



HOKKAIDO UNIVERSITY

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BOOK REVIEWS

ROSHIA GENSHO NENDAIKI [THE RUSSIAN PRIMARY CHRONICLE]. Translated and annotated by *Tetsuo Kunimoto, Iwao Yamaguchi, Naoki Chujo et al.*, Nagoya : Nagoya University Press, 1987, 581+61 pp. ¥10,000.

It may safely be said that in the field of area studies the publication in translation of fundamental historical literature of an area is of vital importance.

The Russian Primary Chronicle which is known also under the name of the *The Nestor's Chronicle* or *The Tale of Bygone Years* was for the first time rendered into Japanese in 1943. Through this work, reprinted over and over again, Yoshitaro Yokemura, the translator, came to be recognized as the pioneer scholar of Old Russian philology in this country. The original text used by Y. Yokemura was an abridged edition of the Chronicle put into Modern Russian with commentaries by V. Panov (Moscow-Leningrad, "Academia", 1936).

The book reviewed here is, on the contrary, a complete translation based on the second edition (1926) of the first volume of *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej* (Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles), i. e., the Laurentian redaction of *The Tale of Bygone Years*. Apart from being complete, it has some distinctive features which may be summarized as follows.

First, the work was carried out collectively. The list of collaborators contains 19 names. All of them, having academic positions in Kyoto or its environs, belong to a research group called *Nihon Kodai Roshia Kenkyukai* (Japanese Association for the Study of Old Russia), the secretariat of which is now located at Nagoya University. The group was organized at the beginning of the sixties by five scholars who soon began publishing installments of the translation of the Primary Chronicle in their mimeographed bulletin *Kodai Roshia Kenkyu* (Study of Old Russia) No. 1-11, 1962-1977. For the present publication, however, the former translation was thoroughly revised and has assumed quite a new aspect : the principle of verbatim, pseudo-archaic rendering was abandoned for the sake of readability. Moreover, the compromising half-measures so often found in collective works are, in my opinion, cleverly avoided and artistic flavor is not sacrificed to scientific accuracy. In a word, the general public as well as students with a special interest in Russia are now enabled to read in standard Japanese a Russian history written nine hundred years ago.

Secondly, the translated text is accompanied by detailed, scrupulous commentaries. Quantitatively the latter even surpasses the former. This shows that the translators were well-versed in the enormous literature on this greatest Russian classic, among which obviously the most useful to them were S. H. Cross and O. P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor, *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, Cambridge, Mass., 1953, D. S. Likhachev's revision of the text and commentaries in *Povest' vremennykh let* (The Tale of Bygone Years), Moscow-Leningrad, 1950, and commentaries by I. P. Eremin and D. S. Likhachev in *Khudozhestvennaya proza Kievskoj Rusi XI-XIII vv.* (The Artistic Prose of Kievan Russia of the XI-XIII Centuries), Moscow, 1957. It must be admitted that the great bulk of explanation was necessitated by the unfamiliarity of the Japanese reading public with the history of Christianity and Old Europe. Thus, for example, more than half a page each is spared for Moses and Constantine I.

Thirdly, the precise genealogical tables and indexes appended to the book deserve special praise. All the princely lines, principal and collateral, are exactly depicted and every prince who is mentioned in the Chronicle even once is given a special sign, a numerical figure or an alphabetical letter or combination ; for example, Ryurik is denoted by (01) and one of his descendants, Vladimir Monomakh, by (D1). The princes, whenever they appear in the text of the Chronicle, bear their designations in parentheses almost like the uniform numbers of football players. This device helps us to avoid getting into the labyrinth of the many princes carrying the same names (during the eleventh century there were four Sviatoslavs and three Davyds), although these designations appearing so repeatedly is rather awkward. The indexes of personal names, geographical names and subjects are not mere repetition of the original Russian text. The subject index especially contains very interesting categories amounting to approximately a thousand in all. These include seasons (spring, summer...), directions (east, west...), divisions of a day (morning, evening...) and kinship terms (mother, father...). Thanks to this index it is now easy to refer to this historical monument from diverse points of view.

All in all, this book is not only the latest but the most successful achievement of philological study of Old Russia in Japan and promises to stimulate further progress in the near future.

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