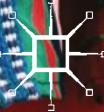


KAZAKHSTAN, KYRGYZSTAN, AND UZBEKISTAN

Life and Politics during the Soviet Era

EDITED BY
TIMUR DADABAEV
HISAO KOMATSU

**POLITICS
AND HISTORY
IN CENTRAL ASIA**



Politics and History in Central Asia

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Timur Dadabaev
University of Tsukuba
Tsukuba, Japan

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Timur Dadabaev • Hisao Komatsu
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Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan

Life and Politics during the Soviet Era

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Collective Memory, Oral History and Central Eurasian Studies in Japan

Hisao Komatsu

In June 2006, the Department of Islamic Area Studies (IAS) was created at the University of Tokyo. It was established as a joint research centre aimed to further promote comprehensive studies of Islamic areas through associated research between the National Institutes for the Humanities (NIHU) and the University of Tokyo. The IAS Centre at the University of Tokyo (TIAS), being a part of a broader network of similar research centres, namely, those at Waseda University, Sophia University, Kyoto University and the Toyo Bunko (The Oriental Library), conducted its first five-year research programme from the fiscal year 2006 to 2010. The common research topic at the TIAS was formulated as ‘Thought and Politics in Islamic Areas: Comparison and Relations’ with the focus on Central Eurasia and the Middle East, and the studies were aimed at examining the dynamic interrelations between thought and politics in modern and contemporary times in the region since the eighteenth century through comparison and correlation. In 2011, the IAS project as a whole launched the second five-year research programme (2011–2015). The author served

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as the representative of the Centre from 2006 to 2011, and was mainly involved in developing Central Eurasian studies. The author referred to the objectives as follows:

Central Eurasia, which consists of Central Asia (including Eastern Turkistan, that is, Xinjiang in China), the Caucasus and the Volga-Ural region—with the exception of some areas—after the collapse of the USSR in 1991 transformed into a ‘newly risen’ Islamic region where scientific research has finally become possible. Though the region currently attracts great attention for its energy resources and geopolitical importance of being located between Russia, China and the Middle East, scientific study of the region itself, even from a global standpoint, has only begun, so, accumulation of basic knowledge on the structures and dynamics in this region should be the most essential task. Paying attention to specific features that the Russian Empire and the USSR, as well as the Qing Dynasty and China attached to local Muslim societies, we will take up such topics as ‘political power and Islam’, ‘Islam and social order’, ‘creation of nations’, and re-Islamisation trends from the final years of the USSR. Investigating these problems through comparison with the Middle East and other areas would likely facilitate clarification of the specificities of Central Eurasia. As a general objective, we are aiming to develop new methods for Central Eurasian area studies.

This chapter aims at reporting on the current results of our research and, at the same time, providing some thoughts on retrospective activities and prospects of Central Eurasian studies in Japan. Furthermore, due to the character of the research activities carried out by the TIAS and research interests of the author, it is historical research work that is mainly dealt with in this chapter.

STUDIES ON CENTRAL ASIAN HISTORY IN JAPAN

When we think of the roots of Central Eurasian studies in Japan, it should be Central Asian history studies, also known as Inner-Asian history or Western Regions studies, that first come to mind. This field is known for its prolific research results, as can be seen from the *Bibliography of Central Asian Studies in Japan, 1879-March 1987* (The Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1989). Central Asian historiography, that had already emerged in pre-war Japan, took its roots in Oriental history studies, and therefore, was characterised by heavy usage of Chinese-language historical sources. Hisao Matsuda (1903–1982), who greatly contributed to the

development of historical and geographical studies of ancient Central Asia, was the most representative researcher of this stream. Together with such positivist historiography, attention is drawn to the fact that, beginning from the 1930s, interest in local affairs in Central Asia was rising in context of the political and military developments in Japan. The interest in the vast area stretching from Manchuria and Mongolia to Soviet Central Asia was inseparably linked with the continental policy and Pan-Asianism of the time; specialist magazines of that time even used extracts from the Soviet press to report on the socio-political situation in Central Asia. It is interesting to note that such reliance on Russian-language sources in the field of Central Asian studies made possible the early introduction of the achievements of Soviet Oriental studies into Japan. Thus, among others, there were introduced such works as B. Ia. Vladimirtsov's *History of Social System of the Mongols* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Research Bureau, 1936), V.V. Bartold's *History of Oriental Studies in Europe and Particularly in Russia*, translated by the Research Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Seikatsusha, 1939) and A. Yakubovskiy and B. Grekov's *History of the Golden Horde* translated by Yukichi Harima (Seikatsusha, 1942). However, this obviously politically oriented trend was discontinued after Japan's defeat in WWII, and the next generation of researchers took on conducting positivist academic research independent from the political context.

With the beginning of the 1960s, there appeared a cohort of pioneering researchers who, not limiting themselves to the traditionally used Chinese sources, also began to actively exploit historical sources written in Turkic, Persian, Mongolian, Tibetan and other Central Asian languages. For example, Nobuo Yamada (1920–1987) proved that it was possible to use contractual and other documents in ancient Uighur as sources in Central and Northern Asian history studies; Masao Mori (1921–1996), while successfully contributing to historical studies of the ancient Turkic peoples through research of the Orkhon inscriptions, indicated the important role the Turkic peoples had been playing in global history. Minobu Honda (1923–1998), through scrutiny of sources in Chinese and Persian, managed to eradicate the negative image associated with the Mongol Empire and build the foundations for the study of the Mongol Empire; Toru Saguchi (1916–2006) shed light on the history of Eastern Turkistan (Xinjiang) in the post-Mongol period, a topic that had long been unelucidated by the world's academia. Hidehiro Okada (1931–) has also made

prominent achievements in post-Mongol Inner-Asian history studies by highlighting the importance of the Mongol Empire in world history.

It was these researchers who laid the groundwork for today's Central Asian studies and who instigated scientific research toward the state formation by nomads and, furthermore, to mutual relationships between the nomads and the sedentary population in China and other adjacent areas. They also showed interest in the dynamics of commercial and cultural exchanges, as symbolised in Sogdian merchants who used to link Eastern and Western Eurasia through the Silk Road. On the whole, their research, through capturing Central Asia as a self-reliant historic world, contributed to a rightful evaluation of historical roles played by the northern nomads that had been traditionally looked down upon within the distinct perceptions of the Sino-barbarian dichotomy as barbarian tribes (*yidi*: non-Han tribes in the east and north of ancient China) inferior to 'civilised' China. Such approach even led to the rethinking of the history of China from the broader perspective of Central Asian history. The endeavour was taken over by the next generation of researchers, such as Takao Moriyasu and Masaaki Sugiyama, who vigorously pursued research in the pre-modern history of Central Asia. Hidehiro Okada and Masaaki Sugiyama came to argue that the Mongol Empire was the first entity in history to unite the whole of Eurasia and therefore opened a new epoch in the history of the world. Such paradigm shift paved the way to re-examining the history of China, which previously used to be regarded as a self-sufficient independent world, within the vaster context of all-Eurasian history. Positioning the Qing dynasty's rule over the eastern part of Eurasia as not just another Chinese dynasty, but rather as a Central Eurasian empire appeared quite an effective approach.

On the other hand, from the end of the 1960s, another research trend emerged that focused on studying Islamic Central Asia. Studying the history of Central Asia during the Islamic period that requires usage of historical sources in Arabic, Persian, Chaghatay and other languages had long been left untouched by Japanese researchers. It was Eiji Mano who was a pioneer in this field, producing a series of works on the Timurid Empire and the memoirs of the last ruler, Babur, *Baburnama (Book of Babur)*. Mano claimed that Timur owed his success to 'the relationship of interdependency between the nomadic and sedentary societies' or, in other words, to his ability to skilfully combine the military strength of the nomads with the economic potential of the sedentary peoples (Mano 1977), thus stressing the importance of the relations between the North

(nomads) and the South (the sedentary) in the historical development of Central Asia. This theory caused disputes with those who, acknowledging the economic and cultural significance of the Silk Road, tend to rather put emphasis on East-West relations in Central Asia and remains a controversial issue that has yet to be solved. In the author's personal opinion, probably both the east-west and south-north axes were functioning in the region, even though with dynamically changing intensities in different periods and different areas; however, it seems that in post-Mongol Central Asia it was the south-north axis that played a predominant role.

Anyway, Mano's pioneering research paved the way for the remarkable development of Islamic Central Asian history studies in the 1980s. This trend was also supported by the tremendous progress in Islamic history studies in Japan that began in the 1970s. At the same time, the next generation of researchers began to produce results on a wide scope of diverse topics, such as post-Timurid political history, structure of the Timurid state, cultural activities protected and patronised by the Timurid court, political and social roles of the *Naqshbandi* order and other Sufi orders, social relations and spirituality in the pre-modern period represented in hagiographies, status of the saint's descendants (*khwaja* families) and pilgrimages to mausoleums of saints (*mazar*), diplomatic relations between the Uzbek khanates and the Ottoman Empire, Russia and the Qing dynasty's rule over Central Asia and their interaction with the Muslim population and national movements of the Turkic Muslims. However, it is also a fact that research activities were subject to certain restrictions of that time. Most of the original historical sources were located in the Soviet Union and were tremendously difficult to access. On the other hand, the available materials had their own limitations, which significantly curbed the scope of research themes.

DEVELOPMENT OF CENTRAL EURASIAN STUDIES

In such course of events, there appeared a new trend to refer to the discipline previously known by such terms as Inner-Asian history, Central Asian history or Northern Asian history by a new term: Central Eurasian history. Thus, in 1975, young Japanese researchers from the Kansai region established the Young Researchers' Eurasian Studies Society. It was the prominent philologist of Hungarian origin, Denis Sinor, who proposed the neologism 'Central Eurasia'; he wrote the monograph *Introduction à l'étude de l'Eurasie Centrale* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963)

with the aim to lay out the basics for philological and historical studies of Central Eurasia, by which he meant a vast space of the continent populated by the Ural-Altai peoples. In such context, the term ‘*Central Eurasia*’ denoted a cultural concept rather than a distinct geographical definition. Of course, the introduction of the term doesn’t mean that it immediately spread throughout academic circles—even the concise English version of the monograph itself was titled with the conventional ‘*Inner Asia*’, rather than proclaiming ‘*Central Eurasia*’ (Sinor, 1971).

Probably the primary reason why Japanese researchers have readily accepted this new term is that they deemed this concept, that alludes to the immense space spreading from the Great Wall of China to the steppes of southern Russia on the northern shore of the Black Sea, most adequate for describing the dynamism of historical events developed in the regions and their great significance in world history. To name one example, this term proves to be truly valid when dealing with the history of the Mongol Empire. Another factor can be seen in that from the end of the 1980s, researchers of Slavic-Russian history and Central Asian history began to collaborate in studies of Asian regions within the Slavic-Russian world; and various research projects, including Islamic area studies, also boosted the trend. Then, the dramatic collapse of the USSR in 1991 revealed the existence of a vast Islamic region stretching out across Central Eurasia. Such changes have opened up access to previously unavailable historical texts, made it possible to conduct field research and facilitated collaboration with local researchers, and therefore, have tremendously improved the overall research environment.

In recent years, in Japan, the concept of Central Eurasian studies goes far beyond Central Asian history in its narrow meaning and comprises a vast range of research topics, including the history of Crimea, Caucasus, the Volga-Ural region, Western Siberia and other Muslim-populated areas of the Russian Empire, as well as the current state of affairs in the newly created independent countries in the post-Soviet space, construction of new international relations, social transformations during the transitional period and Islamic revivalism. It looks likely that the new forum of Central Eurasian studies will eliminate the boundaries between Russian/Soviet studies and Central Asian studies and provide an integral standpoint in order to capture the whole picture in all its complexity. It is worth mentioning in this connection that the Slavic Research Centre at Hokkaido University, a leading Slavic studies institution in Japan, has recently proclaimed the concept of ‘Slavic-Eurasian Studies’

and has already been successful in its research. In 2014, it was renamed as Slavic-Eurasian Research Center. Meanwhile, more and more works that have Central Eurasia in their titles have been published lately. Here are a few examples.

Mori Masao and Okada Hidehiro, *Central Eurasia* [World History Viewed from Peoples: 4] (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1990, in Japanese): A general description of Iranian, Turkic, Mongolian, Uralic and Tibetan peoples.

The Integration of Central Eurasia [The Iwanimi Lecture of World History 11] (Tokyo: Iwanimi Shoten, 1997, in Japanese): Collected papers on major issues of Central Eurasian history from the 9th to the 16th century.

Hisao Komatsu ed., *A History of Central Eurasia* (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2000, in Japanese): The first general history of Mongol, Tibet, Eastern Turkistan, and the former Soviet Central Asia. The Korean translation was published in 2005 by Sonamoo Publishing Union.

Stéphane A. Dudoignon and Komatsu Hisao eds., *Research Trends in Modern Central Eurasian Studies (18th–20th Centuries): A Selective and Critical Bibliography of Works Published between 1985 and 2000*, vol. 1–2 (Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 2003–2006).

Komatsu Hisao, Umemura Hiroshi, Uyama Tomohiko, Obiya Chika and Horikawa Toru eds., *Cyclopedia of Central Eurasia* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2005, in Japanese): The first comprehensive encyclopedia of Islamic Central Eurasia that contains about 1000 items and covers such geographical areas as the former Soviet Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Volga-Urals, Afghanistan, and Xinjiang.

Uyama Tomohiko ed., *Empire, Islam, and Politics in Central Eurasia* (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2007): Collected papers presented at the international symposium “Regional and Transregional Dynamism in Central Eurasia: Empires, Islam and Politics” held by Slavic Research Center in July 7–8, 2005.

The term Central Eurasian studies has already taken root abroad as well. For example, the North American-based Central Eurasian Studies Society (CESS), created in 2000, has organised annual conferences at various universities throughout North America. And in Europe have already been published two issues of *Central Eurasian Reader*, a research review