

Representations of Koreans in Russia in the Russian Press in the Second Half of the Nineteenth–Early Twentieth Centuries¹

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Abstract

The Korean diaspora has lived in the Russian Far East since the nineteenth century. The history of the Korean diaspora's existence in the region was politicized for several reasons. Due to Chosŏn's pursuit of an isolationist policy until the mid-nineteenth century, to the Russian population Koreans were almost unknown. Small groups of Koreans were located in the south of the Far East of Russia in the first half of the nineteenth century, but they rarely contacted the administration. The Russian population met with Koreans during the forced mass migration from the Korean peninsula in the second half of the nineteenth century. The attitude in Russia toward Koreans often changed and was based on the impressions and conclusions of those who met them or gathered information about them and subsequently published their notes in print. The description of these representations is limited to 1911—the beginning of the Amur expedition (1911–1912)—which changed not only the representation of the Koreans in the Russian Far East but also many other aspects of the region. The aim of this article is to consider and analyze representations of Koreans in Russian society before 1911. Elements of

the sources and narratives for this piece are introduced to science and academia for the first time.

Keywords: history, Far East, Russian Empire, ethnography, Koreans, society

Many works on the topic of Koreans in tsarist Russia have been written. The problems of the Korean diaspora in Russia have been considered by many historians—Kim G.N. (Ким Герман Николаевич), Pak B.D. (Пак Борис Дмитриевич), Pak M.N. (Пак Михаил Николаевич), Petrov A.I. (Петров Александр Иванович), Bugai N.F. (Бугай Николай Федорович), and many others, all of whom made an important contribution to the study. However, at the same time, a number of aspects of the topic remained poorly understood, in particular attitudes and opinions on the inhabitants of the “nation of morning calm” in the Russian Empire and how they were formed. Few people in Russian society knew about Koreans because in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Koreans mainly lived in the Far East; a region that was sparsely populated. Therefore, records of travelers, officials, and journalists were the main source of knowledge about Koreans and helped form Russian public opinion about people from the Korean peninsula.

Moreover, the attitude and opinion of society toward Koreans and Korea, in the Russian Empire, and in the Russian Far East were very different due to the problem of personal contacts and perceptions of Russian representatives, the relations between certain population groups and individuals to Koreans, the goals of their communication and other matters. This article primarily deals with attitudes toward Koreans in Russian society as a whole, not just in the Russian Far East region.²

Koreans lived in the south of the modern Far East until the arrival of Russian explorers in these lands. Thus, they are the indigenous population of modern Primorsky Krai of the Russian Federation, but in the first half of the nineteenth century, there were relatively few Koreans in the south of the Far East. In the second half of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, due to the difficult economic situation on the Korean peninsula and the expansion of Japan, many people from Korea began to move to the Russian Far East. Some officials impeded this migration process, considering Koreans as part of the “yellow threat” together with the Chinese, but many dignitaries, on the contrary, encouraged such resettlement to counter the growth of the Chinese population in the region and with the aim of developing agriculture.

Of course, information about Koreans was already known in the Russian Empire in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The first representative of

Russia wrote about the inhabitants of the Korean peninsula was Nikita Bichurin, father of Iakinf. He was the head of the Orthodox Christianity Mission in Beijing and the first Russian Sinologist who actively studied East Asia.³ Bichurin did not travel to Korea, but made historical records of the population of the Korean peninsula.⁴ However, in addition to this, Father Iakinf published extensively about Central Asia and China, and his work aroused great interest among Russian society. Nevertheless, his relatively rare records about Korea remained almost unnoticed at that time.

As it is known, the first Russian contact with Korea occurred in 1854 during the expedition of Admiral Putyatin. The Russian writer and critic Ivan Aleksandrovich Goncharov who participated in this expedition and went on to be famous, gave the first description of the Koreans, which was brief and subjective, but relatively detailed. He wrote:

both simple and uneasy people—everyone was dressed in white paper or grassy dressing gowns ... in addition, everyone wore something like bloomers made of the same materials ... Tall, healthy people, athletes with rude dark-red faces and hands: without any effeminacy in manners, without sophistication and insinuatingness, like the Japanese, without timidity, like lyceans⁵ ... Glorious soldiers would come out of them, and they are infected with Chinese scholarship and write poetry.⁶

But, despite the fact that the Koreans began contact with Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century, for contemporary Russian society they remained little known. At that time, Russian scholarship focused on the study of Europe. Therefore, the data of Bichurin and Goncharov about the Korean peninsula and its inhabitants remained interesting only to a narrow circle of readers in the Russian Empire. In the meantime, the need for information about Russia's far eastern neighbors and the peoples living in the territory of the present Primorsky Krai increased over time. This was due to developing state interests in the East and difficult relations with European powers, which were rapidly gaining strength and influence in Asia.

However, while China and Japan in Russia were comparatively better known due to the aforementioned Bichurin, Korea remained a "terra incognita" for Russian society. Koreans already lived on the territory of the Russian Empire and this stimulated the receipt of information about Eastern foreigners, but at the same time the methods of collecting and evaluating data were unreliable and largely subjective. In addition, the attitude of the Russian official authorities toward the Korean presence in the Amur region has often changed. It depended on the position of governors and other senior officials of the region and, naturally, this affected the inconsistency of data on Koreans in Russia in general.

Specialists who traveled to the far outskirts of the empire had a significant role in the formation of public opinion; their notes were read with great interest. The first in this field were travelers and scientists who dealt with issues of geography, ethnography, and the study of flora and fauna in the Far East in the second half of the nineteenth century. This region had only recently become part of the Russian Empire (after the 1858 Treaty of Aigun between Russia and Qing China). At that time China was fragile and had been forced by the expanding Empire to cede the area to Moscow, so it aroused little interest among the uninformed population of the Russian Empire, but attracted the attention of educated people due to its uncharted and mysterious nature. Any publications about new territories were immediately accepted by the reading public and aroused genuine interest. Therefore, travelers and scientists had a responsibility to represent life in the region and its inhabitants, but not all authors understood the importance of this situation. We will consider this later in the article. The main audience interested in the works of scientists and travelers was the educated part of Russian society, which absorbed knowledge from the essays and reports published by them, discussed them, and altered their perceptions about the regions. Of course, attention was drawn to the records of the peoples of those regions, their traditions and way of life. All this was very different from the usual ways of life for Russian people and therefore sparked keen interest.

Researchers of the Ussuri region in 1860–1870 supplied a lot of information about the Korean people who had already settled in this territory in relatively large numbers. The first such information was provided by N. Przhevalsky in an essay.⁷ Przhevalsky called the resettlement of Koreans “a remarkable phenomenon occurring at that time in the east of Asia.” Przhevalsky visited Korea itself, communicated with the Korean population in the Russian Empire, and indicated their reason for their resettlement in the Ussuri Territory as the “rude despotism [of the Korean state – approx. Authors], shackled all the best forces of the people.”⁸

N. Przhevalsky, having knowledge of ethnographic studies, as much as possible and accurately described the life of Koreans. The scientist immediately appreciated the significance of the resettlement of Koreans for the Ussuri region, describing in detail the features of their agriculture and culture. It was also possible to draw information about the peculiarities of names among Koreans in his work. Of course, Przhevalsky was not a linguist, so his description of the pronunciation of Korean names contains inaccuracies, but his work in this direction was nevertheless of great importance. He did not limit himself to observing Koreans in Russian lands, having also visited Korean territory himself. Przhevalsky noted that, despite the high fertility of the soil in the Ussuri region, the Russian peasants sowing crops did not obtain proper yields due to their ignorance of natural

conditions.⁹ Przhevalsky also paid great attention to the specifics of the Korean economy, and the nation's substantial harvests. But his ideas on improving the economic situation in the region were rejected by the regional authorities.¹⁰

After reading N. Przhevalsky's essay, the reader could form a relatively unbiased view of the life, main occupations, appearance, character, habits, beliefs, and relationships of Koreans in the South Ussuri region. His consideration of the Korean community in the Russian Far East is in the nature of scientific observations, most likely influenced by the education he received at the General Staff Academy. Possessing the thinking of a scientist and researcher, N. Przhevalsky tried not to give a personal assessment of the observations of the life of Koreans, but sought to convey all the details of what he saw as accurately as possible. Apparently, he understood that his material could serve as a basis for further study of the Korean people and its use locally by the Russian administration. Indeed, in subsequent years, his notes were actively quoted by various Russian figures as basic information about Koreans in the Ussuri region, and were of interest to everyone who was sent from Europe or western Russia for military or civilian service in these lands. It should be noted that the main descriptions of N. Przhevalsky are based on the results of not only personal observation, but also collection of information from other people, as well as the analysis of the data collected.

Another specialist who researched this issue, N. Alyabyev, was an official in the region and spent about eight years observing the life of the Amur region.¹¹ His activity took place almost in the same period as the expedition of N. Przhevalsky. In his free time, Alyabyev traveled around the region and compiled his notes, which, unlike the materials of N. Przhevalsky, were more of an educational and popular scientific character. In addition, he looked at the situation from the other side—as an official of the region, who was supposed to take into account the interests of the state and the population, and to strive to improve the position of the empire in the region. Apparently, this affected his perception of the situation, which was somewhat different from the position of N. Przhevalsky. After his arrival back in the western part of Russia, Alyabyev published his observations and reasoning. They were intended for a broad audience interested in the life of the Ussuri region, but the information about Koreans given by the author largely repeats the observations of N. Przhevalsky.¹² Apparently, studies by this scientist had a great influence on Alyabyev's work.

However, at the same time, Alyabyev expressed in his essays a personal opinion about the fate of Koreans in these lands. In particular, he tried to think about strengthening the ties between Koreans and Russia. For example, having complained about the safety of migrants who settled near the border,¹³ he saw the future of these people was in assimilation with the Russians:

... settled separately they will not be merged with the Russian population as soon as possible, what is very important and easy to do. If instead of their current place of residence, they were allocated places in the Khanka district, in the vicinity of the villages of Suifun and Nikolskaya, then it would only benefit the Koreans and the local administration. Koreans would feel completely well-off by the Russian government, the administration would populate the part of the Ussuri Territory where the development of agriculture is a vital issue, and where the Korean population would be much more likely to lose their nationality among the Russian people, and with prudent measures would merge with Russians.¹⁴

Such a view seems unusual for the Russian Empire of the nineteenth century; it will be considered in more detail later in this article. However, as noted earlier, Alyabyev drew conclusions from his position as an official of the regional administration. Increased production could make the region more economically developed, and the integration of Koreans and Russians could contribute to a more successful combatting of attacks by bandits, support the development of exchange between the two groups of the population and their experience in agriculture, farming, and so on. Alyabyev notes in his work the economic backwardness of the region and the high prices of goods there.¹⁵

At the same time, Alyabyev sets forth quite unusual thoughts for that time. In the nineteenth century, nationalism dominated the Russian Empire, the mixture of Russians with other peoples, who were considered to be lower in development or were non-European, was not welcome. This was observed in other areas of the empire, in particular, producing a certain pressure on speakers of the Ukrainian language. Moreover, this was not some special feature of the Russian Empire; similar and sometimes more aggressive trends were observed in most European countries (for example, the attitude of the English toward the Irish or that of the Spanish toward the Basque people). However, as we see from the text, N. Alyabyev proceeded from state considerations of securing the region to the Russian Empire and of embedding greater benefit to his country. Apparently, such reasoning led to the fact that his work on this issue remained little known.

In 1875, in St. Petersburg, a large article about the Koreans of the village of the Blagoslovennoe was published by the famous Siberian historian, writer, public figure, and publicist V. I. Vagin. The inhabitants of this village consisted of immigrants who had fled from hunger in Korea from 1869 to 1870 and been voluntarily resettled, and completely at public expense in the Amur region on one of the tributaries of the Amur. In subsequent years, the village of Blagoslovennoe was famous for its prosperity, as these Koreans immediately received 100 tithe of land ($\approx$ 267 acres) allotments and other benefits, as all immigrants to Russia received following the "Provisional Rules" of 1861.¹⁶ The author took the following

words of Empress Catherine II as an epigraph for his work: "We need a population, not a devastation: make people swarming in our vast deserts."¹⁷ According to A. I. Petrov, Vagin thus expressed his attitude toward Korean immigration to Russia. Apparently, in contrast to this point of the Siberian publicist, Governor-General of the Amur region P. F. Unterberger said: "I prefer the desert, but Russian, than cultivated land, but Korean."¹⁸

A little later, in 1882, Ivan Nadarov, a retired infantry general who was then an officer of the General Staff, carried out a reconnaissance of the military road along the Chinese border and at the same time conducted ethnographic, geographical, and linguistic studies. In his work, released in 1886, he cited a number of statistics on the Korean population, and a brief history of Koreans in the region. Despite the fact that this work was published in Vladivostok, it became widely read in the western part of the country. I. Nadarov suggested that Koreans, as Russian subjects, were more capable of assimilating into European civilization than the Chinese and Manchu.¹⁹ Nadarov did not express his opinion about the Koreans (in contrast to his considerations of the Chinese)—apparently, it was said that he did not have much information about this part of the local population and did not want to write biased work without reason. Therefore, I. Nadarov cited in his work the positions of the Russian representatives about Koreans, who basically had a negative opinion about migrants from there, while recognizing their past usefulness.²⁰ But other Russian military writers, in particular Alexander Rogoza and Ferdinand Webel, who were in the Far East at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, were more categorical and spoke out in favor of preventing Korean and Chinese immigration to Russia.²¹

As we can see, not all the works of Russian officials and travelers about Koreans in the south of the Far East, published in the western part of the country and influencing public opinion, expressed a positive attitude toward people from Korea; negative attitudes could be expressed in various forms. In particular, the position of David Schrader, who was on an expedition to the Far East from 1894 to 1897, is a good example of such negativity. In the 1890s Schrader worked in the newspaper *Russian Vedomosti* (Русские Ведомости) and this also affected the nature of his work. After the trip, this journalist published his work, which was intended for residents of the European part of the Russian Empire. The author considered it necessary to publish the materials of his trip, since there was very little information about this region. Schrader presented readers with information about the Koreans based on his personal observations and materials from various sources that he was able to obtain. Moreover, the author of this work indicates in the introduction that he gives a description of the life of immigrants to Russia, including Koreans, for a wide audience.

Unlike previous authors, Schrader provides a description of Koreans in the city. "On every street corner, and especially near the big stores and shops skinny, stunted figure of battered, impoverished Korean attracts attention ..." ²² Apparently, the traveler did not bother to study the Korean village, in contrast to Przhevalsky, and Schrader calls Koreans "a product of a peculiar life of our distant suburbs." ²³ His perception of Koreans is based on external observation and study of various kinds of materials. Before Schrader met the Koreans "live," he had already made up his mind that they were people who were of much lower standing than Russians in terms of development. However, as we discovered earlier, this nationalist tradition existed in Russian society, so in this case he was simply its representative. This was facilitated with his personal worldview, as well as the perception of Koreans conveyed to him by representatives of various military ranks of the Ussuri region. ²⁴ In the last years of the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century, the opinion of Koreans in Russian society was already inclined to the negative under the influence of the Unterberger local military administration in the Far East.

Therefore, Schrader describes Koreans as weak and unintelligent, ²⁵ this view, apparently based on observations of Koreans in the city, he applied to all. As we can see, his position was largely subjective. He did not think at all of the logical question, why these "weak and unintelligent" people successfully ran their farms and supplied most of the population of the region with agricultural products.

Schrader perceived Koreans as undeveloped and ignorant people, based only on a sense that they tended to show calmness externally, and indifference to what was happening. This opinion of the journalist was formed due to the lack of knowledge about the mentality of the Korean people, their methods of farming, and lifestyle. Schrader presented the development of the Ussuri region as the exclusive work of Russian immigrants, completely discounting the contribution of Koreans. Therefore, readers familiarizing themselves with the land from his book could see Koreans only as some kind of impoverished mass of people, first favored by the Russian authorities and used to populate uninhabited places, and subsequently no longer needed. ²⁶ This idea was conveyed to readers and helped to strengthen the negative opinion of the Korean people, both in the European part of Russia and in the Far East.

Schrader's work, compiled from subjective data and perception, did not convey to readers the real state of things in the province, but at the same time his work contains important information. In particular, his record that "on every street corner, and especially near the big stores and shops ... skinny, stunted figure of battered, impoverished Korean" has already given an idea that, at that time, a lumpen proletariat of urban Koreans may have been appearing in the region.

Of course, there is the possibility that the author often confused the Koreans with the Chinese—since the latter settled more and more in cities at that time—but we do not think that his confusion in nationalities was absolute.

However, it is necessary to take into account that Korean immigrants in the Russian Empire were mainly peasants, and therefore they lived mostly in rural parts of the region. Those who could not get land often worked as farm laborers, but their position in the Ussuri region was incomparably better than in western Russia, not to mention than in Korea. This situation is confirmed by materials from the semi-documentary book of A. T. Zalutsky, whose father was a farm laborer in the Ussuri region during the tsarist period.²⁷ Accordingly, there was no sense for Korean farm laborers without special reason to break away from their community and go to live a half-starved and uncertain life in urban conditions. In addition, as a rule, a person living within a community experiences severe discomfort when changing their situation and becomes deprived of contact with loved ones. Therefore, Schrader's information could be a confirmation that the Korean peasant community in the Russian Far East at that time experienced some kind of crisis, as a result of which its individual marginal members left for the city. Perhaps this was due to some kind of relationship between the Korean families, but this will be the subject of a separate study in the future.

In those years, N. Kholodov, based on the historical materials, periodicals, his own observations, and stories of eyewitnesses, published a review about the Ussuri region. This book was intended for a wide readership outside the Far East. The author cited information about the Koreans based on the materials of N. Przhevalsky, while adding his personal opinion that the Koreans “occupied and tried to occupy better lands to the detriment of Russian immigrants.”²⁸ This undoubtedly contributed to the maintaining of a negative attitude toward the Koreans, because the book did not reveal the essence of why migrants from the Korean peninsula chose these lands for resettlement. Moreover, the subjective assessment of Kholodov was based on the current state of affairs when the lands were already cultivated. The author, having no idea what efforts were made by Korean peasants to develop these areas, immediately assessed their actions as harmful to Russian interests.

At the end of the nineteenth century, questions about the growth of the Russian population in the Far East began to be raised more often in the Russian Empire. Since the natural increase was unrealistic, the option of resettlement was considered. The main Russian population were peasants, moreover, they lived in communes (agricultural communities) and this greatly impeded mass internal migration. However, the Russian Empire still tried to somehow populate the Far East. First of all emphasis was placed on the southern part of the region, which was

more suited to farming and living. The main problem was the lack of information that could be useful for migrants and temporarily seconded specialists, thus, the Ussuri region did not look attractive to immigrants. Books began to be published for educational institutions and immigrants to the Ussuri region, including notes by agronomists and lower administrative officials of the region, as well as newspaper stories about the region. The issues of local residents and the occupation of the “foreign” population were touched upon, in this case, the data on the Koreans were important, since they were also engaged in agriculture. Information about Koreans in these materials was often based on previously published sources, eyewitness accounts, and the writers’ own views. Such publications in most cases had an unscientific, but rather semi-educational character, they distorted information, and were significantly subjective in nature; they still, however, influenced the representations of Koreans among the general population.

At the same time, there were works based on information from Russian travelers (in particular, from the works of N. Przhevalsky) who sought to give a deep and relatively objective description of Koreans in the south of the Far East. Authors of essays prepared by the Literature Committee of the Imperial Moscow Agricultural Society (Литературный комитет Императорского Московского Сельскохозяйственного Общества) and the publishing house of I. D. Sytin in honor of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the accession of the Amur and Ussuri regions to the Russian Empire, described the Koreans as fugitives from their country who needed sympathy for the inhuman treatment they received in their homeland. In these essays, Koreans are presented as people of a nation that arouses sympathy among the Russians. This attitude was introduced through the perception of Koreans as ready to assimilate with the Russian population, adopt Russian habits and traditions, and learn the language.

Koreans are a good people: without predatory tendencies, they came here solely in order to get rid of their willful and inhuman attitude at home. ... This people is hardworking, clever, loves Russian life, soon assimilates our clothes, buildings and customs, easily obeys our authorities and laws, and soon learns to speak Russian.²⁹

In fact, the processes described did not go as smoothly in the region as presented by the authors for various reasons. Cultural interaction proceeded slowly, and did not adequately cover all Korean groups in the Far East.

The perception of the Korean people, similar to previous authors, can also be traced in the work of A. Novitskaya.³⁰ It is noteworthy that this book was admitted by the scientific committee of the Ministry of Education to school libraries. On its basis, school students could form their ideas about the Ussuri region and the population living on its territory. Since the book was published in Kharkov (Kharkiv)

with a circulation of 20,000 copies, the work was available not only in libraries, but also among schools and colleges in the western part of the Russian Empire.

The author presented her own very specific idea of Koreans. She summarizes material about the industriousness of Koreans, their carefully cultivated arable land, household appliances, and habits.

These are hardworking, patient people, but not particularly strong. Russian immigrants do not like to hire Koreans to work, assuring that the Korean will eat more than he will earn. Despite their weakness, Koreans are engaged exclusively in tilling. In the past, they ploughed only with bulls, but now they have learned to work on horses with Russian peasant settlers. Koreans quickly learn the Russian language, sometimes adopt Russian customs, and some of them even willingly adopt the Christian faith.³¹

In this work, the author has a superficial idea of the Korean people in the Ussuri region and their actual relationship with the Russian population. The words “in spite of their weakness, Koreans are engaged exclusively in tillage” look incomprehensible. Apparently, the problem of perceiving the situation for the author was that the Russian and Korean peasants had different methods of farming, requiring certain skills and efforts. But authors from the western part of the Russian Empire had no idea about this due to a lack of knowledge and information.

However, this work was not the most inaccurate in its view of the Korean population. For example, another author, O. Khmeleva, has a number of misconceptions about Koreans in the Ussuri region in her work.³² This work was educational in nature, as was the work of Novitskaya. Her book was aimed at Russian peasants who wanted to move to the southern part of the Far East. For ordinary people, the title of the book, starting with the word “truth,” already spoke of a certain trust in what was stated in it. But in reality, O. Khmeleva published her work based on the stories of several people who visited the Ussuri region, the subjective perception of which she interpreted through her personal ideas. Apparently, the author of the essay had a weak knowledge base in the field of ethnography and was unable to critically examine her material. Her perception of the indigenous population of the Ussuri region was limited to considering a primitive (in her opinion) lifestyle, based on which the author made conclusions about the level of development of these peoples. In accordance with her ideas, the Koreans in the Ussuri region were slightly more developed than other peoples in this territory, but were significantly inferior to the Russians. Apparently, the Koreans deserved a high level of appreciation from the author for their integrity, which she drew attention to.

This approach to presenting information about Koreans gave the reader an erroneous idea of their culture. Potential immigrants, which this book was

designed for, could not assess the level at which they would have to interact with Korean peasants and what help the local population could provide Russian immigrants in the most important issues of agriculture.

N. Kryukov expressed in his essay a neutral, or rather indifferent attitude to the occupations and position of Koreans.³³ Kryukov served as an agronomist in the region and perceived the Korean population primarily from the point of view of his profession. Despite the fact that he described Korean technologies for growing crops and some traditional tools, N. Kryukov was indifferent to the success of Korean agriculture and did not express a desire to adapt anything for the Russian peasantry in the region. Of course, at that time there was still no scientific knowledge about the climatic conditions of the Ussuri region, so all the events that occurred were perceived through the idea of farming in the western part of the Russian Empire. This official perceived the Koreans not as a people who have great practical knowledge about growing crops in the southern part of the far east of Russia and might be able help their host country in the economic development of the region, but simply as an ethnic minority that had for some reason resettled in this territory and one which was not important for the Ussuri region.

Therefore, it seems that in the view of N. Kryukov, who received an agronomic education and was considered a recognized specialist in agriculture, the Koreans could not contribute anything useful to the development of agriculture in the Ussuri region, despite the success of their harvests. He considered their tools and garden-bed technologies for growing crops curious, but primitive, although Korean peasants had more success in farming than Russian settlers. It is possible that in his position the nationalist factor was also reflected—the opinion that non-European peoples could not surpass the Russians in anything.

It must be taken into account that this position's influence on regional administrative structures administration was considerable. Perhaps for this reason, in the first decades of mass migration to the region, Koreans and their agricultural methods and practices were not perceived by Russian peasants as significant for the development of their own farms and capable of influencing the economy of the region. And only when the volumes of grain and vegetable products produced by the Koreans became significant for the region, did Russians begin to pay attention to their technology and methods.

In 1899, the work of Alexander Rittich, *Migration and Peasant Affairs in the South Ussuri Region* (Переселенческое и крестьянское дело в Южно-Уссурийском крае) was published in St. Petersburg. In 1898–1899, Rittich was the head of the resettlement office in the Ussuri region, and worked in the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Tsarist Russia (later he became the last Minister of Agriculture of the Russian Empire). In his work on agriculture, he also touched on the issue of Korean

settlers. Rittich judged the situation from the position of a Russian official who was tasked with the resettlement of Russian peasants, but at the same time, his work shows attempts to approach the issue from an objective position. The official noted the issues of agriculture, the geographical arrangement and position of the peasants, and in particular, pointed to mismanagement in many Russian villages. He noted that “having visited Posyet district and got a little acquainted with the economy and life of Koreans, one involuntarily imbues well-known sympathies for this population.”³⁴

Rittich noted their industriousness and importance for the region—in particular, they sow their crops in “ungrateful sandy soil,” which is unsuitable for Russian farmers. But at the same time, Koreans harvest crops that allow them to feed Russian troops in the region, pay taxes fairly (unlike Russian villages), build Orthodox churches (two) and rural schools (twelve in twenty-one villages) with regular salary payments (360–600 rubles) for teachers, which was higher than in schools in Russian villages. All Korean villages have food stocks (grocery stores),³⁵ the Korean district was the only one in the South Ussuri region, which had a reserve capital of 10,644 rubles. Rittich also noted the work of the public peasant administration, which was the best in the region. He was more loyal to Koreans than Unterberger.

However, at the same time, he believed that Korean migration should be banned, and that Koreans should be given only those lands that are unsuitable for crops of the Russian peasant, since “they have no main thing—they are not Russian.”³⁶ The main problem of Rittich’s worldview was that he considered the situation from a nationalist position and put it higher than the economic or perspective, differing from the ideas of Przhevalsky, Alyabyev, Vagin, and others in this matter.

Periodicals made a considerable contribution to the formation of the perception of the Korean people among the Russian population. Citizens in the European part of the Russian Empire were mostly content with information from newspapers that they were inclined to believe. Notes about life in different parts of the region appeared in the periodical of the city of Vladivostok. For example, in an article on Posyet farmsteads, Koreans are presented as natives of that locality. Brief information about the lives of Koreans and their economic activities is given, as well as their personality traits such as peacefulness and honesty in trade. The author represents the Koreans as “the main contingent of the agricultural worker,”³⁷ ready to work for a small fee due to their unpretentiousness to food and other conditions. Unlike the “knowledge” about Koreans distributed in the western part of the Russian Empire, such information about Koreans was useful to the Russian population. For Russian peasants, Koreans seemed to be a profitable hired labor.

Thus, the representations of Koreans in the Russian Empire were controversial. This was influenced by the positions of travelers, officials, and journalists who viewed Korean communities in the Far East from different perspectives. This was influenced by the occupation of the authors. As can be seen, most of the military men from the western part of the country, who were on business trips in the Ussuri region for a short time, held negative opinions on Korean migration. The same applies to many seconded officials and journalists, many of whom were aligned with the prevailing nationalist positions at that time. However, Russian travelers and officials who lived in the region for a long time were more loyal to the Korean population.

This tendency was formed because immigrants from the Korean peninsula brought economic benefits to the state and the region. However, some authors believed that Korean communities could become part of society in Far Eastern Russia and strengthen the influence of the Russian Empire in the region. Such diverging opinions in publications about Koreans inevitably led to there being no consensus in Russian society on the role and importance of migrants from Korea. As a result, only the Amur expedition of 1911–1912 was able to bring some clarity to this question.

The different authors' positions on the Korean issue at that time can be conditionally divided into three categories: nationalistic (mainly considering Koreans as part of the “yellow threat”), economic (negatively or indifferently assessing Korean communities in the Ussuri region, but recognizing the economic benefits from them), and promising (opinions of experts who believed that Koreans could become an important part of Russian society in the region and bring benefit not only economically, but also by strengthening the Russian Empire in East Asia). The subsequent years, including the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, determined how these positions turned out to be vital.

Notes

1. This publication was supported by the 2023 Korean Studies Grant Program of the Academy of Korean Studies (AKS-2023-R029).
2. We consider this issue in a forthcoming article titled “Representations of Koreans in the Russian Far East.”
3. Alexander Kim, “Life and Works by N. Ia. Bichurin, a Pioneer of Russian Sinology,” *Acta Orientalia*, 66.2 (2013): 163–178.
4. Iakinf Bichurin, *Sobranie svedenij o narodah, obitavshih v Srednej Azii v drevnie Vremena* (Volume 2). (Moscow and Leningrad: Publishing House of the USSR Academy of Sciences, 1950), pp. 50–68; 80–90; 98–135.
5. The name Europeans used for the inhabitants of the Ryukyu Islands (Okinawa) at that time.
6. V. Shipilov, “Otkuda est' poshli korejtsy na Rusi?,” <https://koryo-saram.ru/vyacheslav-shipilov-otkuda-est-poshli-korejtsy-na-rusi/> (accessed 14 November 2024).

7. N. Przhevalsky (1839–1888) – famous Russian traveler, geographer, and officer. He received a military education at the Nikolaev Academy of the General Staff of the Russian Army. He conducted many large geographical and biological studies of the nature of Central Asia, on the basis of which a number of scientific and educational works were published. He also led an expedition to the Ussuri region (1867–1869). According to the results of the expedition, the essays “On the Foreign Population of the Southern Part of the Amur Region” and “Journey to the Ussuri Region” were published.
8. N. Przhevalskiy, *Puteshestvie po Ussurijskomu krayu 1867–1869* (Vladivostok: Far Eastern Book Publishing House, 1990), p. 132.
9. Przhevalskiy, *Puteshestvie po Ussurijskomu krayu 1867–1869*, 1990, p. 25.
10. Przhevalskiy, *Puteshestvie po Ussurijskomu krayu 1867–1869*, 1990, p. 26.
11. Unfortunately, there is very little data about this author.
12. N. Alyabyev, *Dalekaia Rossiia: Ussuriyskij Region* (St. Petersburg: Obshchestvennaia pol’za, 1872), p. 112.
13. At that time, the population of the region (both Russian and Korean) suffered greatly from the raids of the Chinese gangs, which were called “hunhuoses” (the distorted Chinese word “hunhuzi” (hóng húzi), meaning “red-bearded.” “Red-bearded” were members of one of the triads of Northeast China; apparently, this organization was destroyed in the twentieth century. Most likely, they often carried out their raids in the south of the Russian Far East with the purpose of robbery, so their name became a household name for all Chinese gangs in the region.
14. Alyabyev, *Dalekaia Rossiia: Ussuriyskij Region*, 1872, p. 113.
15. Alyabyev, *Dalekaia Rossiia: Ussuriyskij Region*, 1872, pp. 19–21.
16. Provisional Rules (Временные правила) for peasants. Local acts for peasants, which were local laws for regulation of taxis, scale of lands, rules for using forest and other. Provisional Rules were different for each province. Provisional Rules can be changed by administration of province without order from government, but they must declare reasons for this.
17. A. I. Petrov, “Korejcy-pereselency. Ii istoriia v russkoj istoriografii do 1917,” *Russia and Asia-Pacific* 4 (1996): 98.
18. S. D. Anosov, *Korejcy v Ussurijskom krae* (Khabarovsk and Vladivostok: Knizhnoe delo, 1928), p. 8. We consider Unterberger’s policy on the Korean issue in more detail in the forthcoming article “The Perception of Koreans by the Russian Administration and Society in the Far East in the Late Nineteenth–Early Twentieth Centuries.”
19. Nadarov, *Materialy k izucheniiu Ussurijskogo kraia* (Vladivostok: Printing House of the Headquarters of the Ports of the East Ocean, 1886), pp. 22–23.
20. Nadarov, *Materialy k izucheniiu Ussurijskogo kraia*, 1886, p. 26.
21. Petrov, “Korejcy- pereselency,” 1996, 97–02.
22. D. I. Schrader, *Nash Dal’nij Vostok: (3 goda v Ussrijskom krae)* (St. Petersburg: Ttipografiia A. F. Devriena), 1897.
23. Schrader, *Nash Dal’nij Vostok*, 1897, p. 13.
24. We consider this issue in more detail in the forthcoming article “The Perception of Koreans by the Russian Administration and Society in the Far East in the Late Nineteenth–Early Twentieth Centuries.”
25. Schrader, *Nash Dal’nij Vostok*, 1897, p. 14.
26. Schrader, *Nash Dal’nij Vostok*, 1897, p. 15.
27. A. T. Zalutsky, *Mirazh i yav’* (Vladivostok: Far Eastern Book Publishing House), 1988.
28. N. Kholodov, *Ussurijskij kraj: istoriko-geograficheskij ocherk* (St. Petersburg, 1908. Reprint ed. St. Petersburg: Alfaret, 2011), p. 44.
29. *Amurskij i Ussuriyskij kraj: k dvadcatiletiyu prisoedineniia Amurskogo i Ussuriyskogo kraia: obshhedostupnye ocherki*, ed. 1885 (St. Petersburg: Alfaret, 2011), pp. 132–133.

30. A. Novitskaya, *Yuzhno-ussuriyskij kray*, 2nd ed (Kharkiv: Printing House of the Provincial Government, 1896), p. 35.
31. Novitskaya, *Yuzhno-ussuriyskij kray*, 1896, p. 36.
32. O. N. Khmeleva, *Pravda ob Ussuriyskom krae i ego obitatel'nykh*, ed. 1899 (St. Petersburg: Alfaret, 2011), pp. 73–76.
33. N. A. Kryukov, *Ocherk sel'skogo hoziaistva v Primorskom krae* (St. Petersburg: ed. V. Bezobrazova and Co., 1893), pp. 80–86.
34. A. A. Rittich, *Pereselenchesnoe i krest'yanskoe delo v Yuzhno-Ussuriyskom krae* (St. Petersburg: Printing House of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1899), p. 36.
35. The very designation of a food warehouse as a “store” is rather a military one. We consider the specifics of this issue in more detail in the forthcoming article “The Perception of Koreans by the Russian Administration and Society in the Far East in the Late Nineteenth–Early Twentieth Centuries.”
36. Rittich, *Pereselenchesnoe i krest'yanskoe delo v Yuzhno-Ussuriyskom krae*, 1899, p. 37.
37. *Primorskij calendar' 1910: besplatnoe prilozhenie k gazete "Dal'niaia Okraina," Far Outskirts*, 1910, p. 79.

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