Aleksei P. Okladnikov: The Great Explorer of the Past

Volume II

A biography of a Soviet archaeologist (1960s - 1980s)

A. K. Konopatskii

Translated from the Russian by

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Cover background: The wooden church and bell tower from the town of Zashiversk, Open-Air Museum, Akademgorodok (photo from open sources); cover photo: A. P. Okladnikov at the Kara-Tenesh site, Altai Mountains, 1979 (photo by V. P. Mylnikov)

Back cover background: The autumn view of the Akademgorodok from air (photo from open sources)

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Translators’ introduction

As in Volume 1 of this book, we have ‘created’ our own system of transliteration by combining the BGN (US Board of Geographic Names) with a slightly modified version of the LOC (Library of Congress). We have also settled on one ending for words, as the English language forces us to do, rather than providing the appropriate ending (masculine, feminine, neuter, plural/nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, instrumental, and prepositional) that can occur in Russian. Some names are ‘semi–formalised’ in English. For names that do not have an accepted English form we have tried consistently to use our system for transliterating. On the other hand, we generally give a (Russian) ‘i’ or ‘y’ plural for plural words that are not translated. This is with the exception of ethnic names, which are given no ending in the plural (following one accepted form found in *Webster’s 3rd International Dictionary*, 1965).

The system of Russian personal names can be difficult to remember for foreign readers, and this requires some explanation. Russian names consist of three parts: family name (like ‘Okladnikov’), given name (like ‘Aleksei’), and a patronymic name derived from the given name of the father (like ‘Pavlovich’, i.e. son of Pavel). In feminine names, the patronymic part according to Russian grammar will be like ‘Pavlovna’ (daughter of Pavel). It is customary in Russia to call an older or more respected person by both given and patronymic names, and this is why the combination ‘Aleksei Pavlovich’ (or in abbreviated form ‘A. P.’) is widely used here. Some diminutive first names are used here too; for example, ‘Masha’ is a short (and sometimes familiar) form of name Maria; ‘Sasha’ is the same for Aleksander, and ‘Tolya’ – for Anatoly. ‘Alesha’ is the short for Aleksei; this is how Vera Dmitrievna, Okladnikov’s wife, sometimes called her husband. This obviously was inappropriate for Okladnikov’s younger colleagues, who called him ‘Aleksei Pavlovich’, or ‘A. P.’ among themselves.

Some geographic names that we use are different from what is most common in English literature. For example, *Zabaikal’e* means *Transbaikalia* (or

Trans-Baikal), the region east of Lake Baikal; *Pribaikal'e* means *Cis-Baikal*, i.e. region immediately west of Lake Baikal and around the headwaters of Angara and Lena rivers. The term *Primor'e* means *Maritime Province* of modern Russia, near the Sea of Japan; and *Priamur'e* is the Amur Province, the Russian part of the basin of Amur River and its tributaries. In order to trace Okladnikov's travel easier, we included in this volume two maps–Siberia and the neighbouring regions, and Alaska and the Aleutians.

As for the administrative subdivision of the USSR, it consisted of 15 republics (with the Russian Federation as the largest one); each republic includes provinces (*oblast'*), large provinces (*krai*), and sometimes smaller autonomous republics (*avtonomnaya respublika*)–like Buryatia or Tuva. For consistency, we call all the *oblast'* and *krai* provinces. Each province was divided into counties (*raion*); the same applied to large cities that consist of several counties.

At the beginning of the main content of this book, there is an introductory chapter with a brief description of the Akademgorodok where A. P. Okladnikov spent the last 20 years of his life and work, and with some details of his research and relationship with other Soviet scholars. Then the main text is divided into several parts, one of which ('Trip to the United States, 1974') is written as a diary. The final part—'The last years of life (1975–1981)'—is added to the content of the original Russian book published in 2009. Description of some events happened in the 1960s and late 1950s, not mentioned in the main text by A. K. Konopatskii, can be found in the Appendices.

Some aspects of Soviet life in the 1960s – 1970s should be explained to non-Russian readers. In order to travel outside of the USSR, Soviet people needed to apply for a so-called 'foreign passport', while they held 'domestic' passports for everyday use. The justification for a trip to a 'capitalist' country should be either official or by private invitation, or the tourist voucher. However, it was very difficult to purchase a tour due to the very limited number of tourist groups, except to countries of the Eastern block and its 'friends' like India, Vietnam or Cuba. The final decision about travel to the West took several months, and depended to major extent on bureaucrats who sometime abused their power. Generally speaking, such a trip was considered great luck. Soviet people were generally aware of what to expect in the West judging from books and foreign films; nevertheless, they were often overwhelmed, and this is why several thoughts in the description of visit to the USA in this book look a bit naïve to today's US and Russian readers. The same was true of Americans who visited the USSR in the 1950s – 1970s, and for whom it was to some extent a different world; see the essay by R. E. Ackerman in Appendices.

Some other details that are touched upon in this book should also be mentioned. During Soviet times, there were no ATM machines in the USSR, and bank transfers to individuals were conducted rarely. This is why it was not easy to wire money even inside the country; practically, the only option was transfer through the postal service, but this required one or several days of waiting and a personal visit to a particular post office to get cash. Alcohol and tobacco made in the West were not available for the general Soviet public; one could buy it only in stores which sold these items for coupons given to Soviet specialists who worked in the West and in so–called 'developing countries' of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Therefore, these goods as a gift from the foreigner were highly valued. The groceries and department stores in the late USSR were quite poor compared to their Western analogues–for example, there was no chicken meat in Khabarovsk in 1973 (see chapter 'Confinement' in Part II); many items, including the field equipment, were a kind of novelty for Soviet scholars.

In Konopaskii's diary about the trip to the USA in 1974 (Part III of this book), there are several almost idiomatic expressions borrowed from popular Soviet books, movies, and even propaganda slogans (the latter with some degree of humour). For example, in the USSR everybody knew what '*kovarny zarubezh*' (insidious abroad) meant (see chapter 'Departure problems')–hostile, unfriendly, dangerous, and therefore ... so attractive! Another expression is '*vrazhy golos*' (enemy voice) (see chapter 'The side effects of emancipation and what is dangerous on Anangula'), meaning the Western radio station (like *Voice of America*, *BBC*, or *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*) which was pouring shortwave anti–Soviet reports on listeners of the USSR.

We are grateful to colleagues who supplied us with photographs from their collections and archives–V. P. Mylnikov, E. A. Okladnikova, B. Frohlich and A. Harper. We sincerely hope that translation of the second part of the first major biography of A. P. Okladnikov will attract scholars and the general public worldwide.

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