

Science and Power in Soviet Russia within the Context of “Big Game”: Mongol-Tibetan Expedition by P.K. Kozlov (1923-1926)

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Abstract: The relevance of the problem under study is in undeveloped completion of “Big Game” issue in Central Asia after the revolutionary events of 1917 in Russia. The activity of P.K. Kozlov, N.M. Przewalski student has been inseparable from the plans concerning the Russian penetration into Mongolia and Tibet 1880s. The study is devoted to the history of the preparation and performance of the last expedition by P.K. Kozlov planned in 1914 but implemented only in 1920s. A historical-genetic and historical-comparative methods were used in the study. This allows you to show that P.K. Kozlov found his place in the changed policy of the Soviet State. The top leaders of the Soviet State were interested in expedition. That is why, there was a conflict between Kozlov, Russian Geographical Society (RGS) and the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS). P.K. Kozlov expedition was conducted at the turn of two historic epochs which may be viewed in the context of relations between the authorities and scientists in the Soviet Union and the changing international environment in Asia. The study materials may be useful for historians dealing with Central Asia issues and the Foreign policy of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, the history of Mongolia, the organization of geographical expeditions.

Key words: P.K. Kozlov, S.A. Kondratyev, Central Asia, Mongolia, Tibet, archeology, ethnography, the “Big Game”, scientific journey, geographic expedition, Russian geographical society, the Russian Academy of Sciences

INTRODUCTION

During the period of 1850-1910s, the highest political and military activity of Russia in Central Asia was stated. She was associated with the geopolitical confrontation between the United Kingdom and the Russian Empire (“Big Game”) and with the objective needs of Central Asia study, the Altai and the Tibetan Plateau. One of the most important trends of Russian studies was the Tibetan one, the apologist of which was N.I. Przewalski (Sergeev, 2012). His disciple and follower P.K. Kozlov, unlike Przewalski was the supporter of “peaceful expansion” of Russia. At that P.K. Kozlov was involved in “Big Game” personally to a much greater extent than any other Russian researcher of Central Asia. The opposition to the Russian presence in Tibet during this period reached its peak, so neither N.M. Przewalski nor P.K. Kozlov or even N.K. Roerich were never able to visit Lhasa.

In 1921, the People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs (RSFSR) took a number of steps to establish diplomatic and trade relations with Mongolia, Xinjiang and Tibet, at that P. Kozlov, as one of the few existing specialists with good connections within the Tibetan elite, proved to be very demanded by Soviet power (Andreev and Yusupov,

2003). Kozlov proposed a new power an expedition project which was approved by the government of the USSR as a “Tibetan” one but since it was impossible to arrive in Tibet all plans were changed to Mongolia. It managed to achieve a huge success Archaeology. Here, we managed to achieve great success in archeology (Kondratyev, 2006). Despite the great success P.K. Kozlov believed the expedition to be failed as he could not implement the covenants of N.M. Przewalski and did not reach the inaccessible parts of central Tibet. In 1927, Kozlov began to plan a new Tibetan expedition but faced with a change in policy and the opposition of the Peoples Commissariat and OGPU (Andreev and Yusupov, 2001, 2013).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study of geographical expedition history was carried out at three levels: the history of geographical discoveries, the history of Foreign policy and the research of socio-cultural aspects. The study of the Mongolian-Tibetan expedition by P.K. Kozlov (1923-1926) is extremely labored almost due to the fact that the original travel magazines were inaccessible to researchers for a long time (Andreev and Yusupov, 2003).

The use of diaries as a historical source has its own specifics: the diary genre involves a close relation of science, business, personal and even intimate notes. Here, a historian researcher is forced to use the methods of literary text analysis. Historical-genetic, historical and comparative methods were mainly used in this study which allowed to imagine the events in complex at their combination, taking into account the historical context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study shall review the historical context of the Mongolian-Tibetan expedition. Beginning from 1860s, there was a number of outstanding expeditions in Mongolia led by V.V. Radlov, A.M. Pozdnev, N.M. Przewalski, V.L. Kotvich, B.J. Vladimirtsov, etc., (Kulganek, 2006). P.K. Kozlov (1863-1935) took part in the 2nd Tibetan expedition by Przewalski and fully assimilated its extensively-descriptive method of route reconnaissance which was always applied in his own expeditions (Kozlov, 1963).

Political context of P.K. Kozlov expeditions till 1917:

During the period 1883-1926, P.K. Kozlov made six big expeditions, three of which were headed by him. His first trip was an independent Mongolian-Kama expedition (1899-1901). It was a big comprehensive event during which about 10,000 km were mapped, large ranges in the Eastern and Central Tibet were mapped (Zhitomirsky, 1989). The next expedition was the Mongol-Sichuan expedition (1907-1909). It was a landmark for the archeology of the 20th century: in South Gobi on the banks of the river Edzin-Gol the team headed by P. Kozlov discovered an abandoned capital of the Tangut State (Xth-XIVth centuries) Named Hara-Hoto. There P.K. Kozlov discovered an intact medieval library containing thousands of manuscripts and printed books in Tangut, Chinese and Uighur. The materials were transported to St. Petersburg and kept there to this day, at that only Tangut fund makes >6000 units of storage (Kychanov, 2002). Researches are working still with the collection of books and manuscripts from Hara-Hoto (Gorbacheva and Kychanov, 1963; Menshikov, 1984; Kychanov and Arakawa, 2006). For the first time, the downstreams of Edzin-Gol and the lakes Sogo Nur and Nur-Gashun were investigated. A lot of works was performed on the Kukunor Lake (Qinghai) and in the northeastern part of the Tibetan Plateau-Amdo (Yusupova, 2014).

Back in 1905 in the capital of Mongolia Urga (now Ulan Bator), the meeting with the Dalai Lama XIIIth occurred where the Tibetan ruler fled because of the

British invasion in Lhasa. In 1909, there was their second meeting, the development of intimate relations between Kozlov and Dalai Lama was important in terms of Russian-Tibetan relations development (Yusupova, 2014).

In 1914, P.K. Kozlov planned a new Mongolian-Tibetan expedition, whose purpose was the additional study of Khara-Hoto ruins. Then, he had to find and map the origins of the three great rivers of Asia, the Salween, the Yangtze and the Mekong. The expedition did not take place because of the First World War (Andreev and Yusupov, 2003).

P.K. Kozlov, the October revolution of 1917 and the Soviet power:

P.K. Kozlov was demanded by Soviet power. Already in November 1917, the traveler was appointed as the Commissioner of Academy of Sciences to manage the Zoo Askania-Nova. The continuity of new power tasks was a very clear hear, P.K. Kozlov before the war and the revolution welcomed the quick nationalization of the first nature reserve of Russia (Gatiuk, 2014). In 1920, P. Kozlov published the book named "Tibet and the Dalai Lama", in December of the same year People's commissariat for education and the RGO Commissariat sent him to Siberia to restore the relations with the local branches of the geographical society (Andreev and Yusupov, 2001).

The conflict of the soviet government, the Russian geographical society and the russian academy of sciences around the equipment of tibetan expedition:

On 22 August 1922, P. Kozlov held his speech at the meeting of the Russian geographical society which raised the issue of carrying out the failed expedition of 1914 on the same route and the same program. A two-step operation was proposed: the first; one new archaeological excavations in Hara-Hoto, after their completion archaeologists had to return to Russia and geographers, led by Kozlov had to move into the Valley Tsaidam, arrange a weather station there and depending on the time of year to spent winter or just go to the Tibetan Plateau to search the origins of Asian rivers (Andreev and Yusupov, 2013). RGS management, interested in the return of its former prestige sent a petition to the Council of People's Commissars on 27 September. The people's commissariat of Foreign affairs was also interested in the Tibetan expedition. On January 26, 1923 Gosplan ordered to give 100,000 rubles to conduct an expedition (half in the Chinese silver currency, the other half in Soviet gold money). There was a scandal during the organization of the expedition: P.K. Kozlov bypassed the Commission on expeditions at the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), the means

provided by government far exceeded the entire budget of the Academy in 1923. Therefore, the management of RAS recognized the Russian Academy of Sciences expedition as an “untimely” one. However, the Kozlov’s expedition was important for the policy of the Soviet State so on February 27, 1923 People’s Commissars of the expedition found the expedition appropriate for a term of 3 years and it was funded from the state budget (Andreev and Yusupov, 2003). The political background of the Kozlov’s expedition was openly reported in the press of that time (Kozlov, 1963).

It took about 3 months to prepare for expedition. The following route was determined: Urga, Hara, Hoto, Ganzhou, Nanshan, Tsaidam, Tibetan Plateau, Mur-us River, Lhasa. The expeditionary group comprised 21 man including the wife of the expedition head. Most of the team members were very young men with no field experience and academic qualifications. This was due to the fact that Kozlov has consistently used the method of Przewalski when a universally educated and experienced head required mainly the people for his plans implementation (Andreev and Yusupov, 2013).

A few days prior to the expedition departure (June 29), the PCFA did not give passports for two participants without stating the reason. Then, there was an order from Moscow that the expedition will be accompanied by a political commissar. By the personal order from F. Dzerzhinsky and I. Stalin Buryat joined the expedition B. Muharayna (the employee of the Comintern in the Far East) and Lama Erdeniev recommended by an authorized representative of Tibet in Russia A. Dorjiev (Andreev and Yusupov, 2001).

Socio cultural and political context of the Mongolian-Tibetan expedition “tug of war” between the government and scientists: The team arrived in Urga on October 1, 1923, it was required to obtain a protection document and Foreign passports from Beijing for a stay in the Chinese territory. However, on October 21 OGPU withdrew three members from the expedition, including a senior assistant of the head. At the same time, the second expedition to Tibet under the S.S. Borisov’s guidance (Commissariat officer) was prepared. In summer of 1924, the expedition was able to reach Lhasa safely (Andreev and Yusupov, 2013). The winter of 1923 began early, the provision of caravan consisted of 60 camels demanded 5,000 rubles in gold. On November 27, Sovnarkom ordered to postpone the start for an indefinite term and return to Moscow. P.K. Kozlov proposed to leave the whole expedition in Mongolia until next year, citing all financial considerations in the telegram dated on November 28, the sale or lease of 60 camels in winter was equal to the loss of half of their value.

Expedition members were working while waiting S.A. Kondratiev, the nephew of the composer A.S. Arensky became the senior assistant of the head and began to study the folk music of the Mongols. At that time Kozlov communicated with an outstanding researcher of Central Asia, the Swede S. Hedin (Kondratiev, 2006). In January 1924, Urga was visited by the Soviet ambassador A.N. Vasilyev who told Kozlov that Moscow decided to cancel the expedition. The expedition was able to resume but Moscow withdrew three more of its members. A positive aspect in all this was the replacement of the political commissar. At the last moment, OGPU gave the political leadership to the Soviet ambassador in Mongolia (Andreev and Yusupov, 2013).

In 1924, Kozlov at the suggestion of the Mongolian scholar Committee (the future Mongolian Academy of Sciences) sent S.A. Kondratiev to a “scientific tour” to survey the mounds in the Noin-Ula within 100 km to the North from Urga where the tomb of an ancient princess located according to legends. The excavations have brought a sensation, the permafrost preserved an intact tomb of Hun aristocracy which preserved woolen and silk fabrics, Chinese lacquer ware, women braids, equestrian decoration items (I century AD). The discoveries were immediately published in the newspaper “Izvestia”, the Mongolian-Tibetan expedition was suddenly in the focus of public attention. Academy immediately sent the specialists and archaeologists from the Hermitage and Russian Museum to Mongolia but they arrived in Urga by the end of the season September 19, 1924. Since, the conflict between Kozlov and the Academy of Sciences re-escalated (the Academy accused him of despotism and incompetence) the head of the expedition went to Leningrad in December (Kondratiev, 2006).

The most important issue for P.K. Kozlov was the transfer of work in Tibet. A personal meeting with G.V. Chicherin showed that the commissariat is not interested in such an expedition: there was a revolution and a civil war in China, the political situation in Tibet was extremely unfavorable due to the position of the United Kingdom. However, Kozlov managed to persuade the Commissar to appeal Beijing for the expedition work permit (Kondratiev, 2006). At the beginning of April 1926, Kozlov returned to Urga where he divided the team into two groups. The first one was sent to the Mongolian Altai and in Hara-Hoto from there. Kozlov moved to Southern Khangai. Here, his group worked for about 5 months. The season ended in November 1926 but then Chinese passports and safe conducts arrived in Beijing at last but there were no funds to travel in Tibet.

The results of the expedition. Historiography: The main results of the Mongol-Tibetan expedition were formulated by P.K. Kozlov as follows:

- Opening of the Hun tombs in Noin-Ula
- About 3,500 km is mapped with the hypsometric shooting
- The mountains, steppes and deserts up to Hara-Hoto are studied
- Steppe lakes with their flora and fauna are explored, the depths are measured
- Meteorological studies were conducted for 3 year
- Zoological and other collections were gathered
- Ethnographic observations and additional excavations in Hara-Hoto were conducted (Murzaev, 1949)

According to the research materials of expedition a collective monograph on the Trans-Baikaland the Gobi ornithology appeared as the first one in 1930. Since 1963, the publications of the series “Plants of Central Asia” are issued, many publications of which are based on the gatherings of P.K. Kozlov expedition. The botanical gatherings by P.K. Kozlov are still used by the Botanical Institute of Russian Academy of Sciences. According to the data of 1937, the collection materials of P.K. Kozlov were claimed by 102 specialists who published 200 specialized scientific papers. By 2014, this number rose dramatically (Yusupova, 2014).

Noinulinsky discoveries marked a new era in the archaeological study of Turkic inhabitants of Central Asia, in particular, the Huns. Since 2006, excavations in the Noin-Ula are performed by Russian-Mongolian archaeological expedition based on the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences base in Novosibirsk (Yusupova, 2014).

The travel diaries by Kozlov (1949, 2003) were presented in five books and comprised 1099 pages. They were published in severely censored form in 1949 in the “Notes of the All-Union Geographical Society”. It was a retelling of the diary content with large gaps, all the vicissitudes of the struggle for the continuation of the expedition were missed, only “pure science” remained, which was the only one possible in the political environment of the late 1940s. The full edition of diaries with comments was published only in 2003.

CONCLUSION

The history of the last Tibetan expedition performed by P.A. Kozlov is not fully understood until now. It is a

unique sociocultural phenomenon, it was the last classic expedition formed and conducted in accordance with the methods more typical of the “Big Game” era. Its preparation and conduct was the part of a large agreement between OGPU and the PCFA, whose plans were actively intervened also by the Soviet government, the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Russian Geographical Society which tried to play an independent role at that time. Only due to accidentally opened Noin-ulinsky mounds the expedition brought an international sensation and was crowned with a scientific success.

The expedition by P.K. Kozlov was conducted at the turn of two historic epochs that may be viewed in the context of relations between the authorities and the scientific world and in the context of changing international situation. The conflict between the RGS and the RAS, arose due to the preparation of the Tibetan expedition also has two dimensions. First of all, it illustrates the position with the state funding of sciences in Russia during the early 1920s. Secondly, it shows the change of scientific paradigm which made the leading specialists of RAS demand a higher quality level of geographical and archaeological studies and the change of methods. Under the conditions of Soviet Russia, it was impossible to avoid the specific political context and not by chance all dispute actors addressed directly to the Kremlin for a corresponding resolution.

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