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**REGIONAL CULTURAL STUDIES IN RUSSIA: FROM FORMATION TO THE
ATTAINMENT OF THE SUBJECT FIELD**

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ABSTRACT

The article analyzes regional cultural studies in Russia as an emerging area of scientific research. The emergence of new area in Russian humanities research over the last twenty years suggests that the interest in differences peculiar to specific regions allows on the one hand capturing the existing diversity of ethnicities, confessions, cultural practices, and on the other hand, identifying value-normative systems that have created them as well as the importance of the concerned issue for contemporary development of the country.

While in foreign researches the issues of regional differences due to the diversity of cultures and the peculiarities of historical development are traditional to the humanities, becoming the basis for applied research, in Russia the area such as regional cultural studies is at the beginning of its formation. It is therefore important to provide a methodology that would allow considering cultures on a new qualitative level.

The article proposes a brief overview of the research discourses typical for Russian and foreign scientific traditions, reveals the peculiarities of regional culture analysis in Russia and outlines the research avenues of regional cultural studies.

In conclusion, the author explores the prospects of regional cultural studies as a scientific prospect synthesizing advances in historical, geographical and political spheres.

Key words: regional cultural studies, development patterns, scientific prospect, Russia

1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, regional cultural studies in Russia are in a state of becoming and

defining its own problem field. It is postulated that this scientific prospect deals with the study of regional features of social,

economic, cultural and political life of separate territories included into the more general integrities namely the national cultures.

However, there is no proper reflection on methodological procedures of this scientific prospect. The differentiation of regional cultural studies, historical local lore and ethnopsychology that are using the same phenomena as research targets is substantiated insufficiently.

Today we can speak of two emerging areas of research discourses in regional cultural studies: regional cultural studies of foreign countries and regional cultural studies of Russia. In our view, exactly the second direction is of particular interest. This is due to the realities that the country and its regions have faced over the past decades.

1.1 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In contemporary cultural studies a special place is occupied by works relating to the comprehension of the specific nature of culture and its contradictory unity. Recreating the image of the world culture researchers are faced with contradictory phenomena, different in quality, which are in complex interaction – mutual influence, attraction or refusal.

During the XIX–XX centuries multiple attempts were made to comprehend the development logic of

world culture history. These attempts included linear approach, not considering the specifics of different cultures (so-called "theory of progress", Eurocentric in their essence); the "cyclical" approach based on the idea of isolation and impermeability of cultures (O. Spengler); synergistic approach, associated with the comprehension of culture as a self-developing system (M. S. Kagan). The researches focused on culture topology rather than on multi-stage development of cultures are of special interest. In the framework of this logic the world culture is considered simultaneously as integrity (the unity of all existed, existing or future cultures) and discreteness (what is called cultural-historical types according to N.I. Danilevsky, or the self-contained discrete cultural-historical units – according to A. Toynbee). The productivity of such research is obvious, as it is based on the actual multiplicity of cultures present in the common space of world culture. This diversity of forms, varieties and culture types is due to different factors, such as geographical, historical, ethnic, religious, socio-economic, and political.

The complexity in the description of the world culture phenomenon lies in its well-known duality: being simultaneously a form of existence of different ethnic groups, nationalities and societies, and

creating a field for their mutual coexistence. Mega level (of world culture) projected on the level of the national culture development (meso-level) does not simplify the situation. Turning to the national culture, we are again faced with the unity in diversity that is associated with sociocultural differences that arise at different stages of historical development. If we refer to geographical and historical factors, we will reveal that different cultures were developed on the same territory in different historical periods, sometimes genetically related to the preceding cultures, and sometimes denying them.

Different cultural worlds with a particular ethnic history or religious affiliation co-exist coming into antagonism with each other or smoothing away the differences within the same political and socio-economic unified whole. Moreover, speaking about the world of national culture we are constantly faced with the differentiation at the level of individuals, caused by social experiences, educational systems and ways of self-realization.

Creating operational models of national culture comes into conflict with the practice of specific being due to the presence of the complex relationships between specific social or ethnic groups, their attraction - refusal, commonality and

difference in historical destiny as well as multidirectional value orientations. In scientific literature the issue of regional differences has a long history: from the analysis of regionalism in history (E. Storm) or the consideration of "old" and "new" regionalism in the context of economic issues (M. E. Burfisher, S. Robinson, K. Thierfelder) to private issues of regional cultural heritage that become a basis for attracting tourists to the country (T. Cuccia, R. Cellini).

And, perhaps, the analysis of Russian culture is of particular difficulty, since Russia in terms of the variety of historic cultural types of communities who have lived and are living on its territory, is typologically similar to the world culture in general.

Referring to the Russian culture, it is necessary to distinguish several research dimensions, which acquire a special relevance in terms of contemporary socio-cultural situation: Russia as a multiethnic unity (with an emphasis on the consideration of intercultural communication problems); Russia as a multiconfessional country (with an emphasis on tolerant attitudes towards belief system, traditions and cultural practices, different than your own); and Russia as a common living space of many

nations (with an emphasis on historically established territorial unity).

The concepts of the unity and diversity, the need to overcome inter-ethnic and inter-confessional contradictions, and the value of each culture that emerged on the territory of the vast country become the dominant idea when conducting the analysis in any of these perspectives. Concept of the Russian culture as a complex heterogeneous system of closely interconnected elements leads to the fact that it can be described as the historically established integrity. The interconnection and interdependence of its elements lead to the recognition of a plurality of existing (or existed) models of cultural development. The study of regional specificity has its own history. The regionalization processes taking place in different countries of the world were becoming the research targets in political, sociological, historical, and philosophical literature.

In the last third of the XX century the problems of regionalization attracted attention of geopoliticians, sociologists and economists since this phenomenon was closely associated with globalization and the resulting changes in the socio-political and economic spheres. A special place in the studies of regionalism is occupied by the issues on political order of certain territories (federalism issues) which have

received additional impetus in connection with the new political realities (in particular, with the collapse of the USSR, Yugoslavia, the creation of the European Union and complex migration processes). Science faces a new term of "regional challenge", which is associated with the multiplicity of possible political discourses, equal opportunity of the directly opposed solutions to the existing and evolving situations, and the analysis of activity of regional political elites. The works of Russian authors (A. Sergunin, V. Dolgov, V. Alekseev, A. Ryzhkov, Yu. Golik and others) establish the relationship between the problems of regional development and the problems of political and administrative development of the country. While not denying the productivity of this kind of research, we note that they lie in the plane of "applied policy" and do not consider the regions development patterns stating only their current state.

A new level of regional systems analysis is linked with the comprehension of ethnic and cultural differences. A bidirectional process (description and comprehension of ethnic diversity by researchers who belong to these ethnic cultures and attempt to create typological studies) enriches the process of the Russia's regional specificity analysis (in this connection, a definition of Russia "like ten

countries" differing geographically and culturally, emerged not coincidentally). The analysis of ethnic relations in the regions, including those as a specific factor of social life instability, becomes of particular relevance.

Actually, to a very large extent, ethnological studies are summative in nature fixing ethnic and cultural differences, considering culture as either a closed system or by focusing on cross-ethnic relations embodied in the artifacts, ways of communication and mutual assessments of various ethnic group members. The research in the field of ethnic psychology and anthropology is of special interest.

Referring to the problems of "ethnic world view", "ethnic constants" in the context of understanding the specifics of traditional culture, ethnopsychologists reveal the peculiarities of ethnic self-identification mechanisms, consider the adaptive-activity models of human behavior, analyze the ethnos self-structuring mechanisms (interdisciplinary studies, linking the actual problems of ethnology and psychology with the problems of the culture functioning, become the most promising research areas in ethnic psychology). Such approach in domestic science is illustrative in particular for the works of S. Lurie, who tries to

identify new frontiers for science based on European and American traditions: the study of ethnic culture as integrity (F. Boas) forms a unified philosophical and cultural field; the study of culture and psychology in totality (M. Mead); the study of personality structures (A. Gardiner, J. White); psychoanalytic anthropology (G. Roheim, J. Derevo); the studies of national nature and worldview in the context of axiological approach (C. Kluckhohn, R. Redfield).

Studies of historical component of Russian regions increasingly hold a high position in today's science.

And while in former times the historical science was gravitated toward the large-scale research related to the comprehension of macro-processes (driving forces of history, the history of nations and political systems), currently the emphasis is made on the analysis of micro-communities, local phenomena within the context of world history as a required component element: special attention is paid to the introduction of new facts, comprehension of everyday life history, introduction into scientific circulation of new documents describing the processes taking place in "domestic" (local) history. Local history research interlocks with the ethnological studies, when one comprehends cross-ethnic processes

responsible for the specificity of the region's development.

Along with the historiographic work associated with the collection of materials and interpretation of archival sources and museum artifacts, attempts are made to comprehend the research methodology of local history, and emphasis is made on a specific comprehension of the region not so much as a "territory" but as "micro-community", the collectivity of people engaged in certain historical activities.

Research of local history (A. Baiburin, I. Björklund) takes the special place. In our view, today the most productive is the research in the field of scientific (activity analysis of scientific schools developing in the region), educational (development of regional educational systems), and aesthetic (the specificity of artistic practices) activities of people living in a particular region.

A slightly different perspective in the study of regions is observed in contemporary geographical science resulting from the new research area of humane geography. The works of western scientists (K. Sauer, K. Salter, I. Wallerstein) and Russian researchers (Yu. Vedenin, R. Turovsky, D. Zamyatin) allow speaking about efficiency of the holistic analysis of natural-geographical life conditions and forms of culture that arise in

a particular space and stipulate the identity of the people living there.

Because of the multiplicity of challenges that are facing scientists from various research areas, today we can say that creating a holistic picture of life in individual regions of the country requires interdisciplinary studies that integrate various aspects of learning and are based on the comprehension of culture as a unique form of human existence in specific historical and geographical conditions. These studies are in the field of regional cultural anthropology.

1.2. RESEARCH METHODS

Since the mid-1960s in the national science, challenges associated with the culture studies have acquired a special significance facilitating aspects such as analysis of socio-cultural processes in the society, comprehension of the role and place of culture in shaping the personality and society, relationship between culture and the natural environment, and consideration of the value orientation systems of different social groups. A special place in the study of such a multifaceted and complex phenomenon that is culture was occupied and still is occupied by a so-called activity-based approach that defines culture as the totality of forms, methods, means and results of human activity. According to the logic of this

approach, historical component, which allows considering culture as a product of human activity that emerged in certain historical conditions, becomes an additional element in the cultural research.

The study of culture as a sphere of human activity was carried out in different ways, though the problems associated with the content of cultural and creative activity and its defining property of being a system-forming factor of human existence were always brought to the forefront.

In general, within the framework of the activity approach the culture is considered as a complex system of interconnected elements, representing a historically developed natural integrity as a certain united world. In most general terms, culture is understood as a system of non-biologically developed tools and mechanisms through which the human activity is provided, motivated, directed, coordinated and implemented. In definitions of the culture the emphasis is made on its supernatural character and the fact that culture is created by people, as well as on the regulation mechanisms of social relations and behavior. Despite the multiplicity of definitions and approaches, almost everybody stresses the universality of culture and its integrating role in social life.

Until very recently, the concept of regional culture was used with regard to local communities living in a particular area and to a greater degree – in relation to the cultures of foreign countries. In this case the word "region" was used in a narrow meaning – "the territory where the given culture was originated and developed" (studies devoted to the cultures of the Pacific region or the countries of Maghreb, Latin America or Tropical Africa).

Consideration of regional cultures on the territory of Russia was originally conducted in the framework of ethnological research, rather fixing the elements of the traditional culture of individual nations preserved to modern age. The works related to the culture of Siberia, Urals, Don, and Russian North, as well as studies considering various megapolises like Moscow and St. Petersburg as a specific phenomena that are productive in terms of culture, are emerging over the recent time. At the same time, it should be noted that these studies are of segmentary and inconnected nature, indicating the formation of a new area of scientific knowledge, whose initial phase is associated with the accumulation of material and the first attempts of systematization.

In our view, the study of the regional artistic culture is quite symptomatic. The authors of the works describe the phenomena bearing the so-called local color; consider achievements of the "metropolitan art" on provincial background. With all due value of these studies, unfortunately, they do not get to a new qualitative level associated with comprehension of the region's development logic as a specific form of local culture existence within the culture of the country.

Recently there have been studies which analyze various aspects of a regional culture genesis: aspects of microregional type of culture that link socio-cultural and economic-environmental aspects of its existence (E. Shapovalova), the problem of the relation between the universal and idioethnic aspects (L. Danilenko), local options within the regional culture as entirety (G. Kazakova) and the issues related to the architectonics of cultural space (T. Lyapkina). We have carried out the analysis of the regional culture phenomenon as a special existence of the national culture and as self-awareness of a regional community.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Under the regional culture we understand the particular option of national culture and at the same time an independent phenomenon with its own development

laws and the logic of historical existence. It is distinguished by the availability of a number of certain features, as well as the ability to produce a specific system of social relations and its own personality type, the ability to exert influence on nationwide culture in general. Differentiation of concepts gives an insight into the fact that there are forms and mechanisms which transform the culture of the region into the regional culture. On the other hand, this allows including the concept of regional culture into the typological range of historical and cultural phenomena.

The comprehension of the regional culture is based on the idea of a culture as the unity of the world of human and the world of society, in fact, subjectified historical experience of mankind, refracting in a particular existence of private world of the person. A social world in all its diversity of ties (in its historical and contemporary beingness, existing in certain geographically fixed coordinates) becomes a mediating system. The unity of these worlds allows one to describe culture as a social and personal phenomenon, unfolding in the course of history. The works of Russian philosophers and culturologists A. Akhiezer, L. Batkin, G. Gachev, P. Gurevich, B. Erasov, M. Kagan, L. Kogan, I. Kondakov, A. Flier and others offer

methodological framework for the analysis of culture as a socio-personal phenomenon, focusing on the connections "man – society" and "world of culture – the world of nature". A concept of value in the culture analysis becomes essentially significant (P. Sorokin) since it underlies the culture and is a sense-making factor of its development. In our view, to understand the nature of culture it is important to study the type of culture, the characteristics of personality type produced by culture, the aspects of human's self-identification in culture and cultural identity systems. Each of these aspects, one way or another, appeared in the field of view of contemporary cultural studies.

Since the study of regional cultures in Russia is in its infancy, it seems appropriate to offer a methodology for analysis of regional culture, which could become a key element in the emerging research discourse of regional cultural studies.

In the course of comprehending the region as a specific historical and geographical space it is necessary to consider how the regional culture is "segregated" out of the world national culture. Here a special role is played by the "adaptive-adapting" mechanisms of culture, which can be found by reference to the historical experience of individuals and

micro-communities. Content analysis of the geographical environment provides information about adaptation to specific natural conditions, produced during the historical development of a certain cultural community and embodied in the forms of spiritual assimilation of the world and in material artifacts; reference to historical geography allows analyzing the phenomenon of intercultural communication; the description of the value-normative system transmitted by society to the individual and assimilating (or not assimilating) by this individual, makes it possible to link together the "core" of culture and its current status; reference to socio-psychological peculiarities of the individual opens the ways of self-identification of the personality and its self-actualization forms within a specific historical situation. Development of new territory provides ample material illustrating the mechanisms of human adaptation and creation of new forms of culture caused by the new conditions of existence.

To describe this phenomenon we introduce some definitions. First of all we introduce the concept of "mother culture". We will use it as a synonym for "culture of Central European Russia". Another used term is "regional culture". We propose to use this term to describe the variety of

cultures inside a single country. Regional culture is genetically linked with the national culture, the relationship between national culture and its regional version can be considered as general and special relationship.

Regional culture can be formed provided its development through several stages. The first stage is the inclusion of a given geographical space into the development field of "mother" culture (the situation of "discovery" is indicative in varying degrees to many regions of Russia; thus, the Urals, Siberia, Far East, Southern Russia, and later – the territory of East Prussia and the Kaliningrad Region were developed). The second stage is the development of new homeland by migrants (migration of population from Central Russia and Russian North to the Urals and further to Siberia, development of the Southern Russian lands by the Cossacks, Ukrainians, and Byelorussians).

This stage is characterized by the physical and symbolic inclusion of the territory into Russia. "Physical" inclusion of the territory into the administrative structure of the Russian state takes precedence of "symbolic" inclusion. "Symbolic" inclusion, i.e. finding the meaning of people's existence associated with the place of their settlement, with the idea of a role which should be played by

given territory in the country's destiny (to be a "pantry" of natural resources, like the Urals or Siberia; to perform the borders protection function – either South, East, or West) – comes later, when people are extensively exploring the territory during their practical activities and begin to perceive it as their "own".

Residents from different areas of the country being on the one hand natives of the "mother culture" and on the other hand bearing the introduced peculiarities associated with a former residence (this can be illustrated the best way by the example of a language that exists as a single means of communication, which is common for all native-speakers, and the dialect, which is typical for particular area), strive to adapt to the specific forms of existence, however, retain in various cultural forms (from clothing and housing to the language and rituals) features of the former life. At the next stage people begin to realize "relationship with area" that is expressed in certain types of economy and the organization of social life.

Engaging in intercultural communication with indigenous nations and migrants from other regions, one comes to the awareness of his own identity through the identity of a given territory. At this stage the life forms still carry special features of those places from which people

moved. This stage can be considered as a transition from the culture of the region to the regional culture.

The fourth stage is distinguished by the fact that people living in a particular area, perceive it as their homeland, attaining the region as a "purpose-for-themselves". The nature of production and social life, awareness of their own features and significance for the fate of the country, formed ethnos and embodied aesthetic values give the right to call regional the culture of the inhabitants of a particular region.

The next stage links national and regional cultures with new relationships in terms of their nature: not imagining outside the "big whole", the region feels its own importance and seeks to influence the destiny of the "whole". Thus, at this stage it turns into a form of existence of the national culture, while ensuring its development and preservation of internal dynamism. Another form of region's influence may be the specific economic role plaid by the region (e.g., providing access to the Baltic Sea or the Pacific Ocean), sometimes with a political tinge ("Uralian" or "Petersburg" trails in the political history of contemporary Russia). Another manifestation of this trend is connected with the desire of the representatives of regional cultures to

influence the change of the spiritual climate in the country.

Interestingly, not any region produces its regional culture. Thus, we can talk about regional culture with regard to the Urals, Siberia, and the South of Russia. However, the areas of Central Russia cannot be considered as regional culture phenomena since historically they are within the framework of the 'mother' Russian culture. The Russian North, which is perceived as the quintessence of Russian culture linked to another ancient center of Novgorod, and in fact Moscow and St. Petersburg as metropolitan centers can be called the individual territories.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Personalities belonging to a regional culture and artifacts produced in the framework of their activities become marked in a certain way: they get the status of attribute of the given culture. Without denying their ethnic origin (phenomena of Russian culture) they become also regional representatives that can be found in their personal attributes (compare the definitions enshrined in the commonplace sense – "Muscovite", "Petersburger", "Siberian", "Don Cossack") and in artifacts (stone-cutting art as a "landmark" of the Urals).

Thus, regional culture becomes the integrating spring of life of a specific territory, defined by the conditions of

humans' existence and determining the forms of their existence.

Today, the study of the regions is conducted in different aspects: geopolitical (in the context of globalization and regionalization), sociological (discusses the activity of certain social groups, especially political elites), local history (describes specific features of life in particular area), and demographic (addresses the problems of the population resettlement, labor resources distribution, the nature and dynamics of migrations). Formation of the regional cultural studies in Russia offers challenges for studying the regions holistically, in a variety of relationships that in turn creates the background for considering the peculiarities of regional cultures development in economic and political context.

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