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**ROLE OF MENTALITY GEOGRAPHY FOR STUDIES ON  
CULTURAL REGIONALISM**

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*Abstract*

The article identifies the role of geography of mentality for the studies on cultural regionalism. Orenburg region is used as a model region with a population which does not have pronounced regional identity. However, the region has cultural and geographic realities. Retrospective analysis of mental factors of cultural regionalism allowed us to differentiate between five spatial images of Orenburg region: a bridgehead to Central Asia, a citadel of civilizers, an experimental ground for reforms, an exploitable object with vast resources and a deaf province. Currently, Orenburg region is a region of «spreading identity». The mental factors of cultural regionalism are historical memory of the population, perception of the region by local (territorial) communities; land use traditions, traditional architecture. Expansion of geographic researches due to theoretical and methodological studies on geography of mentality is actualized in cultural regionalism. This helps identify the potential for long-term sustainability of multicultural communities and management technologies which can be used for effective and adequate responses to rapidly changing political, economic, and socio-cultural conditions. Based on the historical and spatial analysis of regional identity, it is possible to define the role of mental factors for cultural regionalism. The article uses instrumental and methodical techniques developed by the author to identify mental factors of cultural regionalism.

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**Keywords:** Mentality, geography, cultural regionalism, regional identity.



## 1. Introduction

Cultural regionalism as a dual phenomenon (Streletsky, 2011) which includes, on the one hand, the real regional diversity of cultural landscapes, and on the other, their perception by local (territorial) communities, is organically linked to the identity of the population. Analysis of spatial perception of a region by local communities in the historical and modern perspectives is organically linked with self-awareness of the population. The configuration and cultural-geographical characteristics of the region can be identified by synthesizing geographical researches on cultural regionalism and mental geography.

The article does not touch upon issues of cultural regionalism which are not included in cultural-geographical characteristics of the territory (regionalism as a part of political rhetoric, spatial development strategies, etc.).

## 2. Problem Statement

The lack of identity does not annul mental factors, but simply translates them into a non-articulated stratum. Selection of a region with a specific identity can go beyond the framework of civilization (for example, the Asian Pacific region) or relate to the civilizational identity of a local part. The latter is of special interest since it is determined on the basis of local self-consciousness. Thus, using regional identity as a tool for identifying the configuration of a cultural region, one can reveal the role of mental factors in cultural regionalism.

## 3. Research Questions

Regional identity is a phenomenon closely associated with cultural regionalism which should be studied within mental geography. Based on the definition suggested by Krylov (2005), regional identity is a set of cultural relations defined by the notion “home area” which are signs (typical of this civilization) of culture of rootedness. It has mental-geographical genesis.

According to Krylov (2006), regional identity has both geospatial and civilizational aspects of the study. Geospatial aspects include its forms (police, nuclear ones); civilization aspects include the degree of social sustainability, development of civilization, including “Westernization” and modernization (all these criteria are based on the “archetype of home” creating prerequisites for comparability of a number of similar parameters of civilizations and composing the mental “body” of a civilization with possible interweaving of specific features of the soul into the archetype of home).

In general, analysis of regional identity in cultural regionalism aims to identify configurations of cultural regionalism, forms of territorial organization of mentality. It is wrong to identify regional identity with a spatial level (Krylov, 2006). Individuals identify themselves with their home area as a mental and spiritual space rather than with a certain region (Krylov, 2005).

Local patriotism depends on self-identification with a territory. The share of those who consider themselves as a part of a larger area, lacking home areas decreases with a decrease in local patriotism level. For example, weakening local patriotism in Kostroma under the influence of neighborhood with more dynamic Yaroslavl causes the loss of a sense of belonging to Kostroma region (Krylov, 2005).

In general, regional identity is characterized by a combination of spatial aspects (Ryazan, Tambov identity) and aspects of internal energy, power of identity. The term “local patriotism” is more appropriate (Krylov, 2005).

Totality of cultural relations is a mutual contrast of the culture of regions and settlements, the strength of self-awareness (local patriotism) in regions and settlements, and the desire to segregate regions and settlements that do not coincide (Krylov, 2005).

Regional identity involves identification of the structured mental space, cultural homogeneity within regions, formation of modern «everyday» areas, preservation of reminiscence (in the mind and / or behavior of people) of former regions (provinces, principalities) (Krylov, 2005).

For large regional entities, the following identifiers of regional identity are essential: complex axes, bundles, highways, polyhighways, and cores of the cultural landscape (not just ethereal borders and centers); systems of zones and their interference-intersections (facet areas) (Steppe Siberia, Gornozavodsk Forest Ural, Middle Volga, etc.), complex macroregions with a cultural status (Meshchors, Prikamye); real hub areas which do not coincide with institutional, including natural cultural areas (the Baikal region, the Urals); focal natural objects. All these identifiers are well combined and give hundreds of potential symbolic niches for federal regions (Kagansky, 2007).

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

Based on the historical and spatial analysis of regional identity, let us define the role of mental factors for cultural regionalism.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The article uses instrumental and methodical techniques developed by the author to identify mental factors of cultural regionalism (Lyubichankovsky, 2018).

Sources for article were materials of the funds of the Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA) and author's field studies.

Reliability of the study results is due to the use of the principle of objectivity. In addition, the author applied historical geographical and comparative geographical research methods. The integrated use of these methods allowed a retrospective analysis of mental factors of cultural regionalism in Orenburg region.

Orenburg region was used as a model region with a population that does not have pronounced regional identity but have cultural and geographic realities.

#### **6. Findings**

Orenburg region with its large macro-geographical territory was called Orenburg krai. The territory of Orenburg krai was much larger compared to the territory of current Orenburg oblast. From the north, it was surrounded by the rivers Kama and Iset, from the east - by the rivers Tobol, Uy, Nura and Ishim, and from the south - by the Syr Darya, the Aral and Caspian seas. Almost completely, this territory was incorporated into Muscovy when Ivan IV received an oath of allegiance from Bashkir tribes; however, Moscow's control over this territory remained nominal for a long time, and Peter I made unsuccessful attempts to extend Russia's influence to Central Asia through this region.

Despite its great importance for territorial management of the Russian Empire geographical and ethnographic wealth, Orenburg region (according to C. Mutsuzato (Mutsuzato, 2010), it is the Ural-Caspian region) did not attract research interest. This situation becomes even stranger if we compare the scientific situation around this macro-region with research on the neighboring Volga-Ural region.

Real «cultivation» of the region began with the expedition of Ivan Kirilov during the 1730s which caused the Bashkir uprisings. The boundaries of Orenburg region were established in 1782 as a result of the territorial reform of Catherine II, but on the maps it was listed as Ufa governorship. In 1796, this administrative unit was renamed to Orenburg province under the control of the military governor, and later - under the control of Orenburg governor-general. After 1782, the territorial borders remained almost unchanged until the middle of the XIX century, when Orenburg Governorate General was formed from Orenburg governorate (which later became Orenburg and Ufa governorate) and Samara governorate, two Cossack territories of Orenburg and Ural troops and territories of the Bashkir-Meshcheryak army, internal Horde and the Orenburg Kirgiz inhabited by the Kazakhs of the Younger Zhuz.

According to K. Mutsuzato, one of the reasons for the varying degree of study on the Volga-Ural and Ural-Caspian regions is the fact that the first remained officially recognized macro-region, while the second one was divided by administrative and territorial borders which turned into state borders after the collapse of the USSR (Mutsuzato, 2010).

The use of the historical-geographical approach for assessment of a development vector of incorporation of new lands into the orbit of Russian civilization, analysis of formation of Orenburg region (the Ural-Caspian region) by assessing the geodynamics of its cultural landscapes and social processes allows us to reveal mental factors of cultural regionalism that did not manifest themselves in current regional identity.

On the basis of the research (Lyubichankovsky & Lyubichankovsky, 2017), we suggest considering the Ural-Caspian region as a frontier which existed from the 16th century to the beginning of the 20th century. This period is divided into two stages: formation of the frontier and its disappearance in the «sprawling» identity of the region. This stage was characterized by assimilation of Russian and Nogai cultures at an early stage of development, mosaic and dispersion of the structure of the ethnocultural space, peculiar culture of Ural and Orenburg Cossacks and social development processes. Orenburg region with its «sprawling» regional identity is the only «remnant» of this region.

Five spatial images of Orenburg region can be distinguished in the historical memory of the population: a bridgehead to Central Asia, a citadel of civilizers, an experimental landfill for reforms, an exploitable object with vast resources and a deaf province.

A bridgehead to Central Asia. According to Mutsuzato (2010), the historical origin of this territorial image was due to the fact that in the «Kirilov project» (1730s) it was given special attention. This trend was intensified by the fact that the famous local historian Dobrosmyslov (1900) published a two-volume collection of government decisions and other legal documents adopted in Orenburg region during 1734-1736. The documents were stored in Turgai. Undoubtedly, these collections are useful for researchers. In fact, as soon as the expedition began, Ivan Kirilov confronted the Bashkir uprising, and had to return to the traditional government policy in order to unify the defense of the region. He abandoned an ambitious project aimed to create a new fortress city (Orenburg), a huge shopping center uniting China, India, Central Asia

and Europe. Researchers suggest considering the policy of the government in Orenburg region in a broader context rather than through the prism of the «Kirilov project» (Smirnov, 1997).

A citadel of civilizers. Orenburg local officials tried to make Orenburg a stronghold of civilizers (Kazan had this status). In the first half of the XIX century, the Orthodox missionary activity was mainly directed at Old Believers and pagans. And only in the 1850s, the threat of Islam has become seriously discussed. For example, Russian officials began to note that the Kyrgyz (Kazakhs) (prone to paganism before their integration into the Russian empire, despite being Muslims) were islamized under the Russian rule. Therefore, introduction of the diocese dealing with anti-pagan and missionary activities in multi-confessional Orenburg region, responded to the spirit of that era. Orenburg Theological Seminary was founded only in 1884, a quarter of a century after creation of Orenburg Diocese. In 1908, the Synod criticized Orenburg Diocese for the lack of «necessary observation» of the Old Believers among the Ural cossacks and placed the Urals region under the jurisdiction of Samara Diocese.

The similar process was observed when Orenburg school district was separated from Kazan. A proposal written by Governor-General Nikolai Kryzhanovsky (1864-1883) explained the need to introduce Orenburg school district due to an extremely large area of jurisdiction of Kazan school district which prevented the school system from effective functioning. However, he noted that «Kazan school district had two tasks: administrative and educational task was peculiar to other educational districts, civilizing-missionary has is of special nature (Semenov, 1999). According to the author, the civilizing role of Kazan school district ended in 1854 when the Faculty of Oriental Languages at Kazan University moved to St. Petersburg University. Now the front of the Russian civilization lies in Orenburg. Consequently, the role of the civilizer should be transferred to Orenburg district.

However, it was difficult to organize a board of trustees in Orenburg, since there were no university, theological seminary, lyceum or noble school. The desire of the provincial town to play the civilizing role of Kazan was undeserved.

An experimental training ground for reform. By the middle of the 19th century, a territory with a population of 4,200,000 was divided: two civil provinces were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry for Internal Affairs, the territory of two Cossack and Bashkir troops was under the jurisdiction of the Military Ministry, the territory of the Internal Horde and the Orenburg Kyrgyz was under the jurisdiction of the Ministry for State Property and Foreign Affairs. As a result of personal (non-territorial) jurisdiction, numerous ministries were interested in the same territory, therefore, even ordinary questions were solved by long-term correspondence between ministries.

Reforms that were carried out in Orenburg region in the 1860s were based on the territorial image which had central and regional elites that desperately needed reforms in order to eliminate the corporate structure of the society, expensive administration and separation of powers.

An object of exploitation and a deaf province. These two images are combined, because the region had enormous potential resources, but contemporaries were not able to use them due to insufficient geographical research. In his report to the tsar for 1867–1868, Governor General Kryzhanovsky wrote that the territory “is not yet sufficiently known and is understudied, we are often suspicious of local characteristics and statistics when developing measures aimed at improving the life of the population and nature management”. When Orenburg school district began publishing its journal, the district trustee wrote

that the journal aimed to describe geography of the region. “If the districts of the Ural Mountains, Perm province and parts of Orenburg were more or less studied, this cannot be said of the remaining parts of the region, for example, of Ufa province and Turgai and Ural regions”.

An example of the image of a deaf province can be found in the report of the governor-general for 1867-1868: “not only in the steppes, villages and cities of Orenburg and Ufa provinces, but also in Orenburg, officials are usually unable to enjoy comfortable life and public entertainment which are required for developed people as food for the body. If we take into account the fact that in Orenburg even the most healthy person cannot endure the disastrous climate and all consumer goods are extremely expensive, it is easy to understand why it is so difficult to find people who would like to come here and serve, and why it is even more difficult to make them stay here”. This situation prevented the desire to take the place of Kazan as a bastion of civilizers or to control Turkestan from Orenburg.

Thus, among all the regional images of Orenburg krai, the most successfully implemented one was the ‘experimental ground for reforms’. The region became one of the two international peripheries of the Russian Empire (along with Novorossia). The region, which was originally a product of imagination, received individuality and became an object for application of political forces.

In the Soviet era, Orenburg region was destroyed by new administrative borders within the USSR and the Russian Federation. However, at the present stage, Orenburg region is becoming a macroregional center which actualizes the importance of historical and geographical study of the region.

Spatial limogenic images are a spatial image of the region in the mentality of the population associated with its distribution within certain limits. Identification of these images involves combination of historical analysis and mental geography.

Currently, the limogenic state of Orenburg region falls under the transboundary phenomenon. Transboundary interaction is an interesting layer of researches caused by integration and globalization processes (Gerasimenko & Filimonova, 2009).

The phenomenon of ethnic transboundariness is characteristic of all regions, but for the post-Soviet space it plays a special role and reflects its spatial and temporal specificity. New state borders do not reflect real space differentiation, they often divide ethnocultural regions (Gerasimenko, 2004)

When analyzing researches on economic integration of border regions, T.I. Gerasimenko makes three arguments for the interaction:

- the regions perform the barrier, contact and distribution functions in the system of international economic relations;
- under world trade liberalization, they become accelerators of the cross-border movement of goods;
- border regions gain momentum for their development (Gerasimenko & Filimonova, 2009).

Some authors consider nature, natural resources and a natural factor as a basis for formation of a transboundary region (Baklanov & Hansei, 2004). Others emphasize economic integration (Kolosov, & Turovsky, 1999). Accordingly, they identify economic, environmental, cultural transboundary regions.

Orenburg-Kazakhstan is one of the artificial transboundary regions formed in the 1990s after the collapse of the USSR. The region is located on both sides of the Russian-Kazakhstan border and is an example of stability and tolerant interethnic relations. It consists of Orenburg, West Kazakhstan, Aktobe and Kostanay regions. This region developed not as a national community, but as a polyethnic community.

The region is a landfill in the zone of ethnic contacts with no ethnic conflicts. This is a special world that has a number of features: a united territory, integrity, common historical destiny. The features should determine development paths. This is a boundary, contact zone which has no clear natural boundaries. The border line has similar features: mixed population, similar ecological culture and cultural landscapes, similar layout of villages, language, mentality. The regional and state self-identification of the population is either of dual nature or not clearly expressed. The most important indicator of relations is temporary migration (a stationary indicator of vice versa relations) (study trips, work trips, visits, shopping, etc.) The borders complicate contacts and interaction and are unpopular with people. This situation is an objective basis for integration which has been artificially disturbed in recent years (Gerasimenko & Filimonova, 2009).

Analysis of the current assessment of the limogenic factor for Orenburg region allows us to predict the following trends:

- strengthening the barrier role of the Russian-Kazakhstan border, including in its Orenburg sector, which is reinforced by language differences of a new generation of the Kazakh population (poor knowledge of Russian) as well as by the growth of national staff in the regional government system;
- the regional identity of the western districts of Orenburg region is similar to the regional identity of Samara region;
- the regional identity of the population of Adamovsky and Kvarkensky districts is similar to that of Chelyabinsk region;
- Orenburg region is a region of sprawling identity which creates conditions for changing the administrative-territorial division of the region.

Thus, Orenburg region as a marginal Russian region was included in the global context of world development at the level of a supra-state macroregion (as well as Central Europe, Central Asia, Asia-Pacific, Slavic Eurasia, etc.). Membrane borders form ethnically mixed «frontier zones» throughout the entire perimeter of the empire (Rieber, 2003) or create peculiar spaces of the «borderland» (Zamyatin, 2002).

- historical spatial images of the region (to identify these images, it is necessary to combine historical analysis and mental geography);
- perception of the region as a historical and cultural formation rather than an administrative unit which is connected with self-awareness of the population;
- connection with the landscape fixed in land use traditions and reflected in traditional architecture (according to B. Rodoman, small regional cultural provinces are carriers of significant regional differences and ethnic psychology (Rodoman, 2002).

## **7. Conclusion**

To assess cultural regionalism, it is important to take into account the dynamic historical and geographical space. Ethnic identity should be formed above the regional identity (Eurasian, Central Asian, Siberian, etc.). Historically, the vast space of the Russian Empire, weak relations and fragmented economic and demographic development and appropriation of new territories in the east required new centers performing functions of the imperial center in remote political regions. In the regions, centers and

peripheries appear. They reproduce the all-Russian political and socio-economic configuration (Remnev, 2010). If we consider Eurasia as a complex system consisting of asymmetric regions (from unitarism to imperial federalism), regions and peoples with different socio-economic, political and socio-cultural characteristics, it is necessary to change the perspective of the geographical study of cultural regionalism, to develop geography of mentality. This helps identify the potential for long-term sustainability of multicultural communities and identify control technologies for efficient and adequate transformation of political, economic, and socio-cultural conditions.

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