

Document 4.2: Excerpts from the Treaty of Nerchinsk signed by China and Russia in 1689

This was China's first treaty with a Western power. The need for negotiations came about because of conflicts on the Chinese–Russian border among traders and settlers in the area. Two Jesuits had a hand in drafting the treaty and worked as translators between the two parties.

I

The river called Gorbitsa which going down falls into the Shilka river from the left side near the Chernaya river is decreed the boundary between both states.

Likewise, from the upper reaches of that river the power of both states is thus divided by the stone mountain chain which begins from the upper reaches of that river and extends even to the sea, along the heights of those same mountains; so that all rivers, small and great, that fall into the Amur from the southern slopes of those mountains are under the domination of the Khin state.

Likewise, all rivers that flow from the other slopes of those mountains shall be under the power of the tsarish [czarist] majesty of the Russian state.

[Both sides agreed to mark the boundaries after an exchange of correspondence.]

II

Likewise, the river called Argun which falls into the river Amur is thus decreed the frontier, so that all lands that make up the left side, going along that river to its very sources, are under the dominion of the Khin khan [Chinese ruler]; likewise, all lands contained on the right side are in the domain of the tsarish majesty of the Russian state, and all buildings on the southern bank of that river Argun shall be moved to the other side of that same river.

III

The town of Albazin which was built by the tsarish majesty will be destroyed to its foundations and those people living there with all military and other supplies shall be returned to the side of the tsarish majesty, and none of their losses [i.e., side effects], however small the things, shall be left there.

IV

Fugitives, whether they were, up to this peace decree, from either the side of the tsarish majesty or from the side of the Bugdykhan highness, are [permitted] to be on either side without being exchanged, but those who after this decreed peace shall pass over, such fugitives shall be expelled without delay from either side and [turned over] immediately to the frontier voevodas¹.

V

Whatever people with [i.e., who possess] documents of passage from either side, for the [sake of the] presently inaugurated friendship, may freely come and go to both states for their affairs on either side and may buy and sell what is necessary to them and it shall be [so] ordered.

VI

Formerly, before this decreed peace, there were quarrels between those living on the frontier for trade between both states. [Now if] traders shall pass and thefts or murder will be committed, such people, having been caught, shall be sent back to that side whence they came, to the border towns, to the voevodas, and for them who commit such crimes the punishment shall be severe. [When] people band together and commit such

¹ Local administrators with political and judicial powers

crimes as the above-mentioned thievery, such willful ones, having been caught, shall be sent to the frontier voevodas, and for those who commit such crimes, the punishment shall be death. And warfare and bloodshed shall not be restored to by either side for such reasons or for the offenses of those living on the frontier. Instead, it shall be written about such disputes by the side on which the thieving occurs and reported to the sovereigns [of both powers], and disputes shall be settled by special diplomatic note.

Source: Pei-kai Cheng, Michael Lestz, and Jonathan D. Spence, eds. *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1999. 53-54.