this, with several hundred people arriving on several dozen ships, injuring soldiers of the superior country [K. *sangguk*], and killing those of our small country. Had the situation not been

corrected immediately, it is not even necessary to mention what might have happened in the future.”³

This trespassing case concluded with the strangulation and decapitation of nine criminals, one of whom was Guo Lianjin, a Qing bannerman. But Guo Lianjin and his men were hardly the last Qing subjects to enter Chosŏn territory illegally. Trespassing incidents, involving both bannermen and civilians, continued after the Guo Lianjin group was punished. In an effort to stop trespassing, the Yongzheng emperor dispatched a special envoy to the Shengjing area and maintained regular communication with him. Numerous palace memorials and imperial responses were exchanged between the emperor in Beijing and the special inspector in Shengjing, demonstrating that the emperor and local officials alike recognized that Qing policy toward the Chosŏn was closely linked to security at the empire’s northeastern margin—Manchuria.

This chapter discusses the Qing court’s management of Manchuria and the boundary with Chosŏn in three aspects. First, it examines the Qing restriction on entry into Manchuria, later known as the “quarantine policy” (*jengjin*). After moving to China proper, the Qing court divided Manchuria into several regions, assigning different groups to each, and restricted people’s movements in order to confine the Han Chinese to Shengjing, the Manchus to the northeast, and the Mongols to the northwest. This restriction policy was intended to protect local tribes from the majority Han Chinese population and to preserve untainted Manchu ethnic traits and practices in Manchuria. The Qing strategy for restricting access to Manchuria was to build physical barriers to separate this region from the outside world. Right after moving the capital to Beijing, the Qing emperor began to rebuild the Willow Palisade (*liutiaobian*), along which gates (*bianmen*) were built at given intervals to prevent people from coming in and going out freely. Second, it was expected that this restriction of Manchuria would help the Qing court monopolize the natural resources—especially ginseng—in Manchuria. In 1745, the court established the Ginseng Office (*Guanshenju*) in Manchuria as a new institution for more effective and comprehensive management of the state ginseng monopoly. Through this exclusive office for ginseng monopoly, the court sought to ensure the ginseng quota and curb illegal ginseng poachers in Manchuria.

Finally, this chapter further explores the ways in which the Qing restrictions on entry into Manchuria contributed to the peculiar nature of the boundary with the Chosŏn, and how the rhetoric of the asymmetrical relationship worked to the small country’s benefit with regard to its boundary management. When Qing emperors and officials sought to tighten security along the boundary with the Chosŏn, Koreans felt their territory threatened and resisted the Qing approach. In seeking to deter Qing movements, the Chosŏn court relied on the norms of the tributary relationship. By highlighting the inferior status of the Chosŏn vis-à-vis the great Qing, the Koreans succeeded in preventing the construction of a Qing

military facility on the Yalu River; as the benevolent ruler of the suzerain court, the Qing emperor accepted the Chosŏn request to maintain the vacuum at the boundary by force. Qing and Chosŏn conceptions and practices of territory, which were based on asymmetrical tributary relations, differed from those governing borders between modern states. The Qing-Chosŏn boundary was rather “a thick line with a broad horizontal context.”⁴ However, as long as the Chosŏn remained submissive to Qing imperial authority, the key features of the Qing-Chosŏn borderland—the empty zone on the Yalu River side and the unclear territorial limits on the Tumen River side—caused few troubles between the two neighbors.

THE WILLOW PALISADE

The conquest of China in 1644 provided the Manchus with a new capital in China proper. Soon after the move to Beijing, the situation in the northeast became very unstable. The long war against the Ming army had destroyed both the land and the population.⁵ In 1653, in response to the severe depopulation of Liaodong, the Shunzhi emperor made a proposal on recruitment and cultivation in Liaodong (*Liaodong zhaomin kaiken ling*): an imperial edict that encouraged Han Chinese immigration and offered compensation in order to repopulate the northeast. Immigrants were granted titles and ranks, provided with land and farming tools, and exempted from paying taxes. The Liaodong resettlement policy continued into the Kangxi reign, and even political and criminal exiles were sent to Liaodong to supplement the meager population.⁶ By the end of the seventeenth century this immigration effort had proved successful, and the Han population in Liaodong continued to increase. One result of the booming immigration was that many people, most notably illegal ginseng gatherers, were able to pass unnoticed through Shanhaiguan. The recovery and stabilization of the northeast eventually alarmed the Kangxi emperor, who worried that Han immigration would undermine Manchu privileges in this region. He finally ended the promotion policy in the northeast in 1668.⁷

The Qing policy of stabilization in the northeast was accompanied by administrative reorganization. The region was divided into three jurisdictions headed by military governors. The Shengjing military governor ruled the populous area of Shengjing, while the headquarters of the military governors of Ningguta and Heilongjiang were established in Jilin Wula and Qiqihar, respectively. Throughout the Qing period, the area under these three military governors was known as the “three eastern provinces” (*Dong sansheng*).⁸ Within the three eastern provinces, the Shengjing military governor had a particularly wide range of responsibilities, including the prevention of illegal immigration and control of the boundary with the Chosŏn. A map in *The Unified Gazetteer of Shengjing* (*Shengjing tongzhi*) shows that his domain covered an area demarcated by Hetu Ala in the east,

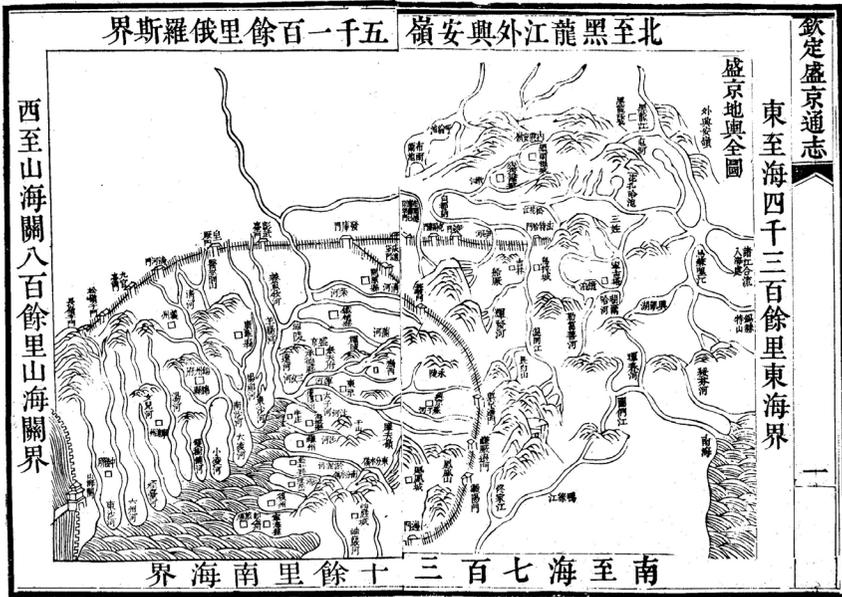


FIGURE 7. Willow Palisade. From *Shengjing tongzhi* (*Gazetteers of Shengjing*), 1784 (Shenyang: Liaohai chubanshe, 1997), *Shengjing quantu*: 1.

Shanhaiguan in the west, Ninghai in the south, Kaiyuan in the north, Zhenjiang in the southeast, the Bohai (K. *Parhae*) Sea in the southwest, Weiyuanbao in the northeast, and Jiuguantai in the northwest near the Mongol areas. Pastures and hunting fields near the Yalu River were also under his command.⁹ Two administrative divisions within the Shengjing office were closely related to Chosŏn affairs: the post of the Xiongyue garrison lieutenant general (*fudutong*), who directed the Yalu River region, and that of the Fenghuangcheng senior commandant, who supervised the boundary with the Chosŏn.¹⁰

In addition to the military governorship, another distinctive feature of Qing rule in the northeast was the Willow Palisade, a physical defense facility that was designed to control access to this vital region. The Qing Willow Palisade was in fact based on the Liaodong Frontier Wall that the Ming had built. After its conquest of China, the Qing court began to rebuild the palisade, which was composed of the eastern line, the western line, and the northern line. In 1661, the Shunzhi emperor relocated the residents along the western line and separated the pastoral Mongols in the west from the sedentary Manchus and Han Chinese in the east.¹¹ Later, the Kangxi emperor continued to expand the fences until 1697, when the Willow Palisade reached its final form. The expansion of the eastern line allowed

old cities such as Fushun, Qingyuan, Fe Ala, and Hetu Ala as well as the tombs of the early rulers to be safely enclosed within the palisade. The western line reached from Weiyuanbao to Shanhaiguan, and the eastern line from Weiyuanbao to Fenghuangcheng. The two lines together stretched across 1,950 *li*. The northern line, also called the New Palisade, was built north of Weiyuanbao during the period from 1670 to 1681. The lines connecting the four points of the palisade, namely Shanhaiguan, Weiyuanbao, Fenghuangcheng, and Fatha, formed the shape of the Chinese character *ren*.¹²

According to Richard Edmonds's research, the Willow Palisade had a total of thirty-four gates, whose locations underwent considerable change over the Qing period.¹³ *The Complete Gazetteer of Shengjing*, compiled in 1748, lists six gates on the eastern line and ten on the western line.¹⁴ Each gate had a tower staffed with a certain number of officers and soldiers. The management of the palisade was the responsibility of the banner soldiers stationed at the gates and outposts (*M. karun*). While the gates were located along the palisade, the outposts were built inside and outside of it. They were added after the Willow Palisade was completed, providing a strong indication that the palisade itself was not adequate to prevent illegal intruders from entering the prohibited land. Outpost personnel were primarily charged with arresting illegal hunters, ginseng poachers, and unlawful settlers outside the palisade.¹⁵

All of the major functions of the palisade, the gates, and the outposts were about restriction of people's movements. The Qing court sought to contain its Han Chinese subjects within China proper and Shengjing, and by doing so to protect other ethnic groups. The first function of the Willow Palisade was to distinguish the administrative districts of the three military governors, enabling the separation of the Han Chinese from the Manchus, the Mongols, and other tribal people in Jilin and Heilongjiang. The central Shengjing area was settled by the Han Chinese, the land outside of the western line was reserved for the Mongols, and the territory north of it was designated for hunting peoples such as the Solon, Dagur, and Orochon tribes.¹⁶ The second function of these installations was to protect the rich natural resources in the region. The Qing rulers established numerous graveyards, pastures, hunting fields, and ginseng mountains outside of the Willow Palisade, all of which were reserved for the exclusive use of the imperial household: "Along the road from Fenghuangcheng to Shanhaiguan and from Kaiyuan to Sa-lin-wo-li, the Willow Palisade is to be built and commoners are to be prohibited from entering."¹⁷

In the area north of the Yalu and Tumen Rivers and near Changbaishan, especially rigorous restrictions were enforced soon after the Qing conquest of 1644. The Kangxi emperor announced that "Changbaishan is the sacred birthplace [*faxiang zhongdi*]" and prohibited any settlement or cultivation.¹⁸ The restriction on entry into the area beyond the eastern line of the Willow Palisade

was also designed as a deterrent to exploiters of ginseng, furs, and pearls, who came from Shengjing and China proper as well as from Korea. The gates on the eastern line were opened for such special occasions as imperial eastern tours, hunts, and ginseng gathering outings, as well as a Chosŏn tributary embassy's journey.¹⁹ When he followed the Kangxi emperor's eastern tour in 1682, Gao Shiqi described the eastern line thus: "The Willow Palisade divides [the inner land] from the Mongols. It reaches the Chosŏn in the south and Shanhaiguan in the west. Illegal intruders beyond [the palisade] are severely punished. . . . Within the preserve, barren mountains bar the passages, so that the roads are decayed and closed."²⁰

GINSENG IN THE SACRED BIRTHPLACE

Soon after acceding to the imperial throne in Beijing in 1723, the Yongzheng emperor realized that good management of the gates and outposts was key to the security of the northeastern region as well as to the imperial monopoly of ginseng. In the early eighteenth century, Qing ginseng policy oscillated between the two directions of banner allocation and merchant licensing. The court entrusted merchants with ginseng collection in 1714, then transferred the task to the banners in 1724, and again hired merchants to run the business in 1730. These changes indicate that as the ginseng harvest declined and the bannermen had difficulty recruiting and provisioning ginseng gatherers, the state had to devise various alternative plans to secure the ginseng quota. Whether through bannermen or through merchants, the purpose of the Qing ginseng monopoly was to collect the amount of ginseng specified by the court. It is also likely that the changes in ginseng policy were part of the overall administrative and financial reforms that the Yongzheng emperor implemented throughout his reign.²¹

It was very clear that the ginseng quota reflected the needs of the state, not the natural conditions of ginseng production. As the Shengjing military governor Tang-boo-ju said, "Ginseng production is of huge importance for state revenue, and therefore the quota [of ginseng] should be predetermined [before collection]."²² In 1730 the state printed ten thousand ginseng licenses and commissioned wealthy merchants to recruit gatherers and to collect sixteen *liang* of ginseng per license; in exchange for recruiting and provisioning their gatherers, the merchants received six out of every sixteen *liang* of ginseng in their quota.²³ This new arrangement was designed to guarantee the set ginseng quota for the court, while merchants and gatherers were able to sell their surplus ginseng and make a profit. According to Wang Peihuan's analysis, in 1740 the Qing court issued 4,562 licenses and collected 45,620 *liang* of ginseng; the licensed merchants received 20,138 *liang* of ginseng, which was equivalent to 402,760 *liang* of silver at the market price in Beijing.²⁴

Soon, however, the licensed merchants became unable to secure the high ginseng quota predetermined by the government, and in 1736, the Shengjing Board of Revenue proposed that the state, not merchants, should manage the ginseng monopoly: "Illegal ginseng poachers continue to increase, not because they do not know of the strict state regulations, but because they are not afraid of punishment in exchange for huge ginseng profits. Instead of relying on merchants, the government should issue ginseng licenses, recruit gatherers, and control their collection."²⁵ In 1745, after years of discussion, the Qianlong emperor implemented a major reform of the ginseng monopoly, which established Ginseng Offices in three places: Shengjing, Jilin, and Ningguta. The Ginseng Offices held exclusive responsibility for the state ginseng monopoly, taking charge of collecting and inspecting ginseng and sending it to the Imperial Household Department in Beijing.²⁶ Despite its physical location in Manchuria, it was under the direct control of the Board of Revenue, not under the supervision of the military governors. However, the military governors of Shengjing and Jilin were involved in the ginseng monopoly, because the authorized routes for ginseng gatherers passed through all three districts.²⁷ All ginseng gatherers and the soldiers escorting them were required to possess standard permits for entering the ginseng mountains (*M. temgetu bithe*; *C. jinshan zhaopiao*).²⁸ When merchants passed through Shanhaiguan into Manchuria to trade surplus ginseng, they had to possess permits stating the quality, grade, and quantity of their ginseng. They were allowed to trade ginseng in China proper only after returning these permits to the Board of Revenue in Beijing.²⁹

Despite such efforts to regulate the ginseng monopoly, a variety of illegal activities persisted. Some gatherers entered areas not authorized by their specific permits or places where any access was entirely prohibited, such as Changbaisan or Chosŏn territory. Others ran away with the ginseng they had harvested or bypassed the designated location for submission in order to avoid inspection. Some gatherers stayed in the mountains to cultivate land or to grow ginseng. All of these illegal actions were punished, while officials and soldiers who addressed smuggling successfully were rewarded.³⁰ As part of his efforts to secure the ginseng monopoly in the northeast, in 1723 the Yongzheng emperor sent a Manchu official, Yong-fu, to Shengjing as a special inspector of six gates on the eastern line of the Willow Palisade (*bianmen zhangjing*). Yong-fu reported to his emperor about the conditions in Shengjing:

The gate of Weiyuanbao leads to Jilin, Ningguta, and Heilongjiang. The gate of Fenghuangcheng is adjacent to the Chosŏn. Outside the gates of Yingè, Wangqing, Jianchang, and Aiyang are imperial hunting fields and ginseng-producing areas. These gates are thus extremely important; [however,] there are a great number of workers, bannermen, civilians, and huntsmen living near the gates, so that it is nearly impossible to prevent people from passing through and poaching ginseng.³¹

The Shengjing military governor Tang-boo-ju likewise reported that ginseng poaching continued to take place in his jurisdiction:

Illegal ginseng poachers travel in groups to go deep into the mountains but often end up getting lost and dying of hunger, being attacked and wounded by wild beasts, or hurting each other fighting over ginseng profits. As these situations affect human lives, [the court] has already prohibited entering the mountains. But in spite of the soldiers' patrolling, illegal ginseng poaching never disappears. . . . No matter how thoroughly patrolling and prohibitions are imposed, people still seek the huge profits of ginseng. Those from Tianjin and Shandong come by boat; others pass through Shanhaiguan and enter Shengjing and Jilin Wula. It is extremely difficult to track down every smuggler.³²

The emperor had a bigger concern than illegal entrance and poaching by Han Chinese: bannermen, who supposedly embodied the "Manchu Way" and represented the dignity of the ruling elite, were increasingly involved in ginseng poaching outside the palisade. In the very first year of his reign, Yongzheng was informed about several dozen bannermen suspected of ginseng poaching. The vice minister of the Shengjing Board of War, Majintai, reported that among those arrested for ginseng poaching were thirty-two bannermen (*M. gūsai niyalma*) and sixty-two civilians from China proper (*M. dorgi ba i irgen*). Punishments for infractions in the prohibited area were harsh: whether civilians or bannermen, criminal leaders had both of their Achilles tendons cut and their accomplices had one; bannermen were sent back to their banners and civilians to their original registers.³³ Later, the punishment became even more severe. In 1771, Han Chinese poachers were beaten one hundred times with a heavy flogging stick (*zhang*) and sentenced to penal servitude (*tu*) for three years. The punishment for bannermen was reduced by a degree to wearing a cangue for two months and receiving one hundred lashes by a flogging leather (*bian*).³⁴

Reports about banner soldiers engaged in ginseng poaching continued to reach Beijing. Yong-fu sent reports to his emperor about various cases, including that of a company captain (*zuoling*) and a corporal (*lingcui*) who confiscated ginseng from illegal intruders and traded it privately; a corporal who engaged in ginseng poaching himself; and huntsmen who stealthily delivered illegal ginseng and sable skins through the gates in collusion with merchants.³⁵ Yongzheng's response to the disturbances in the Willow Palisade was, not surprisingly, firm and resolute: "We Manchus should do our best in everything, work twice as hard as Chinese-martial bannermen [*hanjun baqi*] and Han Chinese do, and not expect silver in reward. [Such a crime as trespassing] is a truly corrupt practice."³⁶ Yongzheng's concern was not limited to the fact that these bannermen had abandoned their duties in favor of illegal activities. Many of the cases of unauthorized crossing for ginseng collection also related to the neighboring Chosŏn—an issue that made the Qing government's management of the northeast even more complicated.

MULTIPLE BOUNDARIES WITHIN THE EMPIRE

Of the numerous trespassing cases involving bannermen in the northeast, it was the incident of Guo Lianjin in 1727 that received the greatest attention at Yongzheng's court. The news that several hundred ginseng poachers had intruded into Chosŏn territory and killed Korean soldiers reached the current Shengjing military governor, Yen-tai, through a report from the Fenghuangcheng military commander, Bo-xi-tun. Yen-tai's report to the emperor explained that Sun Guangzong, one of Guo Lianjin's accomplices and also a local civilian living in Fenghuangcheng, had attracted several hundred people with his plan, bribed the patrolling soldiers to allow him and his followers to cross the Yalu River, entered Chosŏn territory to poach ginseng, and ended up killing people. The patrolling soldiers were supposed to check illegal traffic but instead accepted bribes for several years and helped criminals pass through the gate and make trouble in Chosŏn territory.

Upon receiving the report, Qing court officials agreed that "this case involves foreign people being held and killed" and that such violations could be not tolerated: "The Chosŏn is close to China [*Zhongguo*] and it has long been loyal, because our [Qing] court has taught them with benevolence, treating them equally with the domestic [Qing] subjects [*neidi chenmin*]." Then Qing officials suggested that officers should be dispatched to the scene to arrest the criminals and that soldiers who took bribes should be investigated. It was also deemed necessary for the emperor to empower the Chosŏn king to arrest Qing intruders in Chosŏn territory whenever they injured people or poached ginseng; Chosŏn soldiers should also be authorized to kill Qing intruders if they resisted arrest. These were considered inevitable decisions, required to "prevent Qing subjects from trespassing and embrace the Chosŏn with imperial benevolence."³⁷

The Yongzheng emperor ordered all trespassing suspects to be brought to Shengjing for investigation. During the investigations at Shengjing, it was revealed that the first reporter of the case, the Fenghuangcheng military commander Bo-xi-tun, was also involved in corruption and bribery. Despite his position as an "important official to protect the boundary" (*fengjiang yaoyuan*), Bo-xi-tun had accepted about a thousand *liang* of silver in bribes to help ginseng poachers pass the inspection at the gates. The military commander did not admit his wrongdoings, but others—including those who were involved in giving and delivering the bribe to Bo-xi-tun—all confessed their crimes.³⁸ Sun Guangzong also admitted that he had bribed the military commander.³⁹ The Qing court was full of criticism for these corrupt officers and soldiers: "The trespassers formed a group to carry out evil activities and break the law. All this happened because soldiers were negligent in watching the gates and instead accepted bribes, while their officers did not recognize their misconduct. These soldiers and officers should be dismissed and investigated thoroughly by the Shengjing military governor."⁴⁰

The new Shengjing military governor, Gioro I-li-bu, discovered that Guo Lianjin had originally lived in Shanhaiwei and moved in 1726 to Fenghuangcheng. When Guo was planning the ginseng poaching with his neighbors, Sun Guangzong had provided money to support the plot. Subsequently, Guo and his accomplices gathered ginseng illegally in Yanghe outside of the gate, and Guo used part of the haul to repay Sun. The following year, Guo and as many as two hundred men returned to Yanghe to poach ginseng again. At the gate, they were approached by two of the patrolling soldiers, who demanded one hundred *liang* of silver as a “fee” for illegal entry. Guo’s group paid the silver and passed through the gate to Mangniushao, where they were caught by Chosŏn soldiers.⁴¹ Besides the sheer number of people participating in the conspiracy, what was stunning about this case was the extent of rampant corruption among the banner soldiers stationed at the gates. Wang Tingzuo, a corporal, received four hundred *liang* of silver as a bribe from Sun Guangzong and promised to procure a ginseng-gathering permit for him. When he failed to obtain such a permit, Wang agreed instead to let Sun’s people pass through the gate in order to poach ginseng. Upon hearing of Wang’s actions, his senior officer, a company captain, demanded that Wang share the bribe with him.⁴² Outside the gate, Sun and his people were discovered by another corporal, who did not arrest them but instead demanded a bribe to let them go. Sun gave him five hundred *liang* of silver, which the corporal shared with nine other soldiers at the gate.⁴³ This veritable chain of corruption was common at many gates along the Willow Palisade.

In 1728, Yongzheng issued the final sentences in the Guo Lianjin case: Guo Lianjin was decapitated and eight other people were strangled, while additional accomplices were exiled or beaten according to their crimes. Although he was a bannerman, Wang Tingzuo was not spared given the seriousness of his crime and the amount of the bribe he had accepted. However, other bannermen involved in the Guo Lianjin case benefited from their privileged bannerman status: the sentences of most of the soldiers who received bribes from Guo were reduced because “they were bannermen [*qiren*].”⁴⁴ Despite his firm treatment of those involved in this and similar case, Yongzheng did not believe that Qing subjects were the only ones to be blamed for trespassing and the resulting Korean casualties. The emperor criticized the Chosŏn king for his failure to fulfill the duties of a tributary state:

Previously, Shengzu Ren Huangdi [Kangxi] had written an edict to the Chosŏn king saying, “If bandits enter your country to plunder it, the king should arrest and kill them and return the rest [to the Qing].” After succeeding to the throne, I also explained to the king several times that if any wanderer without a legitimate pass should cause trouble [in Chosŏn territory], the king should punish him according to his law. As prohibitions and regulations are now strongly imposed, outlaws in China proper [*neidi*] can find nowhere to hide and therefore flee to a foreign country

[*waiguo*] to save their lives. The Chosŏn king has already been included among the tributaries [*fanfeng*], so he is obliged to serve the [Qing] court by arresting bandits and pacifying the population. Despite the issuance of several edicts by Shengzu Ren Huangdi and myself, the king has a weak character and has failed to follow these decrees. Therefore, the outlaws of China proper have come to consider Chosŏn territory a hiding place to avoid punishment. Such an evil practice is not to be endured. Hereafter, if the Chosŏn soldiers and officials fail to arrest trespassers and troublemakers, the king should punish them, and the [Qing] Board of Rites should discipline the Chosŏn king for failing in his duty as a tributary king to follow the imperial edicts to arrest bandits and pacify the people.⁴⁵

Interestingly, this edict refers to the Chosŏn simultaneously as “a foreign country” and as “a tributary state.” The use of these two different labels for the Chosŏn indicates that people within the Qing empire held different conceptions of the boundary with the Chosŏn, depending on their location and status. On the one hand, “bandits” in Shengjing, like Guo Lianjin and his fellow troublemakers, regarded the Chosŏn state as a foreign country where they could avoid Qing regulations; on the other hand, the Qing emperor in Beijing considered the Chosŏn a tributary state that had an obligation to serve the Qing court. Seen from the north-eastern periphery, the Chosŏn was a foreign country, but from the perspective of the center the same neighbor was regarded as a tributary state.

Yongzheng’s edict also reveals the ways in which the emperor understood the territoriality of the empire. He recognized that the Willow Palisade served to divide the inside from the outside, but he simultaneously thought that areas both inside and outside the palisade fell within the empire’s territory. This view corresponds with his conception of the Chosŏn state. The Chosŏn king governed his people by his own law; nevertheless, he was, above all, a tributary ruler whom the emperor had enfeoffed. The Willow Palisade was deemed a boundary, and so was the Yalu River. In other words, the Qing empire had multiple boundaries within it. Further, each boundary carried a different meaning according to its location in the empire and represented the imperial power in a different way and to a varying extent. The imperial authority gradually extended over these boundaries from the center to the periphery and then farther beyond to the tributary state.

Yong-fu seemed to share Yongzheng’s conception of the Qing empire’s territoriality and the status of the Chosŏn state. After the Guo Lianjin case closed, Yong-fu reported to the emperor that Qing subjects continued to trespass in Chosŏn territory. He asserted that those who intruded into Chosŏn lands violated the law more seriously than did those who simply poached ginseng outside the Willow Palisade:

Guo Lianjin and his fellow criminals received serious punishments for violating Chosŏn territory. This time, [the trespassers] were also involved in intruding into [Chosŏn] land and poaching ginseng. Their crime is so serious that it should not

be treated as a simple case of ginseng poaching. These people should be sent to Shengjing for investigation and heavy punishment. They should serve as an example to warn people who try to trespass and break the law.⁴⁶

The Yongzheng emperor and his official Yong-fu thus believed that the division between the inner and outer territories was not fixed but rather changeable according to context.⁴⁷ From one perspective, what lay west of the pass at Shanhaiguan corresponded to the inner land—China proper—while the territory to the east of the pass was the outer land. However, this outer land was divided again by the Willow Palisade, which created a different set of “inner” and “outer” lands. In turn, the remote territory outside the palisade was divided by the Yalu and Tumen Rivers. If the area north of these rivers was the inner land of the empire, the southern areas were outside of the empire—they comprised the lands of the Chosŏn, a tributary of the Qing empire.

Qing imperial authority reached everywhere under heaven, beyond Shanhaiguan, the Willow Palisade, and the Yalu and Tumen Rivers. However, each of these multiple boundaries had different functions and meanings for the empire. Shanhaiguan and the Willow Palisade served to create boundaries between ethnic groups, including the Manchus, the Han Chinese, and the Mongols, while the Yalu and Tumen Rivers separated the empire from the tributary state. Unauthorized entrance into Shanhaiguan and beyond the Willow Palisade meant violating state laws meant to segregate ethnic groups and protect imperial property. In comparison, crossing the Yalu and Tumen Rivers was deemed to disturb the tributary state under the protection of the imperial court. What, then, did the territorial boundary between the empire and the tributary state mean to the Qing emperor and the Chosŏn king? Did the two share similar ideas about the Yalu and Tumen Rivers? The ways in which these rulers viewed the territory and sovereignty of the Qing empire and the Chosŏn kingdom are revealed in their debates over the issue of the potential outpost at the Yalu River, a discussion that continued through the Yongzheng and Qianlong periods.

TRESPASSING CONTINUED

Until the late seventeenth century, one of the most vexing issues between the Qing and the Chosŏn had been Korean trespassing on Qing land. At the turn of the eighteenth century, however, cases of Qing subjects encroaching on Chosŏn territory and, for the most part, poaching ginseng there also began to be reported. In 1707, a group of Qing ginseng hunters were reported to have entered P’yŏngan Province and to have taken away a Korean soldier and food supplies.⁴⁸ The following year, the Hamgyŏng governor (K. *kwanch’als’a*), Yi Sŏnbu, disclosed that at least ten Qing ginseng poachers had built tents near the Kapsan area and had made several attempts to rob Korean residents. When arrested and interrogated

by Chosŏn soldiers, these Qing intruders stated that they had legitimate ginseng permits issued by the Shengjing authority and claimed, “We simply got lost while searching for ginseng and ended up coming here after wandering around the Changbaishan area for some time.”⁴⁹ Although it was evident that a growing number of Qing people were approaching Chosŏn territory at this time, it was difficult for Chosŏn officials to confirm their status as legitimate ginseng gatherers. In 1711, Seoul received another report of trespassing in the Kapsan area; again, ten people from Qing territory had been arrested for ginseng poaching and for making contact with local Koreans. After some discussion, the Chosŏn court decided to report this particular event to the Qing as a mere accident rather than as an intentional intrusion.⁵⁰

In 1714, when Qing hunters entered the Yisan area in P’yŏngan Province, the Chosŏn court finally took the step of complaining to Beijing about the ever-increasing intrusions by Qing subjects and officially requested the Qing to take action to prevent such violations:

People of the superior country come and go [across the boundary], forming groups of several dozen or hundreds to hunt animals and gather ginseng. While hunting in the winter and digging for ginseng in the summer, they set up tents and stay for extended periods of time. Their secret contacts with local people in our small country caused the previous trespassing incidents. . . . Now they have violated the rule again by crossing the boundary to abduct a patrolling soldier. If this kind of crime is not stopped now, we cannot anticipate what will happen in the future. . . . Trespassing by the people of the superior country is not something in which this small country can intervene, but I dare to bother Your Highness by reporting this incident. . . . I beg Your Highness to curb illegal trespassers and to stop them from plundering the food supplies and frightening the people of our small country.⁵¹

Upon receiving the Chosŏn court’s report, the Kangxi emperor ordered the imposition of strict regulations for trespassers and local officials. He went further and gave the Chosŏn government his permission to arrest Qing intruders: “If Chosŏn soldiers arrest trespassers and send them back [to the Qing], these criminals should be thoroughly questioned and punished. The Chosŏn should also be informed in writing to strengthen patrolling at the boundary and, in the event of discovering such trespassers, arrest them and send them back to the Qing.”⁵²

In fact, the Kangxi emperor had already given permission for the Chosŏn to arrest Qing intruders two years before this incident, in 1712, explaining, “If [such criminals] enter [Chosŏn territory] and plunder there, the Chosŏn people will think helplessly, ‘We cannot do anything to the people of the Heavenly Court.’ This is something I cannot endure.” The emperor then ordered the Shengjing military governor to stop illegal seafaring near Chosŏn territory and also instructed the Chosŏn court to arrest and punish Qing trespassers, not to pardon them on the basis of their being “imperial subjects.”⁵³ Thus, if Chosŏn soldiers arrested a Qing

subject for seafaring without an authorized pass or for causing a disturbance in Chosŏn territory, they were allowed to punish the Qing criminal under Chosŏn law. However, the emperor also made it clear that this permission did not mean that the Chosŏn court had been given free rein to punish Qing subjects: “[This power] is given to the Chosŏn only as a means of serving the emperor.”⁵⁴

The fact that the Kangxi emperor allowed the Chosŏn to arrest and punish Qing trespassers reflects a profound change in Qing-Chosŏn relations at the turn of the eighteenth century. In the early years of the Kangxi reign, the Chosŏn king had had to pay an excessive fine as a punishment for Korean trespassing, but now, in the last decade of his rule, the emperor granted the Chosŏn court imperial permission to punish Qing subjects for boundary violations. There is no doubt that this change reflected the growing strength of Qing rule in China in the early eighteenth century. The Qing emperor harbored no serious concerns regarding the relationship with the Chosŏn, and this confidence allowed for greater leniency in his Chosŏn policy. In short, the consolidation of the Qing empire opened up opportunities for the Chosŏn court to assert its power at the boundary.

In 1714, the Chosŏn court expressed grave concern over the discovery of Qing seafarers who had built houses and begun to cultivate land around the Kyŏngwŏn area in Hamgyŏng Province. A statement made by these Qing intruders is indicative of the situation: “We were told that people from Ningguta were going to move here, so we wanted to take this fertile land before they came.”⁵⁵ The subsequent investigation by the Chosŏn court revealed a plan proposed by the Ningguta military governor according to which Qing soldiers would be stationed in Hunchun, across from Kyŏngwŏn, and the surrounding area would be declared a military post.⁵⁶ The Chosŏn court’s response to the Qing plan to develop the land on the Tumen River reveals Korean conceptions about the Qing and their mutual boundary:

In Ming times, Jiuliancheng and several other garrisons near the boundary were so close to us that even crowing cockerels and barking dogs could be heard. If people from Liaodong came to our land to till it, we reported [the intrusion] to the [Ming] Liaodong commander so he would stop it and erected a stone marker to demarcate the boundary. The world was then like one family, and our people and the Chinese people [*hua*] were close neighbors; but we were still worried about not having a defense line. It is not even necessary to mention [the importance of the boundary] now. We cannot understand the real intention of the Qing, but it is truly worrisome, since frequent contacts across a narrow river will cause trouble.⁵⁷

This comment implies that drawing clear boundaries had been an important issue during the Ming period and that it became even more critical when the Chosŏn faced the Qing. It assumes that the Qing Manchus could be more threatening to Chosŏn security than the Ming Han Chinese had been.

The Chosŏn court sent a letter to Beijing requesting that the Qing court halt the Ningguta military governor's plan. Contrary to its tacit belief that the Qing represented a greater threat to the Chosŏn than the Ming had been, the Koreans politely explained to the Kangxi emperor that they did not agree with the development of the land near the Tumen River because such development conflicted with previous policy: "[The emperor] built a gate at Fenghuangcheng and checked the entrance, leaving the land outside the gate uninhabited and preventing people from living there. This made a clear distinction between [the great country] and our small country, avoiding their mixing. It was due to imperial thoughtfulness that the boundary has been safe thus far."⁵⁸ Apparently convinced by the argument that trespassing could be prevented only by keeping the area near the river empty of people, the Kangxi emperor accepted the Chosŏn appeal and ordered all Qing subjects residing near the Tumen River to evacuate. In 1715, the Qing Board of Rites sent a letter of confirmation to the Chosŏn, stating that houses and shelters near Kyŏngwŏn had been cleared and that the Ningguta soldiers had also been repositioned. The letter further promised a strict prohibition on Qing people crossing the Tumen River or building houses on or tilling the land near the river; in essence, if illegal residents were discovered near the river, Qing soldiers and officials would be punished for negligence.⁵⁹

Despite Chosŏn oppositions and protests, the Qing had, in fact, established a military garrison in Hunchun, across the Tumen River from Kyŏngwŏn, in 1714. Under the jurisdiction of the Ningguta military governor, the Hunchun regiment colonel (*xieling*) was newly appointed to supervise 150 Kūyara soldiers, who were organized into three companies (M. *niru*), and forty Manchu banner soldiers.⁶⁰ That same year the Chosŏn court dispatched interpreters to deliver a letter expressing its concerns to the Qing,⁶¹ but there is no further record of how the Qing court explained to the Koreans its decision to build the banner garrison in Hunchun, from where Kyŏngwŏn could be visited in a single day's round trip. In the end, the Chosŏn court did not succeed altogether in stopping the Kangxi emperor from stationing Qing soldiers near the Tumen River. But it was at least able to prevent the Qing from developing the land at the Tumen River, because the Ningguta military governor decided to open land in a different location, far away from the river, for his soldiers being stationed in Hunchun.

Li Huazi points out that Kangxi's decision to cease Tumen River development can be deemed a diplomatic victory for the Chosŏn court. She argues that it had a negative effect on Qing boundary management, because the Qing military presence at the Tumen River became insecure and was thus unable to prevent Koreans from crossing the river in the late nineteenth century.⁶² It is true that the Chosŏn court applied the rhetoric of the benevolent emperor who had great trust in his loyal tributary state and that it succeeded in persuading Kangxi to retract his plans for development of the Tumen River area. However, there is more to the decision

than the Chosŏn manipulation of the tributary relationship and its taking advantage of the diplomatic language of loyalty to attain certain objectives. Kangxi's decision not to develop the area was also related to the conception of the boundary as a buffer zone that should be empty of people to prevent troubles with one's neighbor. The empty space at the boundary near the Tumen River did not cause serious problems during the eighteenth century, when the Qing authorities were still strong enough to control traffic across the rivers. It was only in the late nineteenth century that the two states were no longer able to stop people's movements and the uninhabited buffer zone invited a growing number of immigrants and settlers hungry for land.

THE MANGNIUSHAO POST

The Kangxi emperor's authorization of the active involvement of the Chosŏn in patrolling the boundary was confirmed by his son, who in 1728 issued the Yongzheng Imperial Decree (*Yongzheng huangzhi*) to give Chosŏn soldiers permission to arrest Qing intruders in Korean territory and even to kill them in the case of resistance.⁶³ Beyond the imperial efforts in Beijing to curtail trespassing, the Shengjing military governor at the time, Nasutu, identified additional effective methods for achieving security at the boundary, one of which was to build a military post at the mouth of the Yalu River. He paid special attention to a small sandbank called Mangniushao, located where two streams—the Caohe and the Aihe—converged and flowed into the Yalu. This sandbank was used as a foothold by criminals and as a port for delivering provisions to ginseng poachers and trespassers. Nasutu's problem was that although the west side of the sandbank was under the jurisdiction of Fenghuangcheng, the east side fell within Chosŏn territory. Nasutu explained to his emperor that the sandbank enabled criminals to easily evade Qing soldiers because it was located along the boundary with the Chosŏn.⁶⁴ In order to prevent further transgressions, the military governor suggested, ships and soldiers should be stationed at a new military post on Mangniushao. The Yongzheng emperor's first response to Nasutu's proposal was to discuss the matter with the Chosŏn. Despite being the ruler of the superior country, matters pertaining to a boundary with a foreign country could not be decided unilaterally by the Qing emperor.

Upon receiving the Qing court's letter concerning the possible establishment of a military post on Mangniushao, the Chosŏn court assumed that the Qing intention was to "open the land along the Yalu River for settlement." Second State Councilor (K. *chwaŭijŏng*) Cho Munmyŏng said:

Since the Shunzhi reign, the land outside the [Fenghuangcheng] gate has remained empty and no one has been allowed to approach it from either side, a decision that was made after careful consideration. It is very worrisome that recent criminal

activities by our subjects have repeatedly violated the boundary and caused trouble for the superior country. We should stop any attempt at building a military post near the boundary.⁶⁵

Cho's argument against a military post near the Yalu River was the same as the one that had been used in 1714, when the Chosŏn court had opposed development of the land near the Tumen River during the Kangxi reign: if the area is opened for settlement, people will immigrate, and illegal crossings will increase. In 1731, the Chosŏn king Yŏngjo sent a letter to the Qing court, drawing on familiar rhetoric to remind the emperor of the precedents of the Shunzhi and Kangxi emperors, who had displayed consistent benevolence and care on matters relating to the Chosŏn:

In the past, Taizong Wen Huangdi [Hong Taiji] . . . built the Willow Palisade, enforced regular patrols in the region, and kept the land empty; people were not allowed to settle there. It was a truly considerate and extraordinary decision. During the rule of Shengzu Ren Huangdi [Kangxi], the Ningguta military governor stationed soldiers opposite Kyŏngwŏn to the north of this small country. When he further tried to build camps and develop the land, however, the emperor disapproved of the proposal after reading the letter from this small country and showed that imperial benevolence is always deep and eternal. Thanks to his decision, this small country was able to reduce temporarily the burden of patrolling at the boundary.⁶⁶

In the face of Chosŏn complaints, the Yongzheng emperor finally bestowed his favor on the Chosŏn king rather than on his Shengjing military governor. In the same year, 1731, the Qing Board of Rites informed the Chosŏn court of the emperor's objection to the proposed military post on Mangniushao:

[The emperor] understands that the two streams of Caohe and Aihe run along the boundary with the Chosŏn and therefore asks the Chosŏn whether there is any problem [with the proposal]. Since the Chosŏn king begs to follow past precedent, the plan to build a military post will be stopped. It is not necessary for the Board of War to discuss it again.⁶⁷

As an effective way of preventing trespassing, the emperor favored the Chosŏn idea of maintaining an empty buffer zone at the boundary over his own local official's proposal to station soldiers on Mangniushao. Yongzheng's decision was not simply the result of successful Chosŏn diplomacy; rather, the emperor recognized that the Qing empire and the Chosŏn state shared a zone between their territories and he decided to maintain the area uninhabited by force instead of pursuing maximum strategic efficacy in controlling the boundary.

The decision not to build an outpost on the waterway limited Qing efforts to open up new mountains for ginseng collection. In 1738, Yong-fu, now vice minister of the Shengjing Board of War, proposed that more ginseng-producing mountains be opened up and gatherers be allowed to enter via the waterway into Bendou



FIGURE 8. The Fenghuangcheng gate, the Yalu River, and Ūiju. Details from *Sōbuk kyedo* (map of the northwestern boundary), 1777–91. Manuscript, 140 × 135 cm. Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies of Seoul National University, no. ko 4709–89, vol. 5. Used with permission.

and Huanggou outside the eastern line of the palisade. This region was located to the southeast of Elmin and Halmin, the old ginseng preserve in Shengjing. When Yong-fu's proposal was delivered to Beijing, however, the primary concern of the Qing court was not the probable ginseng yield of Bendou and Huanggou but rather the likely reaction of the Chosŏn court, which had been very displeased with the idea of Qing soldiers or ginseng gatherers approaching its territory. In the end, the Qing court rejected the proposal, reasoning,

If we open a waterway to Bendou and Huanggou, which is separated only by a river from Chosŏn territory, some unlawful people may trouble the Chosŏn people and mar the imperial benevolence to embrace the small country. Therefore, ginseng gatherers going to Bendou and Huanggou are not allowed to take the waterways; instead, they should enter through the nearest gates of Jianchang and Aiyang.⁶⁸

The fervent appeal of the Chosŏn for Qing magnanimity evidently pressured the Qing court to take extra precautions at the boundary and to limit voluntarily its efforts to improve ginseng collection in its own territory.

After the proposal for a military post was rejected, Mangniushao continued to serve as a foothold for illegal ginseng poachers. By the time the Qianlong emperor took the throne in 1736, it was clear that the Willow Palisade had failed to check the constant flow of Han Chinese immigrants and ginseng poachers into Manchuria. It was also at this time that the acculturation of the bannermen became a serious concern at the Qing court: signs were omnipresent that the bannermen were losing their traditional means of securing their livelihood, the military skills of horsemanship and archery, and their command of the Manchu language.⁶⁹ As a part of efforts to halt the deterioration of the “Manchu Way,” in 1740 the Qianlong emperor decided to prohibit further immigration to Shengjing and to send illegal residents back to China proper. The same regulations were enforced in Jilin and Heilongjiang in the following years.⁷⁰ Later history tells us that this restriction could not stop tens of thousands of hungry peasants looking for a living in the northeastern region, and the Qing court failed to protect its homeland from Han Chinese immigrants. However, the court did not officially abandon the restriction on entry into the northeast until the end of the nineteenth century, because it was directly linked to the Manchu identity and the basis of the Qing empire. Even in the face of the reality of an increasing Han population in Manchuria, the Qing court doubled down on its efforts to promote the symbolic status of the northeast as the Manchu homeland. From the Qianlong period onward, the Shengjing region in particular began to be called “the place of our Manchu origin” (*Shengjing xi wo Manzhou genben zhi di*), indicating that the Qing court connected the physical locality of Manchuria directly with the ethnicity of the Manchus.⁷¹

Ginseng in Manchuria was still a matter of importance when Qianlong and his officials were discussing places appropriate for the relocation of Beijing bannermen to Manchuria as a way of resolving the “Eight Banners livelihood problem” (*baqi shengji wenti*). Poverty had been increasing among banner soldiers since the eighteenth century for various reasons, including loss of banner lands and the growth of the banner population, and thus the Qing court was confronted with the challenge of finding solutions to the growing economic problems of the bannermen.⁷² In 1741 the court considered the possibility of relocating the bannermen stationed in Beijing and their families to the northeast, where arable land was available. In the course of the discussion regarding appropriate destinations for the bannermen, Grand Secretary Liang Shizheng pointed out that the areas around Hunchun and the Burhatung and Hailan Rivers—two tributaries of the Tumen River—were not to be included among possible resettlement locations, because “these are ginseng-producing areas.” He warned that since the bannermen were not familiar with cultivation, they would have to hire Han Chinese peasants to till the land, and these Han people would certainly try to poach ginseng. Therefore, Liang explained, ginseng-producing areas should not be made available for the

bannermen's relocation.⁷³ Every aspect of Qing policy in Manchuria, even concerning the benefits of the bannermen, thus had to give way to the imperatives of the state's ginseng monopoly.

It was for the same purpose of strengthening security in Shengjing and Jilin in general and of checking ginseng poachers at the boundary with the Chosŏn in particular that the idea of a post at Mangniushao was raised again. As briefly discussed in the introduction, in 1745, fifteen years after Nasutu's initial proposal, the newly appointed Shengjing military governor Daldangga wrote a memorial to the Qianlong emperor about the significance of security in Shengjing. Before mentioning the Mangniushao post, Daldangga argued that the Willow Palisade should be repaired and the area between Fenghuangcheng and Weiyuanbao opened for cultivation.⁷⁴ For him, a guard post at Mangniushao was not only a matter of securing the boundary with the Chosŏn; it was part of an overall plan to reinforce security in Shengjing. Well aware that his predecessor, Nasutu, had failed to persuade the Yongzheng emperor of the merits of the plan, Daldangga first provided the new emperor with a detailed explanation of the geographic features around Mangniushao. In particular he emphasized that the two streams that converged at Mangniushao, the Caohe and the Aihe, both originated from Changbaishan—the sacred homeland of the Manchu court—and that the region was rich in ginseng, the imperial family's precious asset. Even though a number of outposts had been built and soldiers patrolled regularly to protect the ginseng mountains in the imperial preserves, Daldangga cautioned that “vicious people are still illegally building ships to transport food; they pass through Mangniushao and enter the ginseng preserves in secret.”⁷⁵ In order to stop them, he argued, one hundred well-trained banner soldiers with nautical experience should be dispatched to Mangniushao. These soldiers should also be allowed to cultivate the land and build houses near the guard post.⁷⁶

Daldangga knew very well that the previous proposal had been rejected mostly because of the Chosŏn court's appeal against it. He thus made a point of refuting Chosŏn arguments, which he believed were absurd and irrational, arguing that security at the boundary would be beneficial for the Chosŏn as well:

If we miss this opportunity to station soldiers and defend key posts, there will be more people looking to make a profit [at the boundary] as time goes on. There will also be incessant cases of [Qing subjects] coming into contact with Chosŏn people, violating the boundary, and causing trouble. . . . [This military post] will not only prevent unruly people from stealing ginseng but also pacify the boundary with the Chosŏn.⁷⁷

Based on a report from the Xiongyue commander, Daldangga made it clear that the proposed location was outside of Chosŏn territory. All Qing soldiers and ships would be stationed on Qing land, thus precluding any violations of Chosŏn

territory. If an illegal Qing ginseng poacher were to be discovered within Chosŏn territory, the military governor's men would be dispatched and would cooperate with Chosŏn soldiers to arrest the perpetrator.⁷⁸

In addition to local officials in Shengjing, court officials on the Board of Rites in Beijing also supported Daldangga's proposal. Even though the previous emperor had accepted the Chosŏn appeal, they emphasized, "strategic locations at the boundary must be thoroughly secured," and the proposed location lay clearly within Qing territory. Court officials further argued that the "decision to construct a military post within Qing territory [*neidi*] should be made by the presiding local official, not necessarily in consultation with the Chosŏn king."⁷⁹ In essence, they believed it wrong to compromise the country's security out of fear of disturbing a relationship with a neighboring country. Unlike the Yongzheng emperor, who gave priority to diplomatic relations with the Chosŏn, the emperor's officials in Beijing and Shengjing all emphasized the urgency of the local situation.

IMPERIAL AUTHORITY AT THE MARGINS

News of resumed discussions in Beijing regarding the Mangniushao post soon reached the Chosŏn court. Through several channels, including the tributary envoy in Beijing and local interpreters in Fenghuangcheng, the Chosŏn court managed to gather fragments of information and came to the conclusion that the Qing court was making an attempt to relocate the gate of the Willow Palisade closer to the Chosŏn side.⁸⁰ This led to further speculation that by moving the gate, the Shengjing military governor and Qing people would first try to occupy the land at the Yalu River and eventually demand control of Üiju and other cities in the Chosŏn northern region. Hence, King Yŏngjo claimed that the Chosŏn would "lose five to ten *li* of its territory every day." Describing the Qing action as analogous to "someone else building a fence outside my gate," Yŏngjo insisted that any relocation of the Qing gate should be prevented.⁸¹

Anxious to uncover the Qing court's true intentions, especially after receiving news that the Xiongyue commander had already visited the Yalu River, the Chosŏn court decided to ask the Qianlong emperor directly.⁸² Given that the Chosŏn letters were usually delivered to the Qing Board of Rites either in Beijing or in Shengjing, any direct form of contact with the emperor was deemed to be "a violation of the heavenly dignity." This unusually direct channel of communication demonstrates how seriously the Chosŏn court took the Qing state's movements at the Yalu River:

Ever since the imperial court has ruled the world, Your Highness has firmly set the boundary between inside and outside. Concerned with the possibility of vicious

people crossing the boundary in secret, Your Highness built gates and instituted checks at the entrances. The land from the [Qing] gate to the Yalu River, as wide as a hundred *li*, has remained empty, with no one allowed to live on it or till it, and thus people [on either side of the boundary] have not seen or heard each other. It was a considerate plan that permanently secured people's welfare.⁸³

Yǒngjo then reminded the Qianlong emperor that the Kangxi and Yongzheng emperors had not approved of land development or the stationing of soldiers at the boundary with the Chosŏn. He also talked about the special relationship between the Qing and Chosŏn courts: "This small country, despite being an outer dependency [K. *oebŏn*] of the imperial court, has considered itself to be within the empire [K. *naebok*]. We have voiced all our concerns, and [the imperial court] has listened to our requests. From these sincere reactions, we have felt [that the imperial court] has expressed unparalleled devotion to us."⁸⁴ Yǒngjo described the relationship between the two countries as amicable; it was a relationship in which the Chosŏn had served the Qing with sincerity for generations and, in return, the Qing had treated the Chosŏn generously. Yǒngjo implied that he now expected the Qianlong emperor to listen to the Chosŏn court's request to stop plans to build the Mangniushao post.

The language in the Chosŏn king's letter, which reflected the hierarchical role of a submissive inferior court to "serve the great [court]" (K. *sadae*) and that of a benevolent imperial court to "care for its tributaries" (K. *chaso*), was typical of the tributary relationship. But the same rhetoric could carry very different meanings depending on the context. Hong Taiji had applied this rhetoric in the early seventeenth century when he demanded that the Chosŏn king Injo punish Korean trespassers and emphasized the obligation of the Chosŏn to "serve the great." The mid-eighteenth-century letter from the Chosŏn king Yǒngjo used the same expression but purposely put more weight on the imperial duty to "care for its tributaries." Hong Taiji had used this language to coerce the Chosŏn to accept his authority, whereas Qianlong heard the same words when being asked to accept the Chosŏn court's demands. Another interesting point is that the Chosŏn letter tried to portray the Qing rulers as typical Chinese emperors upholding Confucian virtues, a depiction that supported the Chosŏn demand that Qianlong follow past precedent. In spite of their contempt for the Manchus as non-Han Chinese, the Koreans were willing to bestow the epithet of the Confucian sage king on the Qing emperor in order to bolster their claim against the military post. In this sense, the Koreans were exceptionally adept at manipulating the traditional rhetoric of the tributary relationship for their own purposes.

It is not surprising that Qianlong was displeased with the persistent complaints of the Chosŏn about the plans for the empire's northeastern margins. Dal-dangga explained repeatedly that a military post at the boundary would benefit

the Chosŏn as well, and all the officials in the Boards of Rites, Work, and War concurred with him. Beyond that, the emperor had already approved the plan. Qianlong said to his officials: “The Chosŏn king’s memorial admits that some people in his country have taken advantage of the opportunities for trespassing and illegal ginseng gathering. If we station soldiers and patrol [the boundary], these [Koreans] will not be able to cross in secret. The memorial is surely contemptible. People in the small country do not understand what is important; they merely pursue profits and neglect security at the boundary.”⁸⁵ However, it was equally inappropriate for Qianlong to simply ignore the repeated Chosŏn protests in order to follow Daldangga’s proposal. The Chosŏn was one of the oldest tributaries of the Qing empire, a neighbor long favored by the imperial court. If Qianlong desired to live up to the model of a benevolent Confucian king, as Yŏngjo portrayed him, the emperor needed to acknowledge and duly consider the Chosŏn court’s petition.

In addition to the Chosŏn court’s strong resistance, there were internal voices against the plan. The Grand Councilor, Bandi, after inspecting conditions at the proposed location, secretly reported to the Qianlong emperor that building a military post at Mangniushao would not have a great effect on security, since it was not the only place where illegal trespassers could come and go. He further pointed out that the plan would impose on the court the huge expense of provisioning the soldiers and create a diplomatic problem in its relations with the Chosŏn court.⁸⁶ In 1746, Qianlong decided to discontinue the Yalu River development, thereby rejecting one part of Daldangga’s plan and at the same time assuaging the biggest concern of the Chosŏn:

With regard to Daldangga’s memorial about the [Yalu River] development, the Chosŏn king mentioned that the land outside the gate has remained off-limits and empty and the inside and the outside have been separated, so that people have been prevented from coming and causing trouble. This rule must be enforced. As for the relocation of the gate, let this plan be stopped, since the Chosŏn king has appealed against it. Let the Board [of Rites] forward this decision to the Chosŏn king.⁸⁷

As this imperial decree called for the cessation of development at the Yalu River, Daldangga’s master plan for managing the Shengjing region, which included the renovation of the Willow Palisade from Fenghuangcheng to Weiyuanbao and the relocation of soldiers to military posts at the Yalu River, could not move forward. To maintain military forces at the boundary, Daldangga needed housing and land, which he sought to secure in the empty areas near the Yalu River. When the emperor announced his decision to cease further development near the river, officials on the Board of War attempted to change his mind by reiterating the importance of building a post at Mangniushao. The officials, who described

themselves as being “concerned about boundary control,” emphasized the good intentions of Daldangga, who “tried to track down vicious thieves and to secure the boundary for eternity.” They argued that the Mangniushao post would “terminate any trouble at the boundary forever and be beneficial to the outer dependency [the Chosŏn] as well.” They stressed that the Chosŏn complaints were not necessarily serious concerns and that Daldangga’s proposed plan should be put into action.⁸⁸

Between his own court officials, who insisted on erecting a guard post at the Yalu River, and the Chosŏn king, who petitioned to stop it, Qianlong favored the Chosŏn, following his father’s precedent:

The proposed location for the new post is within Qing territory, and it is thus irrelevant to the Chosŏn. However, the Chosŏn king, who has been loyal and submissive to our court for generations, is now worried about being held responsible if his people violate the proposed regulation, and he is therefore pleading with us not to build such a post. . . . I could not bear to see the Chosŏn king being blamed for his people’s wrongdoings. In accordance with his petition, let the building of the Mangniushao post be stopped; [the Board of Rites should] teach the Chosŏn king to control his people better.⁸⁹

Regardless of the urgency of the need for a military post at the boundary, the Qing emperor could not pursue the proposed plan in the face of the Chosŏn court’s persistent appeals against it. The Yongzheng and Qianlong emperors, who sought to uphold the virtues of a Confucian ruler and to embrace the Chosŏn tributary state, decided to sacrifice the potential benefits of a military post at the Yalu River in order to pursue these higher goals. The failed proposal for the Mangniushao post shows that the Qing-Chosŏn relationship had changed significantly over the previous century. The relationship between the two countries was still premised on the asymmetrical hierarchy of a superior and an inferior partner, but it now also allowed space for negotiation and discussion. In addition to this flexible, if not wide open, relationship they also shared an empty zone between their territories, in which the superior court could display its imperial honor while allowing the inferior tributary to keep its benefits. Daldangga’s proposal was unsuccessful not simply because the small Chosŏn kingdom succeeded in protecting its territory against the military might of the Qing empire. The emperor’s desire to embody the role of the universal ruler, the increasingly negotiable relationship between the imperial center and its tributary state, and a shared conception of territory and sovereignty all combined to obviate the necessity of a clearly drawn line between the two neighbors. Instead, they agreed to perpetuate the borderland by maintaining the existing buffer zone and using force, if necessary, to keep it empty and uninhabited.

The gate and the outposts between the eastern line of the Willow Palisade and the Yalu River remained under the jurisdiction of the Shengjing military governor throughout the Qing period. By the 1770s, there were a total of thirty-seven outposts both inside and outside the eastern line, with each of the outposts being staffed with one officer and ten soldiers. Soldiers were stationed at the outposts located inside the eastern line from winter to next spring and then moved to those outside the line from summer to autumn of each year. This schedule for the patrolling soldiers was surely related to the routine of ginseng gathering, which usually took place during the summer outside the eastern line of the palisade. By the end of the Qianlong reign, the number of outposts around the eastern line had changed, to twelve outside the eastern line and twenty-two inside the line.⁹⁰ However, the Qing military presence was not fully visible at this margin of the empire; as Richard Edmonds explains, the Willow Palisade functioned as “an internal boundary rather than the demarcation of the Chinese-Korean border.” Even though Qing soldiers supposedly continued their regular patrols and inspections to prevent ginseng poaching and illegal logging, the empty buffer zone demonstrated “the lack of strategic or political concern at the Qing court for a clearly defined boundary with Korea.”⁹¹

Qianlong might have had little interest in a clearly drawn boundary line with Chosŏn territory because he was full of confidence in the superiority of his status vis-à-vis his Chosŏn tributary. His ideas about the territorial limits of the Qing empire can perhaps be glimpsed in his famous poem about the Willow Palisade, which he wrote in 1754, less than a decade after the debates over the Mangniushao post, when he went on a hunting trip from Jehol through Inner Mongolia to Jilin. The physical barrier in the northeast, the emperor announced, had now become insignificant:

Building it is the same as not having built it
 In so far as the idea exists and the framework is there, there is no
 need to elaborate
 The methods of predecessors are preserved by descendants
 When there are secure fortifications it is peaceful for ten thousand
 years
 How can this be dependent upon these insignificant willows?⁹²

When he wrote this poem, Qianlong seemed “to believe that the deterioration of the Willow Palisade was a sign of the virtue of his rule, for no barrier was necessary to regulate the movement of people when the ruler was a true sage.”⁹³ It is surely questionable whether Qianlong’s confidence was based on the reality of Qing supremacy or merely expressed an ungrounded wish. However, it is

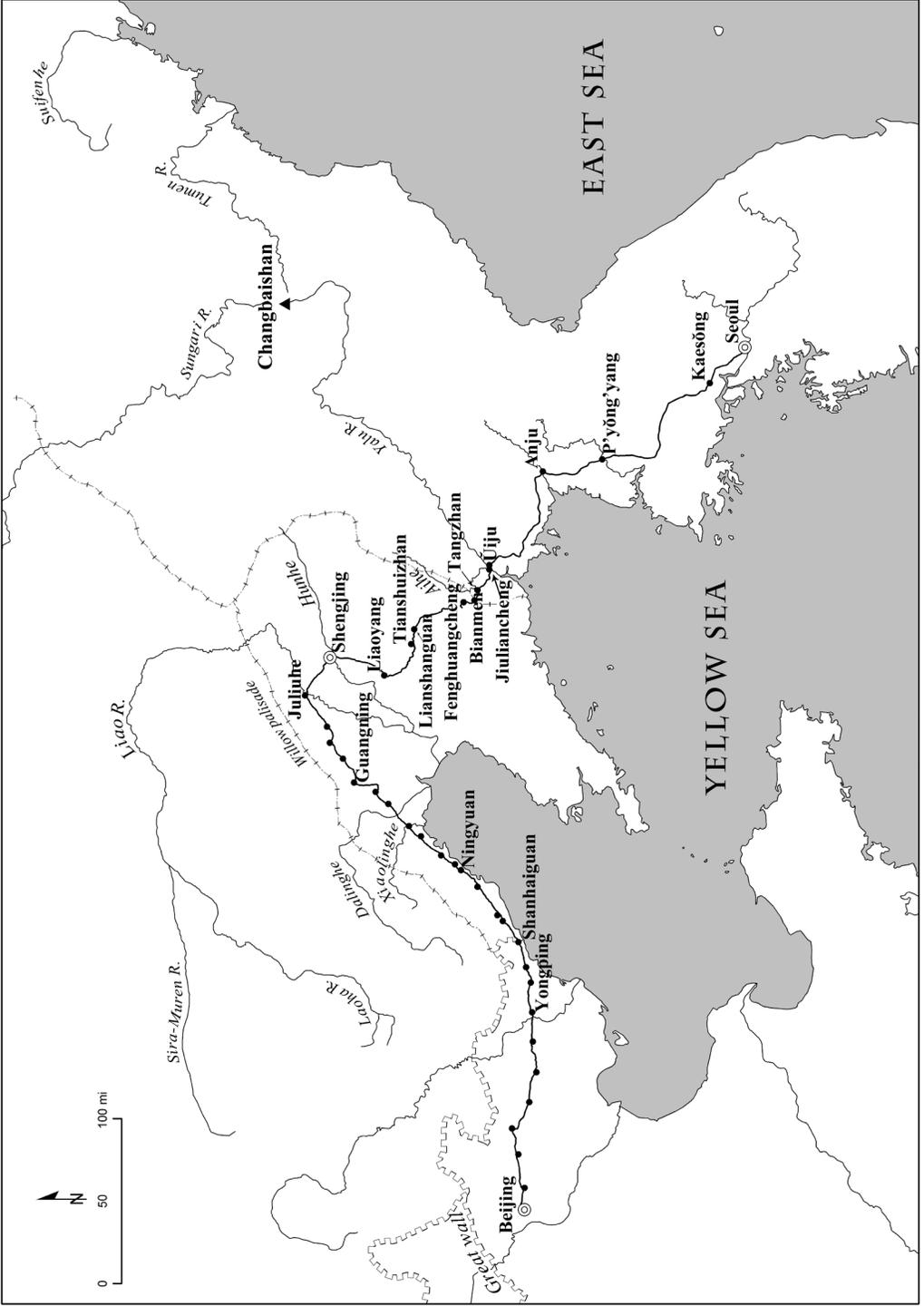
clear that his confidence in his rulership was not limited to Qing territory but also reached the boundary with the Chosŏn. In his view, the imperial power of the Qing extended beyond such trivial barriers as the Willow Palisade; the emperor's prominence was not circumscribed by the narrow rivers dividing the great country and the tributary state. Just as his grandfather Kangxi had done in the case of the 1712 Changbaishan investigation, the Qianlong emperor believed the presentation of imperial power was more important than securing a clear boundary with the Chosŏn.

. . .

The debates around the Mangniushao post at the Yalu River demonstrate that the Qing-Chosŏn borderland was managed and practiced in accordance with the dual principles of the Qing policy on Manchuria and its relationship with the Chosŏn. The Qing economic interest in ginseng production in Manchuria was one of the main reasons why the Qing authorities paid special attention to preventing access by Han civilians to the region. This restrictive policy was also aimed at keeping Koreans away from the Yalu and Tumen Rivers and Changbaishan. The desire of the Qing to protect Manchuria, together with the Chosŏn court's wish to avoid trouble with the great country, led the two states to ban settlement at the boundary and eventually to create the borderland through the imposition of an empty buffer zone between the two countries. This incident also helps us understand the changeability of Qing-Chosŏn relations. Korean trespassing in Qing territory was a constant occurrence from the Nurhaci era to the Qianlong reign, but the Qing court's responses changed over time. The early Manchu rulers imposed harsh punishments on Korean criminals—a policy aimed at forcing the Chosŏn court to accept their power. Unlike their seventeenth-century predecessors, however, the Qing emperors in the eighteenth century ruled over a vast territory populated by diverse groups of people, and they sought to represent themselves as the universal rulers of all subjects of the empire, including the Manchus, the Han, the Mongols, the Uighurs, and the Tibetans.⁹⁴

Such universalism was necessarily reflected also on those living outside the imperial domain. In relation to a tributary state as old as the Chosŏn, in particular, the Qing emperors cast themselves as the benevolent rulers of the Confucian world, an image that required them to accept Korean demands, at least to some degree. The aborted proposal for the Mangniushao post offers an example of how the Qing ruling ideology was projected in its foreign relations. The Chosŏn court's loyalty was very useful and important for justifying Qing rule, while its potential as a military threat to the Qing empire was minimal. Because of this carefully weighed positioning, one can argue that Qing universalism in the eighteenth century actually helped the Chosŏn king protect his territory and sovereignty. This

peculiarity of the tributary relationship between the Qing and the Chosŏn led to the creation and maintenance of the borderland, whose logic did not permit the establishment of a military post. Instead, the same tributary relationship invited people and money to flourishing markets in this supposedly empty zone, as chapter 4 demonstrates.



MAP 4. The Chosŏn tributary embassy's travel route.