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## **Cross-Cultural Communication in Russia and Siberia in the Context of the Biographical Research Method**

**Alexander G. Gryaznukhin\* and Tatiana V. Gryaznukhina\***

*Siberian Federal University*

*82 Svobodny, Krasnoyarsk, 660041 Russia<sup>1</sup>*

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*The article describes the development of cross-cultural communication in Russia and Siberia in the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It analyses the concept of “cultural nest” as a basis for the identification of common processes in the capital and province, as well as the specific features of the culture of Siberia. The basis for the research laid the biographical method. The study of the biographies of the visiting intellectuals allows you to determine what the real contribution they have made to the development of local culture and how to shape the perceptions and knowledge of Siberia in other parts of the country. The article was written in the context of cross-cultural communication studying the life and work of the writer V.Ya. Shishkov.*

*Keywords: biography, communication, culture, Russia, Siberia, V.Ya. Shishkov.*

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The social and cultural space of Siberia of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, on the one hand, was intended to preserve its identity and, on the other hand, was open to the dialogue with the cultural environment of Central Russia. The interaction between the centre and Siberia was presented by the vector “capital-province” that demonstrated the apparent dominance of the metropolitan area on the cultural life of Siberia. The province was considered not only as a geographical phenomenon, but also as a specific socio-cultural element. With a number of specific features in its development the culture of Siberia has taken over the values of Russian culture, which determined its development as a part of the all-Russian civilization. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there

were several cultural centres in the region: Tomsk, Omsk, Krasnoyarsk and Irkutsk. These cities to a large extent determined the historical movement of Siberia. However, the main guiding force of the cultural and historical development of Siberian culture was the all-Russian trends. Siberian cultural centres gravitated not so much to each other as to the all-Russian centre, since they depended on it in both socio-economic and personnel matters. With a number of specific features Siberia in its development could not do without the support of the centre.

The need for a complex approach to the study of the culture of the region was substantiated by one of the first researchers of the history of Siberia S.V. Bakhrushin. Much attention was

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\* Corresponding author E-mail address: agagag@mail.ru, tag-kras@mail.ru

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paid to identifying the mental image of people that participated in the cultural process. In his works S.V. Bakhrushin described in detail some historical figures of the 17<sup>th</sup> century describing them in collaboration with various social strata (Bakhrushin, 1952, 1955). This approach allowed the researcher to identify and consider the communication links between the province and the capital that took place in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The experience of S.V. Bakhrushin can greatly assist in the analysis of cross-cultural communication in later historical periods. The principle of the complex study of historical and cultural processes in Siberia is interesting because it reveals the relationship between the province and the metropolis and shows how local features interacted with nation-wide trends in cultural development.

Studies of the interaction between the province and the centre show that the all-Russian culture is made up of the local cultural phenomena that by becoming all-Russian affect the local cultural processes. The solid understanding of specifics of the cultural process localized in the province can be formed by applying the biographical research method, analyzing biographies of artists who contributed to the development of the region. Since the development of Siberian culture was largely determined by the cultural and historical processes that took place in the Central Russia, it is logical to assume that the conductors of these processes were people who came to the province. These people came to Siberia as settlers, convicts, political exiles or those who came voluntarily to fulfill their duty. In this context, there is a great interest in the concept of a “cultural nest” proposed by N.K. Piksanov in 1928, which requires thorough research and description of the province’s cultural life in all its forms and links (Piksanov, 1928). According to him, it is the concept “cultural nest” that reveals common processes in the metropolis

and province, points to specific features of the provincial culture of Siberia in general and, at the same time, shows the originality of the culture of the studied province. Thus, it becomes apparent that the concept “cultural nest” should be based on the human factor.

The anthropological direction in the cultural studies has always attached great importance to the study of biographies, the life and work of local representatives of the culture. It was based on the fact that it was necessary to know people who drive cultural processes. It is obvious that the study of the communicative culture development is impossible without studying the biographical data of individuals. This approach allows us to identify value systems, behavioural motives and social standards of people who fulfil the communicative links between Siberia and the Central Russia. The biographical method allows us to consider the social composition of people coming to Siberia, to analyze the cultural traditions introduced by immigrants from the metropolis. Naturally, these traditions manifested in the life style, the manner of dress and communication were substantially different from those of convicts, settlers and political exiles. A combination of different ethnic and cultural traditions contributed to the development of specific social relations that were very uneasy and dictated by the need to learn adapting to a new cultural environment and to adapt the rules of behaviour of the foreign culture.

Siberia, with its rich natural resources, always had a great shortage of manpower. For the most part, this problem was solved with the help of the experts who came from Central Russia to Siberia to work. Local Siberian intelligentsia that stood on the positions of regionalism realized the full measure of responsibility for the inducement of the Siberian Society to the spiritual and cultural life. Regionalists set a goal to form the local intelligentsia who would know

Siberia, would love it and defended the interests of the region. G.N. Potanin and N.M. Yadrintsev had an ambivalent attitude toward the newly arrived intelligentsia (Potanin, 1908: 268). On the one hand, they felt a sense of gratitude, since the Decembrists, the Polish exiles, the Petrashevists, the populists of the 1870s, the political exiles of the 1890s created the first rudiments of Siberian culture. Nevertheless, they are “a purely random element of the local life, organically unconnected with it and not ready to immediately withdraw from the scene as soon as the general conditions of the political life change” (Kolosov, 1916: 218). The stronger cultural communication connections between Siberia and the centre were established with the help of specialists who came from Central Russia to Siberia to work. The intelligentsia brought cultural traditions of their region with it. After working for several years they left having played, as a rule, their positive role bringing a new element to the cultural development of Siberia and leaving followers and disciples. The study of the biographies of these people allows us to understand how their representation of Siberia has changed over the years they spent in the region, what real contribution they made to the development of the local culture and how they helped to form perceptions and knowledge of Siberia in other parts of the country.

The development of cultural communication links between Central Russia and Siberia may be traced by studying the biography of Vyacheslav Shishkov. “And when our readers want to peer into the depths of the history of Siberia, they can do nothing without Viacheslav Shishkov” – Konstantin Fedin wrote about the writer in his memoirs (Memoirs, 1987: 4). He believed that Shishkov was a genuine researcher of the folk life. A Siberian writer G.D. Grebenshchikov believed that “...thanks to this writer we acquire a really necessary and useful portrayal of one of

the most extensive and unknown margins of our country” (Memoirs, 1987: 63). Out of the total number of professionals who voluntarily came to Siberia to work, Shishkov stands out by his talent and the literary heritage he left behind. The use of the biographical research method allows us to reveal the names of people who, like V. Shishkov, came to Siberia to fulfill their professional duties, but as for their contribution to the cultural development of the region, we can only learn it by the fact that their lives intertwined with the facts of Shishkov’s biography. This knowledge represents a very definite interest for the researchers, since it can provide a more complete and comprehensive picture of the development of cultural communication ties between Russia and Siberia in the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Thus, in 1907, in Tomsk V.Ya. Shishkov met an engineer V.P. Petrov who, like Shishkov, graduated from the Vyshnevolotsk Technical College and worked under his supervision. During the expeditions V.P. Petrov participated in walks to the villages, small settlements of Siberian peasants and native Altaics. In 1909, in Yakutsk, the writer became friends with a political exile, a student at Kazan University Polozov. In Siberia he met S.P. Shchvetsov, an exile to Siberia for the revolutionary activity who then remained in the settlement. S.P. Schvetsov was engaged in the research of Siberia, he wrote essays and articles (Memoirs, 1987: 306). The importance of each such fact becomes apparent when studying the cross-cultural relations between the two regions. These relations were fulfilled primarily by the intelligentsia, whose history, in the context of our time, needs serious reflection and analysis. The lack of a factual material that allows us to draw conclusions about the composition, quantity and outlook of the intelligentsia complicate the analysis of its activity as a mediator in the implementation of the cross-cultural relations, as well as the development of this topic in general.

The use of the biographical method of research may help to solve this problem.

Vyacheslav Ya. Shishkov was born in the Tver province. After graduating from the college and obtaining a diploma in engineering, in 1894 he went to serve in Tomsk, the area of communication lines. He gave Siberia 20 years of his life, it became his second home. The events and experiences of this period are organically plaited into the biography of the writer. And therefore, it was not easy for the writer to leave Siberia in 1915.

Tomsk warmly welcomed young Shishkov. The student environment, which he got involved in on the arrival in the city, contributed to his rapid adaptation to new conditions. The writer himself admitted: "I had little interest in politics, but the lives of young people caught my fancy, I eagerly raised money with the forbidden subscription lists for the needs of the revolution. I read a lot" (Shishkov, 1987: 16). The mood of Siberian youth resonated with the sentiments of young people in European Russia. Gatherings, clandestine parties with disputes and the presence of Social Democrats, meetings with members of workers' circles, where they sang banned songs – all this romanticism of the pre-revolutionary era was reflected in the behaviour of the youth.

Culturally, Tomsk was a developed city. Well deservedly it assumed a title of the beautiful Siberian Athens. The city had a drama theatre with a good troupe, the Slovyansky choir and the Karageorgievsky choir, well-known throughout Russia at the time, came on tour there. The creative activity of Tomsk artists and writers largely determined and formed the development of the spiritual culture of the region as a whole. V. Shishkov was lucky: when he was seven years old, he lived with a talented poet G. Vyatkin, whose house was often visited by the teachers of two gymnasiums and a school, where they conducted lively discussions on literary topics.

The cultural environment that the future writer got involved in contributed to the development of his talent. In honour of the anniversary of the poet V. Shishkov wrote a symbolic tale "Cedar" and with dedication to the poet sent it to a newspaper "The Siberian Life" (Russian Writers, 1990: 413). This newspaper was influential, people followed its voice. A merchant P.I. Makushin founded it; he was engaged in teaching, had a bookstore and a library, and supported Tomsk Evening University with his own money where the workers and employees studied.

In autumn of 1909, the literary circle headed by G. Vyatkin founded the "Young Siberia" journal. The journal published stories, essays, poems, and reviews on the public life of Siberia. I. Tachalov, P. Dravert, Grebenshchikov, I. Vyatkin, V. Shishkov – the leading writers and poets published their works in this journal. But there were no funding for the journal. They had to humiliate themselves and raise money from friends and wealthy people, which, in the end, did not save the situation and the journal was closed (Essays, 1982: 513). Nevertheless, the creative activity of Shishkov was not over. He sent a journal with the story "Grandma got lost" to V.G. Korolenko who approved the story and asked to send something else to the "Russian Wealth" journal (Memoirs, 1987: 19). In 1909, the writer sent two issues of the "Young Siberia" journal with the same story to his brother. Thus, the readers of European Russia had the opportunity to get acquainted with the way of life of Siberians in the light of the perception of all of this through the eyes of their fellow countryman.

Taking the issues of the cultural life of Siberia too personally V. Shishkov wrote: "If Siberia does not need the drama art – say, one can find it in Moscow – then it does not need neither music, nor art: all this can be found in Moscow. One is welcome to come to Moscow by foot with a knapsack or by the railway, but for Heaven's

sake – go to Moscow... To Moscow, to Moscow! – the Siberians will dream as Chekhov's "sisters" and the time will pass by and the strength will be gone" (Suzdalsky, 1995: 34). The intelligentsia of Siberia understood quite well that education of the people creates the basis for development of higher education in the region and correspondingly contributes to the increase of the region's cultural level in general. And as the number of the local intelligentsia was quite insignificant, the role of the arrived intelligentsia was very important in solving this problem. V. Shishkov contributed a lot to this great affair. The writer was involved into educational activities, he taught adults in the Sunday school, was the Member of the Presidium of the Scientific Society of Siberia's studies, and participated in public recitals and evenings (Memoirs, 1987: 25).

Getting acquainted with G.N. Potanin in the winter of 1910 was a remarkable event for V. Shishkov, while G.N. Potanin possessed a foremost authority in Siberia due to which he had become a part of the leading intelligentsia of Tomsk city. During every day sessions of the group the issues of literature and philosophy were discussed. There Shishkov got acquainted with Siberian writer G.D. Grebenshchikov who liked his literature works; G.N. Potanin also approved of his stories. But there was no literature school in Siberia, and it was necessary to study. In 1912, V. Shishkov went to Saint Petersburg for a while. There he got to know the writers A.M. Remezov, P.V. Ivanov-Razumnik, M.M. Prishvin who taught him "how to write and where the secret of the style's beauty lies".

Cross-cultural relationship of Russia and Siberia was working only in one direction. One of the attempts to acquaint the reader from the capital with Siberian culture was the "Altay almanac" edited by Siberian writer G.D. Grebenshchikov and published in Saint Petersburg in 1914. In this journal the problems of

the culture of Altay were enlightened, the stories of Siberian writers were published, V. Shishkov's as well. The writer had travelled across Siberia's immense vastness and was considered to know the lifestyles of the Northern peoples quite well. The journals "Zavety" (Lifestyles), "Everyday Journal" published his stories from the Tungus life (Memoirs, 1987: 23). The ethnic culture of Siberia was something very exotic for European readers and the stories of V. Shishkov allowed to open a new page in the cognition of the history and culture of Siberia for them.

Due to business trips V. Shishkov had got to another cultural environment. Thus, in 1908 he was sent to supervise the research of the rapids of the Yenisei River. This trip gave him an opportunity to get to know the life of gold miners at Nekrasovsky mine (Memoirs, 1987: 16). In 1909, he was sent to the distant city of Yakutsk to reinforce the Lena's banks within the city. There he was interested in the life of miners and political exiles (Memoirs, 1987: 17). In 1910, during his studies of the Bey River in Altay, he also studied the life of the local population, Kalmyks, and the cult of shamanism. V. Shishkov got closely acquainted with political exiles during the expedition by the Lena River to Chechuiskeye settlement, during the study of the watershed between the Lena and the Lower Tunguska. Political exiles lived in settlements in villages. Among them was Siberian writer Isaac Goldberg. Two from the exiles got married to the daughters of local tradesmen; they travelled in taiga stealing from Tungus people, excusing themselves that it is boring to live without being busy (Memoirs, 1987: 20). Severe Siberian reality was breaking people: someone got adapted to new conditions forgetting about their beliefs, someone sounded to the bottom not able to survive through the collision with the reality. Such people, as a rule, who had brought some elements of culture to Siberia, did not have any

back links with their home and, as a result, could not contribute to the development of interregional cultural relationships. Everything looked totally different, when some conscious interest was shown to the history of Siberia and its modern life. V. Shishkov's biography proves this fact. He was collecting the richest everyday material during his expeditions. After his trips to villages along the Lower Tunguska, which were totally isolated from the world due to the absence of roads and therefore preserved the way of life of the previous centuries, V. Shishkov wrote down 87 ancient "drawling" songs and folk tales, published by Irkutsk Geographic Society in 1912 (Memoirs, 1987: 20). Thus, due to the activities of V. Shishkov one more element of the culture, which could have remained unknown forever, became open to the public.

After V. Shishkov left for Petersburg in 1915, he continued to serve Siberia. He got to know M. Gorky, and from 1916 he began to work with the journal "Chronicles" where his story "Taiga" was published. M. Gorky was in correspondence with many Siberian writers, he guided their work, published their stories in his journal. Gorky's "Chronicles" was, so to say, a communication line connecting the cultures of two regions. In summer of 1916, the writer went to Tomsk where he met G. Potanin and published his essay about the visit to Finland "A trip to Helsingfors" in the newspaper "Siberian life" (Memoirs, 1987: 78). Upon his return to Petersburg he continued to send his stories to the newspaper, thus supporting art links with the region. He often had guests from Siberia: writers, engineers.

Siberia was attracting the attention of scientific and creative intelligentsia of Russia by the uniqueness of its culture. But there was not enough information; many questions regarding the culture of Siberia remained unstudied. V. Shishkov possessed significant knowledge in the

field of routine life and culture of Siberians and shared it generously. The memoirs of his friend, Professor L.R. Kogan, the head of the Chair for Literature in Political Educational Institute, are quite interesting in this respect. Once, the students told Prof. Kogan that the lectures did not give them the picture of religious beliefs of the Northern peoples of Siberia and the nature of shamanism. It was decided to organize a meeting with V. Shishkov for students. The writer accepted the invitation: he came to the lecture with a tambourine and some other accessories of the shamanistic cult. His lecture amused not only students, but teachers as well. In order to give him the opportunity to answer all the questions it was decided to cancel the successive lecture. (Memoirs, 1987: 46). V. Shishkov's great love for Siberia, his reverent attitude to its culture resulted in the fact, that its history always remained in the centre of the writer's attention, thus contributing to arising interest to the culture of Siberian region, establishment of cross-cultural links with it among Russian readers.

All creative work of the writer was connected with Siberia. Most of the works by V. Shishkov are based on the real events and reflect the numerous facets of Siberian life. But the most significant work which brought V. Shishkov into one line with the most popular writers, was, without any doubt, his novel "Ugryum-reka" (Ugryum-river). The writer created the novel basing on the stories of the descendent of Yeniseisk merchants N.E. Matonin about gold miners of Yeniseisk taiga. This novel is an outcome of many years of observations and thoughts of the author about Siberian life. Notwithstanding that the events take place mostly in the Eastern Siberia, the novel has a generalizing nature, recreating on its pages the typical lifestyle of Siberians. Following the destiny of the protagonist Prokhor Gromov, the reader gets acquainted with different people who live in Siberia: its native inhabitants, Tungus people,

with their unique culture, exotic for the European reader; political exiles who Prokhor had originally met during his studies in the city, and then met them in taiga. One of them presents himself as an accountant, another one as a pharmacist, the third one as a jurist (Shishkov, 1982: 63). Among them there were students, experienced engineers (Shishkov, 1982: 539). There was a former province singer in the settlement, who occupied the position of a correspondence clerk (Shishkov, 1982: 511). These data allow us to speak about the social composition of political exiles. A Tsar offender Shaposhnikov was dwelling on their destiny in the novel: some “work as hired labour for farmworkers, are resistant to all hardships of the exile, but do not leave the revolutionary work, follow the events in the country, read a lot, organize the groups of self-education; others sometimes even run away for freedom” (Shishkov, 1982: 263); some lose themselves to drinking and deplete as Shaposhnikov himself. The life of the engineer Protasov gives the idea of the revolutionary work in Siberia. He received illegal literature from Petersburg and Moscow with some drawer, engineer, locksmith or maternity nurse he requested (Shishkov, 1982: 388). The authors acquaints us with old-timers that moved to Siberia during the times of the Tsar Aleksey the Quiet, with runaways from the serfdom, from the army service, with Cossacks who some time ago had explored Siberian lands and stayed there (Shishkov, 1982: 74). Nina writes to Prokhor: “... we founded a literature group, study something, write essays, the group is supervised by the teacher of philology Dolgov” (Shishkov, 1982: 148). These notes allow us to recreate the daily life of Siberian intelligentsia, about which there is very little printed information in archives.

The youth is the most mobile part of the population. Mostly due to its activity there was a cultural interexchange between the regions. If there was an opportunity, young people tried to move to Moscow, as did the son of the legal investigator who was studying the case of Anfisa’s murder (Shishkov, 1982: 310). And vice versa, young people came to Siberia like the young teacher Ekaterina Lvovna who had just graduated from the Institute (Shishkov, 1982: 366). The novel written in a vivid, original language, was a wonderful source of information about the cultural life of Siberia for the European reader. Publication of this novel was another attempt to bring Siberian literature to the all-Russian arena.

Peculiar economic and political conditions of the Siberian region development resulted in peculiarities of its cultural development. The original culture of Siberia with specific values and of significant interest had local nature. The cultural life of Siberia was mainly determined by the tendencies in the centre. The conductors of new ideas, trends were the people who arrived to the region, thus contributing to the development of cross-cultural exchange. The analysis of biographies of these people allows us to recreate the lifestyle of Siberia at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Therefore, the use of the biographical research method is quite reasonable and necessary for the study of the history of cross-cultural communications’ development. Analysis of the biography of V.Ya. Shishkov, as one of the most vivid representatives of the culture, proves the necessity and efficiency of using the biographical method during the studies of the history of Siberian culture and development of cross-cultural communications.

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## **Межкультурные коммуникации России и Сибири в контексте биографического метода исследования**

**А.Г. Грязнухин, Т.В. Грязнухина**  
*Сибирский федеральный университет*  
*Россия 660041, Красноярск, пр. Свободный, 82*

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*В статье рассматривается развитие межкультурных коммуникаций России и Сибири в XIX–XX вв. Анализируется концепт «культурное гнездо» как база для выявления единых процессов в метрополии и провинции, а также специфических особенностей культуры Сибири. В основу исследования положен биографический метод, который позволяет уделить внимание социальному составу приезжавших в Сибирь людей, проанализировать культурные традиции, привносимые выходцами из метрополии. Исследование биографий приезжих интеллигентов позволяет определить, какой реальный вклад они вносили в развитие местной культуры и как способствовали формированию представлений и знаний о Сибири в других районах страны. В контексте межкультурных коммуникаций рассмотрены жизнь и деятельность писателя В.Я. Шишкова.*

*Ключевые слова: биография, коммуникации, культура, Россия, Сибирь, В.Я. Шишков.*

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