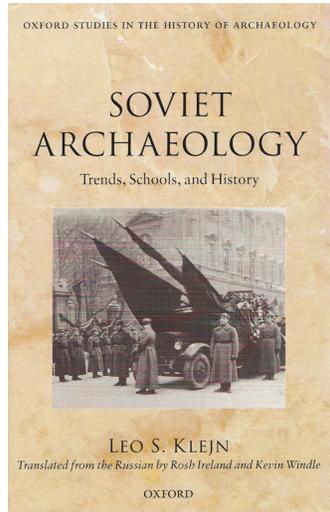


BOOK REVIEW



The Long and Winding Road: Review of L S Klejn. *Soviet Archaeology: Trends, Schools, and History* (translated by R Ireland and K Windle). 2012. Oxford: Oxford University Press (Oxford Studies in the History of Archaeology Series). ISBN: 978-0-19-960135-6; 411 + xvii pages, with 52 illustrations and 6 maps. List price \$160 US (hardback).

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The book under review is a translation of the Russian volume, *Fenomen Sovetskoi Arkheologii* (The Phenomenon of Soviet Archaeology), published in 1993 and translated into Spanish (1993) and German (1997), although lacking wide international distribution. The English version (Klejn 2012), which has some additions compared to the 1993 book, is a very valuable contribution to the international scholarly literature. In fact, this is the first systematic description of the history, issues, approaches, and major *dramatis personae* in Soviet archaeology since its origin, from 1919–20 until the 2000s. This subject is still little-known in the English-speaking scholarly community (e.g. Chard 1969; Trigger 1978).

Several other monographic studies in the history of Soviet archaeology either concentrate on particular regions, issues, and institutions (Matuyshchenko 2001; Tikhonov 2003; Platonova 2010; see also Nosov 2013), are mainly about the pre-1917 (year of the Russian Revolution) times (Lebedev 1992), or represent an apologetic description of achievements under the rule of the USSR Communist Party (Genning 1982; Pryakhin 1986). Only books by Formozov (2004, 2011) contain explicit and critical analysis of the history, methods, issues, and personalities in Soviet archaeology. None of these sources, however, is in English, and some of them are hardly available even in Russia. This is why Klejn's (2012) volume is an important event in the process of understanding the phenomenon of archaeology in a large and powerful totalitarian country. Before, only brief updated information on this subject was available in Trigger (2006:326–44). One review of Klejn's book has already

been published (Ojala 2014). Below, only page numbers are indicated when reference is made to particular parts of Klejn's (2012) volume.

In post-WWII archaeology, Leo S Klejn (born 1927) is an extraordinary person. For example, the title of his 2010 autobiographic essays, *Trudno Byt Klejnom* [Hard to Be a Klejn], resembles the name of a famous Russian science fiction novel by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky *Trudno Byt Bogom* [Hard to Be a God]. Today, Klejn is one of the leading scholars in Russian archaeology, and also a well-known expert in other human sciences (cultural anthropology, philology, and sociology). He began his carrier in the early to middle 1950s, and has always challenged the traditional views and paradigms of Soviet archaeology and history, which were often ideologically motivated. After some relaxation of the political regime in the 1960s, it was not easy to maintain such a free-thinking style in the late Soviet times called "stagnation" (1970s to mid-1980s). As a result, in 1981 Klejn was sentenced to imprisonment based on KGB-fabricated "evidence" and spent 18 months in jail, and right afterwards was deprived of both his academic degree and lecturer position at Leningrad (today St. Petersburg) State University. Only during *perestroika* and later, in the mid-late 1980s and 1990s, was Klejn able to recover his titles and academic degrees, and return to archaeology and history where he remains on its forefront, in his late 80s. Descriptions and discussions of some studies conducted by Klejn can be found in Trigger (1978), Kristiansen (1993), Taylor (1994), and Elyashevich and Leach (2013); the book on Klejn's life and work was recently published (Leach 2015).

The book consists of 15 chapters, a Conclusion, and an Appendix (a discussion between L S Klejn and A A Formozov of the 1993 edition of the *Phenomenon of Soviet Archaeology*). Individual chapters are combined into three parts: "History and the Present" (chapters 1–5), "Facets of the New Science" (chapters 6–10), and "Personalities in the System" (chapters 11–15).

In Part 1, the Chapter 1, "The 'Great Unknown,'" is about the most important topics of Soviet archaeology as viewed from both a Western and a Russian standpoints. In Chapter 2, "The Stages of a Long Journey," a brief overview is given of the developments of Soviet archaeology from its pre-1917 Russian predecessors to the 2000s. In Chapter 3, "Generations and Aspirations," the main methodologically combined groups are discussed (Marxist sociologizers, *doctrinaire unitarians*, autochtonists, subdiffusionists and submigrationalists, empirics, scientification-oriented, imitators, ethnos-oriented, and "true" Marxists). Chapter 4, "A Spectrum of Trends," focuses on the main approaches employed (archaeological history, archaeological ethnogenesis, archaeological sociology, descriptive archaeology, archaeotechnology, archaeological ecology, and "echeloned archaeology"). Chapter 5, "The Arena of Debate," tackles issues of hot debate: the subject of archaeology; archaeological cultures; the relationship between archaeology and ethnogenesis; and the Varangians (i.e. Vikings), and their role in the creation of the early Russian state.

Part 2 describes the archaeology under Soviet rule: the culture-historical approach *sensu* Trigger (2006) as the dominating paradigm (Chapter 6, "Under the Sign of History"); the issue of nationalism (Chapter 7, "The Archaeology of a Great Power: The Complications of Composition"); Marxism in Soviet archaeology (Chapter 8, "Archaeology under the Red Flag"); and also includes chapters 9–10.

Chapter 9, "Childe and Soviet Archaeology" (p 158–74), is one of the focal points of Klejn's book. For the first time, the uneasy relationships between the prominent Western scholar V Gordon Childe and the USSR archaeology in the 1930s–50s are described in full scale. The disappointing letter of Childe written to several influential Soviet scholars in December 1956, less than a year before his death, is presented in several quotes (p 168–72). It was published only in 1992 (see Editorial 1992),

although it was translated for and read to Communist Party members of the Institute of Archaeology branches in both Moscow and Leningrad in early 1957; the translation was also semi-secretly obtained by younger and non-Party academics, including Klejn. As the well-known Russian proverb states, “In Russia, everything is a secret and nothing is a mystery.”

Chapter 10, “Reading between the Lines” (p 175–86), is extremely important to non-Russian readers for understanding the ways used in Soviet times to avoid censorship: “... they [Soviet archaeologists] learnt how to communicate over the heads of the ideological watchdogs, learnt how to make use even of texts forced on them from above. ... We showed our friends chosen passages and delighted in the authors’ skill and inventiveness. Abroad, however, evidently no one understood properly the compositions written in it” (p 176). Klejn describes 12 ways to cope with severe Party control of expressing thoughts, to mention a few: “Talmudism on the sly,” “Salvos fired through the past,” “Schweik’s zeal,” and “Imitating the social realism.”

Part 3 contains sketches of prominent Soviet archaeologists. Chapters 11–14 describe four of the most influential figures, chosen because of their impact via either directorship of a research institute or chairmanship at a university department: Nikolay Y Marr (“Unbridled Intellect and Revolution”), Vladislav I Ravdonikas (“The Red Demon of Archaeology”), Artemy V Artsikhovskiy (“A Historian Armed with a Spade”), and Boris A Rybakov (“Overlord of Soviet Archaeology”). In the lengthy Chapter 15, “The Masters and their Roles,” 22 other important individuals who were active in the 1920s–80s are characterized, while mentioning 12 other scholars who were omitted due to space limitations. Many of them Klejn knew personally, and this gives readers a more vivid impression of their personalities.

Archaeology in the USSR was considered as a part of the historical sciences, and ideological pressure from the Communist Party was always high. Changes in the Party’s line immediately affected the main courses and approaches:

In Soviet archaeology all strictly academic debate of the slightest consequence inevitably assumed the nature of a ferocious political battle. In the early 1930s (and again in the 1950s), if a topic did not in itself qualify for such status, an archaeologist could invariably be found who would invest it with that status, in order to stick a political label on an opponent and win an easy victory. Such victories were often accompanied by ‘organizational measures’: condemnation of the recalcitrant (as enemy of Marxism, or worse, a renegade), dismissal, and even arrest of the individual and all his relations (p 87).

Politically sensitive issues described in Klejn’s book include, for example, the subject of archaeology (p 89); archaeological cultures and their “Marxist” understanding (p 98–105); ethnogenesis of Eastern Slavs in relation to archaeology (p 105–14); and the role of Norsemen in early Russian history using archaeological data (p 115–20). As for the latter, Klejn and his pupil opposed anti-Normanism (“It was a specifically Russian phenomenon, testifying to a kind of inferiority complex and uncertainty as to the country’s ambitions as a state.” p 117), and they participated in a famous public debate in 1965 against the Party’s hardliners (p 118–9).

The situation with Soviet archaeology in the 1930s as one of the most dramatic periods can be demonstrated by a brief description of the career of Sergei N Bykovskiy (1896–1936) (p 21–2, 26, 92–3; see also Tikhonov 2003:158–9). Bykovskiy was an undergraduate for 2 years at Moscow State University before 1917 but did not complete the course; since 1918 he was an active member of the Bolshevik (i.e. Communist) Party and a Commissar of the CHEKA (abbreviation of the Russian

“Extraordinary Commission for the Struggle against Counter-Revolution and Sabotage”). The latter was similar to the French Revolutionary Committee of Public Safety, with the same state terror approach. After completing his CHEKA duties during the Civil War (1918–20), even dismissed from it due to excessive ardor, Bykovsky served as a lecturer in one of the provincial universities in the 1920s, and in 1930 was sent to manage the Party line at the GAIMK (abbreviation of the Russian “State Academy of the History of Material Culture”; later on, the Institute of Archaeology, Russian Academy of Sciences). His main task as a Deputy Director of the GAIMK was to introduce Marxism into the methodological approaches of Soviet archaeologists and historians. Bykovsky was also appointed a Professor at the reformed Faculty of Humanities, Leningrad State University. In 1934, he left GAIMK to be the head of the archaeological division at the Institute of Anthropology, Archaeology, and Ethnography (later on, Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography [a.k.a. *Kunst-kammer*], Russian Academy of Sciences). In 1936, Bykovsky was arrested as an alleged Trotskyite and shortly afterwards executed—a common feature of Stalin’s Great Terror. This is just one example to show what kind of sinister people were trying to lead Soviet archaeology in the 1930s!

Describing academics repressed during the purges in the 1920–30s, Formozov (2004:187–218) lists about 150 archaeologists, historians, art experts, and museum and local lore scholars who were sentenced and either sent to prison, exiled, or even exterminated. Perhaps, the true number is 1–2 orders of magnitude higher. At least 10 well-known Soviet archaeologists were executed or died shortly after imprisonment (p 28).

As for the natural sciences and archaeology in the USSR, application of the former to the historical sciences (a.k.a. geoarchaeology) was to some extent oppressed by the Party line, which assumed the superiority of the humanities over the natural sciences according to the Soviet version of Marxism. Nevertheless, multidisciplinary research originating in pre-1917 Russia in the school of anthropology (or paleoethnology) and led by D N Anuchin, achieved some important results in the fields labeled as “archaeo-technology” and “archaeological ecology” (p 75–9).

In terms of radiocarbon (^{14}C) dating and its impact on Soviet archaeology, it was met with some skepticism, although the first ^{14}C laboratory in the USSR was organized in Leningrad jointly by the Institute for Radioactive Studies and the Institute of Archaeology in 1954–7. Klejn was among the first archaeology academics who fully understood the importance of ^{14}C dating, and in the 1960s he published an overview in the widely read popular science magazine *Priroda* [Nature] (Klejn 1966). However, even in the late 1970s the application of the ^{14}C method in Soviet archaeology was at the infancy stage compared to the West. I recall a question addressed at that time to D A Avdusin, one of the leading Soviet Medieval archaeologists and a prominent lecturer at the Department of Archaeology (Faculty of History, Moscow State University), who wrote a widely read textbook “Archaeology of the USSR” (first edition 1967). I asked him, being a senior undergraduate in the Faculty of Geography at the same university with an interest in geoarchaeology: “Why did you not use the ^{14}C dating to establish the age of burial grounds in the Upper Dnieper region?” The answer was: “I was told by colleagues that this method is not accurate enough.” The artifactological approach was much more common in Soviet archaeology then (and is still quite common).

The essence of Klejn’s (2012) book is, in my opinion, in the Conclusion: “It is only when the dramatic events in the history of Russian archaeology are measured against the relatively tranquil flow of the life of learning in the West, against normal perceptions, that one begins to understand how unusual, peculiar, and stupefying (in all senses) our destiny has been.” (p 351). Nevertheless, despite the absurdity of the Soviet political system, including Orwellian-like attempts to erase from publications the names of people who fell out of the Party’s favor (p 31), pioneering works conduct-

ed by numerous scholars are widely acknowledged: Gleb S Bonch-Osmolovsky (p 293–6), Petr P Yefimenko (p 280–3), Sergey N Zamyatin (p 310–2), and Aleksandr N Rogachev (p 343) on the Paleolithic; Sergey A Semenov on use-wear analysis (p 307–10); Vladislav I Ravdonikas on the Mesolithic and petroglyphs in northern Russia (p 225–9); Mikhail P Gryaznov on Siberian Bronze and Early Iron ages (p 313–7); Sergey I Rudenko on frozen burial mounds (*kurgans*) in Mongolia and the Altai Mountains of Siberia (p 285–7); Sergey P Tolstov on early Central Asian states (p 323–6); Boris B Piotrovsky on the archaeology of Transcaucasia (p 328–9); Aleksei P Okladnikov on Siberian prehistoric archaeology and rock art (p 335–7); and Artemy V Artsikhovskiy on Medieval perishable birch-bark texts from Novgorod (p 246–8).

Klejn’s book is supplemented by several maps created by I A Sorokina, which show the location of the major archaeological research centers in the USSR and post-USSR Russia, and fieldwork campaigns. One can see that in post-WWII USSR, the main archaeological institutions and museums were in Moscow and Leningrad in the 1940s–50s, and more organizations—Academy of Sciences institutes, universities and pedagogical institutes (i.e., teaching training colleges), and museums—appeared since the 1960s in Siberia (Novosibirsk, Irkutsk, Tomsk, Barnaul, Krasnoyarsk, Omsk, Tyumen, Kemerovo, Surgut, Chita, Abakan, and Yakutsk), the Urals (Sverdlovsk [Yekaterinburg], Ufa, Perm, and Chelyabinsk), the Russian Far East (Vladivostok, Magadan, and Khabarovsk), and in European Russia (main centers are Petrozavodsk, Syktyvkar, Voronezh, Kuibyshev [Samara], Kazan, Kalinin [Tver], Rostov-on-Don, Volgograd, Stavropol, Krasnodar, and Makhachkala).

The translation of Klejn’s Russian text was done very well, preserving the original sense and style, including black humor like “... the regime of ‘second Ilyich’, Brezhnev ...” (p 331). “Ilyich” was the patronymic name of both Communist Party leaders, Lenin (the first Ilyich) and Brezhnev (the second one). The people who worked on the translation (mainly Roch Ireland and Kevin Windle; with assistance from Marian Hill and Margaret Travers) should be congratulated.

Several chapters of the book are accompanied by epigraphs from poetry that Klejn seems to admire. It would be therefore appropriate to end this review by another quotation. In one of the verses by the famous Russian poet Osip Mandelstam (who perished in the Gulag’s camp in 1938), “The Age,” literally translated as “Century” [*Vek*], it’s said at the beginning:

“My animal, my age, who will ever be able
to look into your eyes?
Who will ever glue back together the vertebrae
of two centuries with his blood?”
(1923; translated by C Brown and W S Merwin)

It seems that Klejn is trying to “glue back together” the past (i.e. twentieth) and the current (i.e. twenty-first) centuries of Russian (Soviet) archaeology, and he does it brilliantly.

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