

**Historical Science and Area Studies:
A Spatial Approach to Empires**

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Though it is unconventional for academic writings, I would like to begin this essay with a personal event. Professor Teruyuki Hara, the author of excellent monographs on Siberian and Far East history,¹ will retire from Hokkaido University in 2006. His significant contribution to Japanese studies of Russian history² is that he introduced various elements of area studies to historical studies of Russia. This is even more notable if one considers that other leading historians in Japan who created their own schools, such as Yuzuru Taniuchi (1923-2004), Haruki Wada (1938-), and Norie Ishii (1948-), might be regarded as “pure historians.” However, Hara has not popularized his methodology actively among Japanese historians, partly because he has spent most of his academic life at a research institute (SRC), the main task of which is not education. A handful of historians might be included in the list of the “area study school” of Russian history: Makoto Hayasaka,³ Katsunori Nishiyama,⁴ Takeshi Matsumura,⁵ and the present author from the older generation; Tomohiko Uyama,⁶ Eisuke Kaminaga,⁷ and Nobuhiro Naganawa⁸ from the younger generation. These historians learnt Hara’s

¹ Teruyuki Hara, *Shiberia shuppei: kakumei to kanshou 1917-1922* [The Siberian War: the Revolution and Intervention 1917-1922] (Tokyo, 1989); Idem, *Indygilka gou no higeki: 1930 nendai no Rosia kyokutou* [The Tragedy of the Ship “Indygilka”: The Russian Far East in the 1930s] (Tokyo, 1993); Idem, *Urajiosutoku monogatari: Rosia to Ajia ga majiwaru machi* [A Tale of Vladivostok: a City Where Russia and Asia Meet] (Tokyo, 1998).

² By this word I mean the histories of the former USSR territory.

³ Makoto Hayasaka, *Ukuraina: rekishi no fukugen o mosakusuru* [Ukraine: An Attempt to Restore the History] (Tokyo, 1994).

⁴ Katsunori Nishiyama, *Rosia kakumei to touhou henkyo chiiki: “teikoku” chitsujo karano jiritsu o motomete* [The Russian Revolution and the Eastern Peripheries: In Search of the Independence from the “Imperial” Order] (Sapporo, 2002); K. Nishiyama, “Priniatie islama kreshchenymi tatarami i pravoslavnaia tserkov’: etnokul’turnoe protivostoianie na Srednem Povolzh’e v seredine XIX v.,” K. Matsuzato, ed., *Novaia volna v izuchenii etnopoliticheskoi istorii Volgo-Ural’skogo regiona* (Sapporo, 2003), pp. 200-224.

⁵ T. Matsumura, “Droblenie krest’ianskikh khoziaistv Pravoberezhnoi Ukrainy v pervoi polovine XIX v. I kharakter krest’ianskogo zemlevolodeniia,” *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, 2004, Vol. 21, pp. 67-87.

⁶ T. Uyama, “From ‘Bulgharism’ through ‘Marism’ to Nationalist Myth: Discourses on the Tatar, the Chuvash and the Bashkir Ethnogenesis,” *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, 2002, Vol. 19, pp. 163-190.

⁷ E. Kaminaga, “Hokuto Azia niokeru kindai hokeigyō no reimei [The Dawn of the Modern Whaling in North Eastern Asia],” *Suravu kenkyū* [Slavic Studies], 2002, Vol. 49, pp. 51-79.

⁸ N. Naganawa, “Voruga-Uraru chiiki no atarashii tataru chishikijin: daiichiji Rosia kakumeigo no minzoku (Милләт) ni kansuru gensetsu o chushin ni [New Tatar Intellectuals in the Volga-Ural

approach, as a rule, by reading his writings. There is no definite “Hara school” in Japan. However, in such countries as the United States, where universities have historical faculties, the predominance of “pure history” seems even more unchallengeable.⁹ Therefore, if Japanese historians recognize the merits of the “area study approach” to history and try to exploit it, the study of Russian history in Japan would possibly have a comparative advantage.

Moreover, the recent boom of the study of empires (imperiology) makes the “area study approach” to history even more advantageous. One of the reasons for this is that empires were conglomerates of macro-regions (meso-areas) which themselves were multiethnic, rather than cone structures composed of the imperial center and peripheral regions. The structure of empires requires historians to have an interdisciplinary attitude and spatial sensitivity. In this essay I will describe the characteristic features of the “area study approach” in the context of its possible contribution to imperiology.

The “Area Study Approach” and Imperiology

(1) Interdisciplinary and multilingual characteristics

Few will argue that historical studies should not be combined with other academic disciplines.¹⁰ What is characteristic of the “area study approach” is that it requests the methodological interfusion with geography, ethnography, religious studies, political science and other disciplines, mainly oriented towards fieldwork. In this sense, the “area study approach” reveals clear contrast to the recent boom of constructivism, based on semiotics and other disciplines oriented towards “texts.” T. Hara has been promoting the methodological interfusion of history and geography, while attaching importance to spatial factors in history.

This interdisciplinary characteristic is quite advantageous for imperiology. Empires

Region: Discourse around the Nation (миллэт) after the First Russian Revolution],” *Suravu kenkyu* [Slavic Studies], 2003, No. 50, pp. 33-64.

⁹ Local histories (*kraevedenie*), being very popular in CIS countries, should not be confused with the “area study approach” to history.

¹⁰ In this aspect Japanese historians enjoy a certain advantage because of the non-existence of faculties of history in universities. The Japanese intellectual tradition, which does not divide humanities and social sciences, strengthens the interdisciplinary characteristics of Japanese historical science as well.

were multiethnic, multilingual, and geographically diverse. In empires, confessional and language problems easily converted into political issues. Thus imperial studies require historians to have skills of several languages and elementary knowledge of geography and ethno-confessional problems. The specialists of the Russian Empire would need to have elementary knowledge of Islamic, Catholic, Finno-Ugric, and other ethno-confessional studies, even if they are not specialized in one or another ethno-confessional minority. Bearing in mind the recent development of Russian imperial studies, it appears naïve to think it possible to understand this empire by sitting in the reading room of the Russian State Historical Archive for a long time and reading exclusively sources written in Russian.

(2) Territorial approach

Let me introduce an example of the emphasis on territorial factors in Russian imperial studies. During the last several years the study of ethno-political history in the Volga-Ural region experienced a significant breakthrough made by excellent publications by Allen J. Frank,¹¹ Paul W. Werth,¹² Robert P. Geraci,¹³ and Katsuhiko Nishiyama.¹⁴ Therefore, it seems difficult to anticipate a conceptual breakthrough in the study of this macro-region in the near future. On the other hand, only recently did historians begin to pay attention to the neighboring Ural-Caspian Region (I call this region “Great Orenburg” since these territories historically belonged to Orenburg Province). Then, why do we not shift our endeavor to this less studied region?¹⁵ If a scholar decided to study the “Great Orenburg,” he/she may choose any topic advantageous to understand the specifics of this macro-region. The topic might be the Orenburg Mohammedan Spiritual Assembly in Ufa, the Orenburg Governor-Generalship, the Bashkir-Mishari Army, or others. This order of priority diametrically differs from that of pure history in which historians, first of all, become interested in one or another topic and chose regions only as “cases” to elucidate the

¹¹ Allen J. Frank, *Islamic Historiography and “Bulgar” Identity among the Tatars and Bashkirs of Russia* (Leiden, 1998); Idem, “Islamic Transformation on the Kazakh Steppe, 1742-1917: Toward an Islamic History of Kazakhstan under Russian Rule,” Tadayuki Hayashi, ed., *The Construction and Deconstruction of National Histories in Slavic Eurasia* (Saporo, 2003), pp. 261-290.

¹² Paul W. Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy: Mission, Governance, and Confessional Politics in Russia’s Volga-Kama Region, 1827-1905* (Ithaca, 2002).

¹³ Robert P. Geraci, *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, 2001).

¹⁴ Nishiyama, op. cit.

¹⁵ One may find a similar gap of the level of study between the Western provinces and the Ostzei region.

topic he/she chooses.

The territorial approach is a counterproposal to the ethnic approach (national narratives), which had been dominant until recently in Russian imperial studies. The ethnic approach regards an abstract ethnolinguistic community as something like an ontological entity. In contrast, the territorial approach focuses on one or another territory and analyzes interactions between ethnic groups within it, rejecting to analyze each ethnic group in isolation. While the ethnic approach premises the eventual independence of the nation he/she studies as canon a priori, the territorial approach pays attention to the variation of national projects. It is well known that for several years after independence, historical studies of the non-Russian former Soviet countries had become a primordialist island in an ocean of constructivism of world historiography. In Ukraine during the first half of the 1990s, there were even attempts to introduce “scientific nationalism” in university courses. However, this abnormal situation passed away quickly. Ukrainian historians are not in a position to reject contacts with foreign colleagues and contemporary methodologies. Before long, a powerful legion of “revisionist” historians against the dominant national narratives emerged in Ukraine. They already enjoy official institutional bases¹⁶ and financial support not only from foreign funds but also from the state budget. As a result, Ukrainian historiography began to reveal tremendous diversities. Students are not stupid: once the choice has appeared, they easily understand which is the more interesting: official university textbooks or revisionists’ writings¹⁷

¹⁶ In Ukraine, the journal *Ukrains'kyi humanitarnyi ohliad* (Kyiv) and academic institutions, such as the Society of Researchers of Central-Eastern Europe attached to Kyievo-Mohyla Academy University, the Institute for Historical Studies of Lviv University, and the Kowalsky Eastern Ukrainian Institute of Kharkiv University under the leadership of Nataliia Yakovenko, Yaroslav Hrytsak, and Volodymyr Kravchenko, respectively, are widely recognized as the strongholds of revisionist historians challenging Ukrainian national historiography.

¹⁷ Speech by Heorhii Kas'ianov (Institute of History, Ukrainian National Academy of Science) at the International Conference “Gosudarstvennaia samostoitel'nost' Ukrainy i Belorussii i osnovnye tendentsii osveshcheniia proshlogo vostochnogo slavianstva mirovoi naukoj” (13-15 September 2004, Moscow). A number of Ukrainian historians might think Kas'ianov's view excessively optimistic. Volodymyr Kravchenko (Kharkiv University) argues that the influence of the contemporary foreign intellectual trend on post-communist Ukrainian historiography has been “insignificant.” Rather, Kravchenko addresses our attention to the fact that the Soviet Ukrainian historiography was already ambivalent; it “balanced between national-populist and Malorussian paradigms” (His presentation at the International Conference “The Problems of the Russian Empire in the History of Russia, Lithuania, and Ukraine (18th to 21st Century)” held at the Institute of History, Polish Academy of Science, 9-10 September 2004, Warsaw).

The Ukrainian diaspora, which had once contributed to the monopolization of nationalist narratives in Ukraine, changed as well. Until the mid-1990s, almost all of the staff, associate scholars, and doctoral students of the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute could be identified easily, by their surnames (which revealed their Ukrainian origin). However, the massive influx of ethnically non-Ukrainian scholars into Ukrainian studies in North America during the last decade changed its historiographic situation. A simple capitalist principle of the intellectual market, though belated, began to work in Ukrainian studies. How is it possible to remain a primitive primordialist, being at the same time a Harvard professor? These changes abroad could not but influence the situation of the humanities.

More and more historians in the non-Russian territories of the FSU began to hold on to a territorial (supra-ethnic) approach as a proof of their progressive thinking.¹⁸ In Estonian historiography, historians have begun to pay more attention to concrete cultural interactions between Baltic Germans and Estonian peasants than to the official, mutually antagonistic discourses of Baltic Germans, Estonian nationalists, and the Russian officialdom.¹⁹

The Reconstruction of Historical Regions

A serious challenge for the territorial approach is that the Soviet primordialism strongly influenced historians' thinking, the structure of their professional organizations, and even the locations of archives. In my view, one of the reasons for the aforementioned underdevelopment of the study of the Volga-Caspian region (Great Orenburg) in comparison with the Volga-Ural region is that the territory of the former has been shattered by state and administrative borders, while the latter has remained as a widely recognized macro-region. Remember that the Volga federal district is the only

¹⁸ For example, Chuvashi historian Leonid Taimasov proudly identifies his methodological basis as follows: "I propose a spatial (regional) approach instead of an ethnocentric approach, which has consolidated in Russian historiography": L.A. Taimasov, *Khristianskoe prosveshchenie nerusskikh narodov i etnokontsional'nye protsessy v srednem Povolzh'e v poslednei chetverti XVIII – nachale XX veka, Avtoreferat dissertatsii na soiskanie uchenoi stepeni doktora istoricheskikh nauk* (Cheboksary, 2004). Unfortunately, Tatarstan historiography, which enjoys many more chances for contacts with Western historiography than its Chuvashi counterpart, has remained within the "ethnocentric" limits.

¹⁹ Oral presentation by Tiit Rosenberg (Tartu University) at a seminar held by the Japanese Society of the Historians of Russia (1 February 2004, Tokyo).

historically legitimate one (since it largely covers the former territory of the Kazan Khanate) among the seven districts introduced by President Putin in 2000.²⁰ Accordingly, the historians specializing in this macro-region have preserved a corporate solidarity and tradition of collaboration with each other.

In contrast, local historians of the core area of the former Great Orenburg (largely the present Orenburg and Cheliabinsk Oblasts, and Bashkortostan) identify themselves as specialists of the “Southern Urals,” a much smaller area than the former Great Orenburg. The significant part of the archive of the Orenburg Border Committee, which controlled the Small Zhuz of Kazakhs, was transferred to Alma-Aty during the Soviet period since the archive allegedly concerned the “History of Kazakhstan,” but not the Great Orenburg, which historically existed. In the same way, the construction of the “History of Kazakhstan” damaged the archive of Omsk, the capital of the West Siberian, and later Steppe Governor-Generalship.²¹ Even if historians begin to recognize the harm in seeing history through the prism of the present state and administrative borders, it is quite costly to organize academic activities to cover historical regions. Historians working in Orenburg can barely afford to travel themselves to Alma-Aty to work on the former Orenburg archives or to organize academic conferences by inviting their colleagues from Western Kazakhstan and Kalmykia, which belonged to the same Orenburg Province in the past.

The study of Baltic history has been fortunate in this regard. Lithuanian specialists of the tsarist period actively cooperate with Belarus historians since the two nations belonged to the same North Western region then, while Lithuanian specialists of the interwar period, understandably, do the same with Latvian and Estonian historians.

²⁰ A general overview of the performance of this institution is given in: Peter Reddaway and Robert W. Orttung, *The Dynamics of Russian Politics: Putin's Reform of Federal-Regional Relations* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004).

²¹ Important archive funds, such as “Omskoe oblastnoe pravlenie,” “Oblastnoe pravlenie sibirskimi kirgizami MID,” and “Pogranichnoe upravlenie sibirskimi kirgizami,” were relocated from Omsk to Alma-Aty (E.V. Bezikonnaia, *Administrativnaia politika samoderzhavii v Stennom krae (20-60-e gg. XIX v.)*, *Avtoreferat dissertatsii na soiskanie uchenoi stepeni kandidata istoricheskikh nauk*, Omsk, 2002, p. 13). The relocation of archives itself is an interesting topic not only because this reflected what national and regional historiographies the Soviet authorities wished to create, but also because these intentions were not always fully realized because of the local archivists' and historians' resistance. An example is the protracted “war” between the Khmel'nytskyi Oblast Archive and the Kam'yanets-Podil's'kyi State-City Archive around the relocation of the pre-revolutionary archive from Kam'yanets-Podil's'kyi (former provincial capital) to Khmel'nytskyi (present regional center), which ended with the catastrophic fire of the former.

Any massive transfer of archives from Tartu or Riga to Tallin to construct the “History of Estonia” did not take place.

Empires: Context or Instrument?

Alexander Semenov classifies the recent studies of the Russian Empire into two groups according to their representation of the empire: the empire as “context” or “instrument.”²² The historians regarding the empire as “context” include Andreas Kappeler and others, interested in nationality problems. For them, modern empires are transitional political entities, which emerged after the traditional way to integrate the empires by dynastic loyalty of the multinational elites had lost its previous effectiveness. Under this condition, empires became nurseries of various national projects. The Russian government found no alternative but to manipulate between various national projects and also propose its own. A characteristic feature described by these historians is that each national project had its own territorial boundaries for its implementation. This is no surprise because ethnicities turn into nations when they begin to request statehood (independence or territorial autonomy), which does not stand without a definite territory. Therefore, what were imagined were not only nations, but also spaces.

Another group of specialists of Russian imperial history regard empires as an instrument. This might be an instrument to govern a vast territory or to coordinate interethnic relations in such territories where the conditions to build more or less homogeneous nation-states were non-existent. Empires often behaved as instruments for international competition. A typical representative of this “instrumental approach” to empires is Dominic Lieven, who finds the essence of empires in their unilateral governance over peripheries. He compared the Russian Empire and its rivals from the viewpoint of power.²³ Based on my understanding of the mechanism of governor-generalships, A. Semenov includes me in the representatives of the instrumental understanding of the Russian Empire.

The “instrumental approach” to the Russian Empire requires no less attention to spatial factors than the “contextual approach.” In contrast to ethno-territorial empires, such as

²² Oral presentation by Alexander Semenov (Smo’lnyi College) at a seminar held by the Japanese Society of the Historians of Russia (1 February 2004, Tokyo).

²³ Dominic Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (New Heaven-London, 2000).

the Habsburg Empire and the Soviet Union, the Russian Empire was based on purely territorial principles. Moreover, the Russian authorities tried hard lest the ethnic boundaries should coincide with the administrative borders.²⁴ The tsarist officials thought that homogeneous administrative units would inevitably generate separatism and interethnic conflicts (compromise between 90% and 10% of the population will be much more difficult than that between 60% and 40%). There were very few exceptions to this principle, the most significant of which would seem to be the creation of the Steppe Governor-Generalship, composed overwhelmingly of “Kirgizy” (the present Kazakhs and Kyrgyz).

Moreover, the Russian Empire was characterized by the existence of a macro-regional tier of peripheral government, i.e. governor-generalships, analogues of which one may not find in the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires. The macro-regions that general-governors oversaw were the territories having been formed geographically and historically. With a few exceptions, such as the Steppe and Warsaw Governor-Generalship, they were multiethnic. Despite the ethnocentric understanding of the Russian Empire in historiography, the majority of the governor-generalships were targeted not at effective regulation of interethnic relations, but rather at the prompt domestication and exploitation of the newly seized lands (this function was represented by the New Russian, West and East Siberian, Steppe, Turkestan, and Priamur Governor-Generalships). However, in the peripheries with an unstable ethnopolitical situation, the governor-generals conducted ethno-Bonapartist policies by exploiting the multiethnic characteristics of the territories (the North and South Western, Caucasus, and to a lesser extent, Riga Governor-Generalships).

In a previous paper I argued the merits of a territorial approach to analyze the Russian Empire, based (according to A. Semenov) on its “instrumental” representation.²⁵

²⁴ For example, during the 1860-70s, a number of government officials proposed to create an oblast composed of the population of the Internal (Bukeev) Orda to reform its obsolete administration. But this proposal faced a strong opposition in government circles for the very reason mentioned above and the Orda was incorporated into Astrakhan Province as ordinary counties (*uezdy*) (Otchet Ad”iutanta Kryzhanovskogo po upravleniiu Orenburgskim kraem, s fevralya 1865 g. do marts 1866 goda,” Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Orenburgskoi oblasti, f. 6 (Kantseliariia Orenburgskogo general-gubernatotra), op. 6, 1865 god, d. 14045/8, ll. 27ob.-28ob.; “Otchet Vremennogo Soveta po upravleniyu Vnutrennei kirgizskoiu ordoiu za 1875 g.,” Ibid., op. 17, d. 221, ll. 36ob.-37.).

²⁵ Kimitaka Matsuzato, “General-gubernatorstva v Rossiiskoi imperii: ot etnicheskogo k territorialnomu podkhodu,” I. Gerasimov et al., eds., *Novaia imperskaia istoriia postsovetskogo*

Therefore, I limit myself here to describing how historians representing the contextual understanding of the Russian Empire exploit territorial analyses. Though it is difficult to say that the historians introduced below hold on to the position of the “area study approach,” they share its fundamental features.

National Projects and Spatial Imaginations

Polish historian Andrzej Nowak proposes an interesting view on the “imperialization” of Rzeczpospolita in the 19th century. Nowak challenges the authoritative opinion supported by such scholars as John P. LeDonne and Orest Subtelny that Rzeczpospolita was an empire. According to Nowak, Rzeczpospolita, which historically existed after the Lublin Union (1569) until its decline in the 18th century, lacked decisive attributes of empires. First, it did not have a territorial stratification between the imperial center and peripheries. “The power and wealth of a Ruthenian magnate... or a Lithuanian one..., sitting in their manors beyond the Dnieper or Dvina, were in many cases greater than any power that the king could dispose of in his palace in Warsaw.”²⁶ Second, the szlachta ideology of absolute freedom and the mythology of their Sarmatian origin lacked missionary characteristics, a decisive factor of any imperial ideology. The ideology of Rzeczpospolita was not an imperial one, but a utopianism which required isolation, not expansion. At that time, szlachta regarded their political system as better than not only the despotic Muscovite state and Ottoman Empire, but also the absolutist West European powers.²⁷

During the 18th century, when Rzeczpospolita became a Russian protectorate, the Polish elite’s quest for independence began to be combined with the Western ideology of orientalism, which gave them a self-perception as the Eastern outpost of the Western Christianity and Enlightenment destined to struggle against despotic Russia.

prostranstva (Kazan’, 2004), pp. 427-458.

²⁶ Andrzej Nowak, “From Empire Builder to Empire Breaker or There and Back Again: History and Memory of Poland’s Role in East European Politics,” *Ab Imperio*, 2004, No. 1, pp. 255-289 (here, p. 256). This article is based on the paper presented at the International Symposium “Emerging Meso-Areas in the Former Socialist Countries” at the Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University (28-31 January 2004, Sapporo). Nowak developed his idea in his recent paper titled “Granice imperium i problem narodu w polskiej myśli politycznej lat 1772-1863,” presented at the aforementioned International Conference “The Problems of the Russian Empire in the History of Russia, Lithuania, and Ukraine.”

²⁷ Nowak, “From Empire Builder...,” p. 259.

Simultaneously, the Polish elites began to regard the Western borderlands of the Russian Empire (the present Lithuania, Belarus, and Right Bank Ukraine) as the object of their propaganda for freedom. Thus, the two attributes of empires, territorial stratification and missionary expansionism (which did not exist under Rzeczpospolita), took shape during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The resistance against the Holy Alliance and the unsuccessful uprising of 1830 consolidated this stereotype. “In [Adam] Mickiewicz’s and [Julius] Słowacki’s messianic-religious interpretation, Poland became the nation-martyr and even the Christ of nations.”²⁸ The history of Rzeczpospolita was reinterpreted according to this stereotype. The same process of reinterpretation of history (“imperialization” of Rzeczpospolita) took place on the Russian side too, as if the Poles and Russians mirrored each other. Thus, the territorial imagination of the struggle of civilizations in Eastern Europe (the Russian and Polish imperial centers and Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine as the borderlands between them) was constructed as late as the 19th century. The Polish and Russian elites’ national projects resulted in the changes of their territorial imaginations.

Lithuanian historian Darius Staliūnas discerns three territorial dimensions of ethnopolitics in the North Western Region (the present Lithuania and Belarus) of the Russian Empire from the mid-19th to the beginning of the 20th century. The first dimension was determined by the government’s de-polonizing policy. In contrast to Kyiv, Vilnius was too Polish to be transformed into a stronghold to Russify the region. Therefore, the government lowered the status of Vilnius by separating the more Lithuanian territories of Kovno (Lowland Lithuania) from Vilna Province in the 1840s²⁹ and transferring the more Russian (Belarus) provinces of Mogilev, Vitebsk, and Minsk from the jurisdiction of the North Western governor-general to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (thus becoming the “internal provinces”) soon after repressing the Polish Uprising in 1863-64.³⁰

²⁸ Ibid., p. 269.

²⁹ Darius Staliūnas, “Kaip bandyta keisti Kauno gubernijos ribas: slapti rusijos valdžios proektai,” *Darbai ir dienos*, 2001 nr. 28, p. 67-84. The Russian version of this article was published recently in Voronezh. M.D. Karpachev, M.D. Dolbilov, and A.Iu. Minakov, eds., *Rossiiskaia imperiia: strategii stabilizatsii i opyty obnovleniia* (Voronezh, 2004). The creation of Kovno Province was one of the exceptions of the aforementioned principle not to allow ethnically homogeneous administrative territories. This was possible since in the 1840s the government did not need to fear Lithuanian nationalism, but regarded Lithuanians as a potential ally in its struggle against Poles.

³⁰ Darius Staliūnas, “Vilnius as a Regional Centre in Russian Nationality Policy (ca 1860-1914),” paper presented at the aforementioned International Conference in Warsaw, “The Problems of the

The territorial policy of the tsarist government had another dimension, less articulated than its depolonization policy, that is, the tsarist officials' fear of the regional identity shared by the former territories of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. According to Staliūnas, this was the fundamental reason why the tsarist government imposed on the North Western region the territorial reforms diametrically opposite to those adopted for the South Western Region (Right Bank Ukraine). While the government established Kiev University to Russify the South Western Region, it never allowed Vilnius to reopen the university, abolished in the aftermath of the 1830 Polish uprising. While the government tried to raise the authority of the governor-general of the South Western Region to Russify the region, it curtailed the territorial jurisdiction of the North Western Governor-Generalship and eventually abolished it on the eve of WWI. If Vilnius University had been established, it might have been transformed into a forum of interaction between the Polish and Lithuanian youth to form a regional (supra-ethnic) identity, based on the historical memory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The educated society of the North Western Region desired to reintroduce Vilnius University, irrespective of one's ethnic belonging. Remarkably, each university project (Polish, Lithuanian, or supra-ethnic) reflected the initiators' territorial image of their homeland.³¹

The third dimension of the government's territorial policies in regard to the North Western region was the factors common for general imperial territorial policies. For example, the North Western Governor-Generalship was criticized for reproducing the memories of the great state, which had once existed there, and thus strengthening separatist tendencies.³² But this criticism was targeted at not only the North Western but also other governor-generalships in the empire.³³

Russian Empire...”

³¹ Darius Staliūnas, *Ethnopolitical Tendencies in Lithuania During the Period 1905-1907 and the Conceptions of the Revival of the University of Vilnius*, *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, 1996, pp. 97-115. Staliūnas inquired into the possibility to form the supraethnic regional identity in the former territory of the GDL in his study of “krajowy.” Darius Staliūnas, “Tadeusz Wróblewski a idea kulturalnej autonomii personalnej na Litwie na początku XX w.,” J. Jurkiewicza, ed., *Krajowość – tradycje zgody narodów w dobie nacjonalizmu. Materiały z międzynarodowej konferencji naukowej w Instytucie Historii UAM w Poznaniu (11-12 maja 1998)* (Poznań, 1999), pp. 99-107.

³² Darius Staliūnas, “Vilnius as a Regional Centre.”

³³ Matsuzato, “General-gubernatorstva...”

In his article titled “Push Russia into Siberia” Anatolii Remnev, a historian from Omsk, argues that the government’s colonization policy based on peasant migration from European Russia to Siberia and the Far East had not only social (softening the overpopulation, above all, in the Left Bank Ukraine) and military-strategic, but also symbolic purposes. It was a part of the Russian national project. The Russian Empire needed to justify its existence by two-fold territorial expansion: of its territory per se and of the core areas of this territory. Despite the impressive expansion of its territory from the beginning to the middle of the 19th century, the Russian Empire was not able to expand its core areas. Rare exceptions, which entered or at least became similar to the core area, were the New Russia (Southern Ukraine), a part of the former Great Orenburg, and, to a lesser extent, Western Siberia. Under this situation, the ideologues of the Russian national project began to regard the sparsely populated Eastern Siberia and Far East as a land to compensate the unsuccessful expansion of the imperial core towards the West and South. Paradoxically, this priority of symbolic-territorial expansion resulted in exceptional nationality policies conducted by the government in regard to the migrants/colonists. First, the idea of the triad of three Eastern Slavic brothers (Great Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarus) was realized in the Russian Far East in an ideal manner. Immigrants from the overpopulated Western provinces promptly lost their Ukrainian and Belarusian identities and were assimilated into the Great Russian culture. This is why 86.8 % of the present population of the Primor’e Region identify themselves as Great Russian, while most of them bear Ukrainian surnames.³⁴

Second, the government policy towards the Old Believers and various sectarians were more tolerant here than those in the internal provinces. The authorities often regarded the Old Believers as more desirable colonists than the ordinary Orthodox believers since the Old Believers were stubborn in preserving “Russian-ness (*ruskost*),” while the ordinary Russians were assimilated in the native population.³⁵ Thirdly, even Western Slavs, mainly Czechs, were regarded as desirable colonists since they “see Russia as

³⁴ Anatolii Remnev, “Vdvinut’ Rossiui v Sibir’. Imperiia i russkaia kolonizatsiia vtoroi poloviny XIX – nachala XX vv.,” *Ab Imperio*, 2003, No. 3, pp. 135-158 (here, p. 152). This article was reprinted in the aforementioned collection “Novaia imperskaia istoriia...,” pp. 223-242, but I will quote from the 2003 version.

³⁵ The tsarist government tried to use the Old Believers and sectarians to colonize other peripheries too. See Matsuzato, “General-gubernatorstva...”; Reonido Gorizontohu [Leonid Gorizontov], “Rosia teikoku no ‘chimeiteki mondai’ gun ni okeru porando mondai (1831-20 seiki shoto) [The Polish Question in the ‘Fatal Questions’ of the Russian Empire (1831- the beginning of the 20th century)],” *Rosiasi kenkyu* [Russian Historical Studies], 2004, No. 74, pp. 62-64.

their homeland.”³⁶ Thus, to realize the Russian national/territorial project, several principles of the tsarist ethno-confessional policies needed to be corrected in Siberia and the Far East.

Conclusion

The “area study approach” to history is not the object of a monopoly that the historians of one or another country can pretend to possess. Nevertheless, it seems undeniable that the specific academic structure of Japan (the lack of historical faculties in universities and the country’s intellectual tradition not to divide humanities and social sciences strictly) provides a favorable nursery to develop this approach. This approach requires interdisciplinarity and makes much of special factors in history. This approach becomes even more productive against the background of the recent boom to study European and Eurasian empires.

Both of the main representations of the Russian Empire (contextual and instrumental) facilitated the transition from the traditional ethnocentric to the spatial (territorial, regional) approach to the empire. The merits of the “area study approach” more than offset the burdens accompanying it, that is, the necessity to have language skills, knowledge of other academic disciplines, and spatial sensitivity. The “area study approach” requires historians to get acquainted with not only historical sources but also “fields,” i.e., the thinking and feeling of the people who live now in the territory they study. For historians, of course, this is not an additional endeavour, but rather a reward for their painful exploration into archives hidden deep in the provinces of Eurasia.

³⁶ Remnev, *op. cit.*, p. 145.