

## **Chapter 10**

### **The Concept of "Space" in Russian History**

— Regionalization from the Late Imperial  
Period to the Present —

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#### **1. Why Is Russian Historical Geography Not Developed?**

This chapter is aimed at contributing to the development of Russian historical geography, perhaps the weakest area of our studies, by analyzing the history of territorial reform in Russia and the Soviet Union.\*

"In most countries where geography is a well-established and vigorous academic discipline, historical geography is similarly well-established and vigorous." In this sense, however, the Soviet Union was an exception.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, Western historians of Russia have generally paid little attention to geographic factors.

It is true that some groups of Western historians (for example, specialists in pre-modern Russia, its colonial expansion, and ethnic questions) have been much more disciplined in including geographic factors. Certain studies offer indisputable evidence of this: *Russian Colonial Expansion to 1917* (1988) edited by Michael Rywkin, and one recent article by John P. LeDonne.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, *Domination of Eastern Europe* (1986) by Orest Subtelny is not only an excellent example of historical geography but also of a combination of comparative and causal analyses.

\* As this chapter is aimed at analyzing administrative-territorial division itself, the names of territorial units (guberniia, uезд, volost, raion, etc.) will be neither translated into English, nor italicized.

Unfortunately, however, specialists in the modern and Soviet periods are still obliged to put up with such studies as combine into one paragraph several examples picked up from the Urals, Belorussia, and Crimea. Such a negligent attitude to the relevance of geographic factors can be termed *geographic nihilism*. Apparently, recent dramatic changes in the former Soviet Union in allowing access to historical materials, local (state and party) archive materials in particular, have not thus far affected our geographic nihilism. This should prompt us to consider what was wrong with our approaches, and what is to be done.

The underdevelopment of historical geography in the Soviet Union is demonstrated by the fact that throughout the 74 years under Soviet Power not a single historical atlas for professional historians was published. Only in the final years of the Soviet Union was an editing commission for a historical atlas organized in the Institute of USSR History of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. It is known that this commission prepared a draft of a highly accurate and detailed historical atlas, but due to the recent economic situation of the country, the draft has been shelved.

Russian historians seem to enjoy publishing chronicles, but do not seem to like drawing maps. As a result, foreign historians are confronted with a staggering array of place names whose locations cannot be identified. We have no choice but to depend on guberniia maps appended to the Encyclopedia *Brokgauz and Efron*, or a relatively accessible atlas *Geograficheskii atlas Rossiiskoi imperii, Tsarstva Pol'skogo i Velikogo kniazhestva Finliandskogo; Raspolozhennyi po guberniiam*, published in 1823. Regrettably, these maps, with scales of one inch to 30, 60, or even 160 *verstas* (1 *versta* = 1.067 km), cannot show locations of all villages, or sometimes even of volosts. Such maps are inappropriate, for example, to study peasant movements. While specialists in the French Revolution enjoy opportunities to study the paths along which peasant insurgence spread as well as its methods (by rumors, sending couriers, etc.),

students of Russian history do not even know the locations of villages!

To the best of my knowledge, the most detailed Russian historical atlas is *Podrobnaiia karta Rossiiskoi imperii i bliz' lezhashchikh zagranichnykh vladenii*, prepared by the "Imperial Depot of Maps" and presented to Alexander I around 1810. This is a collection of 107 maps drawn to a scale of 100 mm to 70 *verstas*. This scale enables us to identify each village, road, and church, and to gain a rough indication of land use. What is important is that the maps show the significance of each church and, consequently, the significance of the village where the church was located. Although this atlas is highly useful, it is rare. The British Museum, for example, holds one copy, but the Library of Congress in the United States does not.

The development of historical geography in the Soviet Union was hampered by its academic structure. In general, professional historians working in Russian and Ukrainian local universities or institutes specialize in their own regions (the Urals, the Central Industrial Region, the Central Black-Soil Region, Right-Bank Ukraine, etc.), selecting them as the subjects of their life-work. Russian and Ukrainian historians often say that four guberniias are to be analyzed in preparing a doctoral candidate's dissertation. Since the present oblasts are, as a rule, smaller than the former guberniias, it means that he needs to visit between five and ten oblast state archives, not counting party ones.

These requirements enriched Soviet historiography by miraregional typology (in Soviet dissertations we can often find such questions as "why did it happen in Tambovskaia but not in Orlovskaia guberniia?") but hampered the development of interregional typology. A survey trip entailing longdistance travel has not been affordable for Russian and Ukrainian historians, let alone the difficulties caused in recent years by regional conflicts in the area of the former Soviet Union.

In this sense, Moscow and St. Petersburg historians are patently privileged. They have opportunities to select regions more freely than do their hinterland colleagues. Strangely enough, however, it seems that they are more hesitant to visit Russian and Ukrainian provinces than we (foreign historians) are. Perhaps Muscovites and Petersburgers fear that they will become the prey of tigers and wolves in outlying Russian and Ukrainian provinces. Regrettably, it is also the case that sometimes we are better informed about able, young historians working in Russian and Ukrainian provinces than are their colleagues in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

For our part, a serious obstacle to the development of studies of Russian historical geography had been the restrictions imposed by the Soviet regime on foreigners wishing to travel to Soviet provinces. Up to the end of the 1980s, substantial areas of the Urals, the Mid-Volga Region, and Ukraine were "closed" areas for foreigners. It is difficult to share a sense of space and location with historical figures if you yourself have never been there.

However, the negative effects of these "totalitarian" restrictions should not be exaggerated. A significant number of prominent scholars who have contributed to the study of Russian historical geography (J.P. LeDonne for example) belong to a generation which was unable to enjoy opportunities to work in Soviet local archives. On the other hand, most Western historians, as mentioned above, have not escaped geographic nihilism despite the greater access to historical sources in the last years. Therefore, our faults should be seen as mainly methodological.

## **2. "Space" and Public Administration**

Some 30 years ago, J.P. LeDonne pointed out that "France, a close relative of Russia in the family of over-centralized states, had in 1901, 86 *departements* and 36,192 *communes*, each with an elected mayor subject to dismissal by the *prefect* of the *departement* appointed by the Ministry of the Interior,

and European Russia with nearly four times the population and five times the territory of France had only 51 guberniias, 511 uezds and 10,257 volosts."<sup>3</sup>

However, how could a French-style state exist in a country where the population density was only one-twelfth of France (as a whole)?<sup>4</sup> Even at the present time, professional police force is almost non-existent in rural Russia. Local enterprises (collective farms and factories) regularly supply a few of their laborers for this purpose. They are organized into *druzhiny* (militia units) and patrol their areas. Administrative Commissions attached to village district administrations (former selsovets, i.e., village Soviets) deal with minor offenses. Members of the Commissions work "on social principles" (without pay). If a case is too serious for the Commission, the latter transfer it to the professional policeman who visits the village district, as a rule, once a week. It must be noted that given the conditions of the Russian countryside, such a non-professional police system is rational and feasible. It would be unaffordable for each village district to hire even one professional policeman.

In Western countries, care for bedridden old people requires only to organize a system of "home helpers." If a home helper finds something wrong with an old person's health, the helper calls an ambulance. In the Russian countryside, this service is one of the duties of *zhensovety* (Women's Soviets), whose members serve without pay. Heads of village district administrations (former chairmen of selsovets) convene *skhody* (assemblies) in each "population place" (*naselennyi punkt*) to organize a system of mutual care. If someone finds a suffering elderly person, he informs the head of the village district administration, who in turn negotiates with the collective farm office in the district so that the farm's truck may take the person to the nearest hospital. It happens that the collective farm's truck is the only automobile in the district.

Working in such an environment, heads of village district administrations are required to be sturdy bosses (*krepkie*

*khoziaeva*) but neither democratic representatives nor efficient bureaucrats. Here there are scant possibilities for the development of a Weberian bureaucracy.

Specifics of socialist public administration, such as amateurism, the absence of a solid financial system, and the direct mobilization of popular service, have been regarded as unique to Communism or Soviet idealism. The situation after the downfall of Communism, however, revealed that these had in fact been feasible forms of public administration under Russian (Eurasian) geographic conditions. The origin of predominance of direct mobilization of popular service should not be sought in War Communism but in *nqtural'naia povinnost'* (levy in kind or *corvee* labor) in pre-revolutionary Russia.

This is symbolized by reintroduction of the *Subbotnik* (formerly called the *Leninskii subbotnik*). Late in April throughout Russia, after the spring thaw, someone must clean up the streets. If Russian local authorities were to forego the *Subbotnik* and hire street-cleaners, it would surely be more costly *for taxpayers*. In Western countries also, *corvee* labor remains in some spheres of public administration which are unsuited for the professional (hire) principle. An excellent example is the system of volunteer (amateur) fire-fighting brigades in Japan, organized in almost all villages, towns, and urban districts. Since the ideal of fire-fighting is to minimize the dispatch of fire brigades, it would be unprofitable to organize them only with professional firemen. Notwithstanding, Russia (its countryside in particular) can be distinguished from Western countries by an abundance of public duties which can be accomplished less expensively and more effectively by the population themselves than by professional officials.

Historians studying administrative reforms in late Imperial Russia have not been accustomed to evaluating such factors as available manpower, financial resources, territorial optimality, all of which however are definitely important for analyses of public administration. For example, some Western

and Soviet historians have argued that the lack of volost zemstvos was the fatal flaw of the tsarist regime. If we, however, compare the available rural manpower at that time (physicians, agronomists, veterinarians, and others) with the average size of volosts, it is indisputable that in most volosts, zemstvos would have been founded without intellectual workers and, therefore, could not have played the role of modernizing institutions. This was actually proved at the time of the Provisional Government.<sup>5</sup> In short, some historians' anti-realism is caused not only by their liberal/leftist orientation, but also by the lack of spatial sensitivity.

### **3. Territorial Units in Imperial Russia and the USSR**

#### (1) Significance of the question

The issue of administrative-territorial division (*raioni-rovanie* — regionalization) is very important not only because it is one of the basic frameworks for historical geography but also because it reflects chronic requirements which impose various conditions on the politics and government of the country (or region) concerned.

For example, Russian raions and American counties are considerably similar in character, while English counties correspond to Russian oblasts or Japanese *ken* (prefectures). In this author's opinion, the former resemblance results from low population densities in Russian and American rural areas which atomize the countryside and prevent effective township or village self-government. While Japanese *gun* (counties) have degenerated to be strictly territorial units without any administrative function, Russian raions and American counties continue to play a vital role in rural administration.

Every modern state inherited small villages (communes) from its feudal predecessor. In countries with high population densities such as Japan, England, and Germany, these small villages have been consolidated and enlarged to the extent that made stable township self-government possible. This,

however, did not occur in Russia. Even after Nikita Khrushchev's amalgamation of small villages, a significant number of selsoviets in the RSFSR had populations of only several hundred persons. Although the United States did not inherit small villages from feudalism, this country experienced similar difficulties in effecting strong township government. Thus, the raion continues to be a vital link in Russian local government. This author was surprised that Western political scientists were not surprised at the abolition of representative organs at the raion level after the Presidential *coup d'etat* in October, 1993 — which no one had dreamed of after Alexander II's introduction of *uezd zemstvos*.

According to Yuzuru Taniuchi, debates on territorial reform in the 1920s focused on achieving a balance between democracy and administrative efficiency. Enlargement of lower territorial units (selsoviets, volosts and the newly established raions) was aimed at cutting administrative costs, while utilizing cadres in maximumly and ensuring their political obedience. On the other hand, the division of administrative units was regarded as desirable in order to "bring Soviets closer to the population."<sup>6</sup> Since rural Soviets suffered from a chronic insufficiency in manpower and financial resources, the dominant tendency in their territorial reform was the enlargement of their areas, which eventually culminated in Khrushchev's amalgamation of villages. However, enlargement was checked and even temporarily overturned when limited experiments in "revitalizing Soviets" were made in the mid-1920s, in 1929,<sup>7</sup> in the mid-1980s,<sup>8</sup> and over the past twenty years.

## (2) A short history of Soviet regionalization

In common with other absolutist states, the administrative division of the Russian empire was based on purely demographic principles. Moreover, even from a demographic point of view, the tsarist government was unable to adapt itself to the situation created by Russia's rapid industrialization in the second half of the nineteenth century.

One striking example which has been a favorite of Soviet historians is that Ivanovo-Voznesensk, containing about 30,000 textile and printing laborers, was only one of the "cities" in Shuimskii uezd (Vladimirskaia guberniia), the capital of which had a much smaller population.<sup>9</sup>

The Communist Revolution ensued two new criteria to the issue: the ethnic composition of the population and the economic affinity or cohesion (*ekonomicheskoe tiagotenie*) of the region.<sup>10</sup> As a result, Soviet regionalization became much more dynamic than that in tsarist period. This can be shown by comparing Map 1 with Map 2. Territorial division in the European portion of the contemporary CIS is most significantly distinguished from its pre-revolutionary counterpart in such regions as northern Russia, Ukraine, the Mid-Volga, and the northern Caucasus. Territorial changes in northern Russia, the Mid-Volga, and the northern Caucasus resulted from the Soviet government's endeavors to reflect the ethnic composition of the people there. Oblasts in Ukraine, as a rule, are much smaller than its pre-revolutionary guberniias. Due to the rapid development of its economy in the nineteenth century, Ukraine at the beginning of this century suffered from contradictions between administrative units and spatial economic affinity more deeply than did other regions of the Russian empire. Although the territorial division in the Soviet Ukraine underwent numerous changes, we can see a long-term trend toward adaptation of administrative units to realities of the economic situation. The same can be said for the partition of several large guberniias in Russia, namely Tambovskaia, Orlovskaia and Permskaia which even at that time suffered from a lack of internal cohesion.

As Tables 1-6 show, Soviet administrative regionalization passed through several critical junctions. First, the numbers of territorial units at all tiers (selsovets, volosts, uezds, and guberniias) increased between 1917 and 1922, and consequently their average area decreased. Second, from 1923 to 1929 the "guberniia/uezd/volost" system was replaced with

the new "oblast (or krai)/okrug/raion" framework.<sup>11</sup> Oblasts and kraises were broad-area units similar to *general-gubernatorstvo* in pre-revolutionary Russia. As a rule, okrugs were smaller than guberniias but larger than uyezds. Raions were smaller than uyezds but larger than volosts.

The third critical juncture of Soviet regionalization was reached when okrugs were abolished at the height of Collectivization (June 1930).<sup>12</sup> The fourth came in the mid-1980s when, as a logical consequence of the abolition of okrugs, oblasts were redivided down to the size of the former guberniias, or even smaller.

The fifth critical juncture was Khrushchev's amalgamation of villages in the mid-1950s, which sharply reduced the number of selsoviets. The final juncture was the amalgamation of raions decided by the Central Committee of the CPSU in November, 1962. The consequences of this action revealed a geographical contrast. The Russian SFSR redivided raions soon after Khrushchev's fall from power, while in the Ukrainian SSR, enlarged raions have been maintained up to the present (see Tables 3 and 4). As a result, Russia and Ukraine today display a remarkable contrast in rural administrative structures. In Russia, rural population places are less populous than in Ukraine (see Table 7), but on the average, selsoviets contain a higher number of population places than their Ukrainian counterparts do. Instead, in Russia on the average, a raion has fewer selsoviets than a raion does in Ukraine. Thus, each Ukrainian raion has a comparatively larger number of selsoviets and each selsoviet contains only a few population places but these population places are much more populous than in Russia. As is suggested by Tables 5, 6, and 7, the Belorussian SSR followed the example of Russia (in even more extreme fashion), while the Moldavian SSR took the Ukrainian course.

### (3) Selsoviets: peasant communes or volosts?

Peasant life in pre-revolutionary Russia took place within three territorial categories: peasant communes (*sel'skie*

*obshchestva*) as administrative units; land communes (*pozemel'nye obshchestva*) as land-use units; and purely geographical units (*sela* and *derevni*). The formation of selsovets was a process to integrate these three categories into a single territorial unit.

"Selo" means a big village with a church, while "derevnia" means a small village without one. "Selenie" is a general term which embraces both "selo" and "derevnia." Usually, selos were located near road junctions, and had marketplaces (bazaars), post offices, sanatoria, and other public facilities.<sup>13</sup> A selo had several (sometimes, more than ten) "satellite" derevnias. As Aleksandr Chaianov observed,<sup>14</sup> the average radius from the center of selos to their outlying derevnias was about 5 *verstas* (5.3km). This was a distance within which peasants could walk to church and carry grain to the bazaar. For convenience, let us term this sort of territory a "selo-derevnias" unit. It was here that peasants were born, worked, bought and sold, prayed, married and, finally, were buried.

Of the three territorial categories, the "selo-derevnias" units were the most important in peasants' daily life. This fact is often ignored by historians, who have exaggerated the significance of the other two units (peasant and land communes). In this author's opinion, historians' excessive fascination for communes is also symptomatic of an ignorance of spatial factors. Undoubtedly, it was impossible for peasants to support themselves in a commune which had a male population of only 100 - 600 persons (See Table 1).

One of the greatest obstacles to the study of Russian peasant life is the lack of records for the total number of land communes nationwide, as contrasted with our knowledge of the national total of peasant communes and population places.<sup>16</sup> Scholars of the pre-revolutionary Russia did not count the number of land communes, for indeed they were almost impossible to count.

Reformers under Alexander II intended that the area of peasant communes should be the same as that of land communes. However, this principle was soon abandoned,

because if peasants in a village had formerly belonged to more than one serf owners and each group had been allotted differing amount of land, after the Emancipation, peasants with larger allotments did not wish to merge into the same land commune with neighboring "poorer peasants." On the other hand, there were also land communes consisting of several peasant communes.

Table 9 and Map 3 show the remarkable variety of guberniias in European Russia with regard to population structures, namely population densities and correlations between selenies and peasant communes.<sup>16</sup>

According to the census of 1897, there were 6,330 volosts, 78,361 peasant communes and 185,025 population places (selenies) within the territory corresponding to the European part of the present Russian Federation (see Table 1). In 1917, there were 10,606 volosts [a] and about 110,000 peasant communes [b] in the territory corresponding to the Russian SFSR as a whole (not to its European part). By 1922, this had increased to 12,363 volosts [a<sup>1</sup>] and 120,200 selsovetes [b<sup>1</sup>] in the Russian SFSR (see Table 3).

The increases from [a] to [a<sup>1</sup>] and from [b] to [b<sup>1</sup>] reveals the spontaneous division of territorial units during the Revolution. Moreover, the increase from [b] to [b<sup>1</sup>] demonstrates that selsovetes were often born out of selenies but not out of peasant communes (former administrative units). In other words, selsovetes were often organized on a purely spatial basis.

As Table 3 shows, the number of selsovetes in the Russian SFSR had already decreased to one-third of the 1922 figure even before Khrushchev's amalgamation, which reduced the number again by half. The Statute of Selsovetes of the Russian SFSR (1931), which ordered that selsovetes be organized in all selenies or within areas with a radius of 3 km,<sup>17</sup> could not stem this decline. As a result, there were only 16,358 selsovetes (or 15,540 if we exclude oblasts for which former guberniias are omitted from Table 1 because of their substantial nomad and

Cossack territories) in the European part of the Russian Federation in 1993.

Referring to Tables 1 - 6, let us compare the correlations between the numbers of present selsovet (village districts), pre-revolutionary volosts, and peasant communes in the European Soviet Republics.

	ratio of the number of selsovets to that of volosts	ratio of the number of former communes to that of selsovets
European Russia*	2.5	5.0
Ukraine**	3.6	2.8
Byelorussia	2.0	4.6
Moldavia	3.9	1.5

\* Excluding the former Orenburgskaia and Astrakhanskaia guberniias.

\*\* Excluding Western Ukraine.

Here we can find the same sort of grouping as shown in the Republics' responses toward the amalgamation of raions decided by the Central Committee of the CPSU in 1962: in the Republics with low population densities (Russia and Byelorussia), the amalgamation of villages during the Soviet period was much more drastic than in densely populated Ukraine and Moldavia. It is common to all four Republics, however, that current village districts (selsovets) are larger than pre-revolutionary peasant communes but smaller than volosts, and they seem to most resemble the former "selo-derevnias" units.

A significant number of the present core settlements (*tsestral'nye usad'by*) of village districts are in fact former selos. Scenes in these core settlements remind us of the former selos because various administrative and social facilities are concentrated there: the office of the village administration (former selsovet office), the collective farm office, school, hospital, "palace of culture" and the like. The transition from selos to the present core settlements is ironically marked by the sight (often seen in central Russia) of a selsovet office standing beside a ruined church.

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Strictly speaking, pre-revolutionary peasant and land communes were corporative-estate (but not territorial) entities, and the tsarist regime was based, in principle, on the former.<sup>18</sup> The 1917 Revolution rejected the corporative structure of the state. At the same time, the territorial holdings of land communes, as a general rule, approached those of selenies, and the former took over a significant part of the administrative functions of pre-revolutionary peasant communes. However, the legal status of land communes, especially their relationship with selsoviets, was dubious throughout the 1920s. E.H. Carr remarked that "as the village Soviet approached, both in size and in the nature of its functions, the initial design of the rural district (volost - K.M.) executive committee, so the *skhod* (commune assembly - K.M.) rose up from below to assume the initial form of a village Soviet. It was paradoxical that the institution in the countryside which most closely conformed to the original Bolshevik conception of a Soviet should have been one which did not bear the name."<sup>19</sup>

The Collectivization abolished land communes. At the same time, however, the Statute of Selsoviets of the Russian SFSR in 1931 introduced a system of plenipotentiary agents (*upolnomochennye*) of selenies elected by the latter's assemblies (*skhody*).<sup>TM</sup> "Paradoxically" again, it was precisely when the Soviet government abolished the communes that a solid legal relationship was established for the first time between selsoviets and selenies. Villagers often called plenipotentiary agents of selenies "*starosta*" (the head of a peasant commune in pre-revolutionary Russia). *Skhody* continued to "be alive" (*zhivy*) as fundamental organs of selsoviets even after the Collectivization.

The "*skhod-sel'kii starosta*" system as a basic link between village administrations and the population was officially restored in the course of local reforms after the Presidential

coup in October, 1993. The "*skhod-starosta*" system took the place of selsovets.

Originally, this system was proposed by local Soviet leaders as early as the autumn of 1991.<sup>21</sup> Their proposal was directed against idealistic tendencies of the Law of Local Government of the RSFSR adopted in July, 1991 by the RSFSR Supreme Soviet. This was the first comprehensive law concerning local government in the Russian Republic since 1917. The main concept of this law was the "separation of legislative and executive branches of power" at the local levels, from which even the articles for selsovets were not immune. As the introduction of volost zemstvos in 1917 had confused Russian local government, so did this prescription in 1991, both of which were, according to the legislators' goodwill, designed to introduce a Western-style democracy to Russia. It is necessary to note here that in most "democratic" countries, except for Japan, legislative and administrative powers at the local levels are not separate, with the latter being elected by the former. In the same way, in "democratic" countries there have never been such a strong township self-government as had been imagined by the proponents of volost zemstvos. Fortunately, the confusion caused by the 1991 Law was much less than had occurred in the case of volost zemstvos, since the separation of village executives from selsovets was seldom achieved because of the insufficient rural manpower. Nevertheless, the idealism of the 1991 Law dissatisfied some Soviet leaders who, in their turn, sought their own model in the traditional system which was *de facto* functioning then.

After the October coup in 1993, this idea was plagiarized by the President. One head of a village administration in Staritskii raion in Tverskaia oblast remarked in an interview with this writer that one merit of the "*skhod-starosta*" system is that *starostas*, conscious that they are bosses (*khoziaevd*), not only propose courses of action but also see them through, whereas the previous selsovet deputies generally performed only the former function.<sup>22</sup> "Paradoxically" once again, "the

original Bolshevik conception of a Soviet" revived when the Soviet itself was abolished.

To sum up, regionalization policy at the lower Soviet level from the Revolution of 1917 to the present brought about two changes: (1) it integrated three kinds of territorial units into a single administrative, economic, and social unit — namely the village district based upon the former "selo-derevnias" unit; and (2) it created a system for "pumping out" administrative resources from local enterprises (collective farms and factories). It is necessary to bear in mind that one of the most serious issues the selsovet management faced in the 1920s was how to pump out administrative resources from land communes. To this end, the Collectivization provided a solid foundation.

These achievements, however, were Pyrrhic in nature. Khrushchev's amalgamation of villages delivered the final blow to derevnias and made the hegemony of selos over derevnias Gulliver-like. In most village districts in contemporary Russia, nearly all persons capable of working live in the core settlements (selos), whereas only pensioners live in derevnias.

#### (4) Raions: volosts or uezds?

Raions were, formally, declared to be the successors of volosts. As already mentioned, however, volosts on the eve of their abolition were not the size of pre-revolutionary volosts, but much larger (See Table 8).

	ratio of the number of raions to former uezds	ratio of the number of the former volosts to raions
European Russia*	3.7	5.8
Ukraine**	4.1	4.5
Byelorussia	2.9	6.2
Moldavia	5.0	5.3

\* Excluding the former Orenburgskaia and Astrakhanskaia guberniias.

\*\* Excluding Western Ukraine.

While referring to Tables 1 - 6, let us proceed to compare the correlations between the numbers of present raions, pre-revolutionary uyezds, and volosts in the European Soviet Republics.

Here we can discern the same trend as is found in the correlations between selsoviets and communes. In the Republics with low population densities (Russia and Byelorussia), the consolidation of volosts (and early raions) into larger raions was more drastic than in other Republics. Generally speaking, however, the current raions are larger than pre-revolutionary volosts but smaller than uyezds. They seem to most resemble the former uchastoks.

In fact, based on evidence for the Ural regions, where territorial reforms were carried out as early as 1923, J.P. LeDonne observed that the formation of raions was designed to "make the borders of the lower school, agronomic, financial, and other uchastoks coincide with those of the raion in order to avoid recreating the 'capricious intermingling of departmental jurisdictions and local institutions' which characterized the pre-revolutionary volost."<sup>23</sup> Y. Taniuchi quoted A. Rykov's speech at the 12th Congress of the CPSU (1923), which demanded the enlargement of volosts in order to make volost boundaries coincide with those of various uchastoks such as agronomic, veterinary, land-settlement, forestry, judicial, and others.<sup>24</sup>

It seems strange that, despite these remarks, neither LeDonne nor Taniuchi trace the origin of raions to pre-revolutionary uchastoks. Perhaps it is not they but specialists in late Imperial Russia who are to blame, since latter have not supplied available materials on pre-revolutionary uchastoks.

Due to the insufficiency of intellectual manpower in rural Russia, the volost could function only as a unit of peasant estate self-government, but not as a base for modernization. The latter role was played by uchastoks, which acted as links between uyezds and volosts. Roughly speaking, there were four kinds of uchastoks in late Imperial Russia. Among them, the uchastoks of land captains (*zemskie nachal'niki*) is most well-

known. With regard to zemstvos, there were medical, veterinary, and agronomic uchastoks. In 1913, there were 2,866 medical uchastoks,<sup>25</sup> and 1,005 uchastok agronomists worked in 34 "old zemstvo" guberniias,<sup>26</sup> while there were 360 uezds in the same territory.

The introduction of volost zemstvos by the Provisional Government did not improve administrative efficiency but only caused financial crises and geographic diffusion of intellectual manpower. Confronting this situation, during the final stage of the "bourgeois democracy" (up to March 1918) and in White-held territories during the Civil War, zemstvo activists tried to consolidate volost zemstvos to form larger ones. If peasants in a volost were "completely illiterate," it was inevitable to amalgamate it with a neighboring volost to obtain candidates for volost zemstvo councillors.<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, there were certain centrifugal forces which resulted in the partition of volost zemstvos. One of these was land distribution. If peasants after the Emancipation did not wish to merge into a land commune with poorer neighbors, "revolutionary" communes enriched by confiscating landowners' land similarly did not wish to share it with neighboring communes, and tried to form independent volosts.<sup>28</sup> Another centrifugal force was caused by ethnic factors. One example may be cited in Samarskaia guberniia: in September 1918, ethnic German "colonists" wanted to separate from the Bashkir volost, the cultural level of which was considered to be lower than that of the Germans.<sup>29</sup>

The increase in the numbers of volosts and selsovet (former peasant communes) between 1917 and 1922 suggests that Bolsheviks relied upon these centrifugal forces in order to win the Civil War. Therefore, it was natural that in 1922, they (as victors and rulers) resumed the zemstvo activists' work for the consolidation of volosts, a process which ended in the substitution of raions for volosts.

Bolsheviks were seemingly more conscious of the vital importance of raion organs than zemstvo liberals were of uchastoks, although the latter also did not demean the

importance of uchastoks. Raions (uchastoks) were the scattered footholds of "progress" in the hostile surrounding world. One of the main motives behind the abolition of okrugs in 1930 was redeployment of okrug cadres by the raion party and Soviet organs in order to reinforce the latter.<sup>30</sup>

If raions (uchastoks) could be distinguished from volosts by their relative abundance of available manpower, then the difference between raions (uchastoks) and uezds was that the former were purely executive organs of higher tiers of government, irrespective of the existence of representative organs at the raion level. As zemstvo uchastok workers served as functionaries of uezd zemstvos, so raion Soviet (party) leaders were, in fact, only functionaries of oblast Soviet (party) organs, while the latter enjoyed a certain *de facto* independence from Moscow.

However, over the past twenty years, the characteristics of raion Soviets changed significantly, due to an increase in the number of qualified leaders. Until the 1960s, it was possible that a chairman of a collective farm who had graduated from a Higher Party School by "home education (*zaochnoe*)" won rapid promotion up to the position of first secretary of a raion committee of the CPSU, for instance, within three years.<sup>31</sup> It was the professionalization of party and Soviet duties during the Brezhnev era that made such ridiculous things impossible.

Improvement in the quality of raion leadership made the relationship between oblast and raion Soviets similar to that between guberniia and uezd zemstvos: oblast Soviets (party committees) worked out strategic objectives, and raion Soviets (party committees) gave them shape and put them into effect. The raion became an independent unit of policy-making and, consequently, of self-government. As the Soviet regime abandoned policies which had provoked the hostility of the population and as raion organs overcame the chronic insufficiency in intellectual manpower, raions were steadily *uezdized*. Ironically, it was then that the Presidential coup abolished the raion representative organs. This was the first

time that Russian "uezds" lost their organs of representation since the time of Alexander II.

#### IV. Conclusion

Since Russian historical geography is in an underdeveloped state, we must, if quoting again Bater and French, try to "illuminate certain directions in which one can advance... like street lamps spaced out along roads."<sup>32</sup>

As for the question of regionalization, the conclusion reached in this chapter is quite simple. Three pre-revolutionary territorial categories of peasant life were consolidated into the present village district. Raions succeeded uchastoks, but steadily became "uezdized."

Methodologically, what "directions" can this chapter "illuminate"? Generally speaking, it is impossible to share mentalities, emotions, and ways of thinking with historical figures if we do not feel their sense of space. Moreover, this chapter has tried to prove that spatial sensitivity prevents historians from a dogmatic conceptualization of phenomena and precludes the mechanical transplantation of European concepts such as "parliamentary democracy," the "sovereign state," and "Weberian bureaucracy" to Russia. Spatial sensitivity provides criteria for ascertaining what was feasible in the past. In brief, a sense of "space" is one of the bases for historical realism.

#### Notes

1 J.H. Bater and R.A. French (eds.), *Studies in Russian Historical Geography*, 2 vols. (London, 1983), p. 2.

2 J.P. LeDonne, "The Geopolitical Context of Russian Foreign Policy: 1700-1917," *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, tomus XII (1994), pp. 1-23.

3 J.P. LeDonne, "From Guberniia to Oblast: Soviet Territorial-Administrative Reform 1917-1923," Ph. D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1962, p. 112.

4 The population density of France was 71.8 person/km<sup>2</sup> according to the 1896 Census (*Entsiklopedicheskii slovar', Brokgauz i Efron*, vol.

XXXVI<sup>A</sup>, 1902, pp. 550-551). The figure for Russia was 6.0 according to the 1897 Census (*Ibid.*, vol. XXVII<sup>A</sup>, 1899, p. 115).

5 See this author's "Teisei Rosia no Chiho Seido 1889-1917 [Local Government in Late Imperial Russia: 1889-1917]," *Suravu kenkyu (Slavic Studies)*, No. 40 (1993), pp. 167-183; Idem, "Zemusutovo no Saigo: Rosia niokeru Shiminteki Minshushugi no Kanousei [The End of Zemstvos: A Possibility of Burgerlich Democracy in Russia]," *Surabu no sekai [The Slavic World]* series, vol. 3 (1995); Idem, "Konets zemstva," *Istoriia zemstva i perspektivy razvitiia mestnogo samoupravleniia v Rossii* (forthcoming).

6 Y. Taniuchi, *Sutarin Seiji Taisei no Seiritsu [The Formation of the Stalinist Political Regime]*, vol. 2 (Tokyo, 1972), pp. 489-502.

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 494-502.

8 The scaling down of selsoviets and raions territories in the mid-1930s was one component of "Spring of the Soviets" at that time. See: K. Uchida, "Sutarin Seiji Taiseika no Nousei niokeru Touch Taisei no Saihen: 1931-34 [The Reorganization of Rural Government under the Stalinist Political Regime: 1931-34]," *Suravu kenkyu*, No. 29 (1982), pp. 115-116 (for its English summary, see, pp. 117-121).

9 *Sovetskaia istoricheskaia entsiklopediia*, vol. 5 (1964), pp. 738-739.

10 J.P. LeDonne traced the origin of the concept of "economic affinity" to several things in pre-revolutionary Russia: a project for economic regionalization prepared by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry; the activities of regional unions of zemstvos; and, the establishment of the Standing Commission for the Study of the Natural Productive Forces of Russia (*Kommissiia po izucheniiu estestvennykh proizvoditel'nykh sil Rossii*) created in the Academy of Sciences in May, 1915 in order to mobilize Russian industry for war management (LeDonne, "From gubernia...", pp. 31-42, 52 and 66-68). Since not only this Academy Commission but also various regional unions of zemstvos emerged during World War I, it must be noted that the concept of "economic affinity" was brought to the forefront not only by Russia's industrial development but also by the necessities for the total-war management. In other words, attempts at economic regionalization in Russia were, from the very beginning, connected with the idea of public control of the national economy.

11 With regard to discussion about regionalization in the 1920s, both Y. Taniuchi and J.P. LeDonne focused on the confrontation between the Administrative Commission organized under the leadership of the Commissariat of Internal Affairs and the Goerlo-Gosplan block. Taniuchi explained this as an expression of the agrarian-industrial conflict (*Sobieto Seijishi: Kenryoku to Noumin [A Soviet Political History: Power and Peasants]*, (Tokyo, 1962), pp. 189-195 and 212-214). LeDonne explains it as a conflict dating back to pre-revolutionary Russia. In his opinion, pre-revolutionary attempts at

territorial reform tried to satisfy two requirements: the adaptation of territorial units to economic affinity, and the improvement of administrative effectiveness in local government. The former demanded, as a rule, enlargement of territorial units, whereas the latter could be achieved "by granting smaller territories the authority of larger ones" ("From Guberniia...", p. 127), namely by downscaling the territories. Therefore, the replacement of volosts by raions had dual significance — the introduction of larger volosts for the first purpose; and for the second, introduction of smaller uyezds. Similarly, okrugs were enlarged uyezds for the first purpose, but for the second, reduced guberniias.

12 Taniuchi, *Sutarin...*, vol. 4 (1986), pp. 752-770.

13 Hiroshi Okuda provides an excellent description of "selo-derevniias" units in his book *Soveto Keizai Seisakushi [A History of Soviet Economic Policy]* (Tokyo, 1979), pp. 1-6. Let us glance at one example of Voronezhskaia guberniia presented by Okuda. There were 136 "commercial-bazaar selos" in the guberniia. The radius of their economic influence (*tiagotenie*) was roughly 10 to 13 km. However, on the average, satellite derevniias were located within 5 km from the selos. Since Voronezhskaia guberniia did not experience a drastic territorial change during the Soviet era, we can make a long-term comparison.

Pre-Revolutionary Voronezhskaia guberniia (65,900 sq. km)

Selenies	...	2,358
Peasant communes	...	2,099
Volosts	...	232 (Average radius 9.5km)
"Commercial-bazaar selos" ...	...	136 (Average radius 10-13km)
Zemstvo agronomic districts (uchastoks)	...	58
Uezds	...	12

Voronezhskaia oblast in 1993 (52,400 sq. km)

Selsovets	...	490
Raions	...	32

Apparently, the "commercial-bazaar selo" is narrower concept than the usual "selo." As a result, the evidence used by Okuda indicates that "commercial-bazaar selos" were more sparsely distributed than volost centers. Except for this, the example of Voronezhskaia guberniia does not contradict the statistics analyzed below.

The specified number of agronomic uchastoks applies for 1916 (Departament zemledeliia, *Mestnyi agronomicheskii personal, sostoiavshii na pravitel'stvennoi i obshchestvennoi sluzhbe, 1 ianvaria 1916*, Petrograd, 1917, pp. 48-59). The number of agronomic

uehastoks in a uезд reflected the level of the uезд zemstvo's agricultural policy. For example, in Voronezhskii uезд (where the uезд zemstvo was very active in agricultural assistance) each uchastok agronomist was responsible for only 1-3 volosts. On the other hand, in Biriuchenskii and Pavlovskii uezds, agronomic uehastoks consisted of 6-7 volosts.

14 A. Chaianov, *Metody izlozheniiapredmetov* (Moscow, 1916), p. 4.

15 In this paper, only official records for selenies could be used. If we survey rural churches, schools, bazaars, and taverns, we would be able to present a much more vivid picture of the relationship between selos, derevnias, and those categories falling between the two (polselos, etc.).

16 Among the eight zones indicated, we can elucidate four basic categories. Zone A with very low population densities can be termed "northern peripheral type"; here, as a rule, a large peasant commune consisted of numerous small selenies. Zone D with low or medium population densities can be termed "northern peasant type"; here, a medium-sized commune consisted of many small selenies. Zone F with medium or high population densities can be termed "southern peasant type"; here, a large commune consisted almost entirely of a large selenie (or the size of the latter might even exceed the former). Zone H with low population densities can be termed "southern peripheral type"; here, a large commune consisted of several large selenies.

Zone B, where the relationship between communes and selenies continues to be the same as in Zone A, can be regarded as intermediate between A and D. Zone E falls between D and F not only spatially but also typologically. In the same way, Zone G lies between F and H.

Thus, only the C group cannot be categorized.

17 Taniuchi, *Sutarin...*, vol. 2, p. 500.

18 Sometimes the tsarist government was forced to intrude into the purely geographical demarcation. For example, the Provisional Statute of Food Administration in 1901 afforded the opportunity to divide volosts into food precincts. This was designed to bring public food management closer to the people, mobilize rural intelligentsia (irrespective of the estate to which they belonged), and release volost officials from this tiresome duty. However, according to a survey made by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1904, the local authorities' responses to this Statute were not positive. Volosts were divided into food precincts in some uezds in Bessarabskaia, Vilenskaia, Voronezhskaia, Viatskaia, Kovenskaia, Mogilevskaia, Nizhegorodskaia, Olonetskaia, Orenburgskaia, Orlovskaaia, Permskaia, Samarskaia, Saratovskaia, and Tambovskaia guberniias. However, in most cases, smaller precincts emerged only

temporarily due to the famine of 1901-02 (RGIA, f. 1291, op. 130-1902 g., d. 106-a, б and в).

19 E.H. Carr, *Socialism in One Country 1924-1926*, vol. 2 (London, 1959), p. 356.

20 Taniuchi, *Sutarin...*, vol. 2, pp. 500-501.

21 N. Smirnova, "Sokhraniatsia li sel'sovety?" *Tverskie vedomosti* (October 18 1991), p. 2.

22 Interview with A.V. Baranov, the Head of the village administration of the "Stantsiia Staritsa" district (Staritskii raion, Tverskaia oblast), April 15, 1994.

23 LeDonne, "From Guberniia...", p. 140.

24 Taniuchi, *Sobieto...*, p. 195.

25 *Izvestiia Moskovskoi gubernskoi zemskoi upravly*, 1914, No. 1, p. 4.

26 *Mestnyi agronomicheskii personal...1 ianvaria 1913* (St.

Petersburg, 1913). The total number was calculated by this author.

27 For example, see: Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Tambovskoi oblasti, f. 24, op. 1, d. 698, 11.14-15.

28 For example, see: Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Samarskoi oblasti, f. 5, op. 11, d. 226, 1.10.

29 *Ibid.*, 1.15.

30 Taniuchi, *Sutarin...*, vol. 4 (Tokyo, 1986), pp. 754-757.

31 Personal list (*lichnoe delo*) included in f. 147 of *Tsentral'naya dokumentatsiia noveishei istorii Tverskoi oblasti* (the former Party archive of Tverskaia oblast). This "personal lists" have neither been classified nor numbered, since it is part of a huge complex of archival materials transferred to the Party archive after the Tver oblast committee of the CPSU was liquidated.

32 Bate and French, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 483.