



ДИАЛОГ ЦИВИЛИЗАЦИЙ DIALOGUE OF CIVILIZATIONS

DOI: 10.22363/2312-8127-2023-15-4-413-423

EDN: DBGXQN

Research article / Научная статья

Germans in Korea in the late 19th – early 20th centuries as a translocal and bourgeois community

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Abstract. This study deals with the German community in Korea between the conclusion of Korea's first international treaties in the early 1880s and the country's annexation by the Japanese Empire in 1910 in the context of transnational and global history. In the decades around 1900 the circulation of people, ideas, goods and capital beyond and across the national borders increased. The Korean peninsula has gradually integrated into global economic and political processes. The result of it became the formation of the European community in Joseon (Choson). The German community in Korea made up of diplomats, foreign experts hired by the Korean government as well as merchants and missionaries. They were individuals who defined themselves as bourgeois (or middle-class) who actively interacted with representatives of the Korean elites, becoming agents of an imperialist policy in East Asia. German citizens influenced the development of German-Korean relations contributing into the cultural dialogue between the two countries and the subsequent modernization of Joseon.

Keywords: Joseon, Choson, the German Empire, translocalism

Article history: Received: 20.02.2023. Accepted: 27.07.2023.

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For citation: Musinova IA. Germans in Korea in the late 19th — early 20th centuries as a translocal and bourgeois community. *RUDN Journal of World History*. 2023;15(4):413–423. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8127-2023-15-4-413-423>

Немцы в Корее в конце XIX — начале XX вв. как транслокальное буржуазное сообщество

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Аннотация. Цель настоящего исследования — рассмотреть формирование немецкой общины в Корее как транслокального сообщества в период между заключением первых международных договоров в начале 1880-х гг. и аннексией страны Японией в 1910 г. Актуальность исследования обусловлена тем, что в указанный период в Восточной Азии началось активное перемещение людей, идей, товаров и капитала за пределы границ национальных государств. Корейский полуостров постепенно интегрировался в глобальные экономические и политические процессы, а формирование в Корее сообщества европейцев являлось непосредственным результатом происходивших в регионе изменений. Немецкое сообщество в Корее в конце XIX — начале XX вв. было представлено дипломатами, иностранными экспертами, нанятыми корейским правительством, торговцами и миссионерами. Эти люди определяли себя как буржуа или средний класс, активно взаимодействовали с представителями корейских элит, став проводниками многоуровневой политики империализма в Восточной Азии. Немецкие граждане, проживавшие в стране, оказали влияние на развитие германо-корейских отношений, налаживание культурного диалога между двумя странами и последующую модернизацию страны по западному образцу.

Ключевые слова: Чосон, Германская империя, транслокализм

История статьи: Поступила в редакцию: 20.02.2023. Принята к публикации: 27.07.2023.

Для цитирования: Мусинова И.А. Немцы в Корее в конце XIX — начале XX вв. как транслокальное буржуазное сообщество // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Всеобщая история. 2023. Т. 15. № 4. С. 413–423. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8127-2023-15-4-413-423>

In the 1990s it took place a “transnational turn” in Migration Studies, social anthropology and a number of other related academic fields. In 1994, D. Agnew noted the fact that trade and economic blocs rather than separate states are playing

an increasingly important role in the global economic system; the global public sphere has also become transnational. The identity of groups and individuals in the social sphere does not coincide with the state or national borders [1. P. 3–5]. In the 2000 and 2010-s a number of researchers including L. Bush, N. Glick Schiller and K. Antony Blank began to study the phenomenon of migration from the standpoint of this new methodological approach [2]. The social history of globalization was also examined through the transnational perspective. As the result, the 1900-s were called “the period of growing globalization”, when the flows of people, goods, ideas, and capital rushed beyond the state borders [3].

The object of this research has also become the European bourgeoisie. Representatives of this social group set the high life standards, so the elites all over the world tried to achieve it (including those in colonies and semi-colonial states). The concept of ‘translocality’ can be used (W. Freitag, A. von Oppen) in order to analyze this and similar phenomena as well as a variety of cross-territorial connections [4]. This concept was introduced for analyzing both national and social groups which were united on economic and religious grounds. Members of such communities usually belonged to the different national, social and professional circles and included in more than one society. That is why they called “transmigrants” [5; 2].

German researcher K. Dietrich suggests using these methodological approaches to analyze the community of European migrants in Korea in the late XIX — early XX centuries. The formation of this community in East Asia became the result of a high-profile policy of economic imperialism [6]. At the same time, a comprehensive analysis of the interaction of this group with Korean elites also implies the use of the approach related to the social structure as an essential element of the reality of everyday routine (F. Braudel, P. Berger, T. Luckmann) [7; 8; 9]. The formation of a community of Europeans in Korea in the period between the early 1880s and the annexation of the country by the Japanese Empire in 1910 reflected the gradual integration of the Korean peninsula into the global economic and political process.

The Korean governmental statistics for 1897 published in the newspaper “The Independent” provides the information on the number of Europeans indwelling in the country [10; 11. P. 305–306]. During this period there were no more than two hundred Europeans and about a hundred the US citizens in the country. Among the Europeans there was a significant amount of the subjects of the Russian and British Empires as well as Germans and the French [12. C. 324–325].

Germans played an important role in the processes associated with the attempts of the Korean elite to carry out the political, economic and social transformation of the national society in 1882–1910. The reforms in Korea were supposed to help the country effectively deal with numerous eternal and external problems as well as protect its independence. P.G. von Mellendorf (a subject of the German Empire) became the first foreign high-ranking official of the Korean state Joseon. A. Sontag has dealt for a long time with issues of court etiquette and reception of European guests at the Korean court; the archiater R. Wunsch made a serious contribution to the development of Korean medicine; the German musician and composer F. Eckert was the author of the first Korean anthem; the German J. Bollyan was the head of one of the first modern schools in Seoul.

According to the author of the monograph “Joseon and Germany” Lee Yongwan, in the late XIX — early XX centuries, the German Empire (along with other Western powers) had a serious impact on the inclusion of Korea in the global system of international relations. At the beginning of the 20th century the Korean king Gojong and the German emperor Wilhelm II conducted regular correspondence, especially during 1897–1905. The Korean monarch was seeking for help in protecting the Korean independence in that difficult period. German princes Wilhelm and Adalbert von Hohenzollern became the first and only representatives of the European ruling dynasty who made the official visits to the Korean peninsula [13].

In 1902 the German community in Seoul did not exceed a dozen people. It consisted of Consul Ferdinand Krien and his secretary Robert Brinkmeier,

teacher J. Bollyan, musician Franz Eckert and his family, merchant A.F. Gorshalka, A. Sontag and Dr.R. Wunsch [15. P. 503].

Germans like all Europeans who lived in Korea during this period can be divided into five groups. The first group included diplomats. The German Empire in Korea was represented by Consul F. Krien who worked in Korea from 1889 to 1898. The consul also had assistants and translators [15. P. 116–119].

The second group consisted of the foreign experts who worked for the Korean government. In many fields including military service, engineering, law and education were used foreign consultants, most of them came from the United States, Germany, Russia and France [11. P. 185–188]. The first foreign adviser was P.G. von Mollendorff [15; 16]. A German doctor Richard Wunsch worked in Korea. He served as Emperor Gojong's personal doctor in Seoul from November 1901 to April 1905. The European medicine was introduced in East Asia. Another German, J. Bollyan, played a significant role in opening of the first German school in Korea and in the training of Korean translators for diplomatic and economic needs.

The third group was represented by merchants and businessmen. There were two German and two American trading companies operating in the open ports of Korea as well as one British and one French trading house [15. P. 96]. The largest German foreign trading company "Meyer & Company" whose office was located in Chemulpo was closely connected to the Shanghai-based British trading house "Jardine Matheson & Company" [15. P. 116–135]. Both trading houses acted as agents of large European and American business (including insurance and shipping companies). Foreign shopkeepers such as the German F. Gates sold foreign goods in Korea.

The fourth group consisted of missionaries. In 1909 the German Benedictine missionaries first arrived to Korea [14. P. 180–189]. Finally, the fifth group were Germans belonging to the less privileged social groups. This group included consulate guards, sailors, miners and technicians who worked for companies on a concession basis (such as "Seoul Electric Company").

The majority of Western countries' citizens lived in the Chundong — the central district of Korean capital; the embassies and diplomatic missions were located nearby as well as the port of Chemulpo. Foreigners in “open ports” lived in accordance with the regime of extraterritoriality [17. P. 97–98]. A significant part of them demonstrated a commitment to the bourgeois culture which was actively being formed in their homeland at that time and was significantly different from the culture of the local Korean population. Representatives of Western countries carried out a “civilizing mission”, and newspapers such as “The Independent” и “Asiatischen Lloid” supported those ideas. Europeans who indwelled in Korea during this period did not consider the possibility of integration but at the same time expected that Koreans would willingly accept the European way of life [19].

Some key material items were associated by representatives of European countries with the concept of “modernity” and were opposed to the Korean “backwardness”. Since the mid-1890s due to the political changes in the Korean society and the desire of the local elite to transform the country the Germans like other Europeans had an opportunity to recreate the familiar environment in the Chundong district in Seoul and in the foreign areas of Chemulpo. New houses were built on the European model as well as Korean houses were turned into Western-style residences equipped with furniture, carpets, curtains, modern appliances and dishes. The houses were often located in picturesque places, in front of them there was a garden with flowers, vegetables and trees. The servants who worked in the residences were also a symbol of a high social status [18].

For example, in 1890 K. Walter invited the famous Chinese architect and erected a European-style building on a hill in Chemulpo as housing for three employees of the company “Meyer & Co” [6. P. 7–8]. This building became the first European-style house in Chemulpo resembling a palace with a large park. Many Europeans and Koreans saw the company's house from afar even before arriving at the port of Chemulpo. So they often considered it as the Consulate General of the German Empire, the summer palace of the Korean king or the residence of the local governor [17].

A railway, a light projector, a bicycle, brick buildings — all these objects have become “the symbols of modernity” [20. P. 51–53]. An important aspect of everyday life was European music and the piano [6. P. 9–10]. “The Robinson Piano Company” having branches in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore and other major Asian cities regularly sent a representative to Korea to tune and repair instruments [21]. In February 1901 the famous German musician Franz Eckert was invited to the country as a court kapellmeister. In 1897 he composed the first national anthem of Korea called “Taehanjegur” (“the Great Korean Empire”) and conducted it at the event dedicated to the 50th anniversary of Korean king Gojong [23. P. 422, 549–550].

In a newspaper article related to the opening of the first railway between Chemulpho and Seoul, it was noted that “the railway becomes a proof of the advantages of Western social and political institutions” [24]. Travelling by a steamer made it possible to travel comfortably all around the world. “The Pacific Mail Steamship Company”, “The Western and Eastern Steamship Company” and the Japanese “Tōyō Kisen Kaisha” offered plenty of combined tours [25].

In the 1890s and 1900s there were created formal and informal associations which contributed to the consolidation of the European community in Korea as well as the westernization of Korean elites. German, French, Russian and Japanese diplomats gathered at the “Cercle diplomatique et consulaire” [6. P. 11–12].

The bourgeois life of foreigners in Korea was characterized by the presence of the certain gender roles. Although women did not occupy leading positions in society, they played an important role in creating and maintaining informal ties and organizing social events such as lunches and dinner parties [27]. In such cases the European style food was prepared, ingredients were bought from Western, Japanese or Chinese merchants. For example, Marie Antoinette Sontag in 1896–1909 became the organizer of such ceremonies at the Korean court [28. P. 138]. The residence of A. Sontag («Haus von Madame Sontag» or «Sontag Hotel») can be considered as one of the first Western-style hotels in Seoul [30. P. 134–135]. It has become a place of residence for wealthy men from Western countries who have not yet

managed to get their own housing in Korea as well as a comfortable Western-style hotel for travellers [26. P. 92–93]. The guests of the hotel were diplomats, high-ranking Korean officials, officers, scientists, missionaries, travelers and journalists [26. P. 75].

Antoinette Sontag's residence was also the place for meeting of the Chondong Political Club whose members were the famous Korean politicians of that time such as Min Yonghwan and Yoon Chiho. The club became very influential. Korean supporters of the modernization such as Seo Jae-pil also regularly met in this area [13. P. 110].

Meetings held at Sontag's residence had a serious impact on the Korean elite. Western hotels were the places where Koreans got acquainted with the Western culture such as coffee drinking, photography, billiards, a new type of wedding, bicycles, Western music and orchestras etc. Many habits gradually entered the Korean elite's daily life. National and imperial holidays were the important events for the foreign community and were celebrated on the large scale [13].

European migrants tried to reproduce the cultural and economic models of their native country but completely new models were formed as a result of the interaction of various European and the local East Asian cultures [26]. Despite the fact that Europeans and Americans who arrived in Korea had many common features, religious and national competition was shared by a small group of people consisted exclusively of first-generation migrants. The term "translocality" is most suitable for describing this phenomenon.

Translocality can be found in three main aspects. The first is that the decision to migrate to Korea for most Europeans was their own choice [4. P. 373–401]. Many migrants maintained the contacts with people at homeland, regularly spent vacations in Europe or returned there after several years or decades [6. P. 15]. Migration made it possible to increase the social status, so these people somehow belonged to the new emerging global elite.

The second aspect is that European migrants also had an intensive ties with the European communities indwelling in other East Asian countries. Many of them did

not move to Korea directly from their native country but came from China or Japan. It was common to travel to Japan or China to get medical care or education [22]. The examples of the F. Eckert, P.G. von Mollendorf and R. Wunsch demonstrate this fact. The interactions of Europeans in Korea with representatives of Qing China and Japan were often even more intense than with Koreans [6. P. 15].

Mixed marriages are the third example. There were practically no mixed marriages between Koreans and Europeans [17]. However, European and American men have had Chinese and Japanese mistresses since the early 1880s. Some members of the European community married the Japanese women [6. P. 18–19].

Interactions between representatives of various European countries also represent the translocality. Representatives of the different European nationalities lived in Korea together in the same settlements, the number of trading companies with mixed capital as well as the number of the mixed marriages indicate active interactions between people of the different European nations. Such a process seems quite natural within a small foreign community [30]. At the same time, the major European countries and the United States tried to export their social and political models to Korea. Such competition can be retraced in various forms of socialization and everyday practices. The European community in Korea received new unique characteristics that distinguished them from Europeans at home countries. The term “translocality” is most fully suitable to characterize this phenomenon [4].

Thus, Europeans in Korea in 1880–1910 (including representatives of the German Empire) considered themselves as agents of progress and change. However, they led a separate life from the Korean society from the physical, social and mental point of view. Relations with Koreans were often built vertical (with some exceptions concerning the Korean elite, government officials or intellectuals).

A significant number of the German citizens who lived in Korea in the late XIX — early XX centuries influenced the development of the mutual relations, the establishment of the cultural dialogue between two countries as well as the subsequent modernization and westernization of Korea. As an example can be mentioned A. Sontag, F. Eckert, doctor R. Wunsch and J. Bollyan.

At the same time, it should be noted that these persons were simultaneously part of a small stratum of the foreign “bourgeois” elite in Korea, striving for a life of comfort and luxury. They were also the agents of a high-profile policy of imperialism. It is worth saying that Europeans often emphasized their superiority over the Koreans in political, economic and cultural aspects.

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