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LOCAL HISTORY STUDIES AS A FACTOR IN THE FORMATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY: HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS OF POST-SOVIET NARRATIVES

Abstract. In the conditions of growing interest in local history and rethinking the mechanisms of collective memory formation, local history studies acquires a new meaning in both scientific and public spheres. In post-Soviet countries, including Kazakhstan, local history studies becomes an instrument of actualization of historical experience within the framework of memory policy. The article discusses Kazakhstan's key state programs for the preservation and study of cultural heritage, which have contributed to the formation of national identity, the development of historical consciousness, and the strengthening of patriotism through the study and popularization of historical and cultural values. Local history turns out to be a link between academic science, civic initiatives and state memory, reflecting the complex processes of nation-building and identification policy of the country. This article aims to analyze similarities and differences in the historiographical traditions of local history and local history studies in Russia, Poland, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, as well as to determine the relationship with political and cultural contexts. Contemporary research in the field of local history studies goes beyond the descriptive approach and requires thinking through the prism of interdisciplinary theories: cultural memory, microhistory, decolonial approach and spatial analysis.

Keywords: *local history studies, memory policy, nation-building, regional identity, local memory.*

Жаңылсын Қиюбек, Жаслан Нұрбаев
ӨЛКЕТАНУ ҰЛТТЫҚ БІРЕГЕЙЛІКТІ ҚАЛЫПТАСТЫРУ
ФАКТОРЫ РЕТІНДЕ: ПОСТКЕҢЕСТІК БАЯНДАМАЛАРҒА
ТАРИХНАМАЛЫҚ ТАЛДАУ

Аңдатпа. Жергілікті тарихқа деген қызығушылықтың артуы және ұжымдық жадыны қалыптастыру тетіктерін қайта қарау жағдайында өлкетану - ғылыми және қоғамдық салаларда жаңа мәнге ие болады. Посткеңестік елдерде, оның ішінде Қазақстанда өлкетану есте сақтау саясаты шеңберінде тарихи тәжірибені өзектендіру құралына айналууда. Мақалада тарихи-мәдени құндылықтарды зерделеу және дәріптеу арқылы ұлттық бірегейлікті қалыптастыруға, тарихи сананы дамытуға және патриотизмді нығайтуға ықпал еткен мәдени мұраны сақтау және зерттеу аясында Қазақстанның негізгі мемлекеттік бағдарламалары қарастырылады. Өлкетану мемлекеттік құрылыс пен ұлттық бірегейлік саясатының күрделі процестерін ескеретін академиялық ғылым, азаматтық бастамалар мен мемлекеттік жады арасындағы байланыстырушы буын. Бұл мақаланың мақсаты - Ресейдегі, Польшадағы, Өзбекстандағы және Қазақстандағы жергілікті тарих пен өлкетанудың тарихнамалық дәстүрлеріндегі ұқсастықтар мен айырмашылықтарды талдау, сондай-ақ саяси және мәдени контексттермен байланысын анықтау. Өлкетану саласындағы заманауи зерттеулер сипаттамалық тәсілден бастау алып, пәнаралық теорияларды: мәдени жады, микротарих, деколониялық тәсіл және кеңістіктік талдауды түсінуді қажет етеді.

Түйін сөздер: тарихи өлкетану, жады саясаты, ұлттық бірегейлік, аймақтық бірегейлік, жергілікті жады.

Жаңылсын Қиюбек, Жаслан Нұрбаев
ИСТОРИЧЕСКОЕ КРАЕВЕДЕНИЕ КАК ФАКТОР
ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ НАЦИОНАЛЬНОЙ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ:
ИСТОРИОГРАФИЧЕСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ ПОСТСОВЕТСКИХ
НАРРАТИВОВ

Аннотация. В условиях растущего интереса к локальной истории и переосмысления механизмов формирования коллективной памяти краеведение приобретает новое значение как в научной, так и в общественной сферах. В постсоветских странах, в том числе в Казахстане, краеведение становится инструментом актуализации исторического опыта в рамках политики памяти. В статье рассматриваются ключевые государственные программы Казахстана по сохранению и исследованию культурного наследия, которые способствовали формированию национальной идентичности, развитию исторического сознания и укреплению патриотизма через изучение и популяризацию историко-культурных ценностей. Краеведение оказывается связующим звеном между академической наукой, гражданскими инициативами и

государственной памятью, отражая сложные процессы государственного строительства и идентификационной политики страны. Цель данной статьи - проанализировать сходства и различия в историографических традициях локальной истории и краеведения в России, Польше, Узбекистане и Казахстане, а также определить взаимосвязь с политическим и культурным контекстами. Современные исследования в области краеведения выходят за рамки описательного подхода и требуют осмысления через призму междисциплинарных теорий: культурной памяти, микроистории, деколониального подхода и пространственного анализа.

Ключевые слова: историческое краеведение, политика памяти, национальное строительство, региональная идентичность, локальная память.

Introduction

Modern local history research is characterized by an approach focused on using the achievements of other disciplines, among which history plays a particularly important role. This leads to an expansion of the aspects of the phenomena under investigation and the integration of different methods of analysis. The growing importance of the global context contributes to the perception of a specific point in the historical process within a particular space. Research based on the study of local history, that is developing towards a holistic description, taking into account cultural factors and the symbolic space. The modern theory of local history studies adheres to the critical and constructivist direction, emphasizing the non-obvious role of regions in social development. From this point of view, the past in regions can be the subject of research as a key cultural resource. The top-down activities of the authorities collide with those of the grassroots, and different ways of understanding regional identity collide with each other. This can be seen as a process of mutual negotiation and reconciliation of institutionalized discursive practices that find expression in the state's local memory policy.

The relevance of studying this issue is determined by the existence of state programs initiated by the first president of the Republic of Kazakhstan, N. Nazarbayev, aimed at preserving and researching the country's cultural heritage. One of the first was the “Madeni mura” (Cultural heritage) program, launched in 2004, aimed at systematizing, preserving, and restoring historical and archaeological monuments, developing national identity, and promoting spiritual wealth. Within its framework, historical and cultural sites were recreated, materials from foreign archives were collected, and fundamental works on history, archaeology, literature, philosophy, and culture were published [1]. This was followed by the program “Khalyk tarikh tolqyninda” (The people in the flow of history), which sought to find new sources for an objective study of history and determine the place of the Kazakh people in world history [2]. A logical development was the program “Rukhani zhangyru” (Spiritual revival) which focused on modernizing public consciousness, studying the history and culture of the Great Steppe, and the “Archive-2025” project. Within its framework, the initiative “Tugan zher” (Native land) took on special significance, focusing on the development of local history

research, the restoration of local monuments, the implementation of environmental and improvement projects, as well as the involvement of entrepreneurs and young people in supporting their small homeland. A separate area of focus was the creation of a cultural and geographical belt of sacred sites in Kazakhstan as a symbol of national identity and a source of spiritual stability [3].

The subject of this study is local history studies as a form of collective memory work and a tool of national and regional identity formation in post-Soviet countries. Observing how approaches to local history as a way of shaping regional and national identity have developed in Kazakhstan, Russia, Uzbekistan and Poland over the last decades, we would like to draw attention to the actualization of local history studies, which goes beyond a descriptive discipline and becomes an important tool of identity construction, regional image formation and cultural policy. The main issue concerns the implementation of political, symbolic and ideological representation of the past in the countries that have undergone the transition from socialism to other forms of state structure. We are interested in the differences and similarities in approaches to local history and local history studies in Kazakhstan, Russia, Uzbekistan and Poland, while identifying the role of historical heritage, institutional reforms and cultural factors, taking into account their political and cultural contexts and the transformation of memory politics. Is it possible to build the commemoration necessary for local communities by equating state history with the history of the family, the city and the region? How does the development of urban space study help to rethink traumatic events in the past? Does the construction of a dialog between state structures and civic initiatives respond to the needs of local communities? What is the role of the local historian in integrating individual memory with collective memory? We will try to answer these questions by applying historiographical analysis aimed at identifying and comparing approaches to the study of local history and local history studies in the scientific literature of post-Soviet and post-socialist countries. The works of historians, culturologists, memory researchers and local historians were analyzed, which made it possible to trace the evolution of views and theoretical foundations. The study is based on a wide range of literature: scientific articles, monographs, local history publications, speeches of researchers, conceptual and program documents related to the politics of memory and regional history. This analysis allows us to place local knowledge in the context of broader political-ideological and methodological changes, showing that local history becomes not only a tool for preserving the past, but also an arena of symbolic struggle for interpreting the present and projecting the future.

In interpreting local memory, myths and images of space in identity formation, a cultural-anthropological approach was used, which allows us to consider the region not just as an administrative-territorial unit, but as a cultural space filled with myths, meanings, symbols and collective memory. In the context of local history studies, it focuses on how different communities: urban, ethnic, regional - construct and transmit images of “their past”, how local myths, images of heroes, memorial sites become part of everyday identity and political mobilization. Through a cultural-anthropological lens, differences in the perception and representation of

the past in different countries are analyzed, including the sacralization of history, the marginalization of uncomfortable periods (e.g., the Soviet era), and the institutionalization of local memory.

The comparative-historical method is used to identify structural and substantive differences and similarities in the development of local history studies, approaches to local history and forms of memory politics in Kazakhstan, Russia, Uzbekistan and Poland. The method allows us to analyze how different political regimes, cultural contexts and institutional conditions have influenced the interpretation of the past and the inclusion or exclusion of certain events and figures from local histories. Comparative analysis is based on an understanding of both typological parallels (e.g., post-Soviet decommunization in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, decentralization in Poland, civic initiatives in Russia) and differences in historical policy strategies. It reveals unique national characteristics, such as the sacralization of Temurid history in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan's soft integrative model, institutional rethinking of identity in Poland, and postmodern reflection in Russian local history.

This study is based on an interdisciplinary approach and combines qualitative methods of analysis. The main material is academic publications, monographs, articles and conceptual works on national identity and local history studies. The historiographical method, method of comparative analysis and data synthesis are used, which allow us to identify the key factors in the formation of national identity through the prism of local history studies.

Discussion

Local history studies is not only a scientific and educational work devoted to the study of the past and present of a particular region, but also acts as a way of learning from the private to the general, identifying the unique and common features of a particular area, relying on an interdisciplinary approach. In modern historical science, to which researchers attribute the adjective “new”, emphasizing the emergence of ‘new’ methodological approaches, we can ascertain an increase in the interest of scientists in the phenomenon of “local history” and the personality of the “local historian” as representatives of civil society, actively promoting local history by organizing excursions to “forgotten” places of memory. The peculiarity of local history studies is that it combines history, geography and economics, which separately cannot provide answers to modern challenges. Moreover, local history studies meets the needs of tourism, which is actively developing nowadays, contributes to the creation of unique tourist routes to “places of memory”, forms the brand of the region, noting its uniqueness.

In their works, Russian researchers S. Malovychko and M. Rumyantseva mentioned the practice of studying the history of a particular place, which appeared in European historiography in the 18th century. The appeal to local history was largely initiated by the processes of building individual and collective identities. At that time, historiography depended not so much on the professional (historical) training of a particular history writer, but more on his or her position in society at the local or national level. Such history writers were often called amateurs, and the practice of local historiography itself was called amateur. But if the notion of

amateur history for the historiographical space of the 18th century was loaded with positive connotations, because national histories were still written by “amateurs”, then from the second quarter of the 19th century, since the emergence of the notion of scientific history, amateur historiography began to be perceived as an unskilled occupation of history writing, and the notion itself lost its former positive connotations. The transformation of historical knowledge in the twentieth century from linear, mainly represented by state history, to fundamentally nonlinear subject fields makes it necessary to speak not about the hierarchical importance, but about the row-like nature of such subject fields as family history, urban history, regional history, etc. Local history studies belongs to the socially oriented type of historical knowledge and today helps to carry out artificial commemoration necessary for local communities [4].

Thus, already in the 20s of the twentieth century, the intersection point between local history and excursion studies became places that reproduce various semantic connotations with the historical, cultural, literary, artistic, geographical, social content of a certain locus. Constant reference to this content leads to the formation of spatial or, to put it differently, local myth. According to D. Zamyatin's definition, a “local myth” is “a specific stable narrative spread over a certain territory, characteristic of the corresponding local and regional communities and reproduced by them quite regularly”. Local myths, being one of the stable types of spatial representations throughout at least all known written histories, undergo such significant systemic and structural changes in the modern era that they turn out to be not only quite traditional mental narratives describing and characterizing certain places and territories, but also fundamentally, vitally, existentially important components of the vision not only of the past and present, but also of the future - the future begins to be “fixed” as it were by the correspondence between the past and the future [5].

Russian culturologist B. Stepanov noted about the movement towards the development of more modern layers associated with industrial cities, the new modern order of life, which was formed in the late 19th - early 20th century, and which is currently developing in large cities. This is what in urban studies is called “reclaiming the right to the city” and is connected with attempts to master urban space, to understand where we live, what we have here that is valuable, to discover some things that have been hidden or not noticed. Local history is often associated with an interest in ancient periods of history, and can be labeled as a space of memory and historical reflection, which allows us to comprehend the past in an alternative way, separate from the one imposed by state policy. It is within the framework of local history that there is often an opportunity to address the difficult past, to talk not only about the history of the state, figures of commanders and rulers, but also about social problems and processes that happened to ordinary people. Moreover, the author described the dialogue between professional historians and amateur local historians from civic communities as an example of the well-known in the West “public history”, through which it is possible to see how society itself realizes its interest in its local past, the history where this interest originates. Even not everything in local history is always

professional, sometimes associated with myths and ideas not fully verified from the historical point of view, but it is people's activity and an important resource for social development [6].

Characterizing the actual cognitive, L. Repina writes that local and regional history “today is considered in two incommensurable cultural contexts with different ideological orientation: on the one hand, as a way to mobilize historical memory, and on the other hand, as an effective tool of historical cognition, in which the theories, methods and concepts of related disciplines are applied”. L. Repina attributed the first practice of historiography to historical and cultural local history, the second to regional and new local history, thus shifting the emphasis from different levels in the hierarchy of historical research practices to “different ideological orientations” in the study of loci and regions [7, 183].

What makes the study of local history relevant is the interaction of a person with information at the individual level. Discussing the subject as an individual, german philosopher H. Rickert argued that the individual constitutes the true subject of historical knowledge [8]. Hence, by analogy, the subject of local history can be the individual in its irreplaceability and indivisibility. People, phenomena, events, ideas can be considered as individual, which to some extent concretizes the subject area of local history [9]. The task of the local historian is to decompose the individual subjected to his explanation into its constituent cultural components, thereby putting it in connection with the more extensive, which, in turn, must be understood from the individual totality of cultural influences surrounding it. Therefore, just as it is wrong to say that history is limited only to the general and ignores the individual, the singular, it is just as wrong to say that local history is limited only to the singular and does not know the general [10].

In the 20s of the last century, local history studies not only established itself as a new direction in science, but also opened up as a source for studying the city through excursions and cultural centers in order to create an image of the city [11]. Already since this time, the objects of local history are places that reproduce different historical-cultural, literary, artistic, geographical contents of a certain place. The reproduction of urban narratives penetrates into the culture, communication, visual environment of the city through the routes of urban excursions. Local spatial narratives are characterized by the ability to construct new meanings and stable images. It is worth emphasizing the works of P. Nora [12], dedicated to places of memory, he described the belonging of people to certain places, and that the memory of places can be transmitted from generation to generation, uniting them. In his writings, places of memory are seen as remnants of the past, the extreme form in which commemorative consciousness exists in a history that ignores it but needs it. They are in fact places in three senses of the word - material, symbolic and functional - but to very different degrees. Even a place that is outwardly completely material, such as an archival repository, is not a place of memory unless the imagination endows it with a symbolic aura. That is, it is not enough to identify places of memory, but it is also necessary to “revitalize” them, giving them significance in the consciousness of the people [13].

Representations of basic events of the past are often the result of imagination,

but they are used with specific identification purposes. Their creators with the help of images give stability to their identity, the feeling of belonging to a certain cultural community. Vivid historical images shared by members of this community, historical events turned into significant for its representatives “places of memory”, become the basis for its consolidation [14].

The new local history differs from the traditional local history approach by emphasizing private histories, architectural or everyday details, through which contexts are expanded and characteristic and not-so-characteristic traditions are clarified. New research tools, digitized collections, and public access to paper and digital archives have enabled versatile research on local history and mythology. A renewed interest in local, peripheral storytelling, often emanating from amateur local history communities, can also be considered new. The new local history is characterized by a reliance on private histories, architectural or spatial details, through which a versatile exploration of local history becomes possible. H. Jenkins characterized this phenomenon as collective participation in cultural space and in museum activities [15].

Modern regional studies strive for interdisciplinarity, including a particularly important role of history. They focus on the problem field, while taking into account cultural and symbolic aspects. In doing so, the past becomes a valuable cultural resource influencing identity. Top-down (authorities) and bottom-up (local communities) interactions shape regional discourses. In post-communist countries, attention to historical memory as a tool for comprehending the present and constructing the future is increasing.

According to R. Ivolga and E. Sizenov, the relationship of public organizations with the authorities, will give an understanding that success has a principled, at the same time responsible and constructive position, refusal of group egoism and willingness to take into account the interests of other groups, the city as a whole. The most effective activity of civil society institutions was when they managed to establish a dialog with the authorities on an equal footing. Such a dialogue can be conducted only by strong public organizations, so it should be confirmed that the strength of civil society is in its connection with people, in its reliance on their interests, in the willingness to unite to protect them, in the ability to shape public opinion [16].

The new trends in thinking about the city and the mentioned civic initiatives testify in many respects to the demand of the audience. Since the activists themselves belong to the potential target audience of their own projects, they are more sensitive for such a request than the city authorities, and they are more mobile in the implementation and changes in the local history format. The emerging trends of turning to unconventional ways of researching historical space, shifting the search from the center to the periphery both thematically and geographically contribute to the renewal of the local mythology of the city. In contrast to the unified local history institutions of the Soviet past, subordinated to a common ideology, the new local history projects are aimed at studying the private, local, and unofficial. The initiators of civic projects build the process of mastering local history based on horizontal communication, network principles of community

building around the process, often creating a virtual infrastructure. This form allows to include a strong subjective element in the projects, which makes local history and the locus itself close and understandable, i.e. personally credible for other members of the network of project users.

According to the theory of A. Assmann, memory is able to awaken feelings in the bearer, for example, a sense of pride, a sense of shame or a sense of guilt [13, 90]. The work on local history studies can help to educate, first of all, the young generation to love their homeland, pride for their country [17]. The importance of local history studies is determined by the fact that it is an important means of fostering love for the native land, a special form of involvement of the general public in the study of the history of the region, one of the most important ways to involve the public in active and purposeful cultural work in the field.

Appeal to history, creating a link between the present and the past, contributes to the formation of collective memory, which in turn affects the self-presentation of the nation. The author of the theory of collective memory is M. Halbwachs, who also emphasized the peculiarity of memory along with history, naming the former as something that affects the emotions of an individual [18].

Thus, civic initiatives in the field of local history will help to reveal the request “from below” creating prerequisites for a dialog with civic initiatives and state structures, so that the policy of nation-building closes civic requests, at the same time strengthening the memoriality in the minds of the people acting “from above” and existed for a long time in the cultural memory. According to the of A. Assmann's theory, national memory exists longer than social memory, when politicians appeal to it, creating places of memory, marking special dates in history fixing memorial dates in the consciousness of the people, etc.[13, 50]

Results

The choice of Kazakhstan, Russia, Uzbekistan and Poland for comparative analysis is due to several key factors. First of all, all four countries have a common post-socialist past, but have demonstrated different trajectories of rethinking history, memory politics and the formation of regional identities. This allows for a meaningful comparison of models of local historical reflection in different political and cultural contexts. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan represent a region of Central Asia where historical local history is closely linked to issues of nation-building, decolonization and post-imperial transformation. At the same time, each of these countries demonstrates its own approach: Kazakhstan relies on an integrative model of identity, taking into account multi-ethnicity, while Uzbekistan focuses on localization and sacralization of the national past.

Russia is interesting due to local history that has deep historiographical roots and developed throughout the 20th century, including the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, which allows us to trace the evolution of approaches from state-centralized to postmodern and civic.

Poland, as an Eastern European country that emerged from the communist bloc, demonstrates the European experience of institutionalizing local memory under conditions of decentralization and democratization. Its inclusion allows

us to broaden the scope of the analysis and understand how the European way of memory transformation influences the formation of regional narratives and urban identities.

Thus, the experience of these countries allows us to cover different models of local history and historical policy: from post-Soviet (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Russia) to post-socialist and Europeanized (Poland), which makes it possible to identify both universal trends and unique features of local approaches to comprehending the past.

Russia: from the imperial tradition to the post-Soviet reassessment

In Russia, already in the 80s, the rise of local history was noticed, which was largely due to the theoretical and organizational work local historian S. Schmidt, and the assimilation of the theory of scientists M. Grevs and N. Antsiferov about the importance of excursions to rethink the past. This time is characterized by discussions, free search for a topic and method, and the organization of major conferences on local history studies [19].

Gradually, local history was functionally included in socio-cultural communication at the provincial and local levels. The amateurism that prevailed in local history at first was replaced by professional activities in the study of the region, which was facilitated primarily by the emergence of libraries, archives, and museums. The work on collecting and preserving historical and cultural monuments was unfolding. There was transmission of knowledge and information exchange through various library and archival documents, museum expositions, lectures and reports, local history publications [20].

In local history it was manifested in the increased attention to historical research of the general public, the appeal to the previously closed topics and sources, the formation of new research approaches and directions. Prof. M. Demin, using the example of the study of the Altai region, stated that in 1990, a laboratory of local history studies was established at the Altai State Pedagogical Institute. The order on its establishment stated that “the creation of a new concept of historical education is unthinkable without reliance on local history studies”. An important result of local history research in the 1990s, including expeditionary ethnographic work of Altai universities, was the preparation of collections on the history and culture of individual districts of the Altai region. The collection and publication of materials were carried out, as a rule, by the efforts of a number of regional and local organizations with the support of district administrations. The conducted work on the in-depth study of local territories with the publication of research results undoubtedly had a positive impact on the activation of local history research at the district level. A bright distinctive feature of modern regional historical research in Altai region is the activity of the scientific school on ethnography and oral history, which resulted in the creation of an archive of oral historical research. The rise of the tourism industry in the Altai region and the Altai Republic also puts an imprint on the development of local history in the region [21].

M. Gromov in his works noted that the study of Russian historical and cultural heritage is inextricably linked with local history and Russian studies. Turning to local history, first of all, he noted that it is an extremely important sphere of

practical and theoretical activities, including scientific, social, educational aspects [22].

In the article by A. Troitskaya devoted to the phenomenon of new local history on the example of the cultural capital of the Russian Federation St. Petersburg, new local history opens the history of the city from new sides, breaking the old stereotypes, through the rethinking of the place by the perception of an individual. A. Troitskaya, using the example of St. Petersburg's local history magazines, shows original publications that demonstrated different local history objects around one geolocation, or around one historical name or historical period. Reflecting the tendencies of the new local history, the journals were characterized by the assimilation of urban space with the aim of getting to know the chosen site through the history of people, houses, and toponymy. Describing the local history magazines published in the 2000s, A. Troitskaya dwelled on the optics of urban studies, which demonstrated the possibility of discovering “treasures” in sometimes ordinary things and commonplace city views, turning the audience of the publication into urban gourmets. The approach proposed by the editorial team back in 2003 was original in that it demonstrated a rejection of a linear progression along the historical path. The local history character of the publications was combined with the kaleidoscope effect, invariably producing a new picture as it rotated, and the postmodernist technique of inventorying what was available [23].

Poland: local history in the context of democratization and Europeanization

In 1996, B. Jalowiecki posed a number of questions that have long defined the field of research in the field of regional studies. They concerned how far one should look into the past to explain contemporary differences, what role cultural and social factors played in the development of regions, and which regions had more and which had less chance to develop [24]. In many respects, the Polish debate about the past in the post-communist period seems to be a continuation, in new forms, of the political struggle that began before 1989. The political scene is no longer characterized by confrontation between former communists and former dissidents, as it was in the post-1989 period, but since 2005 between supporters and opponents. Round table agreements and political transition organized with the consent of the ruling communist government. The fall of communist regimes and events in Eastern Europe and then the Soviet Union marked a political caesura that had an impact on the profession of historians. Writing about the communist period now meant writing about a bygone era with a clearly defined chronological framework, which became a legitimate field of study. Moreover, the transition from one political regime to another has created a situation of uncertainty that has opened up opportunities to reconsider the scope of the discipline, its methods, objects of study and interpretations. The Polish experience demonstrates how the prospect of European integration prompted a return to a pre-divided history and an appreciation of the differences between Eastern and Western Europe. Historical aspects such as the level of urbanization, modernization and industrialization remain important in the analysis of regional development. Eastern Europe, hitherto

defined mainly through its experience of communism, is faced with the need to compare itself with the rest of the world and to define itself within the European project. The question of Poland's place in the new European order was a reminder of the persistence and relevance of historical differences in development.

In Poland, differences in the quality of local governance are often linked to the historical division of territories. While it is difficult to prove the sustainability of intangible cultural factors, a common conception suggests that capitalist models spread from west to east, giving western regions an advantage in resources, mentality and adaptability to the market economy. The economic development of regions is usually correlated with historical indicators of urbanization, the craft and trade sector, and the level of industrialization. T. Zarycki showed how the cultural environment rooted in tradition shapes the meaning of people's actions and behavior. These elements, dating back to the past, continue to influence subsequent generations. By comparing four historical macro-regions, he focused on key moments in the late nineteenth century rather than on complete social trajectories. This approach is typical for studies of regional differences and is also used in international comparisons of post-communist countries. T. Zarycki analyzed how political conflicts around the interpretation of history influenced regional construction in the post-communist period. In Poland in the 1990s, two political camps - left and right - were based on opposing historical narratives. The left viewed communist Poland as the first autonomous form of nation-state independent of the West. The right, on the other hand, emphasized Soviet occupation, the loss of eastern territories, and the country's isolation from Europe. This ideological divide affects regional identities, creating multiple and competing images of regions. This makes it difficult to build consensus and influences external perceptions. In his opinion, in such conditions it is important to form a compensatory discourse that reinforces the strengths of the region in order to neutralize negative historical images and political criticism [25].

A. Kolasa-Nowak argues that after the reform of local self-government, Poland witnessed an intensification of identification processes: regional ideologies and images of communities were formed through the reinterpretation of history. Ethnic identity has gained particular importance, as seen in Kashubia and Silesia, where sociologists emphasize the importance of collective memory for modern identity. Special attention is paid to regions with broken continuity, such as the Warmia-Mazury, where regional identity was formed through institutionalization and reconstruction of the past. These processes became the basis for the formation of a new image and symbolic integration of the Western territories after 1989. Myths of multiculturalism became an important tool for shaping the image of cities such as Gdańsk, Wrocław, Lublin and Białystok. In sociological studies of urban identity, history is used to reconstruct the image of the city, giving meaning and value to the contemporary space. This is especially important for economically weak regions, where symbolic competition for a positive image helps to cope with development challenges. Recognizing the significance of the past is connected with a more realistic assessment of social transformations in Poland. History is used to explain persistent regional disparities and differences in development

potential. Sociologists turn to fixed historical knowledge to make connections between the past and the present. In post-communist Eastern Europe, the political conflicts of recent years have had much to do with different interpretations of the historical past. While the transformation of the region is usually seen as an economic-geopolitical process, it also has a deep cultural dimension. Historical arguments have become key to legitimizing the new order, including references to religious heritage and the experience of Soviet occupation and isolation during the Cold War [26].

Uzbekistan: rethinking through the lens of postnonclassical historical scholarship

In recent decades, Uzbek historical scholarship has increased its attention to regional history, which is associated with the formation of new identities in the post-Soviet period. After 1991, some directions of regional history have also been developing in Uzbek historical science. We can point to the fundamental work of A. Malikov, who, using the example of the city of Samarkand, with its cultural heritage and rich history intertwined with world history, believes that cities act as key symbols of collective memory. The study of urban memory and identity requires analyzing the transformation of urban symbols under the influence of political, ideological and religious changes in different historical epochs. He also argues about the active use of urban space by political forces as a tool for introducing and consolidating their ideology in the everyday life of citizens. After all, the internal goals of memory politics are to form general ideas about the political and cultural identity of citizens, taking into account local peculiarities and historical context. Focusing on the period of independence in Samarkand, A. Malikov analyzes the stable elements of Samarkand's memory culture during the period between the Bukhara Emirate and today. He divides the realization of memory policy in Samarkand in the post-Soviet period into three stages: 1990s - the formation of independent Uzbekistan, the period after 2007, when the Samanid monuments were demolished, and the period after September 2016 - the coming to power of Sh. Mirziyoyev, pursuing the tasks of legitimizing the new state with a focus on the achievements of the independence period and the contribution of the first president of Uzbekistan I. Karimov in the development of Uzbekistan. It is also worth mentioning the role of "Amir Temur" in achieving these goals, as well as the contribution of local newspapers to different interpretations of the history of Samarkand in the region ("Zarafshan", "Samarkand Herald", "Ovozi Samarkand", etc.) [27].

In addition, it should be emphasized that in independent Uzbekistan the Russian Empire and the Soviet period were perceived in a negative way. One of the notable manifestations of the discourse of rejection of the Soviet past in Uzbekistan has been the state policy towards monuments of the Soviet era. Between 1992 and 2010, a number of memorial sites from both the Russian Empire and the Soviet era were dismantled or destroyed in the country. The fate of monuments dedicated to repressed Uzbek communists was particularly revealing. Thus, in Samarkand, monuments to A. Ikramov (1898-1938) and M. Mirsharapov (1900-1938), figures

who played a significant role in the Soviet history of Uzbekistan and later became victims of Stalinist repression, were demolished [28].

These actions reflect the Uzbek state's strategy of decommunization and desovietization of public space. Memorial culture was rebuilt in accordance with a new ideology focused on national traditions, the revival of Islamic and Turkic cultural heritage, and the formation of an Uzbek identity distanced from the Soviet past.

Uzbek researcher B. Alimdjanov emphasizes the construction of the image of the region as one of the important components of regional history. Thus, he provides a description of the Ferghana Valley as “the oldest agricultural region of Central Asia” or “a meeting zone of civilizations”. Building a positive image of the region unites regional and national culture, which subsequently affects the international prestige of the region as a whole. The author also cites the study of local identity on the example of the history of tribes and prominent historical figures who played a significant role in local culture, referring to the strengthening of more local than regional identities in Uzbekistan. In addition, B. Alimdjanov proposes the introduction of the concept of “regionality” into scientific circulation, which is expressed in the realization of identity and self-representation of the population, and which reproduces established and analyzed local practices, combining macro and micro histories. He also proposes to outline the historiography of regional history and local history studies from the perspective of postnonclassical historical science, which can solve the methodological problem of regional history and its applicability to the regions of Uzbekistan [29].

Comparative Analysis: Russia, Poland, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in the context of regional history and memory politics

The post-Soviet and post-socialist space demonstrates many parallels in the development of regional history and local history studies as a significant element of identity formation, political culture and local memory. However, each of the national contexts bears its own characteristics, shaped by historical legacies, institutional transformations and ideological priorities.

All countries have been characterized by a growing interest in regional history in recent decades. This process became especially noticeable in the political transformations of the 1990s, when the need to create new legitimizing narratives led to a turn to local memory, local history and the symbolic potential of territories. Since that period there has been a peculiar appeal to the history of regions as sources of cultural energy and subjects of historical knowledge. In all post-Soviet countries there is a desire to rethink history with the reliance on local narratives, local history studies and regional identity. This is due to democratization, the growing interest in national identity and the need to legitimize new political regimes. In parallel with this, a new function of the regional historical narrative is being formed - it becomes a tool for constructing a positive image of the territory, which is especially evident in the post-Soviet republics seeking an international symbolic reputation.

Unlike Kazakhstan, where there is a desire to integrate the local and the

national, in Uzbekistan there is a growing tendency to localize identities and represent regions as autonomous sources of cultural heritage. Putting forward the concept of “regionality” suggests an attempt to construct sustainable images of the region in the international arena. The decolonial approach to the study of the history of the city of Samarkand occupies a special place in the politics of memory as a “key symbol of collective memory”. Here, unlike in Russian or Polish cases, the emphasis is on sacralization of history - the Temurid heritage, Islamic civilization, and architectural uniqueness are presented as elements of the nation, not just the city. At the same time, the Soviet past is being dismantled - monuments destroyed, figures associated with the communist regime marginalized. This experience, to a certain extent, contrasts with the Kazakh model, which maintains a balance between criticizing repression and preserving the memory of the Soviet modernization project. It is also worth emphasizing the development in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, along with academic projects, of civic forms of local historical activism, including initiatives to commemorate the victims of repression, deportations and other tragic pages of the 20th century.

A peculiarity of the Polish approach is institutional support for the reconstruction of regional identity: the reform of local self-government has allowed regions to more actively form their own symbolic images through museums, local narratives, and urban legends. Multicultural strategies of image formation in cities such as Wrocław or Lublin serve as an example. In Kazakhstan, however, the process of formalizing regional identity through local government is much more limited, and the initiative to represent local history more often comes from “above” - from state or academic institutions.

While in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Poland there is decommunization, criticism of the Soviet past, selective forms of “oblivion” and symbolic “cleaning” of public space, in Russia there is an ambiguous attitude to the country's Soviet past: on the one hand there is a reflection on repression, on the other hand there is an attempt to integrate the imperial and Soviet heritage into the state narrative. In addition, the impact of the tourist boom in Russia on the development of local history initiatives is observed on the example of Altai region.

Historian-researchers A. Kalysh and A. Isaeva believe that the study of native land means a connection with the life activities of the peoples who inhabit them. Also, in their opinion, macro historical research in Kazakhstan, based on the study of the changes that occurred in society, nation, state, left without attention villages, auls, districts and even individuals. Microhistory, which studies the changes in social life through the prism of an individual's everyday life, should help to overcome this situation. The use of the local history principle ties together theoretical knowledge with its application in practice, helping to better assimilate local history material [30]. In this case, Kazakhstan is characterized by a more complex ethno-cultural composition, which imposes special requirements for an “inclusive” memory policy. Unlike Uzbekistan or Poland, Kazakhstan chose the path of soft transformation of the historical narrative with the preservation of a number of Soviet symbols.

Conclusion

Local history studies in post-Soviet and post-socialist countries is undergoing a process of rethinking associated with the search for new identities, the transformation of forms of collective memory and the actualization of local cultural heritage. In the conditions of political and cultural changes it acquires not only academic, but also an important social function, to serve as a tool of national self-knowledge, intergenerational dialog, as well as the formation of a positive image of territories within the country and in the international arena.

The comparative analysis has shown that despite the common aspiration to study local history and symbolic development of space, each country develops its own forms and priorities. The Polish experience illustrates the institutional power of local history under conditions of decentralization and Europeanization. The Russian model continues to develop within a rich local history tradition, increasingly integrating elements of urbanism. Uzbekistan, in turn, relies on the symbolic mobilization of local regions through the sacralization of the Temurid heritage and alienation from the Soviet past. Kazakhstan demonstrates a strategy of integration: local and regional narratives are included in the national agenda, taking into account multi-ethnicity and historical pluralism.

Thus, local history studies becomes not only a way of reconstructing the past, but also influencing the present and the future, shaping perceptions of the nation, society and space. Its importance increases in the conditions of politicization of memory, growth of civic activity and digital transformation of humanitarian knowledge. In these conditions, the development of interdisciplinary approaches capable of combining academic knowledge, public initiatives and public policy of memory becomes especially important. It is this synthesis that will allow local history studies to remain relevant, in demand and sustainable tool for the formation of identity and cultural continuity in the post-Soviet space.

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