


RESEARCH ARTICLE

Sinology in Russia during the Soviet and Post-Soviet Periods: Research and Politics

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Abstract

This paper follows the developments in Chinese studies in Moscow and Leningrad–Saint Petersburg during the Soviet and post-Soviet decades. It provides an overview of institutions and key currents in research conducted in these two cities, while also contextualizing the general political conditions under which Sinology existed. The paper examines the ways researchers responded to the ideological requirements placed upon them in the early Soviet period, then outlines the main trends in Chinese studies after the establishment of the PRC and during the Sino-Soviet split, and, finally, traces the continuities and changes of the late Soviet and post-Soviet years. This article provides some information on existing bibliographical publications, conferences, and journals as an aid for following China-related research conducted in Russia. It also demonstrates that, while many problems continue to hamper the development of Sinology in Russia, this field has sound foundations and many promising tendencies.

Keywords: Sinology; Russia; Soviet Union; Moscow; Saint Petersburg

Introduction

A milestone event for Chinese studies in Russia was the foundation of the Russian Orthodox Mission in Beijing in 1711, a body that succeeded not so much in providing spiritual guidance to the Chinese but rather in accumulating knowledge in Russia about Manchu and Han culture and history, as well as allowing a certain number of Russian missionaries to learn the Manchu and Chinese languages. Nikita (Hyacinth) Bichurin (1777–1853), Pavel (Piotr) Kamenskiĭ (1765–1845), and Pëtr (Palladius) Kafarov (1817–78) are but a few of the Russian scholars of China who gained knowledge of the Qing Empire through their time at the mission.¹ They participated in the grandiose tasks of translating Chinese philosophical and literary works into Russian and creating dictionaries and other tools for future researchers. Another cradle of Russian Sinology was Imperial Kazan University, founded in 1804, where several Oriental languages were taught and a specialized department of Chinese philology existed between 1837 and

¹Russian names are transliterated using ALA-LC style, with the exception of different spellings used in the authors' own publications.

1855 (the word *Manchurian* was added to the title in 1844). Osip (Iosif) Voĩtsekhovskii (1793–1850) and Vasilii Vasil'ev (1818–1900) were among the department's most famous members. When in 1854–55 Oriental studies were moved from Kazan to Saint Petersburg University, where the Faculty of Oriental Languages was established, Vasilii Vasil'ev, a corresponding member of the Imperial Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences from 1866 and an academician from 1886, became one of the keepers of Kazan traditions. Even before the faculty was moved from Kazan, another institution, the Asiatic Museum, had appeared in the imperial capital in 1818. The museum acted as a center for collecting Oriental manuscripts and artworks and studying them. The Department of the History of the Orient opened at Saint Petersburg University in 1863 and represented yet another step toward deeper and more systematic study of Asia in Russia. The Orient at the time predominantly covered Asian regions, especially those with a shared border with the Russian empire.

The very existence of these institutions, which collected information about the Qing Empire and its predecessors, assembled manuscripts and objects of material culture, and prepared research tools, created fertile ground for the development of Chinese studies in Russia. The shared border between the two countries was another unique factor that strongly affected both the status of Russian and, later, Soviet Sinologists in their country and the political conditions in which they worked.

The long list of names of Russian Sinologists from these years and later periods is as endless as Homer's Catalogue of Ships. The history of Russian academic interest in China has been studied by both Russian and international scholars writing in English, both in the context of Oriental studies and specifically as Sinology.² Here I aim to look at Chinese studies in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia not so much to show the shifts from one great scholar to another, but rather to outline the circumstances under which Russian and Soviet Sinologists found themselves living and working. In Russia (before, during, and after the existence of the USSR), no less and maybe more than in many other countries, arts and sciences in general, Oriental studies more specifically, and Sinology in particular, have always been strongly affected by the politics of the state. Covering the whole temporal and spatial range of the development of Chinese studies in Russia would require a multivolume opus rather than a brief overview such as this one. So here I limit myself to the Soviet and post-Soviet

²For example, Ťu.V. Chudodeev, "Stanovlenie i razvitie kitaevedeniia v Institute vostokovedeniia RAN" [Establishment and Development of Sinology at the Institute of Oriental Studies of RAS], *Orientalistica* 1.3–4 (2018), 424–60; Christoph Harbsmeier, "Vasilii Mikhailovich Alekseev and Russian Sinology," *T'oung Pao*, Second Series, 97.4–5 (2011), 344–70; Alexander Kim, "The Life and Works of N.Ia. Bichurin, a Pioneer of Russian Sinology," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 66.2 (2013), 163–78; A.I. Kobzev, *Dramy i farsy rossiiskoi kitaistiki* [Dramas and Farces of Russian Chinese Studies] (Moscow: IOS RAS, 2016); N.L. Mamaeva, ed., *Osnovnye napravleniia i problemy rossiiskogo kitaevedeniia* [Main Directions and Problems of Russian Sinology] (Moscow: Pamiatniki istoricheskoi mysli, 2014); V.N. Nikiforov, *Sovetskie istoriki o problemakh Kitaia* [Soviet Historians on Matters of China] (Moscow: Nauka, Glavnaia redaktsiia vostochnoi literatury, 1970); I.F. Popova, ed., *Aziatskii muzei—Institut vostochnykh rukopisei RAN: putevoditel'* [Asiatic Museum—Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of RAS: Guidebook] (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo vostochnoi literatury, 2018); David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism. Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); P.E. Skachkov, *Ocherki istorii russkogo kitaevedeniia* [Outline of History of Soviet Sinology] (Moscow: Nauka, Glavnaia redaktsiia vostochnoi literatury, 1977); Vera Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient: The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Alexei D. Voskressenski, "Uneven Development vs. Searching for Integrity: Chinese Studies in Post-Soviet Russia," *China Review* 14.2 (2014), 131–54.

period, focusing chiefly on Petrograd–Leningrad–Saint Petersburg and Moscow, although I will allow myself to take some geographic diversions.³

The essay is structured chronologically because the political perturbations experienced by Russia (and the Soviet Union) affected the conditions under which researchers worked. This article is broken into three parts, focusing on periods with vaguely defined temporal borders: from the October Revolution to World War II, from the foundation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) until and into the Sino-Soviet Split, and, finally, the late Soviet and post-Soviet era. Although this is a very generalized division, it partly reflects the larger circumstances of Chinese studies in Russia and the USSR in the twentieth century. The earliest decades saw a transition from prerevolutionary to Marxist scientific endeavors, which meant a shift from the prerevolutionary conventions of research to attempts at bringing Marxist thought to the study of China. The foundation of the PRC brought new attention to China and therefore stimulated the re-emergence of Sinology after the hardships of the late 1930s and 1940s. Then the Sino-Soviet split affected the directions of research in ways that were often unpredictable. The preceding decades became a foundation for more systematic research conducted during the decades of the split; the conflict even stimulated a surge in Chinese studies and relative independence from some previous evaluations. Today's Sinological scene in Russia is the fruit of those years, with an inflow of new trends re-evaluating the results of Soviet scholarship and introducing new directions. Each part of this paper first outlines the institutional arrangements of the period and then examines key spheres of research. Institutional shuffles are important indicators revealing the state's priorities in subsidizing certain fields of research, allocating them to specific organizations, and controlling the academic endeavors of individuals. The frequency of such reshuffles also affected the coherence of research and personal connections.

There are two voluminous works in Russian that contain bibliographies of Soviet and Russian scholarship organized into thematic categories, as well as at least one biobibliographical dictionary.⁴ All three are in Russian, as are the overwhelming majority of books and articles referenced in them. Therefore, in this paper I do not provide bibliographies for the researchers mentioned and suggest that anyone interested in them refer to these massive compendia. An overview of Soviet scholarship on Chinese literature in English was published by Jeanne Kelly in 1980,⁵ whereas later developments in the Soviet study of Chinese literature received a comprehensive annotation in a paper by

³On the most important centers of Sinology in post-Soviet Russia, i.e., Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Chita, and Vladivostok, see Voskressenski, "Uneven Development vs. Searching for Integrity," 131–54, and "Chinese Studies in Post-Soviet Russia: From Uneven Development to the Search for Integrity," in *Sinology in Post-Communist States: Views from the Czech Republic, Mongolia, Poland, and Russia*, edited by Chih-yu Shih (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2016), 133–56.

⁴V.P. Zhuravlëva, *Bibliografiia Kitaia: Filosofii i obshchestvenno-politicheskaia mysl'. Ètika. Èstetika. Voennaia mysl'. Mifologiia. Religiiia. 1958–2008* [Bibliography of China: Philosophy and Sociopolitical Thought. Ethics. Aesthetics. Military Theory. Mythology. Religion. 1958–2008] (Moscow: ID "Forum," 2015); S.D. Miliband, *Vostokovedy Rosii, XX–nachalo XXI veka. Biobibliograficheskii slovar'* [Orientologists of Russia, Twentieth–Early Twenty-First Century. Biobibliographical Dictionary] (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura, 2008); P.E. Skachkov, *Bibliografiia Kitaia* [Bibliography of China] (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo vostochnoi literatury, 1960).

⁵Jeanne Kelly, "A Survey of Soviet Studies on Chinese Literature (1961–1978): Introduction and Bibliography," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 2.1 (1980), 101–36.

Boris Riftin.⁶ For this reason, my outline mostly leaves philological exploits aside, only touching upon some aspects of translation.

From the October Revolution to World War II

The collapse of the Russian Empire, the February and October Revolutions of 1917, and the ensuing civil war left few things unchanged. The Faculty of Oriental Languages at Saint Petersburg University was closed down in 1919 (to be re-established in 1944); the teaching of these languages was transferred to other departments. However, the Asiatic Museum remained intact and in 1925 was moved to a new, larger site in Leningrad. Its staff increased to nineteen research fellows in 1927 (as opposed to six in 1917).⁷ This was mainly thanks to the efforts of the museum's director, Sergei Ol'denburg (1863–1934), who held that position between 1916 and 1930 and managed to actively defend the interests of his institution under the new government. Ol'denburg even succeeded in organizing the first exhibition of Buddhist art in Russia amidst the hardships of the civil war in 1919. In 1921, the Collegium of Orientalists was founded at the museum as a body for coordinating scholarly efforts and spreading knowledge.

However, although the Asiatic Museum institutionally remained a single body for some time, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) required more pragmatic study of China. Therefore, in 1921 the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies (MIOS) was founded by merging several Oriental departments from several educational institutes in the Soviet capital, including the Lazarev Institute, a prerevolutionary private school established by the Armenian community in Moscow. Since the MIOS's chief purpose was to serve the political needs of the new state, Indian and Far Eastern languages were introduced to the curriculum. As Soviet involvement in China and Comintern interaction with the Chinese Communist and Nationalist Parties grew, Moscow became home to the Sun Yat-sen University of the Toilers of China, established in 1925. Even earlier, in 1921, the Communist University of the Toilers of the East obtained a Chinese section for training Chinese revolutionaries. In 1928 this section merged with Sun Yat-sen University to form the Communist University of the Toilers of China. This Communist university under its various names did not conduct any Sinological research per se, but focused on educating Chinese political activists; however, it did become a center for information exchange and discussions about current trends in Chinese society and politics and China's future paths.

The year 1930 brought the establishment of the Institute of Oriental Studies (IOS) under the aegis of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in Leningrad. The IOS took over the Asiatic Museum, the Collegium of Orientalists, the Institute of Buddhist Culture (established in 1928⁸), and the Turkological Cabinet (established in 1927). The first

⁶Boris Riftin, "The Study of Chinese Classical Literature in Russia," *Asian Research Trends: A Humanities and Social Science Review* 12 (2002), 49–88.

⁷I.F. Popova, "Ot Aziatskogo muzeia k Institutu vostochnykh rukopisei RAN: sobirатели i issledovateli rukopisnoi knigi narodov Vostoka" [From the Asiatic Museum to the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of RAS: Collectors and Researchers of the Handwritten Book of the Peoples of the East], in *Aziatskii muzei—Institut vostochnykh rukopisei RAN: putevoditel'*, 25.

⁸For the history of the Institute of Buddhist Culture, see T.V. Ermakova, "Institut buddiiskoi kul'tury AN SSSR (1928–1930 gg.)" [Institute of Buddhist Culture of the USSR Academy of Sciences, 1928–30], in *Chetvertye vostokovednye chteniia pamiati O.O. Rozenberga: Doklady, stat'i, publikatsii dokumentov* [The Fourth Readings in Memory of O.O. Rosenberg: Presentations, Papers, Publication of Documents], edited by T.V. Ermakova (Saint Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo A. Goloda, 2011), 251–60.

head of IOS was Sergey Ol'denburg (until his death in 1934). Its staff amounted to forty-two researchers, along with fifteen doctoral students.⁹ The Asiatic Museum retained its location and collection, but it became the “library section” of the IOS. The IOS’s primary tasks lay in providing theoretical grounds for Soviet politics in the East, in producing dictionaries and grammar textbooks for Eastern languages, and in cataloguing the rich collections of books and manuscripts stored at the former museum. When the IOS was established, research was conducted in nine departments, or “cabinets” in Russian: the Chinese, Japano-Korean, Mongolian, Indo-Tibetan, Iranian, Turkological, Caucasian, Arabic, and Euro-Syrian departments. The Chinese department was headed by Vasilii Alekseev (1881–1951), a scholar of great importance for Russian and Soviet Sinology. Most “traditional” Sinological research remained in Leningrad, around Alekseev and his students, whereas Moscow scholars focused on China’s present and future, being physically closer to the policy-making government and party bodies.

Amidst these reshuffles, Sinology and Oriental studies in general suffered many heavy blows in the 1930s, when Joseph Stalin’s purges began. Historians Dmitrii Pozdnev (1865–1937) and Pëtr Grinevich (1899–1938), Tibetologist Bazar Baradiin (1878–1937), linguist and historian Nikolai Nevskii (1892–1937), philologists Iulian Shchufskii (1897–1938) and Boris Vasil’ev (1899–1937) were executed, along with many others, convicted on false charges of spying for Japan or engaging in counterrevolutionary activities.¹⁰ Most were posthumously rehabilitated after 1956, with the reason for rehabilitation given as “absence of corpus delicti.” Even more scholars lost the right to continue their research and teaching and were sent to labor camps or otherwise displaced, and their writings went out of academic circulation. Among such scholars were philologist Nikolai Konrad (1891–1970), historians Pëtr Skachkov (1892–1964) and Guo Shaotang (Guo Zhaotang 郭肇堂, Afanasii Krymov, 1905–88), and economist Zoia Dubasova (1903–?).¹¹ Some of those who survived the camps and were rehabilitated would later return to their research. World War II, referred to in the Russian collective memory as the Great Patriotic War of 1941–45, took yet more lives and resulted in more scholars relocating (evacuations from besieged Leningrad, transfers of enlisted researchers, etc.).¹² In the summer of 1942 some staff members from the former Asiatic

⁹Popova, “Ot Aziatskogo muzeia k Institutu vostochnykh rukopisei RAN,” 27.

¹⁰This list does not include political and party activists who also engaged in discussions about China’s society and economy, such as Manuil Abramson (1898–1938), Anatolii Kantorovich (1896–1937), Lajos Magyar (1891–1937), and Pavel Mif (Fortus, 1901–38).

¹¹Although the archives of Soviet security services are still not fully open to the public, several NGOs have been working on compiling databases of victims of purges in the USSR. The International Memorial society, the Open List project, the Immortal Barracks project, and other similar initiatives work toward gathering archival data, the memories of survivors and victims’ family members, etc. to record traces of lives lost and broken by the totalitarian machine. Several lists enumerate scholars of the Orient who were prosecuted in the Soviet years. See, e.g., <https://ru.openlist.wiki/Категория:Востоковеды>; <http://memory.pvost.org/pages/dic.html>; see also V.M. Alpatov, “Martirolog vostokovednoi lingvistiki” [Martyrology of Linguistics in Oriental Studies], *Vestnik Akademii nauk SSSR* [Bulletin of the USSR Academy of Sciences] 12 (1990), 110–21; I.A.V. Vasil’kov, M.Iu. Sorokina, *Ljudi i sud’by. Biobibliograficheskii slovar’ vostokovedov—zhertv politicheskogo terrora v sovetskii period (1917–1991)* [People and Fates: Biobibliographical Dictionary of Asia Scholars—Victims of Political Terror in the Soviet Period, 1917–91] (Saint Petersburg: Peterburgskoe vostokovedenie, 2003).

¹²For more about losses and changes during that time, see L.N. Men’shikov, L.I. Chuguevskii, “Kitaevdenie” [Sinology], in *Aziatskii muzei—Leningradskoe otdelenie Instituta Vostokovedeniia AN SSSR* [Asiatic Museum—Leningrad Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of

Museum were evacuated from the besieged Leningrad to Tashkent. In 1943 a Moscow section of the IOS was founded. These two events allowed the IOS to move its central activities to Moscow in 1950, leaving only the Oriental manuscripts section in Leningrad.

Soviet Sinology emerged in the 1920s and 1930s, when “old school” researchers had to learn the Marxist-Leninist approach to history and sociology. Vladimir Nikiforov (1920–90) referred to this time as “a period of great discussions,” when Sinologists were working out ways of applying the concepts of Marxism-Leninism to the realities of China and to its history.¹³ The focal point of discussions was whether China and other non-Western societies were characterized by the “feudal mode of production” or the “Asiatic mode of production.” Seas of ink were spilt debating this question, while scholars analyzed every aspect of China’s past and present to determine what forces defined Chinese society and who were the exploiters and the exploited there.

Several considerations made establishing which classes were the exploited and the exploiters in China important. First, because Lenin’s elaborations of Marxism resulted in shifts in ideas about the historical development of Russia and the East, Chinese history needed to be written in such a way that it confirmed the universality of all countries’ historical evolution in keeping with Lenin’s theories. Second, defining class relations in China was also of utmost practical importance for the further growth of the Communist revolution globally. Understanding which social forces would lead the revolution in China and how ready the country was for it was essential for guiding revolutionary action and eventually “world revolution.” Much food for thought was provided by the events of 1925–27 in China, which the Soviet literature referred to as a “revolution.” Comintern advisors were directly involved in these events, fostering the Communist movement in China as well as supporting the Guomindang and advising it on the United Front’s tactics. Interestingly, many Soviet analysts who were not in China or were there only briefly theorized over these events from afar, but when they finally did go to China, some of them changed their views quite radically (but still within the Marxist-Leninist framework).¹⁴ Finally, there was a purely internal political aspect to the matter: Leon Trotsky’s associates considered the “Asiatic mode of production” a more suitable explanation for the state of affairs in China, so when Stalin prevailed over Trotsky in a power struggle in the late 1920s, the “feudal” concept gained weight. Since these debates have been thoroughly analyzed during both the Soviet and post-Soviet period, I will not go into further detail.¹⁵ Suffice to say that the need to accommodate China’s wide-ranging, complicated realities and past in a rigid theoretical scheme forced many researchers to concentrate their efforts on issues determined

Sciences], edited by A.N. Kononov et al. (Moscow: Nauka, Glavnaia redaktsiia vostochnoi literatury, 1972), 114–18; V.G. Datsyshen, “Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina i sovetskoe kitaevedenie” [The Great Patriotic War and Soviet Sinology], *Problemy Dal’nego Vostoka* [Far Eastern Affairs] 2 (2015), 108–17.

¹³V.N. Nikiforov, “Izuchenie istorii Kitaia v SSSR” [Study of Chinese History in the USSR], in *Velikii Oktiabr’ i razvitie sovetskogo kitaevedeniia* [Great October and the Development of Soviet Sinology], edited by Iu.V. Chudodeev (Moscow: Nauka, Glavnaia redaktsiia vostochnoi literatury, 1968), 56–84; Nikiforov, *Sovetskie istoriki o problemakh Kitaia*, 126–270.

¹⁴Alexander Pisarev, “Soviet Sinology and Two Approaches to an Understanding of Chinese History,” *China Review* 14.2 (2014), 117.

¹⁵Nikiforov, *Sovetskie istoriki o problemakh Kitaia*, 126–270; Pisarev, “Soviet Sinology,” 113–30, and “Soviet Sinology: Two Conflicting Paradigms of Chinese History,” in *Sinology in Post-Communist States*, 115–32; Joshua A. Fogel, “The Debates over the Asiatic Mode of Production in Soviet Russia, China, and Japan,” *The American Historical Review* 93.1 (1988), 56–79.

by ideology. Moreover, a number of people who participated in the debates and, therefore, in predicting the future of the Chinese revolution were not trained as Sinologists but were Comintern or Communist party activists (e.g., Pavel Mif, Vissarion Lominadze (1897–1935), Karl Radek (1885–1939), etc.).¹⁶ All these factors drove the discussions in directions that were often far from purely academic. Yet some of these considerations created interest in such matters as people's art and grassroots involvement in politics earlier than social history took a firm hold among Western scholars—even if Soviet Sinologists operated with predetermined Marxist and Leninist evaluations of past uprisings, philosophical thought, and political and social trends.

Importantly, behind the husk of ideological constructs, Soviet scholarship from the 1920s and 1930s paid great attention to many aspects of Chinese history, philosophy, and language. The need to find “feudal” or “Asiatic” elements led researchers to examine the role of irrigation in the sociopolitical evolution of China, matters related to land ownership and serfdom, the well-field system in such treatises as *Mencius* (*Meng Zi* 孟子) and *Zhou Li* 周禮, the nature of rebellions throughout Chinese dynastic history, and so on. Vasilii Alekseev, in a study of *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋志異, many of the stories from which he had previously translated into Russian, looked at the novel through the prism of “democratizing” traditional Chinese literature. Similarly, he published research in which he claimed that Chinese folklore and folk prints were evidence of “the creativity of the people.”

Another important development in Soviet Sinology in the late 1920s and 1930s was the elaboration of a latinized Chinese script. This work was mainly connected to policies toward various national groups living inside the USSR, the goals of which were to create writing systems for previously unwritten languages, “to eliminate illiteracy” among the population, and to spread general education among people of all ages, sometimes called “enlightenment” (*prosveshchenie*). The presence of a Chinese population in the Russian Far East (which was later deported to Central Asia) and the expectation of revolution in China led to the establishment of the Commission for Latinization of Chinese Script in 1930 at the IOS in Leningrad. It was headed by Vasilii Alekseev and included linguists Aleksandr Dragunov (1900–55), Aleksandr Shprint̄syn (1907–74), and Iulian Shchut̄skiĭ, as well as two doctoral students, Gaik Papaian (1901–37) and Aleksandr Poliakov (1906–40). They published several reports in 1931–32.¹⁷ The

¹⁶Many of these political activists also lost their lives in the 1930s purges, although, unlike scholars of the Orient, they were not accused of espionage but rather of counterrevolutionary activities and being part of Trotskyite organizations.

¹⁷The commission's first report was published as part of Alekseev's book in 1932, although it had been completed by January 1, 1931: V.M. Alekseev, *Kitaĭskaĭa ieroglificheskaĭa pis'mennost' i eĭ latinizatsĭia* [Chinese Hieroglyphic Script and Its Latinization] (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1932), 74–84. See also V.M. Alekseev, “Komissĭia po latinizatsĭii kitaĭskoi pis'mennosti. K voprosu o latinizatsĭii kitaĭskoi pis'mennosti” [Commission for Latinization of Chinese Script: On the Question of Latinizing Chinese Script], in *Zapiski Instituta vostokovedeniĭa Akademii nauk SSSR* [Bulletin of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences], 1 (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1932), 35–54, www.orientalstudies.ru/rus/images/pdf/journals/zivan_01_1932_03.pdf; V.M. Alpatov, “Razmyshleniĭa nad knigoi V.M. Alekseeva ‘Kitaĭskaĭa ieroglificheskaĭa pis'mennosti i eĭ latinizatsĭia’” [Thinking Over V.M. Alekseev's Book “Chinese Hieroglyphic Script and Its Latinization”], *Obshchestvo i gosudarstvo v Kitae* [Society and State in China] 43.2 (2013), 271–85. Reflections on the phonetic system of the Chinese language were made earlier, for example, by Evgenii Polivanov (1891–1938) and Nikolai Popov-Tativa (1883–1937). See E.D. Polivanov and N.M. Popov-Tativa, *Posobie po kitaĭskoi transkriptsĭii* [Manual on Chinese Transcription] (Moscow: Kommunisticheskii Universitet Trudiashchikhhsia Vostoka im. I.V. Stalina, 1928).

thinking behind this endeavor was that Chinese characters were an obstacle in spreading literacy among the proletariat: “How can a Chinese worker or peasant invest years in learning characters if his intensive labor is barely enough to support his and his family’s half-starving existence?”¹⁸ Introducing a latinized script seemed to offer a solution, and some efforts were made to implement the commission’s proposals in the Soviet Far East (although with little, if any, success).¹⁹ Yet it is worthwhile to point out that Alekseev and his colleagues were not blindly opposed to characters, since Alekseev’s book outlined the benefits of the traditional Chinese writing system alongside the justifications for latinization.

The years before the purges of 1937–38 and World War II hinted at great prospects for Sinology in the USSR: in this time Shchuĭskii worked on the *Yijing* 易經 and *Liezi* 列子; Apollon Petrov (1907–49)²⁰ analyzed the philosophical heritage of Wang Bi 王弼, Wang Chong 王充, and Yang Zhu 楊朱; Konstantin Flug (1893–1942) compiled descriptions of the Dunhuang manuscripts in the IOS collection; and Nikolai Nevskii carried out groundbreaking research in Tangut studies. The accomplishments of many other Soviet scholars could be added to this list. However, the purges and the war spelled tragedy for Soviet arts and sciences. Many research projects were permanently halted due to the execution of the academics involved or due to war-time evacuations and transfers. Some findings from this period, however, were eventually published in the 1950s and 1960s or even later. Nevskii’s *Tangut Philology* saw the light of day only in 1960, even receiving the highly prestigious Lenin Prize in 1962—a quarter of a century after its author’s meaningless execution.²¹

From the Establishment of the PRC to the Sino-Soviet Split

The years after the most massive purges were not favorable to conducting research, although several works were indeed published at this time. In 1940 Vasilii Alekseev, Lazar’ Duman (1907–79), and Apollon Petrov edited one of the most important general

¹⁸Alekseev et al., “Komissiiā po latinizatsii kitaĭskoi pis’mennosti,” 36.

¹⁹For more about the implementation of this script and the reasons for its failure, see V.G. Datsyshen, “Dvizhenie za latinizatsiiu kitaĭskoi pis’mennosti i razvitie kitaĭskoi shkoly na sovetском Dal’nem Vostoke” [Movement for Latinizing Chinese Script and the Development of a Chinese School in the Soviet Far East], *Rossĭia i ATR* [Russia and the Pacific] 3 (2008), 160–69. The work of Alekseev’s commission followed in the footsteps of an earlier attempt by Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白 (1899–1935, Russian pseudonym Strakhov), Dragunov, and Vsevolod Kolokolov (1896–1979) at creating a latinized script called Sin Wenz; for more about this project, see Jing Tsu, “Romanization without Rome: China’s Latin New Script and Soviet Central Asia,” in *Asia Inside Out: Connected Places*, edited by Eric Tagliacozzo et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 321–53.

²⁰Apollon Petrov survived the purges of the 1930s unharmed, but he was removed from his academic position at the IOS and given a diplomatic appointment in wartime Chongqing in 1942, which left him little time for research. He was the Soviet ambassador to the Republic of China in 1945–48, after which he and his family moved to Moscow. However, his wife, Źuliia Averkieva (1907–80), a notable Soviet anthropologist specializing in the peoples of North America, was arrested in 1948 for suspected “connections with spies” and sent to a labor camp for five years. Petrov died a year after her arrest, in 1949. He is considered the first historian of Chinese philosophy in the Soviet Union; see M.L. Titarenko, “Izuchenie kitaĭskoi filosofii i religii” [The Study of Chinese Philosophy and Religion], in *Osnovnye napravleniia i problemy rossiiskogo kitaevedeniia* [Main Directions and Problems of Russian Sinology], edited by N.L. Mamaeva (Moscow: Pamiatniki istoricheskoi mysli, 2014), 191.

²¹For an overview of Russian and Soviet Tangut studies, see Sergey Dmitriev, “Tangut (Xi Xia) Studies in the Soviet Union: The Quinta Essentia of Russian Oriental Studies,” in *Sinology in Post-Communist States*, 233–51.

overviews of the Chinese state and society that had been produced in the USSR until then.²² The end of World War II (and the ensuing start of the Cold War) and the foundation of the PRC created a more friendly environment for the development of Sinology in the USSR. There was a necessity for more specialists with knowledge of the Chinese language and a deep understanding of the country, so the state turned its attention to China-related institutions. The IOS was transferred to Moscow in 1950, but this relocation did not bear fruit immediately: the USSR's First Deputy Premier, Anastas Mikoian (1895–1978), criticized the IOS harshly for its “sleepy” work when speaking at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in February 1956. In the same speech he also regretted that the MIOS, “having existed for 139 years,” had been liquidated.²³ In an attempt to consolidate Soviet Oriental studies and Sinology in particular, later that year several Asia-related departments at the Faculties of History and Philology of Moscow State University were merged to form the Institute of Eastern Languages (reorganized and renamed the Institute of Asian and African Studies in 1972). The IOS received instructions to devote more attention to contemporary developments in the East and to open a specialized publishing house. Thus, Oriental Literature Publishing (*Vostochnaia literatura*) was founded in 1957; it became affiliated with the Science (*Nauka*) Publishing House in 1964. At the same time the Leningrad Oriental manuscripts section became semi-independent when it transformed into the Leningrad Branch of the IOS. In 1956, the Institute of Chinese Studies of the Soviet Academy of Sciences was established in Moscow. It split off from the IOS, taking with it most of the China specialists from the IOS, as well as drawing several Chinese-speaking experts from several practically oriented institutions (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of External Commerce, etc.).²⁴

However, in 1960 PRC officials protested against the existence of what they perceived to be an institution of “colonialist science,” and consequently, the Institute of Chinese Studies was closed the same year.²⁵ Its personnel were moved back to the IOS (renamed the Institute of the Peoples of Asia, IPA, in the same year, only to be renamed the IOS in 1970), where a new China department was formed. This department held a degree of autonomy within the IPA, both thematically, by studying traditional and modern China rather than the contemporary state, and spatially—the department was located at a different site from the rest of the IPA.

Īurii Chudodeev (b. 1931) has referred to the 1950s as the “formative” period of modern Sinology in the Soviet Union.²⁶ To be more specific, the death of Stalin in 1953 and the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956, where Stalin's personality cult was first criticized, allowed the survivors of the preceding turbulent decades to slowly regain the chance to publish their own research and works by their teachers and colleagues who perished. Sinologists who survived the repressions of the 1930s and the violence of World War II (e.g., Afanasii Krymov, Pētr Skachkov, and Lazar'

²²V.M. Alekseev, L.I. Duman, and A.A. Petrov, eds., *Kitai: Istorīia, ěkonomika, kul'tura, geroicheskaia bor'ba za nātsional'nuū nezavisimost'* [China: History, Economy, Culture, Heroic Struggle for National Independence] (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1940).

²³“Zasedanie shestoe. Rech' tov. Mikoiana” [Session Six: Speech by Comrade Mikoian], in *XX s'ezd Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soūza, 14–25 fevralia 1956 goda. Stenograficheskiĭ otchēt* [Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, February 14–25, 1956. Stenographic Report] (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1956), 1, 323–24.

²⁴Chudodeev, “Stanovlenie i razvitie kitaevedenīia,” 429.

²⁵Chudodeev, “Stanovlenie i razvitie kitaevedenīia,” 430–31.

²⁶Chudodeev, “Stanovlenie i razvitie kitaevedenīia,” 426.

Duman) returned to their scholarly endeavors. Apart from that, the knowledge assembled before the 1950s served as a basis for systematic overviews, whereas the overall atmosphere in the USSR after Stalin's death dictated slightly less rigid limits on research. Contacts between the USSR and the PRC provided Soviet researchers with ample opportunities to access both primary and secondary sources from China. The need for specialists stimulated an inflow of new students who were to become the next generation of Soviet Sinologists and who had the opportunity to learn directly from many of the great scholars of the previous generation. In addition to the Faculty of Asian and African Studies at Leningrad University, other institutes educating China experts were MIOS (merged with Moscow State Institute of International Relations in 1954), the Military Institute of Foreign Languages, the Higher School of Diplomacy at the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Institute of External Commerce, and Far Eastern University in Vladivostok.²⁷ A number of other departments and faculties were also established to satisfy the demand for translators and researchers.

Nikiforov characterized the scholarship produced in the 1950s as "outlines" (očerki), meaning book- and article-length publications providing overviews of general trends and covering large periods of Chinese history.²⁸ Chudodeev states the aim of such studies was "to show the stages of the Chinese people's struggle for national liberation and the unfolding of the Chinese revolution."²⁹ Among the earliest of such studies was a collection of "outlines" by Gerontii Efimov (1906–80) published in 1949 and elaborating modern Chinese history. It was soon followed by histories of China's national and revolutionary movements, along with a series of encyclopedic entries on China-related subjects in the second edition of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* and in a multivolume encyclopedia on world history published during the 1950s.³⁰

The 1950s brought opportunities to publish studies on imperial and pre-imperial Chinese history, philosophy, society, economy, and art. Academic translations of the *Shijing* 詩經, *Sun Zi* 孫子, *Guan Zi* 管子, *Chu Ci* 楚辭,³¹ and so forth made these works accessible to Russian readers, together with works on philosophical developments in the Zhou and Qin-Han periods, even though ideological requirements caused researchers to look for materialism, idealism, atheism, and other Marxist-Leninist concepts in Chinese philosophy. In addition, the Sino-Soviet friendship stimulated the translation of Chinese fiction into Russian.³² Advances in linguistic research into the

²⁷Chudodeev, "Stanovlenie i razvitie kitaevedeniia," 426–27.

²⁸Nikiforov, "Izuchenie istorii Kitaia v SSSR," 62–64.

²⁹Chudodeev, "Stanovlenie i razvitie kitaevedeniia," 428.

³⁰See Nikiforov, "Izuchenie istorii Kitaia v SSSR," 64; Chudodeev, "Stanovlenie i razvitie kitaevedeniia," 428. The encyclopedia of world history was called, simply, *World History* (*Vsemirnaia istoriia*).

³¹A.A. Shtukin, trans., N.T. Fedorenko, ed., *Shihszin* [Shijing] (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1957); A.A. Shtukin, trans., N.I. Konrad, ed., *Shihszin: izbrannye pesni* [Shijing: Selected Songs] (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1957); N.I. Konrad, *Sun-tszy. Traktat o voennom iskusstve: perevod i issledovanie* [Sun Zi: Treatise on the Craft of War: Translation and Research] (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1950); V.M. Shtein, *Guan-tszy: issledovanie i perevod* [Guan Zi: Study and Translation] (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo vostochnoi literatury, 1959); N.T. Fedorenko, trans., *Tsiui Tuan'. Stikhi* [Qu Yuan: Poems] (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1956). The translations of the *Guan Zi* and *Chu Ci* are incomplete.

³²All Four Classic Novels were translated into Russian and published in the USSR between 1954 and 1959, as well as many works by twentieth-century Chinese writers. A detailed overview of translations and research on Chinese literature in the USSR from the 1920s through the 1960s can be found in a brochure by Kirina Golygina (1935–99) and Igor Lisevich (1932–2000): K.I. Golygina and I.S. Lisevich, *Soviet*

Chinese language were made by Sergei Ĭakhontov (1926–2018), who had studied under Aleksandr Dragunov and made his career at Leningrad–Saint Petersburg State University. Several doctoral dissertations in Chinese studies were defended after a long break, the earliest being Sergeĭ Tikhvinskii's (1918–2018) work on the reform movement of the late nineteenth century, defended in 1953.³³ In the 1950s Leningrad University's Faculty of Asian and African Studies was “the heart of the best minds of Soviet Oriental studies”³⁴ and laid the groundwork for the upsurge in research in the 1960s and later.

The Sino-Soviet friendship of the 1950s meant that PRC researchers' takes on Chinese history and philosophy were very influential in Soviet scholarship. Among such researchers were Fan Wenlan 范文瀾 (1893–1969), Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978), Shang Yue 尚钺 (1902–82), and Peng Ming 彭明 (1924–2008). Their works were translated into Russian and served as a basis for Soviet scholarship in related areas. Chudodeev points out that many works from this decade also marshaled the facts to fit the Marxist-Leninist framework, while the topics were centered on “the Communist Party of China's struggle” for victory in various fields.³⁵ Moreover, the Soviet government encouraged concentrating attention on observing contemporary China rather than studies of the past, so the new generation that joined academic circles in the 1940s and 1950s was trained more in modern Chinese than in the Classical language, *wenyan*; the same applied to their knowledge of history and culture. When Lev Ĭidlin and Nikolai Fedorenko arrived in Leningrad to begin their doctoral studies, their advisor, Vasilii Alekseev, was “shocked by their ignorance” and had to give them “many hours of lectures.”³⁶ Therefore, relying on Chinese writers' authority in understanding texts in *wenyan* was at times inevitable. A notable example is the case of Fedorenko, who in the 1950s was the premier Soviet expert on Qu Yuan 屈原, even though his books relied solely on Guo Moruo's writings, as Kravtsova and Terekhov demonstrate.³⁷ This was not, however, an overwhelming tendency, and the younger generation of Soviet Sinologists eventually accumulated great expertise in reading and translating *wenyan*. Furthermore, there were more productive ties between Chinese and Soviet scholars, an example of which was the collaboration between Rudolf Viatkin (1910–95), the Russian translator of Sima Qian, and Gu Jiegang 顾颉刚 (1893–1980), who at that time was working on the Zhonghua Shuju standard edition of the *Shi Ji* 史記.³⁸

Sinology in the Past Fifty Years (Literature) (Moscow: “Nauka” Publishing House, Central Department of Oriental Literature, 1968).

³³The peculiar circumstances surrounding the defense of Tikhvinskii's doctoral thesis are described in A.I. Kobzev, “Byl li kheshan Alike ‘osnovatelem sovetskoi shkoly kitaevedeniia?’” [Was Heshang Alike “the Founder of the Soviet School of Sinology?”], *Obshchestvo i gosudarstvo v Kitae* [Society and State in China], 45.2 (2015), 916–79, here 934–41. This paper also examines two earlier works, Lev Ĭidlin's (1909–85) candidate thesis of 1942 and Nikolai Fedorenko's (1912–2000) doctoral thesis of 1943; see *ibid.* p. 970.

³⁴The words of the Soviet Arabist Oleg Bol'shakov (1929–2020), quoted in I.F. Popova, “Lev Nikolaevich Men'shikov (1926–2005)” [Lev Men'shikov, 1926–2005], *Pis'mennye pamiatniki Vostoka* [Written Monuments of the Orient] 1.4 (2006), 6.

³⁵Chudodeev, “Stanovlenie i razvitie kitaevedeniia,” 428.

³⁶M.E. Kravtsova, A.E. Terekhov, “K istorii izucheniiia Chuskikh strof v sovetskom kitaevedenii: 1950–1980-e gg.” [On the History of Soviet Studies of the Elegies of Chu: 1950–1980s], *Asiatica: Trudy po filosofii i kul'turam Vostoka* [Asiatica: Papers on Eastern Philosophy and Cultures] 13.1 (2019), 27.

³⁷Kravtsova and Terekhov, “K istorii izucheniiia Chuskikh strof,” 24–99.

³⁸Tu.L. Krol', “Rudolf Vsevolodovich Viatkin i ‘Istoricheskie zapiski’ Syma Tsiania” [Rudolf Viatkin and Sima Qian's “Records of the Grand Historian”], in *Syma Tsian'. Istoricheskie zapiski* [Sima Qian: The

It was the Sino-Soviet split of the 1960s and 1970s that provided some space for Soviet scholars to examine Chinese history, culture, economic development, and society from more independent viewpoints and to be critical of the Chinese party-state-endorsed views and interpretations. The ideological debates between the Chinese and Soviet Communist parties meant that Soviet Sinologists could move away from some of the Chinese views on revolution, classes in China, and the periodization of China's history. At the same time, Soviet scholars had to maintain the paradigm of "mistakes" in Mao Zedong's theories and to search for historical confirmations of these "mistakes."

As relations between the two countries grew more uneasy, an institute with the intentionally misleading name of the Department of History at the Institute of World Socialist System's Economy of the Soviet Academy of Sciences (Otdel istorii pri Institute ekonomiki mirovoi sotsialisticheskoi sistemy AN SSSR) was established in 1965. This department's chief task was monitoring the situation in China and providing reference materials to the CPSU and the government. In 1966, the Institute of the Far Eastern Studies (IFES) was founded under the aegis of the Soviet Academy of Sciences by merging the Department of History at the Institute of World Socialist System's Economy and the previously closed down Institute of Chinese Studies. Thus, two research centers coexisted in Moscow, with the IFES dealing primarily with contemporary affairs and the China department of the IPA/IOS devoted to matters of prerevolutionary China, covering philosophy, history and historiography, art, and society. The IOS hosted the first all-union conference "Society and State in China" in 1970. The conference brought together researchers who gave talks on a wide variety of topics, covering the most ancient periods to current events. It has been held annually since then, and the presented papers appear in the volumes of conference proceedings and provide a good reflection of the thematic spread of Soviet and Russian Sinology.³⁹ The Leningrad Branch of the IPA/IOS continued to focus on manuscripts, with its main aims being conducting philological analysis, publishing the written heritage of the East, and producing catalogues and scientific descriptions of the large collections of the former Asiatic Museum. As Irina Popova (b. 1961) writes, researchers at the Leningrad Branch were "almost free from the necessity to carry out opportunistic (kon'junkturnyi) research."⁴⁰ That does not mean, of course, that Leningrad scholars were completely free to do as they pleased, but their work was much less predetermined by politics and ideology than it had been in the 1930s, and they were certainly allowed more freedom than their Moscow counterparts in the 1960s and 1970s.

The 1960s and 1970s were, in Nikiforov's words, a period of monographic research, or, according to Chudodeev, a transitional period in which Soviet Sinology moved from an "outlining-educative" (oчерkovo-poznavatel'naia) stage to an "exploratory-monographic" (issledovatel'sko-monograficheskaia) one.⁴¹ From the "outlines" that laid the foundations for more in-depth research Soviet scholars moved to the study of more specific themes. Issues in recent Chinese history (Qing rule, the 1911 Revolution, Guomindang politics, the Civil War of the late 1940s, Sino-Soviet relations,

Records of the Grand Historian], translated and annotated by R.V. Viatkin and V.S. Taskin, 2nd edition (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura, 2001), 1, 409.

³⁹The index and some of the materials published in the Society and State in China conference proceedings can be found at www.synologia.ru/art-general-82.htm.

⁴⁰Popova, "Ot Aziatskogo muzeia k Institutu vostochnykh rukopisei RAN," 44.

⁴¹Nikiforov, "Izuchenie istorii Kitaia v SSSR," 71; Chudodeev, "Stanovlenie i razvitie kitaevedeniia," 436.

etc.) as well as from more remote periods (agrarian and social relations in pre-imperial and imperial China; Qin, Han, Tang, and Ming government and philosophy; the literature and art of imperial period; etc.) received growing attention.

Annotated translations of important Chinese primary sources continued to be produced during the 1960s and 1970s. These were published side by side with translations from other “Eastern” languages in the Monuments of Eastern Literature (Pamiatniki pis'mennosti Vostoka) series established in 1965 by Science Publishing House.⁴² These translations usually contained not only an introductory essay about the translated source but also chapters on its language, and thus were also excellent material for teaching. Viatkin's already-mentioned work on an annotated translation of the *Shi Ji* stretched over decades and was continued by his successors after his death. Other published translations from this period include *Shang jun shu* 商君書 by Leonard Perelomov (1928–2018) and *Shan hai jing* 山海經 by Elektra Tanshina (1924–?).⁴³ In the mid-1960s the Leningrad Branch of the IPA prepared editions of Chinese manuscripts from the Dunhuang collection, as well as of Tangut manuscripts and woodcuts. Historical sources for the study of later periods in Chinese history, such as papers on the Taiping Rebellion or Sun Yat-sen's and Li Dazhao's writings, were translated as well. The China department of the IPA/IOS engaged in the preparation of the *Great Chinese–Russian Dictionary*.⁴⁴ Its editor was Il'ia Oshanin (1900–82), who had compiled smaller dictionaries in the preceding decades. Work on the *Great Chinese–Russian Dictionary* (containing around 250,000 entries) was finished by 1983–84; Oshanin and his team received the USSR State Prize in 1986. The dictionary remains one of the most important reference tools for Russian-speaking Sinologists to this day.

Among those who graduated from the universities in Moscow and Leningrad in the 1950s and went on to contribute to Soviet scholarship on China in the 1960s and 1970s are many prominent names. Lev Men'shikov (1926–2005) worked on Chinese poetry, drama, and the *bianwen* 變文 genre; he also headed a team studying the Dunhuang collection in Leningrad, making great contributions to this field.⁴⁵ Boris Riftin (1932–2012) was one of the most authoritative scholars of medieval Chinese literature, including novelistic prose and folklore. Kim Vasil'ev (1932–87) studied and translated *The Strategies of the Warring States* (*Zhan guo ce* 戰國策). Iurii Krol' (1943–2021)

⁴²The series is still being published. In 1959 it was renamed Monuments of Literature of the Peoples of the East (Pamiatniki literaturny narodov Vostoka), from which the Monuments of Eastern Literature series separated in 1965. An annotated list of books in the series can be found in V.D. Buzaeva and N.V. Isaeva, *Pamiatniki literaturny narodov Vostoka* [Literary Monuments of the Peoples of the East] (Moscow: Nauka, 1986). Lists of later publications in this series are available at the Oriental Literature (Vostochnaia literatura) Publishing House website at <https://vostlit.ru/inform/lb.pdf> and at <https://vostlit.ru/catalog/A1.htm#2>.

⁴³For a bibliography of these and other translations published since the 1960s, see related sections in Zhuravleva's *Bibliography of China*.

⁴⁴Work on the dictionary was started by a large collective in Leningrad in 1938. Among the participants were Vasilii Alekseev, Iurii Bunakov (1908–42), Aleksandr Dragunov, Lazar' Duman, Apollon Petrov, Aleksandr Shprint'syn, Viktor Shtein (1890–1964), and many others. By 1941 the draft contents of the dictionary were ready, but the war put any further preparation on hold. When the Sinologists returned to Leningrad after being evacuated from the city, the compilation of the dictionary was resumed, but by then the Chinese lexis had obtained a large number of neologisms that had to be added. Il'ia Oshanin, Lev Eidlín, and Zhou Songyuan (1909–64) joined the dictionary preparation team. By 1948 the main part of the additions was ready, but in 1949 the dictionary materials were transferred in their entirety from Leningrad to Moscow, where Oshanin took on editing duties. See Men'shikov and Chuguevskii, “Kitaevdenie,” 111, 118–20.

⁴⁵See Popova, “Lev Nikolaevich Men'shikov,” 5–15.

substantially contributed to the study of the Chinese historiography, politics, economic developments, and ideology of the Qin-Han period; later he also published an annotated translation of *Debate on Salt and Iron* (*Yan tie lun* 鹽鐵論). Leonard Perelomov worked on Confucian and Legist philosophy, as well as the history of early imperial China. Nataliia Svistunova (b. 1930) translated Ming laws and produced studies of that period's legal policies and practices. Irina Zograf (b. 1931) and Izabella Gurevich (1932–2016) researched the grammar of medieval Chinese. Evgenii Kychanov (1932–2013) made a highly valuable contribution to the study of the Xi Xia state and Tangut cultural heritage and language. These and many other outstanding scholars shaped the development of Soviet and Russian Sinology in later decades and passed their knowledge to the younger generations after the USSR collapsed.

Stanislav Kuchera (1928–2020) took a markedly different path to becoming a Soviet Sinologist. He graduated from Warsaw University (1952) and later defended his PhD thesis on the *Zhou Li* at Beijing University (1960); from 1966 he worked in the IPA/IOS in Moscow, researching the state and society of the Zhou period, as well as a broad spectrum of other themes.

Marxist-Leninist historical materialism; the use of terms such as *feudalism*, *petty bourgeoisie*, and the like; and the tendency to see all evils as sprouting from the imperialist invasion and capitalist exploitation of China were still prerequisites in this period, but the growing body of scholarship and the stabilization of working conditions for researchers were favorable for the functioning of an academic community and productive discussions within it.

The Late Soviet to Post-Soviet Years

Institutionally, the 1970s and 1980s brought more stability to the Sinological world in the USSR, especially compared to the turbulent period of the 1920s through the 1940s. The academic structures established in the 1950s and 1960s mostly survived up to and past the collapse of the Soviet Union. The IOS and the IFES both continue to exist under the Academy of Sciences (which is no longer a Soviet academy but a Russian one). The Leningrad Branch (renamed the Saint Petersburg Branch when the city reverted to its old name in 1991) became an independent body, titled the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences, in 2007, but it still traces its lineage to the Asiatic Museum. The oldest university centers have also mostly retained their Sinological institutes: the Institute of Asian and African Studies at Moscow State University and the Faculty of Asian and African Studies at Saint Petersburg State University are still active to this day.⁴⁶ However, changes in Russian politics after 1991, together with financial shortages, led to decreasing support for research in the 1990s, causing many scholars either to leave academia altogether or to emigrate in hope of better working conditions. The new conditions under which the whole country had to operate wreaked havoc on the system of education and research in the 1990s and 2000s. Among other things, the bureaucratic eagerness for restructuring, reorganizing, and introducing new standards has re-emerged in recent decades.

⁴⁶Less stability has been maintained in universities outside of Moscow and Saint Petersburg: many smaller institutes were reorganized into enlarged university bodies, creating a network of ten “federal universities” in the mid-2000s. These universities absorbed between two to seven more specialized educational entities each, which might be helpful for financing but has caused numerous administrative issues and disruptions in local schools. Kazan University, a historical center of Sinology, did not escape this fate.

While, in the 1990s Russian politics concentrated on the West rather than on Asia, which affected the financing of Chinese studies, Russia's geopolitical "turn to the East" in the 2000s brought China back into focus. The upsurge in trade and other forms of economic and industrial cooperation between Russia and China meant that Russia needed more experts on the Chinese language, business practices, and law. This demand together with universities' attempts to keep afloat in the market economy led to the emergence of many China-related departments and majors at universities that had not previously been active in this field or even in the humanities in general. However, these institutes of higher learning primarily provide practically oriented education, which bears little relation to Chinese studies. Thus, despite the growing number of university-level programs related to China, the main academic institutions mostly remain the same.

There was relatively little change in the topics researched in the late Soviet and post-Soviet periods. The trends of the preceding decades have continued both in the study of Chinese history and in the translation of primary sources. Scholars have been able to gain deeper insights into Chinese art and culture, literature, philosophy, politics, law, and language through the study of sources that received little or no attention before. Sergei Starostin (1953–2005) made great contributions to linguistic research, in particular to the study of ancient Chinese phonology. Artemii Karapet'ianĭs (1943–2021) also contributed to linguistics, as well as to the teaching of *wenyan* by publishing textbooks (together with his wife, Tan Aoshuang 譚傲霜, 1931–2017). Viacheslav Rybakov (b. 1954) analyzes and translates texts related to the Tang dynasty legal system and bureaucracy. Igor' Alimov (b. 1964) and Marina Kravtsova (b. 1953) have published essential research on Chinese literature. Between 1978 and 1993 a group consisting of Mikhail Kriukov (b. 1932), Vladimir Maliavin (b. 1950), Leonard Perelomov, Mikhail Sofronov (b. 1929), and Nikolai Cheboksarov (1907–80) prepared a six-volume study of the ethnic history of the Chinese people from their emergence to the beginning of the twentieth century; this collective opus is highly acclaimed to this day. Tangut, Manchu, and Dunhuang studies also continue, as does the exploration of nomadic cultures and interactions between populations in Russia-China border territories.

A noticeable addition to the Soviet scholarship after 1991 has been interest in the Guomindang and Taiwan. In the Soviet years, the Guomindang was chiefly scrutinized from the point of view of the economic and military policies of the 1920s through 1940s, with an emphasis on alleged misrule and injustices. The events after the Republican government's evacuation to Taiwan remained unstudied until the 1990s, and it was also only then that the ideologically predetermined evaluations of the Guomindang's rule in mainland China and its diplomacy started to be reconsidered by such researchers as Zoia Katkova (1932–2014), Nataliia Mamaeva (b. 1945), Aleksandr Pisarev (b. 1950), Andrei Karneev (b. 1964), and Vitalii Kozyrev (b. 1964), to name but a few. Another new subject of research is the existence of lesser political parties in the months shortly after the 1911 Revolution and in the years preceding the establishment of the PRC. Political and legal trends in the PRC have also been re-evaluated in publications by Leonid Gudoshnikov (1927–2014), Elena Staburova (b. 1948), Petr Ivanov (b. 1956), and others. Novel topics also include Russian émigré life in China and the functioning of the China Eastern Railway, which were largely dismissed in the Soviet period. The time that has elapsed since the Sino-Soviet split and the collapse of the USSR has given scholars a chance to reconsider many aspects of Russian–Chinese relations and to widen the scope of study through research of informal contacts and perceptions.

In the twenty-first century Russian Sinologists are reconsidering their field's own tradition, while at the same time preparing large synthetic works. Rethinking some Soviet-era academic feats is necessary, not only because of their ideologically motivated tinge, but also thanks to the colossal flow of data from China (from both archaeological sources and secondary literature) and from the global academic community, much of which was not always easily accessible to Soviet researchers. Such rethinking is nonetheless grounded in a reverential attitude toward the previous generations of scholars. Thus, the massive six-volume encyclopedia *China's Spiritual Culture* (2006–10) is at once a summation of three hundred years of Chinese studies in Russia and a serious re-evaluation of existing knowledge.⁴⁷ One of the editors of *China's Spiritual Culture*, Artëm Kobzev (b. 1953), described the circumstances leading up to the production of this work in an interview.⁴⁸ The encyclopedia is divided into six volumes on 1) philosophy; 2) mythology and religion; 3) literature, language, and script; 4) historical thought and legal and political culture; 5) science, technical and military thought, medicine, and education; and 6) art. The preparation of these volumes was the fruit of cooperation between every Sinological center in Russia, involving both the older generation of prominent scholars and younger researchers. A valuable addition to the encyclopedia is the website *Synologia.ru* maintained by the IOS and containing digital copies of many entries. The website has been expanded to include a considerable number of other China-related publications, mostly connected to conferences held at the China department of the IOS and to materials published by its members.⁴⁹

Several other large-scale projects were launched in the 1990s and 2000s. The Institute of Oriental Manuscripts joined the International Dunhuang Project, with the aim of re-creating the virtual space of the Dunhuang cave library;⁵⁰ the institute has been digitizing its collections since 2007.⁵¹ Another project began in the 1990s at the IFES to publish archival documents on Sino-Soviet relations and the Comintern's role in China.⁵² Comintern documents shed light on relations between the Soviet and Chinese governments, as well as between the Soviet and Chinese Communist parties and the Guomindang. They also demonstrate the priorities of Soviet leaders in dealing with revolutionary and liberation movements in other countries, adding to the understanding of the 1920s and the 1930s not only in China, but also in other parts of the world. Attempts to bring into academic circulation long-unpublished works prohibited or forgotten in the Soviet years have inspired the Archive of Russian Chinese

⁴⁷M.L. Titarenko et al., ed., *Dukhovnaia kul'tura Kitaia* [China's Spiritual Culture] (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura, 2006–2010).

⁴⁸Kobzev, *Dramy i farsy*, 56–62.

⁴⁹In addition to the already mentioned index of papers submitted for the "Society and State in China" conference, *Synologia.ru* provides the option to alphabetically search through many entries of *China's Spiritual Culture*, available at www.synologia.ru/art-alphabet.htm. The thematic search option provides access to some papers submitted to conference proceedings prepared by the IOS and some other publications: www.synologia.ru/art-general.htm. Large parts of the publications in *Russian Chinese Studies—Oral History* (see below) can be found at www.synologia.ru/art-general-149.htm.

⁵⁰On the Russian segment of the project, see http://idp.bl.uk/pages/collections_ru.a4d.

⁵¹Popova, "Ot Aziatskogo muzeia k Institutu vostochnykh rukopisei RAN," 44.

⁵²For more about these projects see T.M. Turchak, "Publikatsiia dokumental'nykh serii i krupnykh sbornikov dokumentov kak kharakternaia cherta izuchenii istorii Kitaia v Rossii 1990-kh–nachala 2000-kh gg." [Publication of Series of Documents and Large Collections of Documents as a Characteristic Trait in the Study of Chinese History in Russia in the 1990s through early 2000s], in *Osnovnye napravleniia i problemy rossiiskogo kitaevedeniia*, 22–49.

Studies project.⁵³ Its volumes started out as a place to reproduce rare materials and to publish for the first time works that have been stored in personal and state archives as manuscripts, although in recent years the series has been expanded and prints new works connected to Chinese studies in Russia. Another ongoing project with somewhat similar objectives is the Russian Chinese Studies–Oral History initiative.⁵⁴ It is devoted to holding in-depth interviews with the older generation of Russian Sinologists to keep the memories of teachers and colleagues alive. This is largely a response to the losses of the mid-twentieth century, which left a deep scar on Russian arts and sciences.

One more project that must be mentioned is the ten-volume *History of China from the Ancient Times to the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century*.⁵⁵ Like *China's Spiritual Culture*, it was prepared by a large group of authors, in 2013–17. Each volume focuses on a different period: 1) ancient history; 2) the Warring States, Qin, and Han (fifth century BC–third century AD); 3) the Three Kingdoms, Jin, the Southern and Northern dynasties, Sui, and Tang (220–907); 4) the Five Dynasties, Song, Liao, Jin, and Xi Xia (907–1279); 5) Yuan and Ming (1279–1644); 6) Qing (1644–1911); 7) Republican China (1912–49); 8) the PRC (1949–76); 9) reforms and modernization (1976–2009); and 10) Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, and overseas Chinese. Some of these volumes are important achievements in compiling and systematizing existing knowledge about certain periods of Chinese history, especially the third and fourth volumes covering centuries that have long been understudied in the USSR, Russia, and, to a certain extent, the West in general. The volumes on ancient China, the Qing, Republican China, and non-mainland China are an asset for Russian Sinology because they help update existing literature in Russian and clear away some of the politicized judgments of the past. However, the second and fifth volumes received a great deal of criticism.⁵⁶ In general, the ten volumes of *History of China* comprise a valuable compendium of Russian-language literature on China. However, the publishers had clashing objectives: they tried to produce a work presenting the most up-to-date findings of academic research, while at the same time taking away the more “academic” parts of the research

⁵³Since 2013 four volumes in the Archive series have been published: A.I. Kobzev, comp., and A.R. Viatkin, ed., *Arkhiv rossiiskoi kitaistiki* [Archive of Russian Chinese Studies] (Moscow: Nauka: Vostochnaia literatura, 2013–).

⁵⁴There are three volumes at the moment, the first of which already has a revised and updated second edition: V.Ĭs. Golovachĕv, ed., *Rossiiskoe kitaevedenie—ustnaia istoriia: sbornik intervĕu s vedushchimi rossiiskimi kitaevdami, XX–XXI vv.* [Russian Chinese Studies—Oral History: Collection of Interviews with Leading Russian Sinologists, Twentieth–Twenty-first Centuries] (Moscow: IOS RAS: Kraft+, 2014–).

⁵⁵S.L. Tikhvinskii, ed., *Istoriia Kitaia s drevneishikh vremĕn do nachala XXI veka* [History of China from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century] (Moscow: Nauka: Vostochnaia literatura, 2013–17).

⁵⁶The most important critiques of the second volume are outlined in Kobzev A.I., “‘Istoriia Kitaia’ kak zerkalo rossiiskoi kitaistiki” [“History of China” as the Mirror of Russian Chinese Studies], *Obshchestvo i gosudarstvo v Kitae* [Society and State in China] 44, no. 2 (2014), 462–517. Kobzev and his colleagues at the IOS leveled such sharp criticism of the second volume that it caused a heated discussion. For example, Sergei Filonov, a prominent scholar of Taoism based in Blagoveshchensk, agreed with some of the criticism but emphasized that the volumes of *History of China* are valuable assets nonetheless; see <https://jinshu.amursu.ru/index.php/144-mnenie-eksperta-s-v-dmitriev-luchshe-vsego-bylo-by-unichtozhit-ves-tirazhdannogo-toma-k-vykhodu-v-svet-vtorogo-toma-10-tomnoj-istoriya-kitaya-s-drevneishikh-vremjon-donachala-khkh-veka>. A review of the fifth volume can be found in A.I. Kobzev, “Planovaia khaltura (Pervye vpechatleniia o piatom tome ‘Istorii Kitaia’)” (Routine Hackwork [The First Impressions of the Fifth Volume of “The History of China”]), *Obshchestvo i gosudarstvo v Kitae* [Society and State in China], 47.1 (2017), 360–76.

apparatus (footnotes and bibliographic references) in order to make the books more commercially feasible.

In addition to book-length and multivolume studies, Russian scholars also regularly author articles, and it might be useful to list here some of the Sinological and Asian-studies-related journals published in Russia today. They include *Far Eastern Affairs* (*Problemy Dal'nego Vostoka*); *Asia and Africa Today* (*Aziia i Afrika segodnia*); *Written Monuments of the Orient* (*Pis'mennye pamiatniki Vostoka*); *Bulletin of Saint Petersburg University: Asian and African Studies* (*Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta: Vostokovedenie i afrikanistika*); *Bulletin of Moscow State University: Asian Studies* (*Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta: Vostokovedenie*); *Russia and the Pacific* (*Rossia i ATR*); *Orient* (*Vostok*); *Orientalistika*; *Manuscripta Orientalia*; *Journal of the Institute of Oriental Studies RAS* (*Vestnik Instituta vostokovedeniia RAN*); and *Bulletin NSU. History and Philology* (*Vestnik Novosibirskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta: Istorii, filologii*), among others.⁵⁷ More publications can be found through the Russian Science Index website.⁵⁸ Apart from journals, the proceedings from regularly held conferences are also published. In addition to the already mentioned annual Society and State in China conference held by the IOS, there are two biennial conferences held at Saint Petersburg State University: the International Congress on Historiography and Source Studies of Asia and Africa and Issues of Far Eastern Literature,⁵⁹ each of which produces volumes containing abstracts that show the thematic scope of these events.

Today Chinese studies in Russia face several difficulties. An issue that was inherited from the Soviet years and continues to be a recognizable trait of Chinese studies (and, largely, the humanities and social sciences) in Russia is the degree to which the state and politics are involved in theorizing about the past and present of other countries. Today ideology is not imposed on research directly from above, but rather it is projected in the degree to which scholars themselves look at China through their thinking about the fate of Russia. Some contemporary Russian Sinologists have discussed this issue. Aleksandr Lukin (b. 1961) demonstrated in 2011 that Sinology (as well as Oriental studies in general) in the Soviet Union had a double layer of political meaning. On the one hand, some works aimed to satisfy government-defined tasks, such as proving the necessity of revolution in China, criticizing first the Guomindang and Chiang Kai-shek's rule, then the Cultural Revolution's excesses, and later Deng Xiaoping's reforms as rightist-revisionist, and so on. On the other hand, many works used China as a euphemism for the Soviet Union, indirectly exposing the wrongdoings of a despotic government, the harm caused by the repressive state apparatus, and the disadvantages of restricting private property ownership and the market economy.⁶⁰ In his conclusion, Lukin called for less politicized scholarship, where studying another country would not serve primarily to define

⁵⁷<http://fareasternaffairs.ru/>; <https://asaf-today.ru/?sl=en>; <http://wmo.orientalstudies.ru/index.php?lang=en>; <https://aasjournal.spbu.ru/>; www.iaas.msu.ru/index.php/ru/scientific-activity/vestnik-mgu/vestnik-vostok; <http://riatr.ru/en/index.html>; <https://vostokoriens.ru/>; www.orientalistica.com/jour; <https://manuscripta-orientalia.kunstkamera.ru/>; <https://vestnik.ivran.ru/en/mainpage>; <https://vestnik.nsu.ru/historyphilology/>. Several more Asia-related journals published by the IOS can be found at <https://ivran.ru/periodicheskie-izdaniya>. All links accessed on September 5, 2021.

⁵⁸www.elibrary.ru/.

⁵⁹www.orienthist.spbu.ru/; www.orient.spbu.ru/index.php/ru/novosti/novosti-konferentsij/arkhiv-novostej/129-mezhdunarodnaya-konferentsiya-problemy-literatur-dalnego-vostoka.

⁶⁰A.V. Lukin, "Sovetskoe kitaevedenie: politika i ob"ektivnost'" [Soviet Sinology: Politics and Objectivity], *Obshchestvo i gosudarstvo v Kitae* [Society and State in China], 41.1 (2011), 261–63.

possible paths for Russia itself.⁶¹ But it is doubtful that any such “de-politicization” has occurred. In an article published in 2014, Alekseĭ Voskresenskii (b. 1960) pointed out that in post-Soviet Russia “less ideologically biased but still economy-centered analyses prevailed”⁶² and went on to state that Russian Sinology gained interdisciplinarity, which was needed to better respond to the changes in global affairs and in Russian–Chinese relations. Voskresenskii then provided a brief outline of Russian research on the history of Russian–Chinese contacts, studies on the cultural roots of China’s modernization, re-evaluations of recent Chinese history, analyses of how the Communist Party of China has modernized the state, and appraisals of the PRC’s legal system. It is not hard to notice that all these topics are related to ways of achieving modernization, which for Russia in the 1990s and the 2000s were, and still remain, of essence. From this perspective, China remains a proxy for scrutinizing possible paths for development in Russia, for example, by pondering the benefits of one- vs. multi-party rule and economic regulation vs. market mechanisms. In the same way, much of the Russian expertise on China’s recent past and current development is aimed at providing tools for politicians rather than maintaining academic distance and neutrality.

Many issues affecting Sinology in Russia also have an impact on the other arts and sciences. The state is slowly starting to regain control over academia, a tendency that is already visible and threatening to become even more pronounced in the future.⁶³ Self-censorship is being practiced at some institutions, especially ones where subjects that are thought to be sensitive for Russia, for China, or both are studied (e.g., relations between China and Russia, Xinjiang, Tibet, some aspects of the history of the Communist Party of China, and China’s and Russia’s involvement in each other’s wars and revolutions). Fortunately, such self-censorship in Russia is still a minor affair: most researchers examine problematic spheres of modern and contemporary Chinese developments with no regard for what might be frowned upon politically. Another general problem affecting Russian Sinology is that the pressure put on producing a certain number of publications and achieving other quantitative benchmarks often detracts from the quality of the research being conducted, to put it mildly. Many other issues facing Chinese studies in Russia today have been pointed out by both Russian scholars and one of the most prominent Slavists in China, Yan Guodong 阎国栋 (b. 1965).⁶⁴

⁶¹Lukin, “Sovetskoe kitaevedenie,” 274.

⁶²Voskresenskii, “Uneven Development vs. Searching for Integrity,” 134.

⁶³One indicator of such a trend is the recent amendment to the federal law “On Perpetuating the Victory of the Soviet People in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945,” where the amended Clause 6.1 prohibits “publicly equating the Soviet leadership’s goals, decisions, and actions with those of Nazi Germany” as well as “denying the leading role of the Soviet people in defeating Nazi Germany” (see <http://ips.pravo.gov.ru:8080/default.aspx?pn=0001202107010008>). The official thinking appears to be that in history, as in all other social studies and humanities, “patriotism” should be given priority over objectivity.

⁶⁴A long newspaper article was written in 2014 by one expert on contemporary China in Moscow, Aleksandr Gabuev (b. 1985), enumerating these problems (see www.kommersant.ru/doc/2593673). The article concentrated mostly on China watching rather than Sinology, but the contradictions and difficulties outlined there can certainly be extrapolated to cover traditional scholarly endeavors as well. Yan Guodong reached similar conclusions about a crisis in Russian Sinology; see Yan Guodong 阎国栋, “Eluosi hanxue de weiji” 俄罗斯汉学的危机, *Waiguo shehui kexue* 6 (2015), 68–73. Academician Vladimir Miasnikov (b. 1931) responded to both these articles by calling the authors “whiners”; see V.S. Miasnikov, “Peterburgskaia shkola kitaevedeniia: Doklad na konferentsii Evropeiskoi assotsiatsii kitaevodov, Sankt-Peterburgskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 24 avgusta 2016 g.” [Saint Petersburg School of Sinology: Paper Presented at the Conference of the European Association for Chinese Studies, Saint Petersburg State University, August 24, 2016], *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia* [Modern and Contemporary History] 2 (2017), 124. A

Yet the fact that Chinese studies have survived the hardships of the twentieth century and Russian scholars are ever more actively engaged in research and in international networking shows that today's problems do not mean an end to the Russian traditions of studying China.

Conclusion

Chinese studies in prerevolutionary Russia laid a strong foundation for the later development of scholarship in the Soviet Union: the dictionaries, textbooks, collections of primary sources, and the many translations and synthetic studies from this period led to the establishment of a Sinological tradition by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The relatively early institutionalization of research also helped create personal networks and pass knowledge between generations. The changes brought to Russia by socialist rule meant not only the reorganization of research centers and, at times, harsh political persecution, but also the emergence of an approved theoretical framework of scholarship, the Marxist-Leninist dogma, which prevented independent research on important aspects of Chinese history. Soviet politics and diplomatic affairs also affected Sinology's position and the degree of state support and attention to specific themes. The relative isolation of Soviet scholars from their peers in "the capitalist world" stimulated the creation of a large body of translations and studies in the Russian language, almost self-sufficient in its thematic scope but rarely involved in discussions with China scholars abroad. Despite such difficulties and obstacles, however, Soviet and Russian Sinology did not grind to a halt. Soviet Sinologists regularly published literature on Chinese history and society, which, despite ideological limitations, reflected the state of the field and provided a stable foundation for further research. Perhaps these researchers' most outstanding contributions came in the form of annotated translations of important pre-modern sources, as well as linguistic and historical contextualizations of these sources (including the *Shi Ji*, *Shijing*, etc.). Soviet researchers devoted particular attention to people's movements, folk art and culture, the political thought of pre-imperial and imperial China, and the ethnic history of the Chinese people and their neighbors. Even through the prism of Marxist-Leninist terminology, Soviet scholarship provided a good foundation for studying China's social history. Certain fields of research, such as Dunhuang, Tangut, and Manchu studies and recent research on border-area pidgins and cross-border migration, developed distinctively in the USSR and Russia.

Frequent institutional shifts and state interference in research are partly responsible for Soviet scholars' attention to the "national" tradition and the close connections between researchers, especially across generations. The relative stability of late socialism and the post-Soviet period (with the exception of the financial perturbations of the 1990s) allowed for the establishment of regular connections between experts, annual conferences, institutional journals, and so forth. The generational gap created by the brain drain after the USSR collapsed is slowly being filled by returning or new scholars, and much broader access to international academic circles has resulted in new contacts between Russian and foreign researchers. Today's researchers in Russia need to bear the

more constructive response was given by Sergeĭ Filonov, who wrote that although problems do exist, there are grounds for hope nonetheless; see S.V. Filonov, "Sovremennoe sostoĭanie rossiiskogo kitaevedeniĭa: vzglĭad iz Kitaĭa [po materialam stat'ĭ professora Īan' Goduna]" [Current State of Russian Sinology: The View from China (In Relation to Professor Yan Guodong's Paper)], *Sotsial'nye i gumanitarnye nauki na Dal'nem Vostoke* [Social Sciences and Humanities in the Far East], 14.4 (2017), 135–37.

existing problems in mind to maintain a high level of academic output and to avoid self-isolation, but these problems are not worse than those Soviet Sinologists had to overcome. Today, Russian Sinologists are both continuing the work of their predecessors and covering new ground. Much Russian scholarship is still published only in the Russian language, largely out of convention, economic considerations, and preference for addressing a national audience. However, both greater interest in foreign research and administrative requirements (such as grant and employment conditions) have driven a growing number of Russian Sinologists to produce papers in English and other European languages. The generational changes also encourage closer connections with scholars outside of Russia, as membership in international associations for Chinese and Asian studies is becoming more accessible for Russian researchers, and participation in international conferences and various exchanges with institutions abroad have turned into a regular phenomenon (the lack of travel opportunities due to Covid-19 pandemic has had a negative influence on this trend, but one hopes its impact will not be long-lasting). This means that attention to foreign audiences is growing, and Russian scholars at times opt to publish their articles and sometimes monographs in English. Yet a considerable local audience exists which requires publications in Russian, so English, Chinese, or other foreign languages will hardly become dominant for Russian scholarship in the foreseeable future.

Factors external to Sinology in Russia complicated and continue to complicate research, although at times they can create favorable conditions or, at least, not obstruct it. Partial subordination to politics, on the one hand, shaped a segment of what must be called “opportunistic” scholarship, to use Popova’s word. On the other hand, paradoxically, it motivated a stronger sense of tradition and academic values in Soviet and Russian researchers.

Conflicting Interests

The author declares none.