Perspectives

The "Barnaul School" of Central Asian Studies: A Brief Review of Scientific Research in Barnaul concerning Central Asian Politics and International Relations

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Barnaul is the metropolis of Russian Altay. It was founded as a settlement in 1730 and with the passage of time became one of the main administrative and industrial centers of Asiatic Russia with a population of about 700,000 and many universities. From the very beginning, the city developed multinationally with local indigenous Turkic groups. It became a primarily Slavic city during the Stalin period, as a result of the population transfer policies of the time, but since the Virgin Lands campaign of the 1950s, and especially in the 1990s, in-migration from across the former USSR and from overseas has again made it much more multinational. Its ethnic situation has been basically quiet and without conflict.

The study of interregional interactions in the Great Altay [*Bol'shoi Altai*] and adjacent territories, both in its concrete specificity and in the formation of conceptual frameworks, including their historical connections, builds upon longstanding traditions of scholarly research in Asian Russia in general, and is, in Barnaul, contextualized by the interdisciplinary field of inquiry in particular, which is here called "research on Central Asia." Although it is difficult to periodize precisely the development of those scholarly traditions, a necessary reference point is the 1860s, the decade when Vasilii (Wilhelm) Radlov, future member of the Academy of Sciences and future director of the Asian Museum in St. Petersburg, began his professional and scientific career in the field of Turcology and related subjects. It was nowhere else but Barnaul, where this young German scholar of the humanities spent the first twelve years of his life in Russia. It is unfortunate that neither Radlov's research nor that of other enthusiasts, be they serious scholars or amateurs, found anyone to continue them towards the end of the nineteenth century, or even during the entire first half of the twentieth. The only exception to this would be the great ethnographer Leonid Petrovich Potapov, author of numerous works written during the Second World War on the history and ethnography of the peoples of southern Siberia, and of Altaics in the first place.

In the 1960s Alexei Pavlovich Umanskii developed scholarly research on problems of international relations in Central/Inner Asia. He concentrated on state formations in southern Siberia and adjacent regions, and further undertook fundamental analysis of these states' interrelations (and the state of the Teleuts especially) with their Turcophone neighbors (West Siberian Tatars, Oyrots and others), and also Mongols from the seventeenth century through the first quarter of the eighteenth (see, e.g., Umanskii 1995).[1] Lacking an adequate academic environment, Umanskii nevertheless became a high-caliber researcher in Barnaul due to his personal qualities and collection of numerous archival sources on subjects he investigated. Characteristically, he did not found his own scholarly school having graduate students, group projects, and so forth. For this, he was reproached by certain colleagues who were unaware of the specific scientific situation in Barnaul (personnel, source material, etc.) and whose method of work required proper concentration on, for example, the development of special skills (such as the decipherment of handwritten archival documents) as well as deep historico-ethnological knowledge. Nevertheless, Umanskii was the first humanities

[1] In 1983 Umanskii published another leading work of research on the Teleuts and Russians. His work serves as the basis for a scholarly portrait of mutual relations among the small native peoples of Inner Asia with Russia and also Jungaria.

specialist in Barnaul who made the transition to science, broadly construed, and he became an enthusiastic example for subsequent generations of archaeologists, foreign affairs specialists and others. One of Umanskii's first followers was Aleksei Dmitr'evich Sergeev, who became a specialist on the Barnaul region, easily and frequently transcending disciplinary frameworks in his studies of local history, and who made essential contributions to research having broad implications for how questions should be framed in Central Asian studies.

The field of "Asian Russia and the Asian Near Abroad" considerably developed and expanded thanks to studies by Vladimir Anisimovich Moiseev (a native of the Altay Territory) concerning the policies of the Qing Empire towards the Saiano-Altaic peoples. Moiseev's professional training synthesizes the traditions of several schools of Oriental studies and international relations, including the Moscow and Almatï schools in the first instance.[2] Moiseev carried out intensive research in institutes in Almatï, Kazakhstan prior to 1991. However, he returned home due to political and scholarly disagreements with certain colleagues, and thanks to his efforts the Altay State University founded its Faculty of Oriental Studies in 2000. Its basic orientation is towards Central Asian studies, in particular the mutual relations between Russia and the countries bordering it to the east (China, Kazakhstan, Mongolia). Moiseev's work is distinguished by deep knowledge of historical sources and a polemic approach. Moving to Barnaul seems to have been fruitful for Moiseev. Since his arrival, he has published two single-authored monographs in addition to collections of articles.[3] His work has recently taken a new turn with the sponsorship by the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation (Taiwan) of a large-scale project on the history of Russian-Chinese relations in Xinjiang from the beginning of the nineteenth through the first third of the twentieth centuries.

Moiseev's students (Oleg Valer'evich Boronin, Andrei Iur'evich Bykov, Konstantin Viktorovich Khakhalin, Oksana Anatol'evna Omel'chenko and others) work successfully in the field, and the majority of them have already defended dissertations. Thus Boronin has considered in detail the important question of dual tributary obligations [*dvoedannichestvo*] and dual subject relations [*dvoepoddanstvo*] of the Turkic peoples of south and southwest Siberia from the seventeenth century through the 1860s. Boronin believes this phenomenon of geopolitical history originated in the utter defeat of Jungaria by Qing China in the 1850s, the relative balance between Russia and China in Central Asia, and the Russian government's unwillingness to damage favorable trade with China. However, by the 1860s, the change in the balance of forces in Southern Siberia and Central Asia put an end to dual subject relations in Altay, and the demarcation of the frontier between these two great empires began (Boronin 2002). Khakhalin, probably the best Barnaul expert on the Chinese language, has investigated the differentiation of the Russian and Chinese spheres in Central Asia (1864 Chuguchak Protocol and other source documents).

In the early 1980s, work by Vladimir Nikolaevich Vladimirov (see, 1984a, 1984b, et al.)[4] concentrated on foreign factors in the social and economic development of the Southern Altay in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including the modern and historical demography of Russian Siberia and its transborder regions. Bykov's potential as an expert steadily increases thanks to his success in grant-seeking and contacts with Moscow academic circles. His sphere of interests includes characteristics of the foreign policy of Siberian authorities in the mid-nineteenth century and their autonomy in decision-making on international problems. With Moiseev's help, Bykov has moved from Kazakhstan and is, accordingly, an expert on the realities of the place. He is developing a special course for the university on the Commonwealth of Independent States. Omel'chenko's life has taken a similar course: she has a unique background, thanks to scholarly-vocational training in the St. Petersburg School of Sinology. Her interests concentrate on

[2]His teacher was the well-known researcher on Central Asia Boris Pavlovich Gur'evich, a significant part of whose scholarly archive (copies of documents and books) he managed to transfer to Barnaul.

[3]One of these publications (Moiseev 2001) is a selection of his publicistic work, essays and scientific articles published in various editions over the last ten years. It is very polemical and has leading figures of the Kazakh academic community as its opponents.

[4] Boronin (2002, p. 8) characteristically sees contributions by Vladimirov and some other authors to the study of approaches to examining interregional interactions in Central Asia, as falling within the limits of Siberian studies.

modern Xinjiang, and she has a good knowledge of both Chinese and Japanese (see Omel'chenko 2002).

The professional fate of Valerii Anatol'evich Barmin has likewise subjected him to remarkable peregrinations. Beginning with a critique of the bourgeois historiography of US policy in China during the interwar period (a traditional theme of the Americanologists at Tomsk University, where Barmin did graduate work in the early 1980s), he switched to the study of US policy in the Philippines from 1898 to 1946. This road, however, led to an impasse because of the inaccessibility of sources and literature and the absence of a conducive environment, among other reasons. Moiseev's move to Barnaul solved his problem. Moiseev, sensitive to the choice of themes in relation to the present-day situation, has suggested the theme of Soviet policy in Xinjiang from 1918 to 1949, which even solid scholars and entire institutes in Moscow long ignored for political reasons.

New opportunities to use archival documents have crowned this bet with success: with Moiseev's full support, Barmin prepared two monographs within several years, and has defended a thesis for the *doktor nauk* degree at Tomsk University (Barmin 1998, 1999).[5] The basic value of Barmin's works resides in his use of a significant quantity of documents from the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other departments playing a key role in implementing policy in Xinjiang. The extreme topicality and complexity of these problems attacked by Barmin in this most laudable initiative in fact requires further efforts not just on his part, but on the part of whole teams of qualified Sinologists, ethnologists, and others, both in the region itself and in Moscow. Barmin's work confirms that modern Xinjiang can no longer remain a blind spot, hidden in Russian scholarly research between Sinology on the one hand, and the complex of disciplines that constitute Central Asian research, on the other.

The theme of Russian-Chinese relations in Xinjiang will probably remain popular in Barnaul in the foreseeable future, given the propinquity of the Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) to the Altay Territory, through the Altay Republic. Access to archival collections remains a precondition of the analysis of such historical subjects. The Barnaul specialists have such an opportunity in principle, but there is not yet any real cooperation between researchers from Altay and the XUAR. Only incidental visits from the Chinese side have occurred, and only discussion of possible joint projects has yet been achieved.[6] So far, only the most popular historical sources have been traced regarding the development of contemporary Xinjiang, including regional interactions between Russia and China.

Research themes are far from exhausted on the historical features of Russian Altay's interregional and frontier relations with transborder areas in Central Asia. Umanskii's analysis of such aspects of Russian-Chinese relations is not the only example. Another is the history of Russian-Mongolian trade and economic relations from the second half of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth. Aleksandr Vladimirovich Startsev, one of the leading experts on the history of Siberia's foreign economic relations with transborder Asia, works on the history of business in Altay (see, e.g., 1999a, 1999b). Startsev is not only a thoroughly knowledgeable expert on the pertinent historical sources, but also a serious analyst. However, he should recognize his membership in the community of researchers on Central Asia in addition to that of the Siberianists; the latter is an old complex of serious local researchers with broad profiles and knowledge of fontology (i.e., the science of evaluating and using primary historical sources).

Another Siberianist who could "objectively" be considered a Central Asian specialist is Tat'iania Kirillovna Shcheglova, who throughout the 1990s has scrupulously researched economic relations between Western Siberia and Northeast Kazakhstan from the second half of the nineteenth century through the beginning of the twentieth. She has particularly examined economic data concerning the basic forms taken by fairs and their historical role as a mechanism of exchange between the adjacent regions (2000, 2001). The serious interest evoked by Shcheglova's work among business circles is indicative of her great expertise and insight. The basic aspect of Shcheglova's scholarly originality lies in her treatment of historical-economic

[5] The current relevance of these themes and richness of the historical sources consulted have allowed Barmin to receive support from the Chiang Ching-kuo Fund (Taiwan), thanks to which his 1999 monograph was published.

[6] The last such visit of scientists from the XUAR was held in autumn 1999, when they participated in a conference devoted to the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. See Guan' Shousin' 1999, pp. 62-64.

connections, problematizing them through interdisciplinary focus in a way that connects them with studies of Central Asia. Her way of framing the questions to be investigated and her use of primary historical sources especially contribute to that problematization. But even this does not encompass all of Shcheglova's activity. There is also an organizational-managerial component to her work relating to the ethnology of Altay and adjacent territories. This is expressed institutionally by and given shape within the Oral History Section of the Barnaul Pedagogical University's Laboratory of Historical Regional Studies, regular ethnographic field trips and an overflowing archive of written, audio and video materials.[7] Shcheglova coordinates all of this work, based on the activities of students who are performing both educational and scholarly tasks. One such former student, Konstantin Vadimovich Grigorichev, in fact is the initiator, within the Barnaul research community, of the study of modern social-demographic processes in Altay. His interests, as they have developed under the influence of the great Kazakhstani demographer Aleksandr Nikolaevich Alekseenko, have focused more and more on transborder migrations in Central Asia itself.

Mikhail Aleksandrovich Demin is Director of the Laboratory of Historical Regional Studies and Dean of the Historical Faculty in the Barnaul State Pedagogical University. The disciplines he practices have led him to gravitate towards Central Asian studies in recent years as well. The strongest feature of his individual scholarship is his historiographic approach. Indeed, his research is devoted to the historiography of the native peoples of Siberia, and it discusses many problems of a cultural-civilizational nature regarding Russian immigrants to the region, interregional interactions, and so forth (1995). Demin also gives much attention to training scholars, on both the doctoral [*doktor nauk*] and candidate [*kandidat*] levels, as well as to the conducting of archaeological expeditions. He is himself a student of the great Siberian archaeologist Alexei Pavlovich Okladnikov.

One of Demin's most capable students, Arkadii Vasil'evich Kontev, has carried out research on many problems in the recent history of Barnaul. He heads the Altay Regional Studies Association. In recent years Kontev participated in scholarly undertakings on Central Asian themes in tandem with V. B. Borodaev (1999, 2000). These materials are distinguished by their professional maturity and originality, modern research techniques, and a special taste for the historical document. Borodaev, for his part, displays rare erudition concerning the broadest range of problems in the history, archaeology and ethnology of Central and Inner Asia. However, he has more difficulty making this knowledge available, for in terms of his formal career, he is a skilled editor, publisher and movie-director, as well as an organizer of activities for children and young people.

The Barnaul intellectual community owes a great deal to the remarkable career of Solomon Grigor'evich Livshits (1922-1994), the first scholar in Altay with advanced training ever to teach the history and international relations of the Orient; he inaugurated courses on these subjects in the early 1960s. With a solid university education from Moscow, Livshits found himself compelled by his move to Barnaul to modify the sphere of his earlier research interests (British policy in China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), and turned, for example in the 1970s and 1980s, to original research on the Siberian factor in Japanese policy during the years following the First World War (1991). Being the recognized authority in both teaching and research activities, Livshits neither sought nor used the sort of special protection that ministerial officials could grant, and he never obtained professorial rank. Nevertheless, his talent as a lecturer and teacher created great interest in Barnaul about the Orient (and even created illusions about the ease of studying it). As the only, indeed unique, Barnaul authority, and under conditions of almost complete isolation from the academic community even of Soviet Orientalists, his work was distinguished by subjectivity, weaknesses in methodology, and narrowness of subjects. Still, it was due to Livshits that the idea of the opportunity and desirability of deep study of the modern East took root in Barnaul and Altay. Following his death, a small group of former students (Tamara Alekseevna Shemetova, the aforementioned Barmin and Boyko) together with Moiseev, who had arrived from Kazakhstan, founded the Barnaul Pedagogical University Laboratory "Russia and the East," also known as the Center for Regional Studies. On the

[7] Research results from Barnaul ethnologists are discussed at increasingly regular scientific-practical conferences that are more and more becoming international forums, and are being circulated in serious ethnological publications. See, e.g., *Etnografiia Altaia*, 1998 & 2001.

initiative of this Center the conference series "Russia, Siberia and Central Asia" has been held since 1996, as well as a lecture series in Oriental studies dedicated to Livshits' memory and a series of interdepartmental seminars entitled, "Russia's Asian Frontier."

The author of the present article is also to be counted among Livshits' students. The particular features of my scholarly training and subsequent career led to an essentially marginal situation in the Barnaul university environment (with costs exceeding those even of Livshits himself). During the Soviet period, the best road to a scholarly career was a certain social background combined with political activism, personal connections and special arrangements with local officials. I succeeded in overcoming numerous formal obstacles, including a position as teacher in a workers' youth school (which had a branch for the local prison), to do graduate work at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in Moscow, perhaps one of the few establishments that still in those years retained the democratic and meritocratic spirit that permitted competition for scholarly degrees without recommendations from officials. The events and atmosphere of the mid-1980s together with the ambitiousness of my chosen research topic (Afghanistan) has accustomed me, from my first publications, to work with original sources and serious scholarly literature, including that in foreign languages. My principal teachers were two outstanding Russian Orientalists, the political scientist and historian Vladimir Fedorovich Li and the late Iurii Vladimirovich Gankovskii (who was the simultaneous center of several schools, such as those composed of Afghanists on the one hand, and specialists on Pakistan on the other hand).

However, even a degree in Oriental studies from the largest Moscow research center did not guarantee employment, so after returning to Barnaul I continued as a teacher in a workers' youth school (the students were drivers, weavers, even prisoners), and then later I replaced a teacher in one of the Siberian pedagogical institutes. Only by the late 1990s did postdoctoral studies at the same Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow, along with active scholarship and international contacts, permit me to teach the modern and contemporary history of the East. My research and activities now involve the current history and historiography of Afghanistan and the Afghan diasporas, a history of Chinese and Korean immigration to Western Siberia, the Xinjiang factor in regional politics, the security problems of Asian Russia, directorship of the laboratory "Russia and the East" (Center for Regional Studies), the establishment and maintenance of international contacts and communications of Barnaul Orientalists and specialists in the humanities in general (Siberianists, etc.), the organization of regional and international conferences, provision of expert services, and editing of scholarship on Central Asia published by the Center for Regional Studies (1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2001a, 2001b).[8]

The basic achievements of the Barnaul community of researchers on Central Asia and adjacent regions in the sphere of archaeology are connected with the names of Iurii Fedorovich Kiriushin (rector of Altay State University, who has motivated many scholarly initiatives, including those focused on Asia), Aleksandr Borisovich Shamshin and others. They and their colleagues analyze key problems of the history of Turks and their neighbors in the ancient period.

The scope and depth of scholarly expertise is a distinguishing feature of research of Barnaul geographers, ecologists and experts of ancillary disciplines, such as Gennadii Iakovlevich Baryshnikov, Boris Nikolaevich Luzgin, Viktor Semenovich Reviakin, Viktor Valentinovich Rudskii, Mikhail Iur'evich Shishin, Iurii Ivanovich Vinokurov, Irina Nikolaevna Rotanova, and others (*Geomorfologiia Tsentral'noi Azii* 2001). These experts have researched problems of extreme urgency, with an emphasis on practical issues and the special responsibility that experts have in this regard, often giving rise to sharp debates not only in the research community but also within the Altay public. One such example arises in connection with the discussion of a civil engineering design of a transport highway connecting Barnaul and Urumchi: Barnaul and general Altay archaeologists, ecologists and philosophers have acted as strong opponents of this project under consideration. Their arguments address how the prospective roadway may infringe upon the cultural-ecological equilibrium in the region, particularly on the Ukok Plateau, which UNESCO has listed as a protected natural site.

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[8] International support received by Boyko includes grants from the British Academy, CIAC AAS, Fulbright Program, OIS, IATP (Project Harmony), *inter alia* for the creation of the website "Central Asia: View from Siberia," which may be found at: <http://www.bspu.secna.ru/Faculty/History/orient/>.

Another position on the roadway is found in the Altay government, as well as among business and economic representatives, who advocate developing interregional cooperation in light of existing cultural-ecological factors. Sergei Iur'evich Nozhkin, advisor to the governor of the Altay Territory for foreign trade activities and international communications, spends much effort to develop arguments to support such a view. He is directly involved in decision-making on these questions and seeks to adapt the scholarly expertise already available in Altay and in Barnaul so as to improve his own expert standing. Nozhkin is one of the few enthusiasts who shapes and helps to determine the analytical aspect of work on Altay's Central Asian "Near Abroad" (Kazakhstan, Xinjiang, China, Mongolia). He is a proponent of the idea of coordinating all organizational (including institutional) resources, and bringing to bear on Central Asian topics all those intellectual forces that are pertinent and professionally capable. Nozhkin has published many articles, participated in many scholarly conferences and seminars on the geopolitics and economic policies of the region, and participated in international negotiations on these matters.

Nozhkin's idea of collaboration among diverse fields is embraced by the small, qualified and ambitious community of those who associate themselves, or would like to do so, with interdisciplinary research on Central Asia. Barnaul has many objective prerequisites (geographic, geopolitical, not to mention scientific) for the creation of an authoritative regional center for research on Central Asia and related fields (Inner, North and Northeast Asia), that in time would be able to match and cooperate with relevant researchers in adjacent regions (Novosibirsk, Tomsk, etc.) as well as those in Moscow, and finally to define and occupy a niche in the national and international academic community, among those whose will choose to make their careers in the field of Central Asian studies, in its broadest connotation. The first and important step was taken in late 2001, when the Altay Center for Oriental Studies — an umbrella non-profit organization for all those interested in Central Asian studies — was established under Moiseev's directorship. There is no doubt that the history, features and forms of modern cultural, economic and other interstate and interregional interactions of the peoples of Russia and adjacent countries will become a key direction of the work of Barnaul orientalists, foreign affairs specialists, ethnologists and representatives of other subdisciplines within the complex of Central Asian research.

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