

**PART II: A GLANCE AT KOREAN CULTURE AND SOCIOLOGY
(IN MEMORIAM OF PROF. ALEXANDAR FEDOTOV, 1956–2018,
FOUNDER OF KOREAN STUDIES IN BULGARIA)**



A TRIBUTE TO PROF. ALEXANDER FEDOTOV (1956–2018)

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“A young man passed by me, running towards the subway exit, rushed forward and suddenly fell down” – this is the way a witness described the last minutes of Professor Alexander Fedotov, or Sasha, as most knew him.

He passed away as he lived – darting from one University building to another, changing flights, languages, topics, always seemingly carefree, smiling, ready to help...

He had nothing in common with the traditional persona of a university professor – an elderly person with grey hair, displaying a self-assurance that is not always matched by his reflection in the unbiased eyes of students, who are quickly able to

estimate which teachers are fascinating and which are not; slow-speaking, solemn and inaccessible – a living monument. Prof. Fedotov had nothing in common with this image! He was sociable, affable, easy to communicate with. It is still hard to believe he is no longer with us...

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Korean Studies in Bulgaria: In Memory of Professor Alexander Fedotov.

We were all deeply saddened to hear about the sudden death of Professor Alexander Fedotov (1956–2018). The late professor built a scaffold for Korean studies in Bulgaria. Above all, he was an admirer of Asia who identified himself as such when he said “the whole of Asia is in my heart” in an interview for the Bulgarian magazine *Diplomatic Spectrum* in June 2015. He was born to Russian parents in Novosibirsk, an Asian region of the USSR, in 1956. He married a Bulgarian woman and the couple lived in Bulgaria for many years. He studied Eastern languages and cultures at St. Petersburg State University (formerly Leningrad State University), majoring in Mongolian studies and with a minor in Tibetology. Mongolia was the first Asian country he visited; he was still a student then. For his dedication to the development of relations between Bulgaria and Mongolia, in May 2015 the Mongolian government awarded him the “Order of the Polar Star,” the highest honor of the country, on the occasion of the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and Mongolia.

Professor Fedotov received a doctoral degree in philological sciences from Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. He was fluent in Asian languages, including Korean, Mongolian and Tibetan. Before joining the faculty at Sofia University in 1981 as an assistant professor of Eastern literatures and cultures, he worked for Sofia Press as a translator and editor, and at the same time began teaching Mongolian and Tibetan as a part-time instructor. During his tenure at Sofia University (where he advanced from assistant to full professor, 1981–2018), he held various academic and administrative positions, such as deputy dean of the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology, director of the Center for Eastern Languages and Cultures, and head of the Department of Languages and Cultures of East Asia. He also served as deputy rector of Sofia University (2001–2007), and contributed to off-campus national activities in higher education as a member of the Council for Higher Education (2002–2018)

and Chairman of the Supreme Attestation Commission of the Bulgarian government (2009–2012).

As to his passion and affection for Korean society and culture, I am confident in saying that, to the very end of his life, he was fully devoted to establishing and building Korean studies in Bulgaria. He created the Department of Korean Studies at Sofia University, the largest such department in the European region. He served for a long period as director of the Korean Studies Center at Sofia University (2003–2018) and director of the Institute Sejong in Sofia (2013–2018). He played a key role in the foundation of the Institute Sejong at Sofia University campus in October 2013, created with the support of King Sejong Institute Foundation in Korea. Inaugurated in October 2012 by the Korean government, the aim of this Foundation is to provide a standardized model of Korean language education curriculum and to disseminate Korean culture all over the world.

Professor Fedotov published numerous monographs, articles and translations, dealing with Asian societies. He is the author of more than 40 books. More than 20 of his books, as well as many of his studies and articles, have been published in more than 25 countries. As for his writings dealing with Korean language, literature and society, we can list at least five monographs and 22 research articles, among others. He covered a wide range of topics in this area. The Yonhap News Agency in Korea reported in January 2007 that Professor Fedotov had published a book entitled *The History of Korean Classical Literature in Bulgaria*. The agency also reported he had spent two years translating the book, supported in this by a grant from the Daesan Foundation. In 2017, he was again selected by the Foundation to be the recipient of a grant for Korean literature studies overseas for his research proposal on “Romance in Korean Classical Poetry.” This work was published as a book in 2018, under the title *The Spirit of Spring*.

Although the major part of the Korean studies conducted by Professor Fedotov was focused on traditional folklore and classical literature, he was also very much interested in Korean culture and society in a broader context. During the period 2013–2015, the professor and his research team examined numerous archival materials stored in the Bulgarian State Archives concerning the relationship between the People’s Republic of Bulgaria and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

(North Korea), and later, the relationship between the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the Republic of Bulgaria. In 2015, he and his team published a book on the history of Korea from 1945 to 1953. The book was first published abroad by Sofia University Press.

Shortly before his death, Professor Fedotov was implementing a five-year project devoted to a comparison between Bulgarian and Korean cultures and societies. In a similar historical perspective on Bulgaria and Korea, he attempted to examine the period when the Bulgarian state was restored after the country's liberation from Ottoman rule in 1878, comparing it with the liberation of the Korean state from Japanese rule in 1945, notwithstanding the time gap between the two cases. For this research project, he maintained scholarly networks with Sungkyungwan University and the Academy of Korean Studies in Korea.

In a chapter entitled "A Bulgarian View of the Republic of Korea", written for the collection *Korea in Eastern Europe: Perceptions and Cultural Connections* published by the University of Vienna, Austria, in 2015, he overviewed the Bulgarian-Korean relationships in the political, economic and cultural domains since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1990. He wrote that "The most attractive point for students and professors was not just to learn another Eastern language, but to understand Korean culture, history and literature as a whole"; in closing, he wrote, "I would like to stress that the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Korea has given us a mutual chance to open a Korean studies program in Sofia and a Bulgarian studies program in Seoul. Through this educational and cultural cooperation, our two nations have a real chance to understand each other in a meaningful way." I believe this was exactly what Professor Fedotov had always dreamed of. He died on October 28, 2018. He will be long remembered by his colleagues, friends and students as a genuine scholar, an inspiring educator and a caring mentor with a warm heart and academic enthusiasm.

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Sasha Fedotov came close to the rather superficial but still vivid notion of a "Renaissance Man": a man nearing perfection, harmoniously combining to the highest degree in-depth scientific work and creativity in the widest sense. A person

outside of time, ageless, for whom his professional work was inseparable from his favorite occupation. Such rare people are bewildering and strange in any epoch – in the past they would have been fervently followed or fiercely persecuted, proclaimed prodigies or witches; monuments to them would be erected or demolished, admired or condemned. Our present day, with its TV channels, Internet and comfortable means of overseas travel, has made the *hoi polloi*¹ believe that knowledge about everything is easily obtainable – with only a click of the computer mouse. This age challenges the individual who is distinct, more capable, with a far above average level of knowledge. It is an age of false heroes and authorities, when an ignoramus may overnight be raised to star status by *Gogglebox* and the yellow press, while the really intelligent person seems suspicious, is easily misjudged and brought down. Bulgaria is certainly a place where brilliance and intelligence have seldom been recognized: there are numerous examples of poets, musicians, artists, and born leaders who were blackened by ugly calumny. And when such a person is a foreigner to boot, that is simply too much...

The contribution of Russian scientists to Bulgarian science, taking only Sofia University as an example, is outstanding. These people of enormous, world-level potential, in science and in all domains of culture, came from Russia to Bulgaria following diverse paths. However, “in fact, these are ‘waves’ of an ocean – Russia, and their ‘coast’ is the same – Bulgaria”, as Sergey Rozhkov (who also “embarked” from Russia for Bulgaria) has aptly put it (Russian emigration..., 2006: 6). Fleeing wars and revolution, these aristocrats became refugees. They were inspired by the passion to help a closely related nation, or in some cases by a great love in their lives. As for their later fate in the new motherland – some became victims of the political upheavals, were dismissed from work, exiled, even jailed, deprived of retirement benefits; their contribution was contested, rejected; they were labelled “foreigners”, and forgotten. We can hardly imagine modern Bulgarian sociology without the contribution of Ivan G. Kinkel (1883–1945), an economist and sociologist, one of the founders and first president (1932–1938) of the Bulgarian Scientific and Sociological Society, who created a theory on cyclical economic development (see, for example, Bogatzky 2015; Dimitrova 2017); or the less known Vladimir N. Rennenkampf (1862–1925), professor of law at the Imperial Novorossiia University and professor of law and

sociology at Sofia University after his immigration to Bulgaria, where he fled from the Russian Civil War.

It is hard to even enumerate all those who made significant contribution in various fields of science, such as Porfiry I. Bakhmetiev (1860–1913), founder of the Department of Experimental Physics, of university education and research in physics in Bulgaria, biologist, entomologist, and researcher in anabiosis; P. M. Bitsilli (1879–1953), historian of art and literature; P. M. Bogaevski (1866–1929), lawyer, one of the founders of the Free University in Sofia; V. P. Vorobyov (1876–1937), founder of the Department of Anatomy at Sofia University, which later became part of the Medical Academy²; the theologian and exegete N. N. Glubokovski (1863–1937), the last Rector of the Imperial University of St. Petersburg; the historian Professor Erwin D. Grimm (1870–1940); S. S. Demostenov (1886–1966), economist, with innovative contributions to the theory of money; N. M. Dilevski (1904–2001), historian, philologist, founder of Russian Studies in Bulgaria; Mykhailo P. Drahomanov (1841–1895), political theorist, economist, historian, philosopher, ethnographer and public figure; Vasily V. Zavyalov (1873–1930), physiologist; Vsevolod V. Zavyalov (1895–1965), chemist and physiologist; Nikodym P. Kondakov (1844–1925), art historian and an expert in the history of Russian icon painting; P. N. Milyukov (1859–1943), historian and public figure; V. A. Myakotin, historian; Mikhail G. Popruzhenko (1866–1944), a philologist and expert in Slavic studies, paleographer and literary historian; Mikhail Posnov (1873–1931), historian of Orthodox Christianity; Georgy E. Rhein (1854–1942), obstetrician-gynaecologist and a Russian public figure; A. P. Rozhdestvensky (1864–1930), a Russian Orthodox biblical scholar, theologian, archpriest of the Russian Orthodox Church, professor of Old Testament studies at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy and at the Theological Faculty of Sofia University; I. P. Sozonovich (1855–1923), Russian scientist and politician, professor in the Department of History of Western European Literature, organizer of the Warsaw Department of the Russian Assembly, member of the State Duma, Secretary of the Duma; Prince Nikolai S. Trubetskoy (1890–1938), linguist and historian, founder of the Prague School of structural linguistics and morphology, associated with Russian Eurasianism; Nikolay N. Glubokovsky, founder of New Testament theology in Bulgaria; Yaroslav Tagamlitzky (1917–1983), mathematician, head of the differential and integral calculus Department at Sofia University. An impressive number of Russian medical doctors and professors of medicine immigrated to Bulgaria; they include I. F. Shapshal, author of the first Bulgarian textbook on anatomy (1,500 pages); Alexey E. Yanishevski, neurologist; Professor S. S. Abramov (1875–1945), internationally renowned for his works in general pathology and pathological anatomy,

bacteriology, immunology; Alexander Mankovsky, one of the founders of the Department of Histology and Embryology at the Medical Academy of Sofia; N. M. Popov, psychiatrist and neurosurgeon; the professors S. Abramov, D. D. Krylov, A. K. Medvedev, A. M. Cherekov, and many more.

Professor Alexander Fedotov (1956–2018) indisputably has a place in this impressive list of Russian-born intellectuals who found a new homeland in Bulgaria, and worked in fields of science that were new to this country. His coming to Bulgaria in the second half of 1970s was both a personal choice – he followed the love of his life Snezhana, a Bulgarian woman he had met at the entrance of the university building at University Quay on Vasilyevsky Island, which housed the Departments of Philology and Oriental Studies in what was then Leningrad State University. It is certainly one of the most wonderful places in the world – on the bank of the river Neva, just opposite to the magnificent St. Isaac’s Cathedral. The love between the beautiful dark-haired Southern woman, and the blond Northerner from Siberia, was to last forever. But their decision to settle in Bulgaria was made under circumstances characteristic of the times. Notwithstanding that the USSR and Bulgaria were closest allies in the Warsaw Pact and the Communist bloc, a Bulgarian was still regarded as a foreigner, a stranger, and why not a potential foe. At that time, Stephan E. Nikolov wrote in a letter, which was to thereafter mark his whole life, “In the USSR] no matter if you are Bulgarian or American, you are a foreign citizen, with all the ensuing consequences”. During those years, citizens were deprived of the right to travel and privacy. Upon his graduation, Fedotov received his first appointment – as an interpreter to the Staff of the Soviet troops in Mongolia. The only condition was that he had to break his relation with the “foreign citizen”. He preferred to be with Snezhana, a personal choice that resulted in an asset for Bulgarian Oriental Studies.

Alexander Fedotov was not, properly speaking, an émigré as defined in sociological or legal classifications; moreover, he did not belong to any specific group or wave of immigration. But he is, without any doubt, an excellent example of those intellectuals of Russian origin who, for some reason or other, joined the Bulgarian academic community and made an immense contribution to Bulgarian science and culture.

Understandably, in Bulgaria – which had been part of the Ottoman Empire,

and located close to the Middle East, now called “Near East” in Bulgarian – Ottoman Studies, followed by Arabic Studies, was almost all that existed under the heading of Oriental Studies at Sofia University. Here, again, a relatively strict pattern of “division of labor” was imposed – just as in the economy and in all other social domains.

The specialty of Turkish Philology was established at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski in 1952; this graduate level philological specialty in an Eastern language is currently the specialty of Turkic Studies (Turkology). From 1964, Arabic philology also became a major subject, the second one in the Eastern Philology Faculty, after which the Faculty split into two departments; Arabic philology later became a separate unit of the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology, now called Arabic Studies. The third Eastern philology major, Indology, was opened in 1983, based on the course in Hindi that had been read for years at Sofia University; that same year, the specialty was moved to a separate building, the present home of the Center for Eastern Languages and Cultures (CIEK), so named and founded in 1985. The first director of the Center was Prof. Dr Emil Boev (1932–2013), a prominent Bulgarian Turkic Studies expert. The specialty Japanese studies became a regular university degree program in 1990, and the specialty Chinese studies was established in 1991. Until then, the latter two languages had been taught in occasional courses and in the framework of postgraduate specializations (and they still are at present).

In the 1993/1994 academic year, the specialty Iranian Studies was established; before that, the earlier Persian language, Farsi, had been taught in occasional lecture courses. The specialties Korean Studies and Armenian Philology were established in 1995, with which the number of Eastern disciplines reached eight.

In the year 2000, the new structure of the CIEK was established, consisting of four departments: Turkic and Altaic studies (specialty Turkish Studies), Arabic studies and Semitology (with a major in Arabic studies), Classic East (with 3 majors: Indology, Iranian Studies, and Armenian Philology), and the Department of Languages and Cultures of East Asia (with 3 majors: Japanese, Chinese, and Korean studies). In 2009, the curriculum of the specialty Armenian Philology underwent changes: in the academic year 2009/2010, the specialty was renamed Armenian studies and Caucasian studies. Since the spring of 2010, by a decision of the Academic Council

of Sofia University, Korean studies became a separate department. Thus, the departments became five: Turkic and Altaic studies (specialty Turkology), Arabic studies and Semitology (with Arabic studies as a major), Classic East (with three majors: Indology, Iranian Studies, and Armenian & Caucasian studies), Languages and Cultures of East Asia (with two majors: Japanese and Chinese studies)³ and the new Chair of Korean studies (specialty Korean studies). By decision of the Academic Council of Sofia University, a new inter-Chairs Bachelor program covering South, East and South-East Asia was established in January 2013.

We have presented in detail the short, but eventful history of the Center for Eastern Languages and Cultures, because all the changes listed above were conceived and promoted by Prof. Fedotov. Coming to Sofia, this recently graduated Russian who had specialized in Mongolian and Tibetan, two languages that were nearly unknown in Bulgaria, first supported his family by making translations, including translations for the Sofia Press Agency, a publishing house of Bulgarian magazines and literature in foreign languages. There he met a like-minded Bulgarian, Tsvetanka Tafrajjiyska (1941–1980), the first graduate of Ulan Bator University, an amazing scholar who had much to contribute to Eastern studies as well as to research on the mysterious origin of the Bulgarians. She became his tutor and “guru”, and introduced him at the faculty in Sofia University. Later he started developing completely new areas of Eastern Studies in Bulgaria, expanding its frontiers far beyond those of the original Oriental Studies. When a Bulgarian journalist referred to him as the “Columbus of Eastern Studies in Bulgaria”, he was not exaggerating. As an academic, Fedotov was both typical and untypical; he was both mainstream and heterodox; and his students adored him. He was an undeniable authority in a vast academic area, with fluent command of several East Asian languages, including their ancient and colloquial forms, and with a deep knowledge of the history, culture and society of this immense geographical region. The first striking thing one noticed about him was how surprisingly well he spoke Bulgarian, without a trace of Russian accent – something rare for Russians, even after they have lived for decades in Bulgaria. The second thing one noticed when talking to him was that he would use the phrase “we Bulgarians” without hesitation. He was an adamant traveler, ever seeking new sights and looking for inspiring relics. As a person, he was an exceptionally virtuous and honest man,

appealing but not snobbish, inclined to cooperation and willing to lend support. He possessed a very necessary quality for an academic in the 21st century – proficiency at fund raising for the university and for his various projects. The Sofia embassies of Asian countries considered him a man close to the highest levels of wisdom – perhaps because he was delicate and subtle in his words and deeds.

Main works of Prof. Alexander Fedotov

Korean Society Today. Proceedings of the International Conference on Korean Studies, Sofia March 9, 2018 (compiled by Alexander Fedotov, Kim So-young). Sofia, St. Kliment Ohridski University Publishing House.

Didactic Tradition in Tibetan Poetry (in Bulgarian). Sofia, St. Kliment Ohridski University Publishing House.

Spirit of the Spring (in Bulgarian). Sofia, Publisher: Kameya.

I want to ask the Moon Korean landscape lyrics (in Bulgarian, 2008). Sofia, Publishers: Kameya, Simolini 94.

History of classical Korean literature (in Bulgarian, 2006). Sofia, St. Kliment Ohridski University Publishing House.

History of Korea (in Bulgarian). Koreana Library series. Sofia, St. Kliment Ohridski University Publishing House.

History of Korea (1905–1953). Sofia, St. Kliment Ohridski University Publishing House.

Korea. Korean regional studies. (in Bulgarian). Sofia, St. Kliment Ohridski University Publishing House.

Korea. Korean regional studies (in Bulgarian). Koreana series. Sofia, Publisher: Shambhala.

Korea in Our Eyes. Collection of scientific reports and studies. (in Bulgarian). Ed. By Alexander Fedotov et. al. Sofia, Publisher: Kameya.

Classical Korean poetry. (in Bulgarian, 2001). Sofia, Excel-M.

Confucian Recluse. (in Bulgarian, 2012). Sofia, Simolini. *Korean and Altaian Mythology*, (in Bulgarian, 1999). Sofia, Excel-M.

- Korean Buddhism in Central and East Asia.* (in Bulgarian, 2007). In: Korea – the Heart of Asia. Sofia, St. Kliment Ohridski University Publishing House.
- The Landscape a la Korean* (in Bulgarian, 2005). In: 10 years Korean Studies at St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University. Sofia, Ex-M.
- Traditional Korean Culture* (in Bulgarian, 1999). Sofia, Excel-M.
- The Smile of the Buddha. Buddhist Motifs in Classical Korean Poetry.* Sofia, Zachary Stoyanov Publishing House, 2001.
- Moon in the Well.* Introduction to the Korean literary studies (in Bulgarian). Koreana series. Sofia, Publisher: Shambhala.
- Society, Economy and Culture in Bulgaria and Korea after Liberation.* Conference proceedings. (in Bulgarian). Ed. By Alexander Fedotov et. al. Sofia, Publisher: Kameya.
- A Mirror of the Heart* (in Bulgarian). (in Bulgarian). Sofia, St. Kliment Ohridski University Publishing House.
- First National Symposium in Korean Studies,* Sofia, 1996. Proceedings (in Bulgarian). Ed. By Alexander Fedotov et. al. Koreana series. Sofia, Publisher: Shambhala.
- Countries of East Asia – Relationships and Interaction.* Conference proceedings (in Bulgarian). Ed. By Alexander Fedotov et. al. Sofia, Publisher: Kameya.
- The Secret History of the Mongols.* With a essay by Alexander Fedotov. Translation from Old Mongolian by Alexander Fedotov. (in Bulgarian). Sofia, Publisher: RIVA
- The Secret History of the Mongols. A Study.* (in Bulgarian). Sofia, Publishing House “New Civilization”.
- Tibetan Sakya Pandita.* A comment on translated Tibetan text (in Bulgarian). Sofia, Publisher: East-West.
- The Reprimand of the Tiger.* Allegory in Medieval Korean prose (in Bulgarian, 2015). Sofia, Publisher: Kameya.

Courses read: *Old Korean Literature; Medieval Korean Literature; Korean Culture; Buddhism in Asia; Korean Mythology; Korean Folklore; Comparative Altaic and Korean Mythology; Symbolism in East Asian Poetry; East Asian Mythology; Poetic Symbolism in East Asian Poetry.*

Notes

1 (from Greek) the masses; the general populace; the common people, commoners, commons, crowd, herd, mass, millions, mob, multitude, people, plebeians, plebs, populace, public, rank and file. Derogatory, an antonym to elite. This phrase comes originally from the famous Funeral Oration, delivered by Pericles, an eminent Athenian politician, at the end of the first year of the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC) as a part of the annual public funeral for the fallen in the war (see Thucydides). There it was actually applied in a positive way. Today it is generally used by people who think of themselves as superior – “avoid mixing with the hoi polloi” – though it is also at times used in Pericles’ democratic spirit.

2 Vorobyov, after receiving a personal letter from Lenin, returned to Russia to become head of the department of anatomy at Kharkov University. He took part in the embalming of Lenin’s corpse. He became an academician of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, and is considered the founder of the Soviet anatomical school.

3 From the Spring of 2018, by a decision of the Academic Council of Sofia University, Chinese and Japanese studies within the Department of Languages and Cultures of East Asia were divided into separate departments.

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