

Tracing the Evolution and Current Landscape of Korean Studies in Russia's Far East: The Case of Far Eastern Federal University

Vadim Akulenko
Far Eastern Federal University

Junghyun Choi
Korea University

Abstract

In 1900, the Oriental Institute in Vladivostok established the first Department of Korean Language in Russia and the world, marking the beginning of Russian Korean studies scholarship. Within a few years, the foundation of the Far Eastern School of Practical Korean Studies was firmly established. However, the turbulent events of the 20th century, including Stalin's repressions, severely disrupted its development, resulting in a harsh interruption of this scholarly tradition. Despite these challenges, Korean studies training was revived in Vladivostok in 1975. Over the past five decades, it has achieved significant progress, culminating in the establishment of the dynamic Department of Korean Studies and the Center for Korean Studies at Far Eastern Federal University (FEFU).

This study aims to examine the 125-year history and current state of Korean Studies at FEFU. The research draws upon materials from *Izvestiya Vostochnogo Instituta* (Bulletin of the Oriental Institute), the works of professors instrumental in reviving Oriental Studies education in Vladivostok, and the contributions of distinguished graduates who have advanced the field through their teaching at FEFU. The analysis of the current state is based on Vadim Akulenko's personal materials, interviews with the head of the Department of Korean Studies, and official documents available on the FEFU website.

Keywords

Korean Studies, Korean Studies Education, Far Eastern Federal University (FEFU), Vladivostok, Oriental Institute, Center for Korean Studies, Department of Korean Studies

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Vadim Akulenko

Far Eastern Federal University

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Introduction

In 2025, Far Eastern Federal University (FEFU) will celebrate several significant anniversaries related to Korean studies. Among these is the 125th anniversary of the establishment of the world's first Department of Korean Language at the Oriental Institute, marking the inception of higher education in the Russian Far East. FEFU proudly upholds the traditions established by the Oriental Institute, which laid a strong foundation for the development of the Vladivostok Center for Korean Studies.

Over the past 125 years, the Oriental Institute, Far Eastern State University (FESU), and FEFU have collectively trained hundreds of specialists in Korean language, culture, economics, and literature. On September 4, 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, a commemorative plaque was unveiled at the historic Oriental Institute building on Pushkinskaya Street to honor this remarkable milestone.

Another significant milestone was the 50th anniversary of the resumption of Korean language instruction in Vladivostok following its interruption during the Great Purge. In 1975, the first cohort of students was admitted to the Korean Philology Division within the Oriental Faculty of FESU, which later was transitioned to FEFU in 2011.

Figure 1. Commemorative plaque at the historic Oriental Institute building on Pushkinskaya Street, marking the establishment of the world’s first Department of Korean Language at the Oriental Institute (Photo by Vadim Akulenko)



Additionally, on October 2, 2025, FEPU will commemorate the 30th anniversary of the ceremonial opening of the Higher College for Korean Studies (HCKS FESU). This achievement was the result of a successful partnership between FESU and “Kohap Group,” one of the Republic of Korea’s largest financial and industrial groups at the time, led by Chairman Jang Chihyeok. His father, Jang Dobin, was a prominent Korean independence activist, scholar, and journalist who spent several years in Vladivostok. The establishment of the college represented the first educational investment project in the history of diplomatic and cultural relations between Russia and the Republic of Korea.

This study aims to explore the stages of development of Korean studies in Vladivostok and evaluate its current state. Research on the early stages draws on materials from *Izvestiya Vostochnogo Instituta* (Bulle-

tin of the Oriental Institute).¹ The analysis of the current state is based on the materials personally collected by Vadim Akulenko, interviews with the head of the Department of Korean Studies, and official documents available on the FEFU website.

The study also incorporates the works of professors who played pivotal roles in the revival of Oriental and Korean studies in Vladivostok during the second half of the 20th century, including V. M. Serov and V. V. Verkholyak. Additionally, it references the contributions of distinguished graduates of FESU, such as A. A. Khamatova and I. A. Tolstokulakov, who have dedicated their careers to advancing Oriental studies education in Vladivostok. The emergence and development of Korean studies are further contextualized through the works of L. R. Kontsevich, while the biography of the first Russian Koreanist, G. V. Podstavin, has been meticulously documented by A. A. Khisamutdinov.

Pioneering the Field: The World's First Department of Korean Language

In October 1899, the Oriental Institute was established in Vladivostok, one of the most remote yet rapidly developing cities of the Russian Empire. It quickly became a prominent center for the study of East Asian countries, including Korea. The primary mission of the Institute was to train specialists to support the development of relations with Asian nations such as China, Japan, and Korea.

Students at the Oriental Institute received their education within four divisions: Chinese-Manchurian, Chinese-Mongolian, Chinese-Japanese, and Chinese-Korean. The four-year curriculum provided a comprehensive education that included instruction in Chinese and English, as well as one of the four Oriental languages. In addition, students attended courses on the history, geography, and ethnography of East Asia, studied

¹ *Izvestiya Vostochnogo instituta* (Bulletin of the Oriental Institute) was the official publication and scientific journal of the Oriental Institute, published in Vladivostok from 1900 to 1921.

the economic and political conditions of Asian countries, and acquired knowledge in fields such as economics, law, and other relevant disciplines.²

The Oriental Institute was founded by Professor A. M. Pozdnev (1851–1920), a distinguished specialist in Mongolian and Manchu studies and a graduate of St. Petersburg University. Professor Pozdnev served as the Institute's first director. In 1903, he was briefly succeeded by his brother, D. M. Pozdnev (1865–1937), a noted Japanologist who held the position of director from 1904 to 1905. Following the revolutionary events of 1905 and continuing until 1917, the directorship was held by Professor A. V. Rudakov (1871–1949), an expert in Manchu and Chinese studies.

The Oriental Institute was conceived as a pioneering educational institution, unprecedented in Russia and other countries. As A. M. Pozdnev emphasized during a conference meeting on August 18, 1900, the teaching of Eastern languages should be guided by a practical orientation. Furthermore, students were to be thoroughly acquainted with the natural, economic, and legal conditions of the East Asian states they studied.³

Thus, Oriental studies in Vladivostok initially adopted a practical orientation, with a strong emphasis on fieldwork in neighboring countries such as Mongolia, China, Korea, and Japan. For instance, the inaugural issue of *Izvestiya Vostochnogo Instituta* highlighted the expectation that professors and instructors at the Institute should undertake educational and research internships in the countries they studied at least once every three years. To facilitate this initiative, the Institute sought for additional funding from the Governor-General of Priamurye.⁴

Regarding travel to Korea, it was specifically noted that such jour-

² V. M. Serov, "Stanovlenie Vostochnogo instituta (1899-1909 gg.)," *Izvestiya Vostochnogo instituta* 1 (1994): 16.

³ V. M. Serov, "Protokoly zasedaniy Konferentsiy Vostochnogo instituta za 1900-1901 akademicheskii god," *Izvestiya Vostochnogo instituta* 2, no. 1 (1901): 45.

⁴ Serov, "Protokoly 1901," 11.

neys could only be undertaken on horseback, requiring the hiring of drivers and guides. The estimated total cost for such an educational trip was 400 rubles, with the expectation that a professor from the Oriental Institute would cover a distance of no less than 2,000 li (approximately 1,000 kilometers) round-trip (*Izvestiya Vostochnogo Instituta*, 9-10). In contrast, travel to China was recommended by water transport, with inland travel utilizing horse-drawn vehicles. Depending on the destination, the cost for such trips ranged from 350 to 530 rubles.⁵ Travel to Japan also required water transport; however, in Japan, transportation could be conducted by train, rickshaw, or horse-drawn vehicles, with total expenses estimated between 500 and 600 rubles.⁶

The Department of Korean Language at the Oriental Institute was led by Professor G. V. Podstavin (1875–1924), who is recognized as the founder of academic Korean studies in Russia and the world's first head of a Korean language department. He held this position from its establishment until 1921 when he was forced to leave his homeland.

Podstavin studied Mongolian, Chinese, and Manchu languages at Saint Petersburg Imperial University under the mentorship of distinguished scholars such as Professors V. P. Vasiliev and A. M. Pozdnev. After graduating with honors from the university's Oriental Faculty, Podstavin briefly interned in Korea from October 1899 to May 1900 before relocating to Vladivostok at the invitation of A. M. Pozdnev.⁷

The history of Russian academic Korean studies truly began with Podstavin's appointment as a professor in the Department of Korean Language at the Oriental Institute. Prior to this, the Korean language had not been taught as part of a separate division's curriculum or as a mandatory discipline anywhere in Russia. Since 1897, it had only been offered as an elective for students at Saint Petersburg Imperial University.

It is reasonable to infer that, despite the innate talent of the young

⁵ Serov, "Protokoly 1901," 8.

⁶ Serov, "Protokoly 1901," 11.

⁷ V. M. Serov, "Protokoly zasedaniy Konferentsiy Vostochnogo instituta za 1901-1902 akademicheskii god," *Izvestiya Vostochnogo instituta* 3, no. 5 (1902): 163.

graduate, Podstavin's brief stay in Seoul could not have allowed him to achieve a level of proficiency in Korean sufficient for practical teaching. Significant support in developing practical Korean language skills—both for the students of the Oriental Institute and for Podstavin himself—was provided by the Korean lecturer Han Gilmyeong. In recommending Han for this position, Podstavin noted that Han came from an ancient aristocratic family and had studied classical Chinese from the age of five. Beginning in 1896, Han studied the Russian language for three years at the Russian Language School in Seoul. Podstavin remarked that the school administration had recommended Han as its best student and as an ideal assistant for his own study of the Korean language.

Han Gilmyeong subsequently accompanied Podstavin on his travels through northern Korea and later joined him in Vladivostok, where he continued to contribute to the study and teaching of the Korean language. Podstavin particularly praised Han's "extensive knowledge of Chinese and Korean literature, fully worthy of the position of lecturer in the Department of Korean Language."⁸

Unfortunately, Han Gilmyeong's health prevented him from holding his position for long, and in 1901, he was succeeded by Tae Wonson (1901–1903). Tae Wonson, also from a noble Korean family in Seoul, had graduated from the Seoul School of Foreign Languages that same year.⁹ In 1903, Tae Wonson was succeeded by Yun Byeongji (1903–1905). However, from 1905 to 1908, Han Gilmyeong returned to his position at the Oriental Institute.¹⁰ Tragically, overwhelmed by the humiliation of his homeland's plight, he took his own life within the walls of the institute on February 12, 1908.¹¹ Subsequently, the position of Korean language lecturer was held by Kim Byunghak, the father of the future So-

⁸ Serov, "Protokoly 1902," 12-13.

⁹ Serov, "Protokoly 1902," 24-26.

¹⁰ L. R. Kontsevich, "O razvitii traditsionnogo koreevedeniya v tsarskoy Rossii," accessed September 2, 2024, <https://koryo-saram.site/o-razvitii-traditsionnogo-koreevedeniya-v-tsarskoj-rossii>.

¹¹ "Otchet o sostoyanii Vostochnogo instituta za 1909 g. s istoricheskim ocherkom ego desyatiletney deyatelnosti," *Izvestiya Vostochnogo instituta* 11, Appendix 1 (1910): 3-4.

viet intelligence officer and writer R. N. Kim.¹²

Upon assuming leadership of Russia's first Department of Korean Language, Podstavin faced an immense challenge. He not only needed to design a curriculum for teaching the Korean language and other Korean studies disciplines for the first time but also had to independently create teaching materials. To address this, Podstavin promptly raised the issue with the institute's administration of acquiring printing fonts from a Japanese company. The plan was to print texts in both *Hangeul* and a mixed script incorporating Chinese characters.¹³ Additionally, from his initial journey to Korea, Professor Podstavin brought back a substantial collection of Korean books—137 pieces in 819 volumes—and one map of eight copies.¹⁴

The curriculum for studying the Korean language, developed by Podstavin during his first year as head of the Department of Korean Language, began with a theoretical introduction. This introductory section covered existing knowledge on the origins of the Korean language, the influence of Chinese on its development, and the history of Korean script.

The main part of the course followed the classical method, focusing on the study of Korean grammar and syntax. Practical exercises included reading texts from *Cours d'exercices gradués*, included as a supplement to *Grammaire coréenne, composée par les Missionnaires en Corée* (Yokohama, 1881), and excerpts from selected Korean books. They were also to memorize conversational phrases from *A Corean Manual, or Phrase-book* by James Scott (Seoul: English Church Mission Press, 1893), and *Korean Grammatical Forms, being a Manual of Korean Verb Forms* by James S. Gale (Seoul: Trilingual Press, 1894). In addition to these exercises, students practiced Korean calligraphy and read Korean texts written in Chinese characters, further enhancing their linguistic and cultural

¹² "Otchet o sostoyanii," 3-4.

¹³ Serov, "Protokoly 1901," 14.

¹⁴ Serov, "Protokoly 1901," 16.

understanding.¹⁵

Although Korean studies were still in their infancy at the time, Professor Podstavin made significant efforts to compile essential publications for teaching the Korean language. He presented these works as a list of recommended editions for study:

1. Baird, Annie L. A. *Fifty Helps for the Beginners in the Use of the Korean Language*.
2. Gale, J. *Korean Grammatical Forms being a Manual of Korean Verb Forms*. Seoul, 1894.
3. *Korean-English Dictionary*. Yokohama, 1897.
4. *Grammait e coréenne, composée par les missionnaires de Corée*. Yokohama, 1881.
5. *Dictionnaire coréen-français par les missionnaires de Corée*. Yokohama, 1880.
6. *Korean Words and Phrases by Hodge*. Seoul, 1897.
7. Imbault-Huart, C. *Manuel de la langue coréenne parlée*. Paris, 1889.
8. Ross, John. *Korean Speech, with Grammar and Vocabulary*. 1882.
9. *Corean Primer; being Lessons in Corean*. Shanghai, 1877.
10. Scott, James. *Corean Manual, or Phrase-book with Introductory Grammar*. Seoul, 1893.
11. *English-Corean Dictionary*. Corean, 1891.
12. Underwood, H. G. *An Introduction to the Korean Spoken Language*. Shanghai, 1890.
13. *A Concise Dictionary of the Korean Language*. Shanghai, 1890.¹⁶

Subsequently, Podstavin not only expanded this list but also independently developed an extensive series of textbooks on the Korean language. Within the first three years of leading the department, and alongside the ongoing development of the curriculum, he prepared essential

¹⁵ Serov, "Protokoly 1901," 34-36.

¹⁶ Serov, "Protokoly 1901," 36.

materials to ensure its successful implementation. These included *Korean Chrestomathy* in two parts (1901), *A Guide to the Practical Study of the Korean Language* (1901), as well as several collections on colloquial Korean (1902), mixed Korean-Chinese script (1902), and samples of official documents (1903). In later years, Podstavin continued his efforts, compiling *Chrestomathy of literary Korean* (1905), a collection of contemporary Korean satirical works (1907), and a manual on the study of the official style of modern Korean (1908).¹⁷

Although Podstavin had to prioritize teaching, he successfully systematized an extensive body of lexical and grammatical material on the Korean language, which he had independently compiled in his textbooks. The Russian transcription system for the Korean language that he developed was adopted for use in Russian cartography and in publications by the Academy of Sciences until the 1930s.¹⁸

The training program for the first Korean Studies specialists, much like contemporary programs, was not limited to language instruction but also encompassed the study of specialized disciplines. According to data published in *Izvestiya Vostochnogo Instituta*, Professor Podstavin developed and taught courses such as “The Political Organization of Korea” and “The Trade and Industrial Activities of Contemporary Korea.” These courses combined lectures with practical components, including the analysis of specific texts from Korean newspapers, legislative documents, and significant trade records.¹⁹

In addition to specialized language courses, students at the Oriental Institute attended general lectures on Oriental studies. First-year students participated in a foundational course on the geography and ethnography of China, Korea, and Japan, while second and third-year students took a course on the modern history of these countries. The history of China

¹⁷ A. A. Khasamutdinov, “Osnovatel’ shkoly koreevedeniya G. V. Podstavin,” *Problemy dal’nego vostoka* 1 (2015): 107.

¹⁸ Kontsevich, “O razvitii traditsionnogo koreevedeniya v tsarskoy Rossii,” <https://koryo-saram.site/o-razvitii-traditsionnogo-koreevedeniya-v-tsarskoj-rossii>.

¹⁹ Serov, “Protokoly 1902,” 209-10.

was taught with particular depth, beginning with the rise of the Manchus and their conquest of China. The history of Korea was studied starting from the events of the late sixteenth century, whereas the focus on Japan centered primarily on the transformations of the nineteenth century following the Meiji Restoration, with a preliminary analysis of the conditions for these changes in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.²⁰ Fourth-year students further expanded their knowledge by attending lectures on the commercial geography of China, Korea, and Japan.²¹

Comprehensive training of well-rounded Oriental studies practitioners would have been impossible without the inclusion of additional subjects such as political economy, international law, the political structures of Russia and major Western European powers, civil and commercial law, judicial procedures, merchandise studies, accounting, and theology.²²

Given the intensity of this program, it is evident that, with proper diligence, a student could graduate as a fully-fledged specialist by the fourth year of study. However, as previously noted, a distinctive feature of the Vladivostok Center for Oriental Studies was its emphasis on practical training. A key component of this education was the so-called “excursions” to the countries of the languages being studied, conducted during the summer holidays and supported by dedicated financial aid. For instance, during the summer holidays of the 1901-1902 academic year, seven second and third-year students from the Chinese-Korean division were sent to Korea—four to Seoul, and each of the rest to Busan, Nampo, and Incheon.²³ After these trips, students prepared detailed reports, the best of which were published in *Izvestiya Vostochnogo Instituta*.

These excursions were not limited to students; professors at the Oriental Institute were also required to refine and update their expertise through similar trips to East Asian countries. *Izvestiya Vostochnogo*

²⁰ Serov, “Protokoly 1902,” 230-42.

²¹ Serov, “Protokoly 1902,” 227-30.

²² Serov, “Protokoly 1902,” 284.

²³ Serov, “Protokoly 1902,” 185.

Instituta provides details about the preparations for Podstavín's second trip to Korea. Following instructions from the Institute's director, A. M. Pozdneev, Podstavín was tasked not only with deepening his practical proficiency in the Korean language but also with gathering additional information on Korea's political organization, trade and industrial activities, administrative structure, legal regulations, and other aspects that may have been overlooked during his initial visit to Seoul.²⁴

With regard to the Korean language, Professor Podstavín was given specific directives. He was to focus primarily on familiarizing himself with the spoken language of both the common people and the intelligentsia. Additionally, he was instructed to study the official language in detail, including various forms of business correspondence. Another key objective was to collect essential literature to expand the Institute's library resources.²⁵

Although Seoul—being the capital of Korea, home to its main administrative institutions, and a hub for foreigners and local intelligentsia—was chosen as the primary location for Professor Podstavín's internship, he was also instructed to undertake several trips throughout the country. These excursions were designed to provide him with a more comprehensive understanding of contemporary Korea's economic development and to collect additional geographical and ethnographic information.²⁶ Specific recommendations were made regarding the routes of these trips: (1) from Seoul to Gaesong, continuing through Hwanghae Province to Pyongyang and Nampo; and (2) from Mokpo to Gwangju, then through Jinju to the ports of Masan and Busan.²⁷

Given his teaching responsibilities, it was impractical for Podstavín to be absent for an extended period, so the duration of the trip was limited to five months, from May 1 to September 1, 1902. He was to spend three months in Seoul and the remaining two months traveling around Korea. A substantial sum of 900 silver rubles was allocated for this trip, a

²⁴ Serov, "Protokoly 1902," 164.

²⁵ Serov, "Protokoly 1902," 165.

²⁶ Serov, "Protokoly 1902," 165.

²⁷ Serov, "Protokoly 1902," 166.

considerable amount at the time.²⁸

Podstavin's efforts were not confined solely to academic pursuits; he also made significant contributions to the cultural and educational development of Koreans in Primorsky Krai. For instance, from 1914 to 1916, he chaired a commission tasked with establishing schools for Korean children in the Amur region. During the turbulent years of 1919 to 1921, he served as the first rector of Far Eastern State University, the successor institution to the Oriental Institute. However, with the establishment of the Soviet Union, Podstavin was forced to emigrate, traveling through Korea to Harbin, where he passed away in 1924.

Another prominent scholar associated with the Oriental Institute was N. V. Kyuner (1877–1955), a distinguished expert on Korea and other Far Eastern countries. Kyuner taught general courses covering the history, historiography, geography, and cultural history of East and Central Asian countries, which were a core part of the curriculum for all Oriental studies students. His works remain part of the golden treasury of Russian Oriental studies. His contributions to the development of the Oriental studies program and the training of specialists in Korean studies have been briefly outlined earlier.

The development of Korean studies at the Oriental Institute was inextricably linked to its rich library, which began to take shape in the institute's early years. The library's structure was formalized after the Russo-Japanese War, evolving into a specialized repository of Oriental studies texts. It also included materials on political economy, accounting, encyclopedias, dictionaries across various disciplines, and Russian periodicals, although these were comparatively fewer in number.

Following the Russo-Japanese War, the library was divided into the following sections: Russian-foreign, Chinese, Japanese, Manchu, Korean, Mongolian, Tibetan, periodicals, bibliographic, and cartographic. While the Chinese section was the largest one, the Korean section was notable for its unique contents. It housed a collection of xylographic and

²⁸ Serov, "Protokoly 1902," 166.

printed books, including the renowned encyclopedia *Munheon Bigo*,²⁹ most of which had been collected by Podstavin. Out of 911 titles in the Korean section, 456 were acquired through his efforts. The collection predominantly comprised materials for studying conversational Korean, as well as collections of fairy tales, songs, stories, and novels, primarily published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It also included numerous Korean translations of Japanese textbooks on subjects such as mathematics, geography, and history. Additionally, the library featured a complete collection of publications from the Russian Orthodox Mission in Seoul and various materials on Korean reforms.³⁰

The holdings of the Oriental Institute's library were regularly replenished, but frequent reorganizations were required due to a lack of funds. After the reorganization of the Oriental Institute in 1920, many rare manuscripts were transferred to the library of FESU. Later, some Korean-language books were moved from FESU to the Far Eastern International Pedagogical Institute (later renamed the Korean Pedagogical Institute), which was established in Vladivostok in 1931. However, following the closure of the institute in September 1937 due to the deportation of Koreans from the Far Eastern region, the surviving Korean collection was relocated to Kazakhstan along with the displaced Korean community.³¹

The Korean Studies program in Vladivostok persisted until July 1939, when FESU was closed, and the Oriental Studies programs were dissolved. This marked a devastating blow to Far Eastern Oriental studies: the field suffered a significant depletion of human resources, with many professors facing repression, and its unique library collection was almost entirely destroyed.

²⁹ This encyclopedia of Korean traditional culture was initially compiled as *Dongguk munheon bigo* (동국문헌비고) in 100 volumes during the 46th year of King Yeongjo's reign (1770). It was finally expanded and published in 1903, the seventh year of Emperor Gwangmu of the Korean Empire. The complete work consists of 250 volumes in 50 books and is currently housed in institutions such as the National Library of Korea.

³⁰ Serov, "Protokoly 1902," 27-28.

³¹ S. Yu. Vradii, "Koreyskie ksilografiy biblioteki DVO RAN," *Izvestiya Vostochnogo instituta* 1, no. 41 (2019): 70.

A Renaissance of Scholarship: The Revival of Korean Studies in Vladivostok

The study of the Korean language in Vladivostok resumed 36 years later in 1975 when the Academic Council of FESU decided to reintroduce Korean Studies programs. This decision led to the creation of two new divisions within the Faculty of Oriental Studies: the Korean Philology Division and the Korean History Division. The Korean Philology Division was incorporated into the Department of Japanese Philology, while the Korean History Division became part of the Department of Area Studies.

The revival of Korean Studies at FESU during the 1970s and 1980s was significantly supported by the country's leading Korean Studies centers—Moscow State University and Leningrad State University. The first Korean language instructor at FESU was T. Y. Kaplan.³² At the time, no textbooks for Korean or related disciplines were available, so the grammar course relied heavily on Kaplan's lectures, which students transcribed. Practical materials included photocopies of texts from the Korean Philology Division at Leningrad State University and resources from Kim Il-sung University in Pyongyang.³³ Additionally, reading North Korean newspapers and magazines became a common practice in language classes.

It is notable, however, that FESU's geographical proximity to the DPRK did not provide any significant advantages in establishing con-

³² Tamara Yuryevna Kaplan (born April 24, 1952) graduated in 1975 from the Department of Korean Philology in the Faculty of Oriental Studies at Leningrad State University (LSU). In 1979, she completed a correspondence postgraduate program at LSU and was awarded the title of Associate Professor on October 20, 1999. Kaplan has been a faculty member at FESU and its Faculty of Oriental Studies since 1975. She has served as the Head of the Department of Korean Philology at FESU's Oriental Institute since 1999 and was promoted to the rank of Professor in 2005. Kaplan is the author of approximately 50 publications, including the widely used *Korean Language Textbook for First-Year Students*, which has been published in three editions (1985, 1997, 2003). This work highlights her significant contributions to the field of Korean language education and her dedication to advancing Korean studies in Russia.

³³ I. A. Tolstokulakov, "Podgotovka spetsialistov-koreevedov v Vostochnom institute DVGU: istoriya i sovremennost'," *Izvestiya Vostochnogo instituta* 15 (2008): 7-8.

tacts with the North Korean academic community.

In addition to Kaplan, S. N. Zhetpisov, from the Institute of Asian and African Studies at Moscow State University, joined the effort to revive Korean studies in 1976. From 1978, Moon Yengir, a native speaker and senior lecturer in the Department of Japanese Philology, also made important contributions.³⁴ Furthermore, V. M. Serov³⁵ and L. V. Galkina,³⁶ a research associate at the Far Eastern Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences, played a significant role in training the next generation of Korean studies scholars.

By the late 1970s, the Korean language training program had evolved to include the following components: (1) practical grammar of modern Korean; (2) theoretical grammar of modern Korean; (3) history of the Korean language; (4) hieroglyphics; (5) theory and practice of translation; and (6) practical Korean conversation. The in-depth study of Korean grammar was further supported by specialized courses such as “Problems of Modern Korean Grammar” (Kaplan), “Fundamentals of

³⁴ A. A. Khamatova, S. N. Ilin, “Shkola vostokovedov v DVGU (1962-1994 gg.),” *Izvestiya Vostochnogo instituta* 1(1994): 90.

³⁵ Vadim Mikhailovich Serov (August 14, 1935-2004) graduated in 1959 from the Faculty of Oriental Studies at LSU. He earned his Ph.D. in History on October 29, 1964, with a dissertation titled “The Peasant Uprising in Korea in the 12th Century.” In recognition of his academic achievements, he was awarded the title of Associate Professor on July 30, 1969. From 1964 to 2003, Serov served as a lecturer at FESU, where he held the position of Head of the Department of Regional Studies starting in 1980. He played a pivotal role in establishing the School of Oriental Studies at FESU during the early 1960s. By the early 2000s, many faculty members of the Oriental Institute at FESU were his former students, reflecting his profound influence as an educator and mentor. A dedicated scholar, Serov authored more than twenty publications, making significant contributions to the development of Korean studies in Russia.

³⁶ Ludmila Vasilievna Galkina (December 8, 1947-May 16, 2010) graduated in 1974 from the Faculty of Oriental Studies at LSU. She earned her Ph.D. in Philology on August 13, 1980, with a dissertation titled “The Life and Work of the Korean Poet Kim Jeong-sik Sowol (1903-1934)” (Oriental Institute, USSR Academy of Sciences). From 1974 to 1981, Galkina worked as a research fellow at the Institute of History, Archaeology, and Ethnography of the Far Eastern Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences. She then joined FESU, serving as a lecturer at the Faculty of Oriental Studies (1981-1990) and the Oriental Institute (1990-1999). During this period, she also served as the Head of the Department of Korean Philology (1990-1999). A highly active scholar, Galkina participated in numerous academic events and made significant contributions to the field of Korean Studies, authoring over twenty publications.

Literary Translation” (Galkina), and “Introduction to Special Philology” (Galkina and Kaplan).³⁷ This curriculum remained largely unchanged, with only minor modifications, until the early 2010s.

Following the re-establishment of the Korean division, its professors concentrated their efforts on teaching Korean studies disciplines. Unlike the pioneering academic Korean studies scholars, such as Podstavin, who had to build the field from scratch, Vladivostok’s Korean studies scholars were able to shift from addressing immediate practical needs to combining teaching with research activities by the early 1980s.

During this period, V. V. Verkholyak,³⁸ a graduate of LSU, joined FESU and made significant contributions to the advancement of Korean studies in Vladivostok. This era also marked the emergence of the division’s first candidates for philological sciences degrees: Galkina, Yengir, and Verkholyak. The teaching staff further expanded with the addition of top graduates, including E. Ivlieva, Z. Khaustova, and E. Rusetsky.³⁹

In the 1980s, Far Eastern State University (FESU) developed its first textbooks for Korean studies: *Textbook on the Korean Language* (V. V. Verkholyak, T. Y. Kaplan, 1985), *Textbook on the Korean Language* (Moon Yengir, 1988), *Foreign Words in Modern Korean: A Textbook* (Moon Yengir, 1988), and *Korean Poetry of the 1920s* (L. V. Galkina, 1987).⁴⁰

³⁷ V. V. Verkholyak, “Iz istorii prepodavaniya i izucheniya koreyskogo yazyka v Dal’nevostochnom gosudarstvennom universitete,” *Izvestiya Vostochnogo instituta* 5 (1999): 135.

³⁸ Vladimir Vasilievich Verkholyak (born April 3, 1957) graduated in 1980 from the Faculty of Oriental Studies at LSU with a specialization in Korean Philology. He earned his Ph.D. in Philology on October 26, 1989, with a dissertation titled “Grammatical Categories of Predicativity in the Korean Language of the 17th Century (Based on the Material of ‘*Pak Tongsa Onhae*’)” (LSU) and was awarded the title of Associate Professor on October 20, 1999. Verkholyak served as a lecturer at the Faculty of Oriental Studies (1980-1990) and the Department of Korean Philology at the Oriental Institute (1990-1991). From 1995 to 2000, he headed the Department of History, Economics, and Culture of Korea at the Oriental Institute at FESU. He also served as the Director of the Higher College for Korean Studies at Oriental Institute, FESU from 1994 to 2003. An active participant in numerous international and regional conferences on Korean studies, Verkholyak has authored more than twenty publications, making significant contributions to the field.

³⁹ Tolstokulakov, “Podgotovka,” 8.

⁴⁰ Verkholyak, “Iz istorii,” 135.

By the end of the 1980s, significant progress had been made in establishing the education of Korean studies. In 1989, discussions commenced regarding the creation of an independent Department of Korean Philology within the Faculty of Oriental Studies. Galkina was appointed as the first head of the department and served in this role until 1999. This structural change enabled the department to expand the number of its staff to nine instructors by 1994, with two additional Korean studies scholars working in the Area Studies Department of the Faculty of Oriental Studies. By this time, the total number of Korean studies students had grown to 62.⁴¹

Simultaneously, Korean studies began to emerge in other universities in Vladivostok. With the active involvement of FESU graduates, Korean language instruction was introduced at the Oriental Institute of the Far Eastern State Technical University (FESTU).

This rapid development of Korean studies in Vladivostok was closely linked to shifts in foreign policy. The establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and the Republic of Korea in 1990 marked a new phase in Russian-Korean relations. To further advance Korean studies, a structural reorganization was necessary. On June 10, 1994, the FESU Academic Council approved the transformation of the Department of Korean Philology into the Faculty of Korean Studies. In 1995, this was further reorganized into the Higher College (Faculty) of Korean Studies (HCKS FESU).

The creation of the HCKS FESU was the result of a collaborative effort between the FESU team, the Primorsky Krai Administration, and one of South Korea's leading financial and industrial groups, "Kohap Group." Significant contributions were made by Kohap's chairman, Jang Chihyeok, and South Korean parliamentarian Lee Seung. The first director of the HCKS was V. V. Verkholyak.

Structurally, the HCKS FESU comprised two departments: the pre-existing Department of Korean Philology and the newly established De-

⁴¹ Tolstokulakov, "Podgotovka," 9.

partment of Korean History, Economics, and Culture, the latter of which was created alongside the HCKS. In 2000, another significant academic unit was added to FESU's structure—the Center for Korean Studies. This center was established with financial support from the Korea Foundation and was headed by the rector of FESU, V. I. Kurilov.⁴²

The Department of Korean Philology at the HCKS FESU trained specialists with expertise not only in the Korean language and literature but also in linguistics, literary studies, history, and modern Korean grammar. The Department of Korean History, Economics, and Culture offered two specializations: Korean history and Korean economics. All students were enrolled in the field of “Oriental Studies and African Studies” (and for some time under the specialty of “Regional Studies”),⁴³ focusing on philological, historical, and economic disciplines.⁴⁴

The curriculum was centered on studying the Korean and English languages alongside training in a comprehensive range of area studies disciplines, including history, literature, ethnography, economics, and the political systems of Korea. Students during this period had opportunities to intern at universities in the Republic of Korea. Unfortunately, access to study programs at Kim Il-sung University was lost, though efforts to restore this partnership were made as late as in 2007.⁴⁵

Faculty members of the HCKS FESU were actively involved in developing textbooks and educational materials, contributing significantly to the academic resources for Korean studies. Key publications included: *Korean Language Textbook for First-Year Students* (V. V. Verkholyak, T. Y. Kaplan, 1997); *Korean Language Textbook for First-Year Students* (V. V. Verkholyak, L. V. Galkina, V. N. Kozhemyako, 1998); *Speech Etiquette in Modern Korean* (T. Y. Kaplan, T. S. Deryugina, 2003); *Modern Korean Literature* (M. V. Soldatova, K. A. Pak, 2003); *Korean*

⁴² Tolstokulakov, “Podgotovka,” 10.

⁴³ Verkholyak, “Iz istorii,” 137.

⁴⁴ Tolstokulakov, “Podgotovka,” 9.

⁴⁵ Tolstokulakov, “Podgotovka,” 10.

Language Textbook for Non-Oriental Studies Specialties (T. Y. Kaplan et al., 2004); *Korean Language through the Press* (T. Y. Kaplan, Jeong Eunsang, 1999); *Korean Language for Business Communication* (T. Y. Kaplan, Jeong Eunsang, 2004); *Guide to Commercial Translation from Korean* (I. V. Yusov, 2006); *The Development of the Korean Economy: Lessons from the Transition Period* (edited by N. V. Kuznetsova and I. A. Tolstokulakov, 2001); *An Outline of the History of Korean Culture* (I. A. Tolstokulakov, 2002); *The Role of the Religious Factor in the Life of Korean Society* (edited by I. A. Tolstokulakov, 2004); and *History of Socio-Political Thought in Korea* (I. A. Tolstokulakov, 2007).

Most of these publications were prepared under the auspices of the Center for Korean Studies at FESU and were supported financially by the Korea Foundation or the Academy of Korean Studies.

By the end of the 1990s, the HCKS FESU had over 200 students and approximately 20 faculty members.⁴⁶ The growth in student numbers was driven by the increasing demand for specialists capable of supporting the expanding economic interaction between Russia and the Republic of Korea.

In the first decade of the 21st century, the Korean Studies Center in Vladivostok became one of the largest in modern Russia. By the 2000s and 2010s, the HCKS had around 300 students, including both specialist-level and undergraduate students. Initially, the training program followed a five-year specialist degree course; however, in 2004, the first bachelor's degrees were awarded, and the department gradually transitioned to a four-year program. A significant milestone in its academic development was the introduction of a master's program in "History of Asian and African Countries (Korea)" in 2008. Additionally, the most outstanding HCKS students were recommended by the administration for admission to graduate school and offered opportunities to work in the department as teaching assistants.

The HCKS FEFU received consistent support from philanthropist

⁴⁶ Verkholyak, "Iz istorii," 137.

Jang Chihyeok. Through his efforts and with assistance from the Korea Academic and Cultural Foundation, which he chaired, FESU hosted numerous research projects and academic conferences, including events involving North Korean scholars. Faculty members of the department, including the author of this text, also participated in the activities of the “Bohai” Archaeological Research Center. Established jointly by the foundation and FESU, this center conducted extensive archaeological research in the Primorsky Krai region.

In 2009, a landmark achievement for Korean studies in the Russian Far East occurred when I. A. Tolstokulakov,⁴⁷ a graduate of FESU, lecturer at the HCKS, and the Head of the Department of History, Economics, and Culture of Korea, was awarded a Doctor of Sciences (Habilitation) degree. Dr. Tolstokulakov remains the only Korean studies scholar in Vladivostok to hold this prestigious qualification.

By the time a new federal-level university was established based on FESU, the HCKS had solidified its position as not only the largest Korean studies center in the Russian Far East but also one of the leading Korean studies institutions in Russia.

Modern Horizons: The Vladivostok Center for Korean Studies Today

In 2011, the merger of four major universities in Primorsky Krai—FESU,

⁴⁷ Igor Anatolyevich Tolstokulakov (born January 30, 1963) graduated in 1986 from the Faculty of Oriental Studies at FESU. He earned his Ph.D. in History in 2000 with a dissertation titled “The Development of the Democratic Process in South Korea during the Sixth Republic” and a Doctor of Sciences in History in 2009 with a dissertation titled “Political Modernization in a Post-Traditional Society (Using South Korea as an Example).” Since 1986, Tolstokulakov has been a lecturer at the Department of Korean Studies. In 2000, he was appointed the Head of the Department of History, Economics, and Culture of Korea at the Oriental Institute of FESU. In addition, he has served as the Academic Secretary of the Oriental Institute and Coordinator of the Center for Korean Studies at FESU since 2000. Tolstokulakov has held several editorial roles, including membership on the editorial board of *Izvestia of the Oriental Institute* (1996-2003), editor-in-chief of the *Bulletin of the Confucius Institute*, and membership on the editorial board of the almanac *Russian Korean Studies*. An accomplished scholar, Tolstokulakov has authored over 300 academic and educational publications, contributing significantly to the field of Korean Studies in Russia.

FESTU, Pacific State University of Economics (PSUE), and Ussuriysk State Pedagogical Institute (USPI)—led to the gradual consolidation of previously parallel Korean studies programs. As a result, the HCKS FESU and the Korean Studies division of the Department of Japanese and Korean Studies at FESTU were merged into a single structural unit: the Department of Korean Studies within the School of Regional and International Studies at FEFU. The newly unified department was headed by E. M. Ermolaeva.⁴⁸

The institutional reorganization was a complex process, and it brought with it the challenge of unifying educational programs. Nevertheless, the successors of the proud traditions of the Vladivostok school of Korean Studies worked diligently not only to preserve but also to build upon the achievements of its 35-year development since 1975. The adoption of federal state education standards facilitated the integration of original courses designed by the department's leading instructors, elevating the program to a new level.

Despite these changes, the department largely retained its classical approach to training Korean studies specialists, focusing on producing graduates with not only a high level of language proficiency but also a deep understanding of the history, culture, literature, economy, and other aspects of Korea.

Currently, the Department of Korean Studies in the School of Regional and International Studies at FEFU offers a four-year program for an undergraduate degree in Oriental Studies and African Studies with a focus on Korean studies, designed to last four years, as well as a two-year master's program in the same field.

The curriculum for both undergraduate and graduate students com-

⁴⁸ Ekaterina Mikhailovna Ermolaeva (born January 26, 1980) graduated in 2002 from the Department of Korean Regional Studies at the Oriental Institute of FESU. She completed her postgraduate studies at FESU in 2005 and earned a Ph.D. in History in 2010 with a dissertation titled "The Formation and Development of Ideology during the Period of Authoritarian Regimes in South Korea: 1948-1987." Ermolaeva has been teaching at FESU since 2002 and currently serves as the Head of the Department of Korean Studies at FEFU. She is the author of over twenty academic and educational publications, contributing significantly to the field of Korean Studies in Russia.

prises several components. Core courses cover the Korean language, history, geography, literature, and culture of Korea, alongside a wide range of specialized courses. As in previous years, Korean studies students are required to study hieroglyphics and work with specialized texts. At the same time, the department places a strong emphasis on preparing students for research, with students beginning to collaborate with academic advisors in their second year after selecting their specialization within Korean studies. Interdisciplinary research is encouraged, allowing students to explore fields beyond traditional areas such as philology, literature, history, or economics.

The training program also includes various internships designed to develop professional skills and competencies in research and organizational-administrative activities. Additionally, master's students receive specialized training in working with electronic databases—an essential skill for modern research.⁴⁹

Today, the academic process in the Department of Korean Studies is supported by 22 full-time faculty members, most of whom are graduates of the Korean Studies programs either at FESU or FESTU. Six faculty members hold Ph.D. degrees and serve as full professors or assistant professors, while the rest are highly qualified specialists with extensive teaching experience and practical expertise in academia and the economy.⁵⁰

In recent years, interest in Korea has grown significantly, both in Russia and globally. Consequently, students across Russia now enroll in the Department of Korean Studies at FEFU, marking a shift from earlier periods at FESU when most students came from Primorsky Krai and the Far East. During the 2023–2024 academic year, the department had 101 first-year students, 95 second-year students, 80 third-year students, and 69 fourth-year students, along with 12 first-year master's students and 15 second-year master's students, totaling 372 students. Furthermore, many

⁴⁹ Based on the educational programs available on the FEFU website (<https://www.dvfu.ru/sveden/education/>), accessed September 2, 2024.

⁵⁰ The information of this and the following paragraphs is based on information provided by E. M. Ermolayeva, Head of the Department of Korean Studies at FEFU.

students from other FEFU departments express interest in learning Korean, prompting the Korean Studies faculty to offer additional elective classes in the language as part of their broader academic programs.

Faculty members and students of the department are also actively engaged in introducing Russian audiences to Korean traditions and culture. The department organizes an annual Korean Culture Festival to sustain interest in Korean heritage. Additionally, the artistic group *Samul Nori*, founded in 1995 under T. A. Son⁵¹ at the HCKS FESU, continues its legacy under the name *Haedong*. In their free time, members of this group learn to play traditional Korean musical instruments and explore Korean dance traditions.

The folk ensemble of the Korean Studies Department has become a hallmark of the School of Regional and International Studies at FEFU. It has regular participation in numerous international student events and activities hosted by the Korean diaspora in Primorye, showcasing its rich cultural contributions.

The scientific research activities of the Department of Korean Studies at FEFU continue to thrive. In January 2016, the FEFU leadership decided to reestablish the Center for Korean Studies within the structure of the Oriental Institute—School of Regional and International Studies. This decision was closely tied to the Academy of Korean Studies of the Republic of Korea providing grant support to the Center during the 2016–2020 period.⁵²

The re-establishment of the Center allowed FEFU to revive its tradition of hosting scientific conferences, attracting Korean studies special-

⁵¹ Son Tita Hikhenovna (Tina Alexandrovna) (October 2, 1950-May 15, 2019) graduated in 1978 from the Khabarovsk Institute of Culture with a degree in Choreography and in 1988 from the Department of Korean Philology at the Faculty of Oriental Studies, FESU. From 1988 to 1995, she worked as a translator for various organizations in Vladivostok. In 1995, she joined the Department of Korean Studies at FESU, continuing her academic career at FEFU following its establishment. Son was an active participant in numerous academic conferences and served as the longstanding leader of a Korean drumming folk ensemble, significantly contributing to the promotion of Korean culture in the Russian Far East.

⁵² “Tsentr koreevedcheskikh issledovaniy,” accessed September 2, 2024, https://www.dvfu.ru/schools/school_of_regional_and_international_studies/structure/centre_of_korean_studies/.

ists from Russia and abroad. Additionally, distinguished scholars were invited to deliver annual lectures specifically for FEFU students. The Center also supported the publication of several notable monographs on Korean studies, including: *Juvenile Delinquency: Criminological, Legal, and Political Expertise of the Republic of Korea* (A. A. Maltsev, 2018); *Spatial Development of Urbanization on the Korean Peninsula: A Comparison of South and North* (P. P. Em, 2018); *Ethnogenesis of the Korean People: South and North Korean Scholarly Perspectives* (V. S. Akulenko, 2019); *History of Socio-Political Thought in Korea: A Reader* (I. A. Tolstokulakov, E. M. Ermolaeva, 2021); *Customs and Tariff Regulation in Korea: A Textbook* (I. A. Tolstokulakov, M. P. Kukla, 2019); *Regional Identity of Ethnic Koreans in the Russian Far East and Central Asia: A Collaborative Analysis* (T. G. Troyakova, Y. I. Din, D. A. Sokolova, E. E. Sapozhnikova, V. S. Akulenko, K. A. Pak, 2019); *Republic of Korea in the Authoritarian Period: Ideology, Power, and Society: A Monograph* (E. M. Ermolaeva, 2021); *Public Geography of the States of the Korean Peninsula: A Collection of Articles* (Edited by L. E. Kozlov, Foreword by P. P. Em, 2023); *Economy of the Republic of Korea: A Textbook* (M. P. Kukla, 2022); and *Foreign Policy and Diplomacy of the Republic of Korea: A Textbook* (M. P. Kukla, L. E. Kozlov, E. M. Ermolaeva, K. A. Pak, V. I. Voloshchak, 2022).

The publication of the *Bulletin of the Center for Korean Studies* was also resumed during this period. However, the ambitious plans for the Center were disrupted first by the COVID-19 pandemic and later by funding shortages. Despite these setbacks, the Department of Korean Studies has retained its core scientific and pedagogical staff, providing hope for the swift resumption of the Center's activities.

Of particular note is the resumption of relations with North Korean colleagues following the pandemic. As the DPRK was among the last countries to reopen its borders to foreigners, opportunities for bilateral cooperation were delayed. Nevertheless, the recent strengthening of relations, including mutual visits by the leaders of Russia and North Korea, has paved the way for new areas of collaboration between FEFU's and North Korea's academic and educational institutions. Current discussions

include potential assistance from the DPRK in teaching the Korean language, with the North Korean side already expressing interest. The resumption of academic exchange programs, which has been interrupted, now is likely to happen in the near future.

Conclusion

Korean studies at FEFU have undergone a long and challenging journey of development. Begun nearly 125 years ago with the establishment of the world's first Department of Korean Language, led by its pioneering scholar Podstavin, the tradition of practical Korean studies was abruptly interrupted by Stalin's repressions. The founder of the university's Korean studies program was forced to emigrate and passed away in Harbin, while the department's invaluable library was largely destroyed—partially lost and partially dispersed among the collections of other academic institutions.

In 1975, the teaching of the Korean language was revived through the efforts of specialists from Leningrad State University, Moscow State University, and the Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Within just 15 years, Korean studies at FEFU not only regained its position but also earned significant authority among Soviet university centers for Korean studies. This progress laid the foundation for the establishment of the HCKS FESU in 1995 and the Center for Korean Studies in 2000.

Today, the Department of Korean Studies at FEFU simultaneously trains more than 300 students in bachelor's and master's programs and employs over 20 faculty members. It is actively engaged in publishing scientific and educational literature and fosters strong connections with other centers of Korean studies worldwide. Additionally, the department continues to strengthen its collaboration with academic and research institutions in both North and South Korea.

Initially created as a center for the practical study of Korea, the school of Korean Studies in Vladivostok has remained true to its roots. At the same time, the Department of Korean Studies at FEFU strives to

stay aligned with modern trends, successfully integrating the latest methods in research and teaching to advance the field.

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