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Ukrainian Diaspora in Occupied Manchuria

Articulating the Needs for the Independent State (1932-1945)

A hybrid *u:japan lecture* by Olga Khomenko

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院寺ナイラクウ (ンピルハ)



Thursday
2022-03-24
18:30~20:00



<https://japanologie.univie.ac.at/ujapanlectures>



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Since the abolition of serfdom in the Russian Empire and during the Chinese Railway construction and Stolypin reforms, both before and after the Russian Revolution, many Ukrainians moved to and lived in the Far East and China. For Ukrainians, who by their Cossack nature in the pursuit of freedom sought lands far from political centers and historically tended to settle in border areas, the Far East and Manchuria became safe havens from the Russian Empire where they could live and create their “little Ukraine” more freely away from the oppressive power of the capitals of Petersburg and Moscow.

This talk is based on a book called “The Far Eastern Odyssey of Ivan Svit” published in Ukraine last December and telling a story of forgotten 100 000 people Ukrainian diaspora in Manchuria and its leader, Ivan Svit (1897–1989), a forgotten Ukrainian journalist, editor, historian, and social activist. They actively communicated with Japanese authorities under the occupation and advanced the processes of the self-identification of Ukrainians in the Far East and broader North-East Asia. The story of Ivan Svit is a microhistory of the life of Ukrainians in the Far East and Asia. Besides working in Russian Far East as a journalist, in China as a stamp dealer, a journalist and an editor running a couple of Ukrainian printed media publications included the “Manchurian Herald” (1932-1937) and “The Call of the Ukraine”(1941-1942) as well as radio programs, Svit helped to print a Map of Green Ukraine (1937) and to publish the first Ukrainian Japanese dictionary (1944). Thanks to the social, cultural, and political activities of enthu-

siasts like Ivan Svit and print media they ran, from the nationally diverse masses, they created a new social structure - the Ukrainian community, so-called imaginary Ukraine in Asia.

By the end of World War II, Svit worked as a self-proclaimed Ukrainian consul and helped to evacuate large groups of Ukrainians from China. Through his work activity, Svit knew many of the participants in those historical events, which later enabled him to become a historian and write two books called “Short History of the Ukrainian Movement in the Far East/Asia (Harbin, 1938) and «Ukrainian-Japanese Relations (1903-1945). Historical Survey and Observations” (NY,1972).

Active community members, such as Ivan Svit under Japanese occupation in Manchuria, did not give up and continued actively communicating with authorities, emphasizing their need for an independent Ukrainian state. Thanks to his communication skills, Svit became an important figure in the community, a cultural bridge, and a mediator between people of different political and cultural backgrounds in Northeast Asia. The story of Ivan Svit as a representative of the forgotten Ukrainian diaspora in Asia is an excellent example of Ukrainian identity creation through the printed media far away from the mainland, history of an active dialogue between West and East, and Ukrainian public and cultural diplomacy.



Dr. **Olga Khomenko** (Ольга Хоменко) is an Associate Professor and Japan Program Director at Kyiv Mohyla Business School (KMBS), The National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy Ukraine. She holds a PhD in Area Studies, specifically on the history of Japan, from the University of Tokyo (2005), a PhD in world history from the Ukrainian Academy of Science (2013), and an MBA from the Kyiv School of Economics (2017). From 2018 to 2020, she was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Harvard University, USA, at the Ukrainian Research Institute and Davis Center. Her research interests include the history of post-war Japan, the history of Japanese business and consumption culture, the history of Ukraine-Japan relations, with a focus on Ukrainians in the Far East and Manchuria under Japanese occupation, as well as the history of the creation of Ukrainian national identity and Ukrainian literature. Her recent book *The Far Eastern Odyssey of Ivan Svit* [original Title *Далекосхідна одісея Івана Світа*] was published in 2021, by Laurus in Kyiv. As well as her recent Japanese book *Ukrainians who crossed the borders* [original Title *国境を超えたウクライナ人*] was published in February of 2022, by Gunzoshia in Tokyo.



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