

Title: Broken Tongues: Race, Sacrifice and Geopolitics in Vsevolod Ivanov's *Armored Car No. 14-69*

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Vsevolod Ivanov (1895-1963) made his literary reputation primarily through his short story *Armored Car No 14-69*, published in *Krasnaia Nov'* in 1922 and later adapted into a successful stage play. The story, supposedly based on fact, narrates the successful effort of a group of Red peasant partisans in seizing an armored train delivering reinforcements to quell a revolutionary rebellion in Vladivostok. Arguably the most memorable figure is the "Chinaman" (*kitaets*) Sin-Bin U, a Red volunteer motivated by a desire to avenge himself against the Japanese. He sacrifices his body on the train tracks, ensuring the train's capture. The most prominent marker of Sin-Bin U's Chinese-ness is his tortured Russian, rendered nearly incomprehensible by his accent; as one critic acidly noted, Sin-Bin U himself "is a chopsuey of mispronounced Russian words." Following work in American literature about "racial form," i.e., the way in which racial types and identities are materially and ideologically constructed, this paper proposes a way of viewing Sin-Bin U through the lens of what might be called "racial de-formation," an always tentative racialization that approaches identity but also foregrounds its own disintegration and subjugation. Viewed through this lens, it is not accidental that Sin-Bin U's broken Russian coincides with his mutilated body. The paper goes on to argue for Sin-Bin U's sacrifice as an ideological and ritualized mediation through which the racial and imperial struggle for supremacy between Russia and Japan are reconfigured against the background of a non-sovereign, primitive and inarticulate China. Sin-Bin U's fatal attempt to become a Soviet subject, both in speech and life, highlights the contradiction between socialist internationalism and Russian particularism, and underlines the persistent anxieties about race and the legacies of empire in revolutionary Soviet consciousness.