

SOVIET STUDIES IN JAPANESE HISTORY

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Japan is the Eastern neighbour of our country. The interest in Japanese history has grown more and more in the course of the development of relations between the two countries.

The first book about Japan appeared in St. Petersburg in 1734. It was *The Description of Japan* by Caron Francois. *A Japanese-Russian Dictionary*, by I. Goshkevich, appeared in Petersburg in 1857 and, according to original, it was compiled "with the help of a Japanese, Tachibana-no Kosai". Other books to be published were the following: I. Reihel, *A Short History of The Japanese State; Gathered from Reliable Sources* (1783); N. Gorlov, *A History of Japan* (1835); V. Kostilev, *An Outline of Japanese History* (1888); A. Nikolaev, *Outlines of the History of Japanese People* (1905). After the *Meiji Ishin* (Meiji Restoration), a series of articles about *Meiji Ishin* and the ensuing reforms appeared in all kind of journals. I. Mechnikov wrote two articles under the title "The Era of Enlightenment in Japan" (Delo, 1876, No. 10, 1877, No. 2). In 1905, both articles were compeled and published in book form. In 1902 in Petersburg a translation, from French, of a book by A. Zibolt *The Era of Great Reforms in Japan* was also published.

In the time of Russo-Japanese War the interest in Japan became even stronger and it gave birth to a number of articles about various aspects of life in Japan. One may see the enumeration of these publications in *Bibliography of Japan: Literature Issued in Russia from 1734 to 1917* (1965).

In the first half of the 20th century, studies in Japanese history

were mainly carried out in Petersburg and Leningrad. Soviet Japanese studies developed on the basis of Russian Japanology, preserving and succeeding its best traditions.

In 1950 the center of Oriental studies in the U.S.S.R. was transferred to Moscow where the Academic Institute of Oriental Studies was organized. Specialists in all branches of Japanese studies—history, literature, linguistics, economics—were gathered there in the Department of Japan.

The fifties and sixties were the most fruitful period in the studies of Japanese history. At that time, several interesting books covering a large historical period appeared. The most outstanding work of this period was *Outlines of the Modern History of Japan* (1958), written on the basis of numerous documents and works by Japanese and Western scholars. Its editor-in-chief was an outstanding Soviet scholar, A. Galperin. The book presented a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the processes that took place in historical and social life of Japan from the 16th century to World War . In spite of the fact that thirty years have passed since its publication, this work has not lost its scientific value.

This collective monography became the stimulus for the appearance of several books, written by different scholars. In 1960, G. Podpalova published *Peasant's Petitionary Movement in Japan, Late 1600's to Early 1700's*. The content of the book is much wider than the title. It is a study on socio-economic history, and the system of rural relations and living conditions of the peasantry. One third of the book consists of translations of different documents concerning the activities of the bakufu and the petitionary movement.

In 1961, the first Soviet book about Japanese feudal cities, written by A. Iskenderov, was published. 1965 saw the publication of a book by A. Galperin *Outlines of the Socio-political History of Japan in Late Feudalism*, Towards the end of his life, Galperin tried hard to study such little known problems as the development of feudalism and the

genesis of capitalism in Japan. But his sudden death in 1960 did not allow him to realize his numerous plans. The publication of his last book was prepared by his pupils. But that was only a part of a large-scale monography Galperin had been going to write. He had gathered an enormous quantity of sources on the basis of which he planned to show how the changes in the Japanese economy, beginning from the 15th century, influenced rural relations and agriculture.

The end of the sixties was a turning point, in which studies began to change from historical matters to contemporary ones. The reason, of course, was the success reached by Japan in its post-war economic development. The "Japan phenomenon", in other words, Japan as the only Asian country to achieve such remarkable progress in science and technology, has puzzled scholars all over the world, Soviet scholars included. In 1978 *The History of Japan, 1945-1975* was published. The authors of the book dealt not only with historical matters but also with economical subjects as well.

The activities of political parties in Japan have been analyzed in two books: I. Latyshev *The Ruling Liberal-Democratic Party of Japan and its Policy* (1967) and I. Derzavin *Soka-Gakkai—Komeito* (1972). A book by K. Sarkisov *Japan and the Organization of the United Nations* (1975) was concerned with the international activities of Japan.

But other themes also attracted the attention of Soviet scholars. 1974 saw the publication of a book by N. Joffan *Ancient Japanese Culture*, devoted to the topic of the sources of Japanese culture, especially of ancient and medieval art. One may see the list of works on Japan, published between 1917-73 in *Bibliography of Japan. Literature issued in Russian in the U.S.S.R., 1917-1958* (1960) and *Bibliography of Japan: Literature Issued in Russian in the U.S.S.R., 1959-1973* (1984). The books on Japan written in the eighties were quite diverse. In 1984, N. Leschenko published a book *Meiji Ishin in the Works of Japanese Marxist Scholars*. In the epilogue, we can find the historiography of the

Meiji Restoration from the view points of the: Japanese, Soviet, American and English. There are, naturally, many different points of view regarding this turning point of Japanese history.

The events of 1867-68 still remain one of the most disputed topics in Japanese history, although all scholars consider this period to be the starting point in the development of modern Japan. The various discussions concern: the correlation of internal and external factors in the process of the development of capitalism in Japan; the inner potentialities of Japanese society; the level of the economic development of the country in the late Tokugawa period, etc. In order to give answers to these questions, research on socio-economic history must be combined with research in historical demography, historical psychology and sociology, and studies on the evolution of the family, the development of literacy, the history of enterprises.

Two works of by M. Sutyagina are devoted to the last of the above topics: *Mitsubishi* (1973) and *The Group Sumitomo* (1979), the main concern of the author being the post-war development of the groups. The history, however, of one of the oldest merchant dynasties—Mitsui—has not yet been described in Russian at all. So, we may say that economic history still remains a “blank space” in the Soviet studies on Japan.

Knowledge of culture, national psychology, and traditions of a country is quite essential for a deeper understanding of its history. Thus, the book by L. Grishelyova *The Formation of Japanese National Culture* (1986) is devoted to the socio-political aspects of the process of the formation of Japanese culture. The author gives a wide panorama of cultural life of Japan. The book by N. Chegodar and L. Grishelyova should be also mentioned among the studies of Japanese culture, *Post-War Japanese Culture* (1981).

The mutual influence and intercourse of Buddhism and Shinto not only on the official level, but also at level of folk beliefs, are analyzed in book by A. Mescheryakov *Ancient Japan: Buddhism and Shinto—the Problem*

of *Syncretism*(1987), and *The Carpet of History. Is Woven by the People*.

Biographical studies of different historical personalities contribute to a better understanding of the past, while at the same time, through an analysis of the conditions of where a man lived and the ideas he held, we may better understand the person himself. In 1984, A. Iskenderov published a political biography of Toyotomi Hideyoshi. A kind of historical fiction, the book: gives a broad picture of Japanese life in the second half of the 16th century; draws political portraits of outstanding personages of that time; describes the mode of life and customs of the Japanese. At present, A. Iskenderov is the editor-in-chief of the journal *The Problems of History*.

1987 saw the publication of a book by S. Paskov *Japan in the Early Middle Ages, 600-1100*. The problems of socio-economic history, politics, ideology and intellectual development are viewed on the basis of official sources and research by Japanese scholars. Paskov gave lectures on Japanese studies at the Oriental Faculty of Vladivostok University but, unfortunately, this talented young scholar died in 1986.

Besides being studied in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Science of the U.S.S.R., Japanese history is also studied in the Institute of the Countries of Asia and Africa in Moscow University. Two professors of this institute, G. Navlitskaya and I. Syritsin, have written a textbook . *History of Japan*(1988), which is the first textbook in the U.S.S.R. where Japanese history is described from ancient to modern times. Usually the chapters on Japan were included in different textbooks, and all were of a general character.

In the time of perestroika, Japanese studies as a part of historical studies, are in the process of renovation. The situation in historical studies on the whole may be characterized by the words "the historians are in the course of discussions". New possibilities opened by perestroika, i.e. possibilities for free discussions, for expressing different points of view, gave birth to a stream of articles on the topic of social and economical structures, published in the journal *Narodi Asii i Afriki*. Perestroika in Orien-

tal studies revived the old discussion about the Asiatic mode of production. But nowadays the discussion has a quite new level, dealing with the theory of social and economical structures. This theory mustn't be identified with its dogmatic usage. Marx was also against this approach, according to which his theory of primary accumulation of capital, constructed on the basis of European material, was regarded as a norm equally binding all countries.

One of the main objects of the present discussion is: to overcome Eurocentrism while studying socio-economical and political processes in Oriental countries; to resist "pulling up" the history of the East to the history of the West; and from regarding all the discrepancies in historical processes as "lagging behind" in the East.

World history demonstrates diversified ways of transition from one structure to another. The unique historical way of every country and its entrance into the world system is determined by historical, geographical, demographical and other nation factors. The new themes of studies in the Department of Japan in the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies reflect perestroika in humanities. At present, in the Sector of History, Department of Japan, new themes to be studied are the following: medieval history of Japan, history of Japanese culture, national psychology, the imperial institution of Japan, mythology, the place of Japan in world history, socio-economical history of Japan from the 17th to 18th centuries, the formation of a new society in Japan.

The scholars of the Sector prepared a joint publication under the title "Discussive Problems of Japanese History" where they tried to give the analysis of some problems of Japanese history from the point of view of the uniqueness of world historical processes. It can be said that these studies are only the first steps in writing the full history of Japan—a work that is quite urgently needed already.

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