



Traditions and Trends in the Russian Study of Koguryō History

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The goal of Chinese historians is to rewrite the history of Koguryō by including it as a part of the history of China. It is known that China (during various dynasties) traditionally, for certain reasons, carried out a policy of military and cultural expansion toward its neighbors. The three states on the Korean peninsula were among the countries affected by this influence. But, in our opinion, it is necessary to separate the real substance of the ethnic and historical development of this region from the facts of formal dependence of the Koguryō kingdom from the Chinese empire.

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The study of early-medieval Korea in Russian oriental sciences has been highly irregular. The history of Russian Korean studies began as far back as the seventeenth century. However, the beginning of the scientific study of Korea in Russia should be dated to the fifth decade of the nineteenth century.

Russian Korean studies began its development in the bosom of Russian sinology. In 1842 appeared the work of Nikolai Bichurin (Father Jacinth), *The Statistical Description of the Chinese Empire in Two Parts*. In the second part of this book was a chapter dedicated to Korea, "The Chosŏn (Chao-xian) Kingdom." This was the first brief statement of the history of Korea in the Russian language. Several years later, in 1851, the publication of Bichurin's three-volume work, *A Collection of Information about Nations in the Middle Asia in Ancient Times*, for the first time gave the Russian and international scientific communities an opportunity to fully familiarize themselves with evidence from Chinese annals and dynastic chronicles of the ancient and medieval ethnic, political, and cultural history of Korea.

The establishment of a treaty with Korea in 1884, as well as the establishment of diplomatic relations, promoted the increase of interest in Korea among Russians. The materials gathered by Russian and European travelers were used as sources in the writing of *The Description of Korea*. This three-volume work constituted an encyclopedic codex of information available in the early twentieth century on the history, ethnography, economics, and culture of Korea from ancient times to the late nineteenth century. This

book, being a collective work of many leading Russian orientalists, was unparalleled in the international orientalist literature dedicated to Korea. In 1960 appeared an abridged version of this work which was subsequently translated into Korean and published in Korea.

The history of the Russian study of Korea has seen periods of upsurge and periods of certain stagnation, but, in general, there was progressive motion. To understand and analyze its achievements in full is a matter for the future. During the long period of development, several trends have formed in the Russian historical study of Korea.

The study of the history of Koguryō holds a special position among these trends. In the 1960s and 1970s Russian orientalist-archaeologists investigated the cultures of the northern regions of Korea predominantly. This was to some extent determined by the political situation in the Korean Peninsula, and the relations between the Soviet Union and the Korean states. As a result, at the present moment an important experience of analysis of a tremendous body of sources (written and archaeological) about the culture and history of Koguryō state has been collected by Russian scientists in early-medieval archaeology.

It is important to mention the fact that the study of questions in the history of Koguryō, as well as other Korean states, has been conducted in the course of one of the most important trends in science of the second half of the twentieth century, the study of questions in ethnogeny and the ethnic history of the Korean nation. The problems of ethnogeny and the ethnic history of the Korean nation were always subjects of close attention by Russian scientists. In their study of this extremely complicated problem, Russian scientists tried to apply information from different fields of science: evidence from written sources (first, primarily Chinese), materials of historical ethnography, anthropology, and linguistics.

In the 1950s Russian science became more interested in the evidence from Chinese dynastic chronicles about the ancient and medieval history of Central Asia and East Asia, including the ancient and early-medieval history of Koreans. In 1950-1953 the Ethnography Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR reprinted Bichurin's *A Collection of Information about Nations in the Middle Asia in Ancient Times*. Information about

Korea and Koreans, extracted from Chinese writings such as the *Shi ji* (juan 115), *Qian Han shu* (juan 95), *Hou Han shu* (juan 115). *Nanshi* (juan 79), *Beishi* (juan 94), *Sui shu* (juan 81), and *Tang shu* (juan 219), are found in the second volume (Bichurin, 1950. Vol. 2, pp. 7-137). In 1961 was published Nikolai Kühner's *Chinese Information about Folks of Southern Siberia, Central Asia, and the Far East*, with a large volume of data about the history of Korea (Kühner, 1961). In these years the attention of scientists was drawn by juan 30 of the *Sanguo zhi*. In 1961 was published a translation of this important source by Mikhail Pak.

One of the truly epochal events in Russian Korean studies was the publication in 1959 of the Russian translation of Kim Pusik's *Samguk sagi*. In the first volume was included the "Silla Chronicles" (books 1-12). While translating and providing commentary, Pak faced problems that were novel to Russian koreanology. At that time, the written monuments of the histories of other Far Eastern countries were not adequately available in Russian translation with comments: publication of the fundamental work of ancient Chinese historiography, the *Shi ji* by Sima Qian began only in 1972 (and is not finished yet); the ancient Japanese manuscripts *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* were published in Russian only in 1993-1997. Those fragments of translations of Chinese dynastic chronicles by Bichurin became outdated.

With the translation of the *Samguk sagi*, Russian Korean studies took a significant step forward. New ways were discovered for solving problems both in ethnogeny and in the early ethnic history of the Korean nation, its history, and culture. On this basis appeared an opportunity to study concrete problems of the early and medieval history of Korea.

The translation of the *Samguk sagi* was itself a part of the tasks of the scientific study of problems of ancient Korean history. That is why the first volume included Pak's article, "The Silla Chronicles and Questions of the Social-Political History of Korea," with comments and appendices. It is worth mentioning that translations of this historical source into modern Korean, accompanied by texts in *hanmun*, were published in Seoul and in P'yōngyang at the same time as the first volume of the Russian edition, or later.

Rosa Djarylgasinova began studying the problems of the ethnogeny of

Koreans in 1956. She focused her research on questions of the proportion of northern (pro-Altaic) and southern (possibly, Malayo-Polynesian) components. Her attention was most attracted by the ethnic history of the Koguryō people and the definition of their role in the ethnic history of Koreans. This question is reflected in several of her articles and her two books, *The Ancient Koguryō People: On the Ethnic History of Koreans* (1972a) and *The Ethnogeny and Ethnic History of Koreans According to Epigraphs: The King Kwanggaet'o Stele* (Moscow, 1979b). In this latter work, among sources for the study of problems in ethnogeny and ethnic history of Koreans, were used evidence from the epigraphic monuments of the Three Kingdoms period, and, in the first place, the inscription on the King Kwanggaet'o stele. At that time, the inscription was first translated into Russian.

The problems of ethnogeny and the early ethnic history of the Korean nation attracted the attention of Soviet archaeologists and historians. It is important to mention the works by Mikhail Vorobyov (Vorobyov, 1961; Vorobyov, 1997), Vitaly Larichev, Pak (Pak, 1979), and Yuri Butin (Butin, 1982; Butin, 1984). Solving problems of the ethnogeny of Koreans is impossible without applying linguistic data. The hypothesis about connections between the Korean language and the languages of the Altaic family was first substantiated by E. Polivanov as far back as 1927 (Polivanov, 1927). Among the works of the present day it is worth paying attention to a fundamental monograph by Sergey Starostin, *The Altaic Problem and the Origin of the Japanese Language*.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Soviet science started study of the theory of ethnos and ethnic self-consciousness. This problem on Korean material was addressed by Djarylgasinoва, who in 1986 defended her doctoral thesis, "Ethnic Self-Consciousness of Koreans in the Early Medieval Epoch" (Djarylgasinoва, 1986, 1986). In her work she examined various components of the ethnic self-consciousness of Koguryō people, Paekche people, and Silla people. She showed that Koguryō, Paekche, and Silla each had a hierarchically complex ethnic self-consciousness, that is, along with conscience of their specifics, they were aware of their commonness and had notions about their common origin.

A new impulse in the study of Korean history during the period of the

Three Kingdoms and Unified Silla was published in 1995 in the Russian translation of the second volume of the *Samguk sagi*, which included the “Koguryō Chronicles” and the “Paekche Chronicles,” as well as the “Chronological Tables” (volumes 13-31). In 2002, the publication of the *Samguk sagi* was completed. The third volume included “Various Descriptions” and “Biographies” (books 32-50). Translation of these books was performed by a group of specialists-disciples and colleagues of Pak’s from Moscow and St. Petersburg, led by Lev Kontsevich. Pak gave scientific consultation and did the general editing of the translation. The first volume of the *Samguk sagi*, which had become a rare book at that time, was republished shortly before (Publication of the *Samguk sagi* between 1995 and 2002 occurred under the auspices of the Korea Foundation). All three volumes were printed from the original facsimile. Thus, Russian koreanologists gained a first in world Korean studies, a full, annotated translation of the annals from *hanmun* into one of the European languages-the Russian language.

One of the peculiarities of the Russian study of Koguryō history and culture is the concentrated interest in archaeological sources for research of the early-medieval period in the history of Koreans. The first, and most detailed, description in Russian historiography of Koguryō archaeological materials was Vorobyov’s *Ancient Korea*, which includes information about fortresses, burial mounds, and other monuments of that period. The researcher conducted analysis of Koguryō burial mounds in the vicinity of the Jian region and near the city of P’yōngyang. The materials of this book have, indeed, become outdated. However, this book remains an important source in Russian for the study of Koguryō mounds. The works of Japanese archaeologists, which were often referred to by researchers, cannot be ignored, since, firstly, the tombs they excavated were not always mentioned in later archaeological literature, and, secondly, many paintings were later fully or partly lost (Vorobyov, 1961).

A. Shokov’s *Archaeology of Korea*, written on the basis of materials he collected during his work in P’yōngyang, was published in 1962. He supervised excavations in North Korea, took part in archaeological explorations, and studied archaeological expositions, museum stocks, and specialized literature. In a brief article, Shokov, among monuments, discusses those

tombs with paintings. He regards the wall paintings of Koguryō as an outstanding example of art among the paintings of Asian countries (Shokov, 1962).

The result of Russian Korean studies is the two-volume *The History of Korea*. This book presents an extensive outline of the political and the social history of Koguryō, analysis of data about the origins of statehood and the distinctive culture of Koguryō people, of their contacts with the outside world, and of the influence of Koguryō upon the development of Koreans. Burial mounds are presented fragmentarily, with the purpose of introducing the architecture and art of Koguryō. The section "The Culture of the Three Kingdoms" mentions the "Tomb of the Commander," the Anak tomb number three, the "Three Tombs," and notes that everyday themes predominate in the early paintings (Anak tomb number three), and mythological themes, among them the motif of the "Four Genii," predominate in the later paintings (History, 1974, vol. 1).

Djarylgasinova in her monograph *The Ancient Koguryō People* substantively supplemented the information about the archaeological sites of Koguryō. She conducted a thorough analysis of paintings in the tombs of Korean nobility from the position of an ethnographer. Djarylgasinova for the first time introduced to scientific circles the concepts of *sokchubun* and *pon-tobun*, published a map of locations of tombs with paintings near Jian, P'yōng'annam-to, and Hwanghaebuk-to. Unlike Vorobyov, she used the research of Korean archaeologists of the 1950s and the 1960s [Kim Yōjung, Yi Pyōngdo, Ri Chirin, Pak Chin'uk, To Yuho, and others] (Djarylgasinova, 1972a). In this and other works, Djarylgasinova brought up a number of problems concerning the history of Koguryō. In particular, in the article "The Koguryō People and Their Role in the Formation of the Korean Nation" she presented a sketch of the material and spiritual culture of the Koguryō people (Djarylgasinova, 1960). Djarylgasinova extracted three layers of Koguryō paintings influenced by Buddhism: ornamentation, images of divine fairies and other specimens of the divine pantheon, and depictions of Buddhist religious ceremonies (Djarylgasinova, 1972b). The translation and comments on the King Kwanggaet'o stele text allowed more precise reconstruction of those facets of the funeral rite that were not adequately reflected

archaeologically.

O. Glukhareva analyzed paintings of the Koguryō epoch from other perspectives. Her book *The Art of Korea from Ancient Times to the Late Nineteenth Century* was the first fundamental study of Korean art in Russian. She examined the sources of Korean culture and the ancient monuments of architecture and sculpture. A fine art approach to the study of tombs with paintings can be called new. Glukhareva has shown by many examples that the art of Koguryō painters was influenced from China, both in mural techniques and in the themes of the paintings (Glukhareva, 1982).

The problems of military organization and the arts of war during the Three Kingdoms period are studied by Julius Khudyakov. The archaeologist from Novosibirsk extracts the fundamental types and groups of weapons, and reconstructs the complex of armaments. Particularly interesting is his interpretation of images on the walls of Koguryō tombs. For instance, he recreates the order of combat arms during movement, guided by depictions of processions (Khudyakov, 1996). Many Russian researchers use images from Koguryō wall paintings when discussing the origins of the hard saddle with stirrups. S. Weinstein believes that the saddle with stirrups appeared not earlier than the sixth century at Altaic Turki. However, Djarylgasinoва stated that depictions of saddles with stirrups remained in the Muyong-ch'ong, Kaema-ch'ong, and Ssangyōng-ch'ong tombs, which were constructed not later than the sixth century. Hence, the question about the place and time of origin of the saddle cannot be regarded as fully solved (Djarylgasinoва, 1972a). Regarding the armaments of Koguryō warriors, in Russian articles these are compared with the armaments of inhabitants of neighboring regions. All researchers note the resemblance among Koguryō, Parhae, and Jurchen samples (Khudyakov, 1996). Yet, incomplete elaboration of the chronology of tombs with wall paintings and weak familiarity with the archaeological collections of the Koguryō period still do not allow Russian archaeologists to step away from static weapon-study schemes and to outline the dynamics of change in the types of offensive and defensive weapons.

The book *Korea until the Second Third of the Seventh Century: Ethnos, Society, Culture, and the Outside World* by Vorobyov (1997) can be regard-

ed as the final work of the Russian study of the Three Kingdoms period because at the present day it is the best work in Russian on this theme. It differs from previous works, firstly, by the abundance of new materials, and secondly, by the broad coverage of problems of the ancient history of Korea. Three large classes of phenomena are examined in the book; ethnos, society, and culture. The chapter "The Outside World" focuses on the ethnic, cultural, and political histories of nations that inhabited the neighboring regions of China, the Russian Pacific coast, and Japan, and is very interesting. In the chapter "Society," the history, external relations, government, social structure, and state development of Korea are examined step by step until the seventh century. The chapter "Culture" presents the development of the material culture of the inhabitants of the Korean peninsula. Vorobyov segregates all Korean tombs into *sokchubun* and *pontobun*, describes new archaeological sites, characterizes funeral implements, and examines the evolution of paintings in Koguryō tombs. The information about the relations of Koguryō with neighboring regions is valuable.

Thus, at present, Russian historiography counts a considerable number of works dedicated to archaeological records of Koguryō, mainly pontobun paintings. The different approaches of scientists are evidence that the tombs are unique monuments representing an inexhaustible source of information about the life of ancient Koguryō people. In spite of the fact that the monuments were discovered in the course of archaeological excavations, an extended analysis of funeral sites of Koguryō has not yet been conducted. Researchers have been studying painting for the most part, forgetting the fact that after the reconstruction of all possible details of funeral rites, the tombs with pontobun paintings could be used as a source of cultural, sociological, demographic, and other information. At the same time, tombs with paintings seem as if they have been torn out of the main body of Koguryō tombs, a result of which can be the seeming lack of proof of certain conclusions of the researchers. For instance, the absence of information about tombs of ordinary people gives cause for doubt that pontobun were funeral installations for the nobility. Hence, the necessity of an extended archaeological analysis that could give new information about the history of Koguryō is beyond question.

The study of the history of Koguryō as a part of the Korean nation is a tradition of Russian koreanology. The whole complex of historical, epigraphic, and archaeological sources is evidence that the Koguryō people were one of the ethnic components that formed the Korean nation from the seventh century to the seventeenth century. The coincidence of ethnic and political borders, the strengthening of central authority, the institution of state ownership of land, the confessional unity and closeness of economic and cultural portraits, the cognation of languages, and the unity of the writing culture all contributed to consolidation (Djarylgasinoва, 1986).

That explains the interest with which Russians observe the development of the so-called “history war” between historians and politicians of China and both Koreas around the Koguryō legacy. This “war” has once again shown the close connection of the interpretation of history and real politics, when both sides operate with the same information from medieval historical chronicles and interpret them in their own favor.

A thorough analysis of the Chinese-Korean contradictions in the interpretation of Koguryō history is given in the Russian historiography (Pirozhenko, 2004; Petrov, 2004, 2005). Without delving deep into the reasons for the contradictions, revealed as early as the 1960s, it would be well to admit that the modern stage of the conflict started, in fact, with the so-called Northeast Project of China. The goal of Chinese historians is to rewrite the history of Koguryō by including it as a part of the history of China.

It is known that China (during various dynasties) traditionally, for certain reasons, carried out a policy of military and cultural expansion toward its neighbors. The three states on the Korean peninsula were among the countries affected by this influence. But, in our opinion, it is necessary to separate the real substance of the ethnic and historical development of this region from the facts of formal dependence of the Koguryō kingdom from the Chinese empire.

Russian historians and archaeologists proceed in their research from the fact that the Korean peninsula (primarily the northern part), the adjacent region of northeastern China, the Amur River basin (particularly the right-bank area), and the southern Pacific coast area in antiquity and the ear-

ly middle ages constituted a common historical and cultural area, which is proven by archaeological materials. This determines the direction of work of Siberian scientists on the study of the medieval history of Far Eastern countries.

At the present moment, in Novosibirsk, a scientific center (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography SB RAS; Novosibirsk State University) has started a project to study the materials of the Koguryŏ period. First, our attention is directed to archaeological sources published recently by Chinese colleagues. A series of problems is facing researchers. The primary task is the translation and analysis of the materials and research of Chinese archaeologists. Scientific contacts between us and archaeologists from Jilin Province have been maintained for many years. In 2002 and 2004 this author visited Jian. In the Institute of Archaeology of Jilin Province, in Changchun, I looked at several collections obtained in the course of excavations from 1990 to 2003. The point of view of Russian archaeologists on the distinctive character of the Koguryŏ culture proved to be true during a discussion with Chinese colleagues.

Among actual problems that are particularly interesting to Russian koreanologists and archaeologists are the cultural contacts of Koguryŏ people and Mohe. The archaeological sites of the culture of Mohe and Parhae are actively studied in the Russian Far East (Derevyanko, 1977; Nesterov, Alkin, 1999; Stoyakin, Ahmetov, 2006 etc.).

As far back as the 1960s E. Shavkunov revealed the influence of Koguryŏ people on Mohe architecture, pattern of tiling, writing, and literature (Shavkunov, 1968). The significant progress of the last five years of archaeological study of Parhae sites in the southern Russian Pacific coast area showed the concretizing influence of Koguryŏ on Parhae culture (German, Boldin, 2004).

Another direction of research includes further study of Koguryŏ culture using the materials from funeral monuments. Artem Gilyov dedicated a number of articles to problems of the reconstruction of funeral rites of the Koguryŏ elite, and to the reconstruction of themes of Koguryŏ mythology and rituals (Gilyov, 2001, 2004). For example, it is known that there is a fierce discussion about the origins of Koguryŏ tombs with paintings. Some

exclude the Chinese influence completely, some overemphasize it. Gilyov suggested a compromise settlement of the problem. In his works he showed that in the making of the Koguryō kingdom, features of the construction of burial tombs and the basic themes of Han wall paintings were borrowed in the first place. It was that which led to the appearance of early multi-chamber tombs of the Han type. Later, the transformation of burial ritual led to the strengthening of properly Koguryō features and to the appearance of sophisticated burial complexes with new themes in Koguryō paintings.

Gilyov also subjected to critical examination the question of the content of cultural relations between Koguryō and Central Asia, which is used by some researchers to prove the Central Asian influence in the origins of the well-type vaults in Koguryō tombs. Having shown, after other researchers, the existence of constructive features of Koguryō tombs and wall paintings that trace back to Chinese origins, he, at the same time, revealed through concrete archaeological material the absence of real data about Central Asian well-type vaults. The Han character of the well-type vault ceiling has been confirmed. At the same time, contacts with the West could exist, which is probably indicated by the screen-like ornamental pattern of Koguryō paintings and the image of the “Central Asian dancer” in the painting from the Anak tomb number three burial mound (Djarylgasinoва, 1959).

An advanced scientific school of Korean studies, one of the oldest in the world, exists in Russia (Kontsevich, 2003; Simbirtseva, 2004). It had formed completely in the 1950s and 1960 by means of independent study of all points of view (both North Korean and South Korean), but, primarily, on the basis of written and archaeological sources. Thus, our understanding of the history of Korea in general — and of Koguryō in particular — is science-based. Koguryō and the Koguryō people have a place in world history, as do all other nations. This place is determined by the positive benefit to the development of the world civilization. The research of Russian koreanologists is directed to maximally objective and well-founded statements about Koguryō history. I think we have advanced far in this field already.

Editor's Note: We hope to include the bibliography for this article in a future issue.