

Concluding Remarks

Abstract. The concept of “imagology” has recently entered the circulation of humanitarian sciences. Imagology is a scientific discipline with the subject of images of “the Other” (“alien” nations, countries, cultures). Imagology is interdisciplinary in nature: its sources are languages, culture (both mass and elitist), various types of arts, literature, folklore, semiotics, ethnopsychology, ethnology, cultural studies, history, political science and others. Imagology as science studies the dynamic natural image of the foreign culture, which has been historically formed. Studying the materials obtained from these sources and scientific disciplines, imagology seeks to generalize them and develop some common paradigms of the reception of “the Others” in the space of one national consciousness or another. The sources for historical imagology are materials of national history, archival documents, and memoirs.

Keywords. Imagology, Image, Perception, Stereotype, China.

The origins of imagology are as ancient as the history that begins with cultural differentiation, according to the principles of “we” and “they”, “I” and “the Other”, with mutual perception and mutual representations as well as with mutual familiarization. In other words, imagology studies the elements of the cultural unconscious. Imagology is also a new scientific direction, and, therefore, its subject and research methods are not yet completely defined.

Some scholars consider imagology to be a part of historical studies and argue that it should investigate perceptions of other peoples and countries that arose in the public consciousness of a particular nation at a certain historical stage. Sources for historical imagology are usually taken from materials of national and world history. They are archival documents, as well as memoirs, from which information can be obtained on how the representations of one people about another were formed and changed throughout history. Painting, visual arts, and cinematography also reflect perceptions of other cultures contained in artistic forms.

Others, first of all, turn their attention to literary texts. Literary scholars prefer to talk about “artistic imagology”, which is mastered by comparative literary criticism. Unlike historical imagology, the material of which is highly reliable, artistic imagology has a different kind of authenticity: literature, with all its conventions, is able to fully, vividly recreate the atmosphere of human relations; mentality, characters, speech, stereotypes of everyday consciousness are all formed in one national or social environment or another. At the same time, “artistic imagology” requires an interdisciplinary approach, i.e., attracting data from history, cultural studies, ethnopsychology, but also data on national character, lifestyle, behavior, customs, religion, etc.

Cultural anthropologists and sociologists believe that the goal of imagology is to study the ideas of the participants in a cultural dialogue and their perceptions about each other.¹

The ultimate perspective of image studies is a theory of cultural or national stereotypes, not a theory of cultural or national identity. Imagology is concerned with the representamen, representations as textual strategies and as discourse. That discourse implicitly raises a claim of referentiality vis-à-vis empirical reality, telling us that nation X has a set of characteristics Y, yet the actual validity of that referentiality claim is not the imagologist's to verify or falsify. The imagologist's frame of reference is a textual and intertextual one.

1 Joep LEERSSEN: “Imagology: History and method”. In: Manfred BELLER and Joep LEERSSEN (eds.): *Imagology: the Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters; a Critical Survey*, Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi 2007, p. 27.

Researchers who work in the sphere of cultural paradigms have their own point of view of the formation and functioning of images and stereotypes. They presuppose that the ability to understand “uncommon” and “foreign” phenomena and their communication processes is one of the most important problems in the history of culture. On the other hand, cultural anthropologists state that the intention to understand “foreign” culture enables a person to exceed the bounds of his own world and plunge into other cultural spheres. It is very important for the development of his own culture. Nowadays, being influenced by globalization, this statement is becoming more and more *en vogue*.

As for political scientists, the study of the rules according to which the images of “the Other” could be created and introduced into public consciousness is considered the most important task of imagology.

Another group of scholars prefers to study national stereotypes, which are distributed in the ideas of one nation relative to another and have both positive and negative sides. The positive side of national stereotypes is that they, as it were, accumulate and store in short form, with the already existing experience of interethnic communication. The negative side of national stereotypes is known even more as it can be the basis for the development of chauvinism. Thus, the basis of stereotyping is the historical experience of the people and the experience of interaction between the nations. A factor that prompts the cognition and appreciation of any “alien”, “other” culture is often a surprise at an unusual, unfamiliar one. In the context of cultural globalization, the question of how the implementation of perceptions and representations of “strange” nations, and the transformation of these stereotypes (true and false) occur in the mass consciousness should be very acute. In addition, the development of imagological studies is currently associated with the need to promote mutual understanding between peoples and has a definite humanitarian goal.

More recently, philology and cultural anthropology have been added to the variety of human sciences, methods and approaches used in this multidisciplinary endeavor. It is impossible to understand the dynamics, mechanisms and certain ways of how a definite image of a country or a nation forms, or to understand the transformation of that image into a stable stereotype, without applying the data of sciences delineated above.

Scholars usually studying the problem within the framework of psychological paradigms consider the concept of real and imagined images of any nation or ethnic group to be the subject matter of ethnic self-consciousness. On the subject of ethnic stereotypes, one can safely assume they are formed on the basis of ethnic imagery systems; they are generalized, stable, and highly charged; they are composed through historical aspects of interethnic relations; and they regulate their

carriers' perception and way of conduct. A great influence of ethnic stereotypes on interethnic relations is described in many works by modern social psychologists and ethno-psychologists, who mention that ethnic stereotypes reflect cultural and historical peculiarities of parties to ethnic relations: ethnic stereotypes and ethnic auto-stereotypes, while depicting judgment-based and standard components of an ethnos (as a sociocultural system) serves as a driving force for the self-identification in ethnic communities and cultures continuum. Emotive and estimative character of ethnic stereotypes is one of the crucial points. There are three parameters of an ethnic stereotype's emotive and estimative component: ambivalence, expressiveness and target-orientation. These are important characteristics of an ethnic stereotype, because they depict its "imagery". Ethno-psychologists consider stability and rigidity to be another important quality of ethnic stereotypes. However, a degree of relativity to this stability is also recognized.

Ethno-psychologists, while conducting applied research, pay much attention to the formation of ethnic stereotypes and their functioning on the basis of cultural, common and other specific features of an ethnic community determined through the course of history. In this respect, it is noticed that ethnic stereotypes are the components of a national mental makeup and the basis of national self-image formation. At this point, meaningful results in the sphere of development of the concept of ethnic stereotypes have been achieved. Ethnologists declare that ethnic stereotypes have an absolute effect on peoples' behavior and that they can form ethnic antipathies or good feelings, pushing nations apart or pulling them together. They can also predetermine human behavior in any situation.

Russian historian and anthropologist A. S. MYL'NIKOV, while developing an ethnological component of research in imagology and stressing its interdisciplinary nature, comes up with the term "ethnic imagology". Its main components are: 1) The creation of an ethnic/ethnocultural worldview which tends to be different from one nation to another during different historical periods; 2) The study of the formation of ethnic/ethnocultural stereotypes and activities concerning different nations and their representatives; 3) The development of a set of issues connected with researching concepts of national character, ethnic mindset, and phenomena that generate relevant ethnocultural stereotypes. Consequently, the analysis of this set of issues is bound to be carried out by taking account of groupwide sociocultural imagery that usually differs from general ethnical imagery; 4) The examination of the historical memory phenomenon that through an interrelation of ethnic, spatial and diachronic factors secures a continuity of ethnic/ethnocultural traditions from the past into the present and the future.²

2 Aleksandr MYL'NIKOV: "Ėtnicheskaïa imagologiia" (Ethnic imagology). In: *Kur'er Petrovskoi Kunstkamery* (Messenger of Peter's Kunstkamera) 1999, no. 8–9, p. 16.

According to the concept of A. S. MYL'NIKOV, the main branches of ethnic imagology are: worldview, ethnocultural stereotypes, ethnic mindset and historical memory which altogether offer opportunities for understanding ethnopsychological mechanisms on systemic levels. Perception is the component of ethnic imagology that depicts public feelings and conscience, and, as MYL'NIKOV states, "it is as unbiased as the things it depicts"³.

Thus, from the contemporary point of view, nowadays, imagology is considered to be an overarching academic discipline in humanities that examines the process whereby any images (country, nation, culture, etc.) are formed, perceived and transformed. The main point in conducting imagology research is the certain way different ethnic groups, countries and cultures figuratively perceive something "uncommon". The specified imagology subject matters are: 1) stable images objectified in literature (literary studies); 2) national images and ethnic stereotypes, and the ways they influence society (in ethnology); 3) stereotypes of any language (linguistic imagology); 4) mutual perceptions of participants in a cultural dialogue regarding each other (in culture studies); and 5) images of social function (in sociology).

At the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century the interdisciplinary research space of historical imagology has been, and continues to be, expanding and become conceptually saturated. Methods of imagological studies are based on concrete historical analysis of the collective representations of other peoples and states, as well as analysis of ethnic, national, cultural, auto- and hetero-stereotypes, the ways of their formation, the ways of functioning and transformation processes in the context of "we" and "they" relations. Having mastered historical anthropological, sociopsychological and cultural approaches, historical imagology has accumulated a significant amount of empirical research. The focus was on the complex processes of the formation of ethnic representations and the creation of national identity. With respect to the studies of historically formed stereotypical views of foreigners, multi-genre texts are used to reveal heterogeneous pictures of the world.

Comparative historical analysis of national images provides an opportunity for studying historical dynamics of the formation of the views, which, in turn, allows us to comprehend the historical features of the development of different societies and cultures. In this regard, the perceptions and the stereotypes formed on their basis are the object of study by means of historical imagology. The study of national images is a comparative undertaking; it addresses cross national relations rather than national identities. According to J. LEERSEN's conception:

³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

this indicates that national characterizations are often specific instances and combinations of generic moral polarities, and that our way of thinking in terms of national characters boils down to an ethnic political distribution of role patterns in an imagined anthropological landscape. It is in this comparatist aspect that imagology holds out a challenge and a promise for future research.⁴

The key methodological principles of the imagological research program are gradually receiving more approval. First of all, one of the principles is the need to take into account the psychological component of the process of forming ethnic and national representations and images as a mixture of truth and fantasy, diligent observation and gross misconceptions. It is also very important to study prejudices regarding “Others” and high self-esteem in the context of various processes taking place in various areas of activity and external relationships of society at specific points in its history. That is why the study of individual and collective ideas about other peoples (leaving aside the question of their conformity to reality or its distortion) opens the way to the penetration into the spiritual life of the society in which these ideas are formed and function.

The formation of mutual perceptions, images, and stereotypes occurs in the process of sociocultural interaction of two or more nations. Sociocultural interaction of two countries is significantly more complex than simple bilateral cultural contacts or cultural interference. In this case, historians face the interaction processes between both different cultures and different societies. These societies and cultures are characterized by different levels of economic and social relations, religion and spiritual life. These differences allow discussion of the varying degrees, phases and modules of that interaction process which is inherent in sociocultural communities at defined stages of their social and cultural development.

Sociocultural interaction of countries and peoples is not a constant proximity despite being geographical. Arising and moving forward in a historical continuum, each nation passes through various stages, constantly replacing each other and depending on their relative development at each discrete historical stage. Sociocultural interaction represents the process of these concrete parameters, the ramifications and requirements of societal actions, their cultural, social and historical characteristics, but also the external influence of worldwide historical development or the phenomena of regional order. In addition to the aforementioned factors, history also provides many examples of artificial and spasmodic development of these specified processes.

On the basis of methodological approaches and the specified data of research fields described above, first of all, we must define the connection between the

4 Joep LEERSEN: “Imagology: History and method” (2007), p. 29.

following concepts, such as “perception”, “stereotype”, “prejudice” and “image” in order to study their formation and development within the framework of social ideas and collective consciousness of any nation.

We consider “perception” to be an impression about another nation or country and primary apprehension of this impression in an individual’s mind. More frequently, “perceptions” occur on the basis of available information, which can either be fragmentary or systematic (personal impressions and data obtained from other people, literature, or under the weight of mass communication media). It must be taken into account that this information can be subjective, unilateral, unreliable or even false. “Perceptions” can be easily changed. Also, they can be stable, positive as well as negative. The main point is that they are always oriented on an individual’s mind. A set of perceptions forms a model that is strong enough to influence stereotypes and form the images.

“Stereotype” (ethnic, national) in its turn is depicted as a component of collective consciousness. It is a stable representation which is set in the public mind and which consists of standardized collective experiences one receives during the process of communication (within a family, an educational institution, a community or a state). “Stereotypes” can be based on both objective knowledge and misunderstandings formed in the society or created under the pressure of propaganda. They can often be transformed into persistent forms lingering in the minds of some groups of people or even nations.

“Perceptions” and “stereotypes” sometimes can cause “prejudice”, i.e., a negative attitude toward any ethnic group, nation or state. Ethnical prejudice often becomes an element of a global public mindset. They can engender various theoretical constructs. On the basis of these constructs, many geopolitical and foreign policy concepts are formed in an objective way or perhaps only to conform to a certain political environment. A famous American psychologist Gordon ALLPORT (1897–1967) conducted research on the sources of prejudice and the role of prejudice in the structure of national character. He tried to use sociological as well as historical approaches and psychological data while writing his book *The Nature of Prejudice*⁵.

The combination of “perceptions”, “stereotypes” and, in some cases, “prejudice” forms the “image” of a nation: a specific collective portrait which is projected into its collective consciousness. On the basis of this, we can state that an “image”, globally speaking, turns out to be an objective phenomenon which consists of sets of perceptions and stereotypes depicted in different spheres of public life and mass consciousness.

The joint German-Russian project provided by sinologists from Heidelberg and St. Petersburg universities, which is a basis for this book, was aimed at

5 Gordon ALLPORT: *Nature of Prejudice*, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books 1958.

investigating shifts and continuities in Chinese perceptions of Russia and the West during the 20th century. The shifts and continuities were studied in three major areas: 1. The field of socialization via an investigation into normative descriptions of Russia and the West in Chinese school textbooks which define images of “the Other” from childhood onwards; 2. The field of literature and Chinese fictional representations of Russia and “the West” consumed by the Chinese reading public; 3. The field of social, political and ethnic perceptions as reflected in visual sources.

The chosen areas of research are determined by their significance for understanding the processes of image formation. The time-frame includes the whole of the 20th century, from Tsarist Russia through the Soviet Union to post-Soviet Russia, then from the two World Wars through the Chinese transition from Imperial China to the Republic, and finally to the People’s Republic. The time of the Sino-Soviet split, the end of the Cold War, and the new situation in the world after 1989, as well as its effects on China, are also interesting for detailed study. The focus on “Chinese” perceptions, in turn, covers not only mainland China in the 20th century but also post-1945 Taiwan. These choices in terms of spatial and temporal coverage are to lead to a multifaceted research on how Chinese perceptions of Russia and “the West” shifted, and, where possible, continuities might be detected.

The first block of the articles was devoted to the Chinese school textbooks. The perceptions of other countries and their history constructed by school textbooks are extremely important because they form the schoolchildren’s views, which remain with them for their entire life. Textbooks usually demonstrate that the content of these texts reflects complex and multidirectional trends in the academic and political environment of the societies.

In the time between 1900 and 1949 (the late Qing and Republican period), both Russia and the West in Chinese history textbooks were described through the same categories, which define their image as either liberals and leaders of progress, or aggressors and imperialists. Chinese textbooks from that period associated Russia with the West but often presented Russians as the most despotic and aggressive representatives of the Westerners. At the same time, it can be said that Russia stood in a certain opposition to all the rest of the Western countries. There is a dual image of the West in Chinese textbooks. The image of the Western countries in the textbooks on national Chinese history, due to aggression and wars, was mostly negative. In the world history textbooks, Western countries were portrayed as not only the imperialists but also act as the authors of concepts such as human rights and the constitution and liberalism. They were the creators of the Industrial Revolution and proponents of the development of science and progress. Since the 1930s, when Kuomintang came to power, the textbooks have become extremely nationalistic.

They stress China's contribution to world culture, stating that many inventions came from China and helped Europe develop.

The PRC school history textbooks began with an idealization of the USSR in the 1950s. School textbooks published in the People's Republic of China in the 1950s, as well as the accompanying teaching materials, to a large extent, had copied similar textbooks and training programs used in the Soviet Union. This was especially true of textbooks on world history. In the 1950s, many Soviet historians visited China and contributed to the development of world history teaching programs in Chinese universities and schools. It is therefore unsurprising that Chinese textbooks on general history sought mostly to emulate Soviet publications. Special emphasis is laid on the Industrial Revolution, which was the driving force behind the development of colonialism. China enters the stage of world history as a victim of Western colonialism, which is seen as the result of capitalism and an expression of worldwide class struggle according to Leninism. It is shown how the West is presented as an aggressor and how Marxism and the Communist Party are seen as legitimate defenders of China.

With the split of the PRC-Soviet ties, a disenchantment with post-Stalinist USSR ensues, and the PRC regards itself as the only true proponent of communism. Western "progress" and "achievements", in contrast, are deconstructed by exposing their inhumane nature, especially in the 1950s. With the "Reform and Opening" politics and the "Four Modernizations" beginning in the late 1970s, the West was cautiously credited for technological innovation.

In the 1980s, during the "Four Modernizations", a more positive image of the West appeared in China and was added to the history curricula and textbooks. Scientific innovation during the Industrial Revolution now won high praise. In the 1980s, European history was instrumentalized to legitimize the Chinese Reform and Opening policy. As the policy of the PRC was being altered, the concept of history was likewise modified. The DENG Xiaoping Era's idea of the Chinese future was technocratic and modernized, or even westernized. Therefore, a new interpretation of the world history and a more positive image of the West appeared in Chinese textbooks.

Actual information on world events is just one aspect of world history education. Our studies show that the underlying use of the said information always speaks to the present and should be also understood as allegory, parable or coded propaganda to legitimize domestic policies and the status quo of national identity. This may be especially seen and pronounced in the shifts and rifts in PRC world history textbooks. This is especially noticeable in the shift and schism in the PRC textbooks on world history.

In recent decades the image of the Western countries and Russia has been defined by Chinese political and economic policies aimed at its integration into the world's global institutions. For this purpose, previous historical concepts gave way to a new theoretical framework. From this point of view, China became regarded as an integral part of the global historical process led by the West to form a unified world political and economic system. Western countries received, in historical textbooks, much more positive assessment as the main leading states contributing to the formation of the world economy system. At the same time, this global history concept is used in Chinese textbooks as a tool for building national identity and supporting the domestic political agenda.

Apparently, the image of Russia in modern Chinese and Taiwanese textbooks is slightly different from that of rather positively assessed Western countries. Textbooks on both sides of the Taiwan Strait try to demonstrate that Tsarist Russia always had development strategies of outward expansion. They detail the issues of land expansion by Russia in the Far East.

Taiwanese textbooks give even more negative assessments in the section on the history of China even though there has been a steady improvement in bilateral relations between Russia and Taiwan since the 1990s. This might be attributed to the anti-Soviet and anti-Communist rhetoric of the 1950s and 70s, which is left unattended since the main focus is put on the revision of proper Taiwanese history. Chinese and Taiwanese textbooks give different assessments of the 1917 revolution, the key event in the history of Russia with world implications. Chinese textbooks describe the October Revolution as a turning event in the world history, suggesting a non-capitalist model of social development. The later Soviet experience of socialism is seen as an example of bad implementation, and thus a warning against mistakes that could be made on the way. In Taiwanese textbooks, the revolution of 1917 is consistently shown as the result of military upheavals, which did not bring relief to the people but rather deprived the country of democracy and freedom.

Formation of literary perceptions and Chinese fictional representations of Russia consumed by the Chinese reading public were demonstrated by the authors of the book on the background of the history of Russian literature in China.

The introduction of Russian literature to China dates back to 1872. Sometimes it was driven by the intention to expose the evils of the aggressive northern barbarians, sometimes by the desire of Chinese literati to learn the revolutionary experience of Russia in the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. Although initially the translation of Russian literature was lagging behind the Western literatures, after the May Fourth movement in China in 1919 and the October Revolution in Russia in 1917, it started to attract more and more attention. After the split of the GMD and the CCP in 1927 and the rupture of diplomatic relations between China

and the USSR in 1929, the promotion of Soviet literature became not only problematic but also a rather dangerous affair. Nevertheless, it was at the beginning of the 1930s that the translation of Russian and Soviet literature underwent significant acceleration. In the 1930s, the Russian and Soviet literature became the second most frequently translated foreign literature in China, and, from the 1940s up to the end of the 1980s, it was dominating foreign literature. The contribution of left-wing literati to the translation and promotion of Russian and Soviet literature in China at the beginning of the 1930s is widely acknowledged. However, their ideological rivals, i.e., Chinese nationalists, did not ignore Russian literature either. Communist and nationalist literati each had their own reasons to address Russia and created distinct images of Russia and Russian literature in their publications.

The third group of texts examines representations and visual images of Russia and the West in the 20th century China. “Representation is a relatively new word in the historian’s vocabulary. Instead of the concrete and factual, scholars interested in understanding the path are turning to thought and images”.⁶ Contemporary trends in historiography are less concerned about the distinction between reality and imagination. Visual images (pictures, cartoons, photos, films, sculptures, architecture, etc.) usually inform the historians in specific ways. No doubt, the use of visual materials does not replace the documental sources. Nevertheless, it creates new opportunities for understanding some of the trends of the past. By studying visual images, we can definitely present new visions of the history.

Materials presented with visual images are extensive and diverse. Their form and content can be influenced by ethnic and religious beliefs, myths or a game of imagination, but commonly, politics and ideology. As shown in our book, visual images that need to be studied are extremely diverse: *nianhua*, cartoons, caricatures, political posters and even cemeteries.

The Late Imperial China period is represented by traditional Chinese folk woodblock printings. The appearance of new visual images of foreigners and foreign realities in China during that period is considered through the prism of traditional folk thinking. Paintings can be divided into three main groups: images related to Christian missionaries in China, images on historical and political themes, and traditional benevolent paintings depicting Western advances in science and technology. Each group was addressed to a specific “consumer”. Woodblock prints associated with the activities of Christian missionaries in China, well-wishing pictures with images of Western realities, as well as images on historical and political topics that became particularly popular in early 20th century. It is probably for this reason that images with western “curiosities” make up the most

6 Yulia MIKHAILOVA and M. William STEELE (eds.): *Japan and Russia: Three Centuries of Mutual Images*, Folkestone: Global Oriental 2008, p. 1.

numerous groups. This fact once again confirms that the art of *nianhua* was extremely responsive to changes in Chinese society and, among other things, brought the information about the latest achievements to every corner of the country.

The Republican period shows a diverse and fluid picture of Chinese perceptions of Russia and the West – Cartoons which appeared at that time were a foreign medium; which was eagerly accepted and adapted to local tastes. Through this foreign medium, Russia and the West were depicted interchangeably together and apart, as sources of inspiration and of danger, as governments and as commoners. The cartoonists recognized the key threats of the decade to be coming from totalitarian states, imperialist interests and militarist zeal, and yet the division into Axis and Allied powers was not always clear at that time. The premonition of a looming global war drove a part of Chinese society into visualizing the future as a clash of defenseless humanity and unstoppable warmongers, a conflict not of country against country, but of civilization against barbarianism. However, this massive threat did not completely overshadow the more mundane matters of daily life, where new films, intricate designs and celebrity trivia were still a part of what the Chinese read about the West and about Westerners' existence in China. Some issues, such as British presence in Hong Kong or foreign sailors' drunken behavior in Shanghai, were the cause of indignation while others, like achievements of painters, cinematographers or writers, would be praised and admired. In this cultural sphere “the West” and “Russia” could be mixed together. The only sphere where “Russians” were most often quite clearly separated from “Westerners” was the narrative of Russian emigrants living in China and standing well apart from both Chinese and other foreigners.

After the creation of the People's Republic of China, in the 1950s–1970s, visual images presented in the form of pictures, portraits, posters and cartoons played a very important role in mass propaganda and were used to introduce official ideas to the public consciousness. After 1949 a lot of posters and cartoons that appeared in China had to promote the main ideological principles of the Communist Party, including its foreign policy. In that period, the image of the USA and the West as a whole was negative in China and did not change much. The image of the Soviet Union, in contrast, was entirely positive in the 1950s, but underwent significant changes during the Cultural Revolution, becoming similar to the image of the West in many respects. All these changes attained their reflection in posters and cartoons.

Accordingly, the articles by the German, Russian, and Chinese scholars presented in this book reveal a wide range of issues and problems associated with the formation of perceptions of Russia and the West in China, and their changes, continuities and contingencies on the base of imagological framework. This

publication opens the door to further research in this area and offers food for thought not only to sinologists, but also to sociologists, anthropologists and literary scholars.

