

Sinographic Studies in Russia: Histories, Texts, and Perspectives

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For over two centuries, Russian scholarly institutions, from the Russian Spiritual Mission in Beijing to the Asiatic Museum in St. Petersburg (now the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, RAS) and research centers across Moscow and Vladivostok, have cultivated a rich tradition of East Asian philological research. Operating at the geographical and intellectual crossroads of Eurasia, Russian scholars have long approached Literary Sinitic and Sinographic script cultures as a dynamic regional medium of diplomacy, religion, historical memory, and statecraft across East and Central Asia.

The initiative for this special issue originated from a suggestion by Professor Shin Jeongsoo, a member of our Editorial Board. Russian Korean studies and Sinographic scholarship possess a deep historical tradition and an exceptionally high level of academic rigor yet remain under-recognized within the broader international academic community. By bringing together recent research from Russian scholars in English, this issue aims to bridge that gap and foster deeper engagement between Russian orientology and global Sinographic studies.

The historical shift from shared Sinitic literacy to modern national languages transformed how classical texts are archived, read, and interpreted. Within this global historiographical landscape, Russian academic contributions offer distinctive strengths in codicology, philological translation, critical cartography, and multi-lingual archival collation. This special issue of the *Journal of Sinographic Philologies and Legacies* presents seven contributions that showcase the depth of current Russian scholarship on Sinographic texts, manuscript collections, historiography, and diplomatic legacies.

The issue opens with three studies that explore the material, cartographic, and historiographical intersections between late Joseon Korea and Russian academia. Iuliia V. Boltach initiates this exploration (“The First Korean Books in *Hanmun* in Russia”) through a codicological and archival investigation into the 19th-century Korean block-print collection, traditionally designated as the Brosset Collection, kept at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, RAS. Analyzing marginalia and physical evidence, Boltach proves that these early bilingual Sino-Korean textbooks and *Hanmun* primers were originally acquired by Baron Paul Schilling and Nikita Bichurin (Archimandrite Hyacinth) of the Ninth Russian Spiritual Mission in Beijing, representing the earliest Korean Sinitic imprints to reach Russia.

Shifting from physical books to spatial intelligence, Sergey Vradiy (“Mapping Russia with Korean Eyes: The *Aguk Yeojido* Revisited”) analyzes the late 19th-century Joseon manuscript album *Aguk Yeojido* 俄國輿地圖 (Map of Russia) preserved in the

Jangseogak Library. Applying critical cartography and cross-referencing newly recovered archives from Japan and Taiwan, Vradiy dates the map to 1883–1886 and attributes its compilation to Kim Gwanghun and Sin Seonuk, demonstrating how this cartographic-textual hybrid served as a covert intelligence tool documenting Russian border fortifications and early Korean settlements in the Primorskii Region.

Completing this first thematic cluster, Daria Grishina and Varvara Isaeva (“The Most Influential Woman at the Chosŏn Court: Queen Min and her Evaluations in Russian-language Academia”) turn a critical lens onto Russian academic evaluations of Queen Min (1851–1895). By contrasting Russian historical scholarship with primary sources, including the *Kojong sillok*, contemporary diplomatic memoirs, and personal diaries, the authors trace how Russian scholars constructed Queen Min as an all-powerful political mastermind, highlighting the methodological limitations of this enduring historiographical concept.

Moving back in time to early and medieval Korean Sinographic culture, the next group of contributions examines wartime prosopography, pilgrim travelogues, and historical wonder tales. Opening this section, Ksenia Khazizova (“Mongolian Military Commanders Leading Campaigns against Koryŏ in 1218–1260: A Reconstruction of Biographies Based on Historical Sources”) undertakes a comprehensive biographical reconstruction of ten Mongol military leaders who directed campaigns against Koryŏ. Cross-referencing Korean and Sinitic chronicles (*Koryŏsa*, *Koryŏsa chŏryo*, *Yuan shi*) with Mongolian and Persian records, Khazizova reveals the heterogeneous ethnic composition of the Mongol command structure, comprising Genghisids, Jurchens, Jalayirs, and Barghuts, filling a major biographical lacuna in medieval East Asian military history.

Turning from military encounters to spiritual and literary journeys, Arina Mrachkovskaia (“Literary Style and Composition of *Memoirs of a Pilgrimage to the Five Indian Kingdoms*: Koreaness of a Buddhist Travelogue”) conducts a comparative stylistic and lexical analysis of the 8th-century Silla monk Hyech’o’s 慧超 *Wang Ō Ch’ŏnch’ukkuk Chŏn* 往五天竺國傳 alongside Xuanzang’s *Da Tang Xiyu ji*. Mrachkovskaia highlights Hyech’o’s emotional candor, distinct Sinitic vocabulary, and five-character Tang-style poetry, illuminating the unique voice of early Korean pilgrim literature written in Sinitic.

Concluding this medieval Korean cluster with a return to classical historiography, Alexander V. Solovyov (“Extraordinary, Power, Chaos, and Spirits: Taxonomy of Mysteries in *Samguk sagi* 三國史記”) re-evaluates Kim Pusik’s 12th-century chronicle by proposing a systematic taxonomy of over 180 “wonder tales.” Rejecting straightforward positivist dismissals of supernatural entries, Solovyov demonstrates how accounts of miracles, omens, and spirits served vital structural, moral, and political functions within Confucian statecraft and historical pedagogy.

Concluding the issue as a standalone contribution, Sergey V. Dmitriev (“‘Jing of Kindness’: *Xiao jing* 孝經 (Canon of [Descendants] Piety) in Tangut Culture”) broadens our Sinographic horizons to medieval Tangut (Western Xia) culture through an examination of the manuscript translation of the *Xiao jing* 孝經 discovered at

Khara-Khoto and preserved at the IOM RAS. Dmitriev reveals that the Tangut text uniquely preserves Northern Song reformer Lü Huiqing's lost commentary, showing how Tangut intellectuals selectively adapted Sinitic ethics into their own legal and educational framework while reframing filial piety into a broader universal ethos of "kindness."

Taken together, these seven studies illustrate that Sinographic texts and Literary Sinitic materials were never static or monochromatic. Whether recorded in 8th-century Buddhist travelogues, analyzed in medieval chronicles, collected by 19th-century Russian sinologists, drawn on late Joseon intelligence maps, re-evaluated in modern court historiography, or adapted into Tangut legal thought, Sinitic written culture served as a shared medium across geographical and cultural frontiers. We hope this special issue offers global readers fresh insights into the enduring legacy of Sinographic studies through the lens of Russian scholarship.