

Chapter 16

Bon Voyage to Chekiang Refugees

As a measure of relieving the famished conditions in southeastern Chekiang, the provincial government recently scheduled to send 100,000 to the North-Eastern Provinces. The famine refugees are to be brought to Shanghai whence they embark for Manchuria. The first batch, about 300, and the second, about 500, reached the city a few days ago and both embarked on 26th inst. Both the provincial government and the famished people are to be complimented for this undertaking. Emigration, or rather colonization in the present case, as a governmental policy is indeed as old as Chinese history, but seldom has it been undertaken solely and deliberately with the view of equalizing economic situations in two different parts of the country. Batches after batches of colonists were sent over to the regions watered by the Liao by the first Ming Emperor, but they were to be there largely for military purposes. In more recent times, millions from Shantung and Hopei have gone beyond Shanhaikwan, but these went of their own accord and enjoyed little or no governmental supervision. But the present move taken by the Chekiang government is clearly different; it is one which is not only properly planned and organized by the political authorities but is also undertaken with the explicit economic purpose of helping develop one region while relieving the pressure felt in another. Of the families and individuals who joined the movement we must further observe that they, unlike their forefathers, are less tied down to their soil and their ancestral tombs—a characteristic which is said by some foreign observers to be inherent in us and to be at the basis of our inability to gain upon and to keep pace with the dynamic West. The colonists under the Mings were virtually snatched away from their ancestral hearths; many a sad tale of parting, which was practically equal to one rendered by the hand of death, is yet to be read in some of the family histories. The individuals and families that embarked on 26th inst. help demonstrate that we have now largely outgrown such sentimentalities.

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