VLADIVOSTOK CITY (RUSSIA) AS A TRANSCULTURAL
EDUCATIONAL SPACE FOR THE CHINESE MIGRANTS
(1920-30-ES)

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Abstract: In the article the author characterizes various forms and methods of the educational work, analyses the role of authorities in the realization of educational programs, considers in detail the structure "city of Vladivostok" in the system of the Far East Russian-Chinese inter-regional relations as a complete educational space for Chinese migrants. The author also distinguishes the features of the interaction of Russian and Chinese groups of people during the realization of educational work. The article is based on the archival materials that have never been published before.

Key terms: Chinese migrants, Russian Far East, Vladivostok, Russian-Chinese relations, trans-cultural educational space.
In the middle of the 19th century the diplomatic decisions of frontier problems became the major mark in the history of Russian-Chinese relations. The agreements between Russia and China, by which the differentiation of territories in Amur and Maritime provinces had been made, were signed. The signing of the agreements at Ajgun and Peking not only strengthened the interstate communications between Russia and China, but put a legal basis for mutually advantageous frontier interaction.

In the 19th century, after the territorial delimitation in Amur and Maritime provinces, the settling of these new Far Eastern provinces by immigrants from the western regions of Russia began, at the same time, the natives of the central and southern provinces of China began to migrate to Manchuria. There was an agricultural and industrial development of the frontier territories of both countries. The rapprochement of the two largest civilizations began. On the geopolitical space of the Far East the largest system of inter-regional Russian-Chinese interaction was formed.

The Chinese population in the Russian Far East became one of its subsystems and, at the same time, it became an independent system. Chinese migration stream to Russian territory began. Vladivostok – the city in the suburb of Russian Empire, but the major transport centre, seaport and military advanced post of Russia - became one of the centers of Chinese arrival and concentration in the Russian Far East.

In October 1910 about 50 thousand Chinese people lived in the city1. Chinese migrants worked in various industries – they worked as joiners, carpenters, roofers, stove-makers, house painters, cooks, hairdressers, footmen, photographers; they were engaged in footwear repair, etc. Chinese merchants took in leading positions in small and retail trade. In 1908 there were 16 Chinese firms with the capital of over two thousand Chinese dollars, more than 100 firms with the capital of over twenty thousand Chinese dollars, and 400-500 small trade enterprises with the capital of about one thousand Chinese dollars in Vladivostok2.

Thus, in Vladivostok there was an interaction of two cultures and their representatives were close geopolitical neighborhoods. A special civilization environment, in which Russian and Chinese ethnics were combined, was formed in the city by the presence of Chinese citizens. However, till 1917, Chinese population in Vladivostok was a part of the population of the other state (China) only.

After October Revolution radical restructurings in a social, economic and political system of Russian society were made. In the first Soviet Constitution (1918) for all citizens, living in the Soviet Republic, irrespective of their racial and national identity equal rights were fixed.

In the multinational Russian Far East, during the revolution, civil war and intervention, there were no possibilities for realization of a complex national policy. The realization of the Soviet national policy principles concerning national minorities began only after the joining of the Russian Far East to RSFSR.

With the joining of the Russian Far East to RSFSR, significant changes in a legal status of Chinese population were made. Chinese migrants were included into a category "national minorities" (with assignment of the corresponding rights of a national minority in the Soviet state, that meant absolute change of their social status in Russian society), and, at the same time, their legal status of foreigners was kept.

One of the basic aspects of Soviet national policy was the expansion of educational work among national minorities. It was to make a direct impact on education international consciousness among them, and acquaint them with the construction of a socialist society. In the tideway of the national policy carried out in the Soviet state, Chinese workers were to become the conductors of revolutionary ideas in China in the future. The educational work, as a component of a new socialist society construction process, was, at the same time, the major direction in the process of education among proletarian internationalism among Chinese workers.

Educational work among Chinese migrants in Vladivostok was a new form of the directing bodies activity. Certain work was carried out among a group of people speaking another (not Russian) language; moreover, Chinese migrants were the citizens of a different state. The concomitant factors were the general low level of Chinese workers erudition, a seasonal nature of their work, the shortage of educational literature and the absence of qualified teachers.

The tasks of educational work among national minorities were illiteracy liquidation, organization of log huts-reading rooms and libraries, allocation places in high schools for national minorities, reorganization of national schools and publication of methodical textbooks. The trade unions of the enterprises where Chinese workers worked were to plan the expenses on educational
work among national minorities. Moreover, it was planned to develop educational work not only among Chinese workers of the Soviet Far East but also in China.

Illiteracy liquidation was one of the basic aspects of educational work. The percent of those literate among Chinese migrants was very low, for example, in Vladivostok district there were only about 5% literate Chinese people (about 1 thousand people).

The basic attention was given to the work of illiteracy liquidation among Chinese who worked in gold mining, coal and wood industries. At the enterprises where there were Chinese workers, the centers of illiteracy liquidation and schools for the illiterate were organized. In 1926-1927 in Vladivostok twenty seven Chinese migrants studied in the centers of illiteracy liquidation, and in 1924-1929 in Maritime province about 2 thousand Chinese migrants were included into educational programs.

To foster the process of mastering reading and writing (hieroglyphs were very difficult to study) Chinese writing was Latinized. For Chinese migrants in the Soviet state a new Latin alphabet was also created.

The first project of Chinese alphabet on Latin basis was created by Qui Qiubo and published in 1929. In 1930 the elaboration of Latin Chinese alphabet was made by a group under the direction of Xiao San (in Moscow) and special commission under the chairmanship of V. M. Alekseev (in Leningrad). On May 21, 1931 the Latin Chinese alphabet was definitively approved. After the group of Moscow and Leningrad sinologists went to Vladivostok to organize the conference about new alphabet. The new alphabet was to be taught to only those Chinese – adults and children – who lived in the Soviet Far East, but then, during the spread of soviet processes in China, the population of China was to use their experience.

On September 26-28th, 1931 the first conference about the latinization of Chinese writing took place in Vladivostok. The sinologists from Moscow, Leningrad, Vladivostok and Khabarovsk, the representatives of the city committees, students and teachers of Chinese working faculties (rabfacs) and of Chinese Soviet party school, the workers of Chinese cells and clubs of the eastern workers, Chinese collective farmers and about 1500 Chinese workers took part in the conference opening ceremony. During the conference the Committee of the Chinese Latin alphabet was created. In Vladivostok and other cities of the Far East the 1,5-month's courses of illiteracy’s liquidators teaching were organized. In regional clubs of the eastern workers the cells of the «Chinese writing latinization assistance» were opened.

In February 1932 the Committee was reorganized into the Far East Committee of the New Alphabet that included 3 sections: Chinese, Korean and the North people sections. Lubin became responsible secretary of the Committee and in 1933 the post took Wang Changxi (Martinov).

The Committee made introduction of Chinese Latin alphabet among the Chinese workers in the Soviet Far East. For the maintenance of a methodical management in the Committee methodical consulting bureau was created headed by A. G. Shprintsyn. The newspaper «For the New Alphabet» began to be publish (it was published till July 1938), in 1933 its circulation was 2 thousand copies. In the newspaper, there were standard articles and the lessons of the political reading and writing in native language, Arithmetic and Russian. In May 1932 the first abc-book «The New Writing» with circulation of 30 thousand copies was printed. By September 1, 1933 the first textbooks on new Chinese alphabet for elementary school were printed.

By the time of the second conference about the latinization of Chinese writing (Vladivostok, October 1932) the first teachers – 168 Chinese people - studied. By the end of August 1932 about 2000 Chinese people – 3.6% of the Chinese population in the Soviet Far East - were taught new alphabet. The mastering of Latin basis writing allowed Chinese workers to acquire knowledge more quickly and to understand the political situation. It opened the new possibilities for their further work and study.

The other direction of the educational work among Chinese workers was the creation of clubs for them. On May 1, 1924 in Vladivostok “The 1st of May” club for east workers was opened. By April 1, 1925 there were 515 members in this club. In the club there were two committees of the Chinese workers, a theatre group, a physical culture group, a military group, a center of illiteracy liquidation, a musical group, and a red corner. There was a library with 400 books in the club. The seminars of the komsomol activists and the loud reading of newspapers, the thematic evenings and meetings were held there, the reports on various themes were read, and the wall newspaper was issued in the club. The club also was engaged in distribution among the Chinese migrants of the revolutionary literature published in China as well as Harbin and Shanghai newspapers.
In total in 1927 in the Far East there were six clubs for the eastern workers (1945 members), mainly Chinese workers. Clubs were very popular among Chinese workers. Chinese workers visited clubs very often. In December 1933, celebrating the 6th anniversary of the Cantonese commune formation, in clubs and red corners the «international evenings» were held, Chinese workers and collective farmers listened to reports on creation of a commune and on a political situation in China.

One more aspect of the educational work developed among Chinese migrants in 1920-1930 was the publication and distribution of newspapers in Chinese.

In March 1922 in Chita the edition of Chinese newspaper «Working Way» («Gongren zhi lu») began, the editor was appointed by Liu Xiangpo. In 1923 the newspaper «Working Way» began to be published in Vladivostok four times a month. On the first page of the newspaper Chinese translations of materials from newspapers "Pravda", "Krasnoye Znamya" were usually placed. In 1927 the newspaper circulation was 1600 copies, and 350 copies were sent to China. The value of the "Working Way" as a publication for the Chinese workers of the Soviet Far East was great.

In the middle of October 1928 the “Working Way” newspaper publication relocated from Vladivostok to Khabarovsk. Jin Shang was appointed editor of the “Working Way” newspaper. Except the “Working Way” newspaper, till the end of 1920th the newspaper “Minguo Shibao” was delivered from China for Chinese workers in the Soviet Far East.

In 1932-1933 in Vladivostok the “Chinese Worker” was also published. For six months of their existence, the “Chinese Worker” achieved good results: economic and political problems were interpreted in due time, the number of worker correspondents increased to 200 people, the management of the 70th bulletin board newspapers was carried out and Latin alphabet actively spread. The newspaper circulation increased to 4 thousand copies, the quantity of releases – to 10 per month.

Since 1929 Chinese language newspapers “Seaman” and “The Pacific Worker”, in 1931-1932 – “Matou Gongren” ("Portovik") were also published in Vladivostok.

The organization of comprehensive and high schools was one of major aspects of the educational work among Chinese migrants. The decision from October 31st, 1918 «About schools of national minorities» in which the right of nationalities in RSFSR for the training organization in the native language was declared, it was one of the first documents developed by the National Commissariat of education of RSFSR. After the establishment of the Soviet power in the Far East, the full reorganization of the school system began. National schools were included in the general network of the national education.

On December 1st, 1924 Chinese school of the 1st level was opened in Vladivostok. By March, 1925 the number of pupils increased from 17 to 60 people, there were three teachers at school. The pupils studied the Chinese language (hieroglyphic and Latin alphabet), mathematics, physical culture, drawing, needlework, singing, history, geography and natural study of China. At school the pioneer group (including 33 pupils of school) was organized. The performances and the publication of wall newspapers were held at the school.

Besides this state school, private Chinese school also functioned in Vladivostok, in 1925 106 pupils and 4 teachers were there. The school received about 2600 rubles from Chinese society every year. The age of children varied from 7 to 15, among pupils there was one Russian child. In 1927-1928, 130 pupils studied at school. In 1929-1930, with great outflow of Chinese migrants from the Soviet Far East, during Sino-Soviet conflict of 1929, the school stopped teaching.

The boarding schools were also opened for the Chinese children in the Soviet Far East. In March, 1935 in the Vladivostok boarding school (which actually was the children's home) there were 49 Chinese children. Children of Chinese migrants also studied at private Russian schools of Vladivostok. Thus, the frameworks of two nations’ civil interactions expanded.

In 1925 Chinese branch in Vladivostok Soviet party school was opened. The quantity of pupils was 16. In 1926 14 pupils were accepted into the Chinese branch, including 11 men and 3 women. Training term was planned for two years. On the Chinese and Korean branches, because of the absence of literature and programs, curricula were developed by teachers of school independently. Curriculums were made by specially created subject commissions and were coordinated with the Chinese and Korean sections of the Maritime Party Committee. Training at school was on the basis of hieroglyphic and new Latin alphabet.

In 1929 the Chinese Soviet party school was opened in Vladivostok. The school took an active part in economic-political campaigns (in crops campaigns, the organizations of the illiteracy liquidation centers, etc.) and drawing up textbooks for national minorities. The students of Chinese Soviet party school drew wall newspapers, organized performances, held evenings of questions and...
In 1932 there were 166 students and 17 teachers in the Chinese Soviet party school. In summer the students went on practice: young men worked in trade-unions and girls worked on children playgrounds.

Since autumn of 1926 Chinese branch of Chinese working faculty (rabfac) was opened, in 1926-1927 there were 24 Chinese students, in 1928-1929 – 29, in 1929-1930 – 59 Chinese students. In 1932-1933 60 Koreans and 30 Chinese people became the students of the Far East international teacher's college (address: Vladivostok city, Chinese street, 18).

However, the basic school of teaching the Chinese workers was the Far East Regional Higher Chinese Lenin School. It was opened in Vladivostok on March 1st, 1933. The programme included:

1. The preparatory section – it was one-year section of general educational. Chinese workers and collective farmers with elementary education could enter this section.
2. The average section – included 2 years term of training (the communist party section) and 3 years term of training (the working faculty). Since 1934 the training term on (the communist party section had been increased till 3,5 years, on the working faculty – till 4,5 years.
3. The higher section – included 2 years term of training and two small special sections – the communist party section and the educational working faculty section (preparing basically the teachers for schools for adults).

At the Far East Regional Higher Chinese Lenin School the Chinese communists from Manchuria were also trained. In the autumn of 1926, the Far East bureau of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in Shanghai, analyzed conditions in China, reported to Moscow that there was “a huge lack of the Chinese communists”. For the purpose of the quickest training in the USSR personals for the Communist Party of China, the workers were sent from Shanghai and Manchuria to study in the Soviet party and military schools in the Far East.

Among the subjects of the curriculum of the Far East Regional Higher Chinese Lenin School were: Leninism, Political Economy, Economy of China, Communist International History, History of Russia and the USSR, Historical and Present Stage of the Chinese Revolution, Pedagogies, Natural Sciences, Physics, Astronomy, Mathematics, Literary Chinese Language, Russian, etc. Training at the school was on the basis of hieroglyphic writing and the new alphabet. Each graduate should be able to write hieroglyphs by means of Latin transcription. As all educational and periodical literature was based on hieroglyphs, there remained the necessity of preservation of hieroglyphic writing as a subject.

In 1930-1934, five graduations took place in Chinese Lenin School. The demand for graduates of the school was great. In the Soviet Far East and in other regions of the USSR there was a shortage of Chinese party instructors. Competent Chinese were constantly required for so-called “special” work in special sections of various departments. The post-graduates of the Chinese Lenin School went for a supervising work in collective farms; they were appointed to posts of instructors of the various organizations - regional executive committees and district executive committees. They became club and editorial workers, teachers in Chinese schools and managers of Chinese sectors in various divisions, i.e. they actually continued the educational work in the Soviet Far East. Besides, post-graduates were transferred into the staff of the Red Flag Special Army. It was repeatedly admitted that the set in school and scales of training in this school could not be reduced, it was necessary to keep and increase it.

Thus, with the ending of the civil war and intervention in 1920-1930th in the Soviet Far East the educational work among the Chinese migrants developed. Vladivostok city became one of the centers of this work. Educational work was carried out by various forms and methods. The stations of illiteracy liquidation and libraries for Chinese migrants were opened in Vladivostok, Chinese newspapers were published, and the spread of Chinese Latinized alphabet was conducted. The school for Chinese children was created. The club with various educational sections was opened for Chinese workers on May 1st, 1924 in Vladivostok. The system of higher education for the Chinese migrants included the Far East Regional Higher Chinese Lenin School. The activity of all these institutions stopped only in 1938 with the beginning of reprisals.

In 1923-1938 Chinese population, forming a new society got involved in the socialist construction and transformational processes in the Soviet Far East. The research revealed that the expansion of the educational work among the Chinese migrants not only promoted increasing of their educational level, but also became the major aspect of civil interaction between the peoples of two countries – Russia and China - in the Far East region. The reached level of the interaction testifies to formation a trans-cultural educational space in Vladivostok city that should be recognized as a
phenomenon and, at the same time, as the actor of the whole system of Russian-Chinese relations. During the process of the educational work in the consciousness of Chinese migrants the image of Russia generated, and after their returning home it had an influence on their further perception of the sociopolitical and economic processes in China and Russia. Being a city on Empire’s periphery, Vladivostok city became a global space.

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