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**Yuri P. Shabaev, Igor L. Zherebtsov**

**Russian political and cultural regionalism  
in XXI century: Siberian option**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Organizing Committee of the International Seminar “Mapping Post-Soviet Eurasia: Political Economy, Strategic Environment and Cultural Landscape” said in its Concept Note: “The disintegration of the USSR in 1991, resulted in a complete restructuring of the social, economic and political infrastructure of not just the countries that emerged out of it but also in the regions beyond. Its impact was clearly global in nature in more ways than one. The fall of communism in Russia also weakened the centuries-long process of Eurasian integration. What was unleashed was a process of transition that in some countries entailed elements of re-democratisation, re-privatisation of property and re-liberalisation of social relations as a whole. While in others, it was about rediscovery and recovery of native memory, indigenous traditions and also about re-modernisation. The multiple transitional experiences despite the common past of the newly emerged countries in the former Soviet space has been one of the most defining feature of the transition. Their distinct political journeys have displayed trajectories ranging from initial power struggle among competing elites to a period of marked political pluralisation in some instances and also to a reconsolidating of authoritarian rule in many cases. The variations are also evident in regard to the foreign policy choices made by these countries, as they negotiate with the world at large in the drastically changed international environment post 1991. Consequently, the prevailing strategic environment has greatly impacted the political and economic choices that many of these countries have made in pursuit of their national and strategic interests. With contemporary world politics marked by persistent competition between diverse states, regions and civilisations, Post-Soviet Eurasia presents an interesting mix of all these components. The geopolitical and civilisational aspects of Eurasianism, in which Russia occupies a pivotal geo-political place creates both opportunities and anxieties for stake holders as Post-Soviet Eurasia navigates through the complexities of contemporary global politics seeking solutions to some of the most pressing national, regional and global

concerns. It is to ponder on these pertinent nuances of the transformation underway in the post-Soviet Eurasian Landscape that the theme of the International Conference is proposed as: Mapping Post-Soviet Eurasia: Political Economy, Strategic Environment and Cultural Landscape”.

One of the main sub-themes of the International Seminar is “Regions and Regionalism in Eurasia”. In our opinion, the Siberian regionalism is an interesting problem for the participants of this seminar. The scientists in the Republic of Komi explore these issues for a long time. The Institute of Language, Literature and History in Syktyvkar, Republic of Komi, was founded in 1970. Today the Institute of Language, Literature and History is one of the leading centers of Finno-Ugristics and humanitarian study of the North in the field of historical and philological sciences in Russia. Along with the leading research centres of Finland, Hungary, Germany and other countries of Europe, the Institute is the leading Russian research centre in the field of Russian history, archeology, ethnography [Zherebtsov 2015]. Holding on the basis of the Institute of a number of large international forums (Northern social-ecological congress, etc.), participation in realization of many international projects and extensive international contacts is the evidence of the universally recognized international authority of the Institute.

## THE SIBERIAN REGIONALISM

The Russian political practices essentially change last 20 years, keeping thus traditions of political hierarchy and political corporativism at which the principle of separation of power is conditional enough and more ritual. At the same time, it is impossible to speak about full unification and ritualization of political life in the country, for anyhow expressed mobilization of regionalistic and ethno-political ideas for the solution of both current and long-term political aims remain.

The fact that regionalism appeared to be in the centre of our attention is not accidental, for as P. Sorokin (who was born in the Komi region) noted in his “Sociology System”, compatriotic relations are the strongest social relations: “The Grouping by place of residence during all history was one of the main things. It lies in the basis of the state grouping, in division of the state territory into districts: provinces, districts, volosts, in the phenomena of jurisdiction, possession or deprivation of the rights of self-government (places deprived of zemstvos, etc.) etc. In a word, among many solidarities there is a special solidarity by place of residence, giving grounds for a special grouping not coinciding with the basic one and being one of the most important social co-ordinates, defining the behavior and experiences of individuals living together” [Sorokin 1992: 120–121].

Nevertheless, in a public discourse there is an opinion that “regionalism (as movement) in Russia is at an infantile stage of development” [Krylov]. It is not absolutely so, for ethnonational movement which can be considered as component of regional movements, became integral part of modern Russian political landscape, and their ideology was adequately formed [Shabaev, Sadokhin 2014]. If so speak about history of the Russian regionalism, then, for example, the idea of the Siberian republic was for the first time expressed in 1820-s, i.e. it is 200 years. At that the Siberian regionalism in the form of “Siberian autonomism” the mouthpiece of which were the so-called “oblast-men”, was formed already in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 19<sup>th</sup> century [Harbulova 2010], while regional ethnonational movements, for example, in the Finno-Ugric people (if not to take into consideration the Finns), began to be formed in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century [Shabaev, Charina 2010; Shabaev, Zherebtsov, Alexander 1997], i.e. regionalistic and ethnoregionalistic political associations for Russia are not something new at all.

Inevitably there is a question why regionalism and ethnicity as instruments of political mobilization are considered as complementary political resources, as in many respects equivalent instruments? The fact is that political practice indicates not only the close relationships between these two categories, but also that ideology of regionalism, regionalistic movements can be transformed to ideology of ethnic nationalism and ethnic movements.

At that it is necessary to distinguish regionalism as political practice and regionalism as ideology. In Post-Soviet Russia it is possible to name, perhaps, only two regional political projects which have been realized in practice but which destiny essentially differs. The first project is the creation of the Ural republic, and the second one is the reorganization of the Tatar Soviet Socialist Republic to Tatarstan, formation of the Tatar regional identity and ideology of the Tatar regionalism [Shabaev, Zherebtsov 2016].

The most successful experience of formation of regional ideology was accumulated in the Arkhangelsk region. Of importance is that there historical memory and ethnicity became the base of regional ideology [Shabaev, Zherebtsov, Zhuravlev 2012; Zherebtsov 2016]. And this ideology successfully drifted from politicisation of historical memory to constructing ethnicity.

The idea of wide regional integration is rather popular in circles of Archangelsk political and intellectual elite, and, according to our surveys, it is actively supported by the population of northern regions [Shabaev 2011; Shabaev, Zherebtsov, Kim Hye Jin, Kim Hyun Taek 2016]. Nevertheless, the Pomor movement could not realize their ideas and to become appreciable political force in the European north of Russian Federation for, as a result of two anti-Pomor campaigns, it had in fact been crushed.

But the Siberian regionalism has the deepest historical roots in Russia. (Modern population of Siberia was formed during various multiplane migratory processes, special scientific literature is devoted to [Zherebtsov 2010; Zherebtsov, Isupov 2013a; Zherebtsov, Isupov 2013b]).

In Soviet years there could not be any Siberian autonomism. But during the Post-Soviet epoch not any revival of the idea of Siberian regionalism/autonomism occurred. Only separate attempts to revive this idea took place. In 1997 it was declared of creation of some “Siberian party”, professing ideas of regionalism, but having no broad support and quickly disappeared from political horizon. In 1998 the Liberation army of Siberia numbering 15 people was created.

Since the beginning of the 2000s ideas of Siberian autonomism or close to them start to appear even more often in regional Internet resources. In 2005 in Live Magazine there appeared some “Siberian movement”, then – Regional alternative of Siberia, “State of Siberia” etc. In 2006 the Baikal peoples’ front numbering about 30 members was created [Modern Siberian]. Supporters of modern Siberian regionalism, as well as their predecessors, basically support quite rational ideas connected with expansion of power of the regions. But shy attempts of revival of the Siberian movement as a regional political association so far are not successful, as well as popular and widely discussed concept of modern Siberian regionalism.

However this does not mean that the idea of the Siberian regionalism is dead. It obtains another form – the form of constructing the Siberian identity and Siberian cultural distinctiveness, i.e. the Siberian regionalism, as well as in other cases, obtains ethnic colouring. In some editions (basically textbook) it is said that territorial determinant “Siberian” should be considered as ethnonym, and the Siberians – as a separate ethnic group [Polyanichkina 2007]. That allowed some supporters of the Siberian regionalism to assert that the named ethnonym is not simply real, but very widespread and the Siberian identity is realized not only in it, but also in other symbolical forms. So, on a Novosibirsk news site “Tape of regional news” Semen Kaigorodov confirmed in March, 2012: “Last population census was marked by that in the column “nationality” many our fellow citizens (informal figure – about 4 millions) wrote – “Siberian”. Ethnographers hardly, but recognize: the Siberian subethnos, apparently, exists. Enthusiasts of the appeared “Siberians” invented, on the basis of old-timers’ Yenisei dialect, “the Siberian language”, began to develop concepts of development of Siberia and even argued on where there should be a future Siberian capital. Sayan Andrianov, Novosibirsk musician, leader of the group “Bugotak” playing ethnic rock music, composed the Siberian hymn “I am a Siberian” [Kaigorodov 2012]. The most radical supporters of the Siberian movement are not only for recognition of the Siberian an independent ethnic group, but also for the “formation of the strong Siberian nation” [Present].

But words about 4 million people who have defined their ethnic belonging with the ethnonym “Siberian”, are obvious exaggeration as such are only some thousand, and most of them (4 thousand people) – from Novosibirsk which together with Tomsk, Irkutsk and Surgut is considered one of the main centers of cultivation of the idea of Siberian

autonomism. In 2012 in Novosibirsk, they tried to create a national-cultural autonomy of the Siberians, but as officially the Siberians are not recognized neither an ethnographic group of the Russians, nor an independent ethnic community, they failed to achieve it.

Today there are no grounds to speak about formation of any wide Siberian movement or occurrence of socially significant “Siberian project”, but it is obvious that in regions of Siberia the cultural basis for strengthening of the Siberian identity as a possible basis of the future social movement is formed. Here two directions should be noted: transformation of Siberian distinctiveness in some brand and its use in the consumer market, and intellectualization of the idea of “Siberianism”.

A number of the enterprises located in cities of Siberia, mark the production either as Made in Siberia or Product of Siberia. Vests, T-shirts. Labels on suitcases end even covers for passports with words “I am a Siberian” became popular. They actively are on sale in Novosibirsk and have got popularity, and it means that Siberian distinctiveness is visualized and market as special consumer quality. However, as Internet sites inform, “some local residents prefer to be represented to foreigners as “From Siberia”: this not only causes less negative associations (with corruption, authoritarianism etc.), than “From Russia”, but is perceived as romanticism end exotic [I am Siberian].

However the aspiration to exotization cannot be perceived only as some reaction to unification and globalization or as the form of the cultural protest against social ulcers of the Russian society. The aspiration to exotization has quite rational basis that can be seen from the example of Kalmykia [Cuchinova 2012: 171–190]. But Siberian distinctiveness can take the form of cultural protest, of which testifies the demonstration in Novosibirsk on May 1, 2016 (a cultural parody to classical demonstration) under the slogan “Here is not Moscow for you” with 2 thousand people taking part in it.

Intellectualization of the idea of Siberian distinctiveness is promoted by the activity of the scientific organizations and universities where studying of the Siberian cultural heritage is conducted. In 2014 in Tomsk the scientific conference “Man in the varying world. Identity and social adaptation problem in the history and the present: methodology, technique and research practice” was held at which the problems of formation of the Russian identity were discussed, special attention was

given to discussion of the concept “Siberian”. Philologists of Tomsk University, in turn, issued “The Dictionary of figurative units of the Siberian dialect” etc.

Gradually formed cultural base of Siberian distinctiveness can lead to formation of the bases of regional ideology, but cannot be transformed to any forms of regional political movement. First, in Russia they are very much afraid of growth of separatism moods for what there are grounds. These fears have led to defeat of the Pomor movement in Arkhangelsk. Secondly, in Russia creation of regional parties and the parties built by an ethnic principle is forbidden. Thirdly, the Siberian regionalism has no wide public support today, it will be very difficult to change public moods, if at all.

What can feed the regionalism today? Evidently, any regional movements should be formed as expressing the interests of local population. These interests are many-sided, but economic interests are most significant. For an ordinary citizen or businessman of importance is the condition of labour market, level of prices and incomes, the system of taxation and tariffs, business dealing conditions etc. Here are observed quite obvious disproportions connected with that the most part of industrial potential is in region, and almost all financial capital is concentrated in Moscow. The basic part of national riches is produced outside the capital, the largest tax bearer is Moscow as headquarters of the largest corporations are located there, they pay a considerable share of taxes not to local budgets, but to the capital budget. Here from comes very essential difference in incomes of inhabitants of regions and capitals.

Formation of vertical of power has led to that, besides concentration of the capital, almost all power potential is concentrated in Moscow as the role of local political elites and political influence of the regions is extremely limited which cannot but cause discontent. The aspiration to eradication of separatist moods among regional leaders was the purpose of such concentration, but this purpose had been achieved only partly. Besides, the regionalist is born and fed appreciably in view of the fact that the policy of civil integration has not become the important component in political practice of both federal and regional political managers.

But besides the economic and political reasons inevitably generating regionalistic ideas, the cultural peculiarities of the regions, their cultural distinctiveness are also of great importance. For occurrence and strengthening of local nationalism and separatism it is important not only to rely on

economic egoism and healthy economic interests of local population, but not less important is to form ideology which convincingly would prove that inhabitants of the given concrete region are an independent cultural community with the cultural, economic and political interests which are not considered or are insufficiently considered by the federal authorities. It is necessary, that this ideology has been apprehended by various strata of society. Today there is nobody to form such an ideology, but at that isolated ideas of Siberian distinctiveness live and are constantly duplicated in virtual space. Therefore the Siberian regionalism while now can be only virtual.

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## APPENDIX

### *INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND HISTORY: WITH A SIGHT IN THE FUTURE*

As a result of researches of modern local communities (ethnic, religious, territorial) and ethnocultural processes in the extreme North and the Northeast of the European part of Russia carried out in 2011–2013, it is established that the character of the ethnodemographic and cultural processes taking place in the European north of the Russian Federation, testifies to the begun process of decolonization of the North. This process has got steady character as the former cultural image of the North is disrupted, while regional identities and regional communities are not stable of which testifies the fact that the majority of the population of regions of the European North do not identify themselves with local communities, and local identities (city, territorial) are expressed poorly. It is revealed that traditional cultural experience at local level is appreciably preserved and demanded. This experience can form the basis for self-development and self-organization of local cultural groups.

Special attention was given to carrying out the structural-applied researches and investigations which can be used in practice of regional social policy, especially at working out of programs and mechanisms of realization of the state national policy. In 2011 Yu.P. Shabaev and the academician V.A. Tishkov prepared and published the textbook “Ethnopolitical science: political functions of ethnicity”. The experience of domestic and foreign ethnopolitics is generalized in the textbook, the basic problems connected with regulation of relations between ethnic communities and the state are given. The textbook is used not only in practice of educational activity of the higher school, but also in practice of preparation of the civil servants occupied in formation of the cultural and national policy. On the instructions of the Ministry of National Policy of the Komi Republic the Institute of Language, Literature and History developed the model of regional network of monitoring of ethnic conflictness, the republican network of experts is formed, preparation and instructing of employees of the network is done and its high-grade functioning is provided.

The major problems of historical-demographic development of the European North are considered, common features and regional peculiarities

of development of the population of the European Northeast are shown, its basic stages are singled out. For the first time in national historical demography the demographic development of an extensive region with specific ethnic structure of the population is specially analyzed throughout so long period of time, its relation to climatic changes is traced. The analysis of historical experience of the historical-demographic processes taking place in the region, can be used at working out of new concepts of demographic development of the Republic of Komi and the North of Russia as a whole.

The main objective of researches of the historians is the creation of the concept of regional development in the all-Russian context. Problems of definition of the role of factors (migratory, ethnodemographic, social and economic and specific northern natural-climatic) influencing the local population everyday life in various historical periods; studying of history of the Finno-Ugric statehood in context of development and strengthening of the Russian federative state (problems of formation and development of the national autonomy, party building, the relation of the population to power structures; and also the retrospective analysis of agrarian problems in the Euroasian north, adapted for high-altitude conditions and studying of history of industrialisation and development of natural resources of the region), are set.

The ethnographic component of working out of this direction assumes, first, the systematic studying of the processes of interethnic integration and civil consolidation in the European north of the Russian Federation and the analysis of conditions promoting preservation and cultivation of negative ethnic stereotypes, formation of an intercultural distance, strengthening of xenophobia for the purpose of development of mechanisms of management by interethnic conflicts of different level. It is necessary to estimate interrelations between ethnic groups historically formed on territory of the region and new (migrant) groups, to define the importance of ethnic and general civil values and norms in cultural development of the population of the region, for this purpose it is supposed to reveal the specificity of cultural interaction between groups, to define the importance of negative stereotypes and guidelines in mass moods, to define the most conflict spheres of interaction between groups, to work out proposals on optimisation of mechanisms of realisation of regional models of ethnopolicy.

Secondly, the ethnographers plan to study the regional features of the processes of nation-building and formation of the all-Russian identity, the

analysis of the role of the ethnic factor in the course of civil consolidation that is extremely significant for the state policy directed on maintenance of social stability, the civil world and strengthening of bases of the Russian civil nation. For the solution of this problem studying of regional features of the process of nation-building in Russia and the role of the ethnic factor in this process, definition of dynamics of changes in the system of cultural identities (local, regional, ethnic, general civil) is necessary; revealing of the factors promoting strengthening of civil solidarity and the all-Russian civil identity; working out of proposals directed on maintenance of regional social stability and organic use in the process of nation-building of ethnic and general civil values and ideals.

And the third, for ethnography rather important is the complex study of local and general regional national cultural traditions, the character of cultural interference in the region allowing to consider ways and forms of inter-generational translation of national culture, to define stability of various elements of culture in different social conditions by the analysis of local cultural complexes, to define the role of confessional factor in the course of cultural development of groups, to reveal the general and specific in the course of cultural evolution of various groups of the population of the North, to specify the degree of preservation of national traditions and forms of their transformation.

The results of this large work of the historians and ethnographers should become formation of a new concept of history of statehood of the Finno-Ugric people of Russia; working out of periodization of ethnodemographic processes in the Finno-Ugric people; studying of experience of solution of the agrarian problem for formation of fuller picture of development of the European North; scientific support of legislative processes in the field of national and ethno-confessional relations and the state building in the region; revealing of features of formation of ethnographic Komi groups, cultural specificity of each region, creation of an electronic database on ethnographic groups of Komi; tolerance development in the polyethnic region.

In the Sector of ethnography the generalizing work on ethnography of Komi which is to generalize the results of more than two-centuries studying of the Komi ethnography is carried out. Besides serious attention is given to working out of new directions of researches. Among perspective directions we can name city anthropology. This direction rather actively developing in the world, has not yet got proper development in Russia. Ethnographers

of the Institute not only carried out a series of researches of city culture, but also act as the co-ordinator of similar researches in Russia. Under their initiative a series of collected works "City anthropology" which will have not only all-Russian, but also the international importance is prepares for publication. Another perspective theme is studying of processes of evolution of rural settlements and peasant farms in last decades, mainly in the form of monographic descriptions of separate settlements located in different regions of the European north.

For the last years at the Institute of Language, Literature and History the subjects of scientific researches were extended, new perspective and priority directions from the point of view of modern science were revealed. The researches which have been carried out by the Institute, have general-theoretical value and have played the important role in studying of ancient and modern history of Russia, spiritual and material culture of the Finno-Ugric, Samoyed and Russian people of the Russian Federation. Many of the large generalizing works prepared by scientists of the Institute have no analogues not only in the Finno-Ugric regions of Russia, but also in the country as a whole, and also abroad.

In subjects of scientific researches the continuity is observed. New themes are based on the preceding scientific workings out and urged to develop research of key problems of the ancient and modern history, traditional culture and way of life, language, to expand and deepen the understanding of the put problems, and in certain cases – to reconsider former estimations on the basis of attraction of a new factual material.

Indicator of authority of scientists of the Institute, their popularity in the scientific circles is constant active participation of scientists of the Institute in many major scientific congresses, conferences, seminars held in our country and abroad. The Institute repeatedly was the organizer of various international, All-Russia and regional scientific forums. The quantity of works published by the Institute has considerably increased. Practically all scientific results obtained by scientists of the Institute of Language, Literature and History quickly enough are introduced in the scientific turnover by their publication, become accessible to a wide audience. This testifies to the proper organization of planning of the research and publishing work, adequate correlation of these major directions of the activity of the Institute, ability to expect and to properly estimate the probable requirements for various printing editions not only in the scientific circles, but also in

education sphere, culture, the population as a whole. The publication of some popular scientific works and teaching aids promoting popularization of scientific knowledge, introduction in practice of scientific achievements and, in particular, of their use in educational process in the higher school and secondary educational institutions should especially be noted.

Solving first of all of problems of the organisation and carrying out of fundamental scientific researches, we should not forget about applied researches. In fact, among all their variety we can mention two basic directions: to preservation of historical and cultural heritage of the people of the northeast of Europe (monitoring and passportization of known sites of archeology, searches and studying the historical and cultural heritage in areas of intensive industrial and road building, and also collecting, preservation and publication of monuments of oral national literature) and to creation of educational-methodical complexes, propagation of history and culture of the people of the European North of Russia.