

# Interaction of Russian, British and American Cultures in Siberia (Case of Literary Preferences)

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**Abstract-**The article analyzes the process of intercultural communication on the example of literary preferences of Siberian society on the basis of the methodology of diffusionism. Through the study of archival documents and other sources in the library of a famous Siberian bibliophile G. V. Yudin, the works of writers of Great Britain and the USA have been analyzed. The distribution and popularity of these materials confirm the hypothesis of the existence of intercultural relations between Siberia and foreign countries, which began in the early 19th century and continues today. The authors analyze the influence of the cultures in question on Siberian society and look at the current trends of preference.

**Keywords-***Russian culture, British culture, American culture, Siberia*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The relevance of the study of the interaction of Russian culture with European ones is connected in recent years, primarily with the rapid development of new technologies and the opportunity in a short time to get acquainted with the achievements of different cultures. The development of regional culturology in Russian humanities is extremely important, as it allows to develop effective models of interaction between the "center" and "periphery", and the identification of the social, cultural and political heritage of Siberian region allows to expand the idea of the development of national culture, its importance in the world historical and cultural space and the impact on intercultural communication today.

## II. METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

The results of the process of intercultural communication are recorded by cultural borrowings. At the end of the XIX century there appeared diffusionism as a way to study the peculiarities of the spread of cultural

phenomena through contacts between people – trade, resettlement, conquest and others. Diffusionism emerged as a counterbalance to evolutionism, which asserted the autonomy of cultural development. F. Ratzel, a German ethnographer of the XIX - early XX century, the founder of diffusionism identified two ways of moving the elements of culture: acculturation - almost complete transfer of a cultural complex, rather than individual things, from one culture to another; the second method – the transfer of individual phenomena and components [1]. Such well-known researchers, as L. Frobenius, F. Groebner, C. Wissler, G. Elliot-Smith, W. James Perry and others were engaged in the development of the diffusionism concept.

The authors of this article believe that the acculturation of foreign cultures in question in Siberia did not happen and could not happen due to various factors, including their extreme remoteness, complex ethnic and religious composition of Siberian population, involving the displacement of many cultural traditions, the difference in mentality, the lack of the diasporas, rooted and permanently living in Siberia. However, the transfer of certain forms of British and American cultures has been carried out and is still being carried out in Siberia, which shows the presence of a process of intercultural communication.

The purpose of the contribution is to study the interaction of forms of British, American and Russian cultures in Siberia. The theme of these relations in Russia has been sufficiently studied, however, there are practically no publications, investigating the influence of mentioned cultures on Siberian society. In connection with this circumstance the team of authors believes that this study is relevant. It is expected to publish a number of articles on this topic, each being devoted to a cultural form. This paper

analyzes historical and modern preferences of Siberians in British and American literature.

### III. CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE YENISEI PROVINCE OF THE XIX CENTURY

Krasnoyarsk and Yeniseisk became important political and economic centers of the Yenisei province in the first third of the XIX century with Krasnoyarsk, holding a leading position in social and economic relation.

In the Yenisei region, signs of interest and contact with a foreign culture were related to business, science and art. The Trans-Siberian railway served as a "window to Asia", having opened the borders for international cooperation.

By the turn of the XIX-XX century Krasnoyarsk intelligentsia, being stimulated by the exiles had been formed. Cultural centers included the provincial center of Krasnoyarsk and district centers of the province -Yeniseisk, Turukhansk, Minusinsk, Kansk, Achinsk. In the 1830-ies of the XIX century there were 6 schools, by 1853 – 3 district and 8 parochial schools, religious schools attached to churches and monasteries, schools of military and mining department. The city opened the first printing house (ca 1823), Krasnoyarsk public library in 1839. The Yenisei Governor A.P. Stepanov contributed to the development of culture and the publication of the "Yenisei almanac for 1828." Home libraries of governors A.P. Stepanov, V. I. Kopylov were allowed to be used by friends from the environment. Along with these libraries public libraries of such Decembrists as V. L. Davydov and M. M. Spiridonov were popular, departmental libraries, institutions, hospitals, churches of intelligentsia – teachers, doctors, civil servants, clergymen [2].

In the first third of the XIX century the general population read the lives of saints, manuscript collections, popular historical novels, for example, "The Tale of Francele Veneziana" [2]. The clergy had their own libraries, where in addition to books of religious content there existed works of E. A. Baratynsky, G. R. Derzhavin, I. A. Krylov's fables, history books, magazines. Officials, merchants, clergy of Yeniseisk and Krasnoyarsk received works of N.M. Karamzin "History of the Russian State" by subscription. Artist V. I. Surikov recalled that in addition to books of spiritual content he read Milton, Pushkin, Lermontov, "Contemporary", "Housewarming" magazines [2].

In the 1820s M. M. Speransky who had traveled through Siberia "was shocked by the low level of cultural and spiritual development, which he found even among the urban elite" [3]. The preserved documents confirm the cultural and educational level of that period. In the records of E. A. Krasnozhenova related to the lifestyle of the burghers it was noted that in Krasnoyarsk of the 1850-1870s "...the young people played games, and the old were visiting friends or were sitting at the gate on the benches... during the week before Lent...the local "aristocracy" ride on the big sleigh...celebrations were held..." [4].

### IV. BRITISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE IN THE KRASNOYARSK LIBRARY OF G. V. YUDIN

The rich Russian literary life of the first quarter of the XIX century defined the literary face of salons and circles. In Siberia they were less common, but the desire to create different associations really became a sign of the time. Scientific, charitable, educational and political societies began to emerge. In the 60-70-ies some newspapers and magazines ("Russian Thought", "Russian Vedomosti", etc.) began to perform to some extent the function of the association of writers and readers. It became a tradition to hold literary and musical evenings and folk readings; the public could hear both works of art by classical authors and works on religious themes.

In the merchant environment children received a quality education and by the mid-nineteenth century, 63 % of business owners became literate [3]. Under these circumstances the elite of Siberian merchants was being formed, the famous bibliophile G. V. Yudin (1840-1912) being an example. Special respect for the book and reading was laid in him in the early period. Living in Tobolsk in 1847-1850, the Yudin's family got acquainted with the Decembrists A. F. Frolov and I. V. Kireev; this fact testifies to the reader's level of the family's interests [5].

According to the list of Yudin's books in the Krasnoyarsk scientific library, one can make judgement about a collection of literature in English. There were books from 20 (1888), to 2,146 units (1901) [6] in foreign languages in public libraries of the regions of Minusinsk and Achinsk. Among the readers there were two foreigners in the Krasnoyarsk city public library; more often residents of the city asked for the works by C. Dickens, V. Hugo. Reader's interest in Siberian region to the books in English depended on the presence or opinions of literature customers. For example, in Irkutsk, Yakutsk, Tomsk Maine Reid was popular; Viluisk, Krasnoyarsk, Tobolsk preferred Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, Daniel Defoe, Edgar Poe, W. Scott, W. Shakespeare. Popular fiction of adventure genre was in demand; in philosophical, sociological, economic, natural and historical science sections books were asked for by intellectuals, employees, political exiles. The works of philosophers and sociologists such as Herbert Spencer, John Mill, moral and philosophical presentations by Samuel Smiles, the historian Henry Buckle, naturalist-evolutionist Charles Darwin were requested in the original and in translation [7].

The second Yudin's book collection became part of the fund, opened in Krasnoyarsk regional library in 1935. It contained books and magazines in foreign languages. From the collection of preserved journals is "The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine" - an illustrated edition in English published in the United States from 1881 to 1930. It was the successor of the "Scribner's Monthly" magazine, which published fiction and scientific articles. "The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine" focused on the country survey with a wide range of topics: history, economics, philosophy, religion, geography, culture,

ethnography, life, scientific and biographical materials, literary novelties. In the illustrated journals of the Scribner publishers worked as artists and illustrators Jay Hembidge (1867-1924), known for his theory of "dynamic symmetry", May Wilson Preston (XIX – early XX century), Florence Scovel Shinn (1871-1940) with pictures to her popular book "the Game of life and how to play it", Frederick Dorr Steele (1873-1944) worked on the Sherlock Holmes stories, Alexander Wilson Drake (1843-1916), the director of the art department of Scribner's Magazine.

Literature of Great Britain in the collection of G. V. Yudin was represented by publications of printing houses of St. Petersburg and Moscow. As for fiction, the greatest number of works were represented in the descending order by W. Shakespeare, C. Dickens, Jerome K. Jerome, J. Milton, W. Scott, W. Thackeray, O. Wilde, B. Shaw, then came sentimental, adventurous, historical novels, Ouida's stories for children, J. Evelyn, S. Riddell, A. Crake, F. Montgomery [8], which directly reflected the interests of collectors and readers. Works on the literature of Great Britain included criticism, cultural-historical sketches, biographical overviews by E. Dowden, S. Malakhov, F. Paulsen, review of the works of Shakespeare by V. V. Chuiko; of the novel "Robinson Crusoe" of D. Defoe - by V. A. Kamensky; O. Sero and V. Yakovenko analyzed the creativity of D. Swift and O. Wilde [9]. Literary works in the original, published in England, were illustrated by such leading artists as John Cruickshank, Geoffrey Leech, H. Brown, publisher John Boydell, etc., giving aesthetic value to a book and figuratively revealing the printed text.

In the Yudin's catalogue the following books were available: "English local government", "Evening additional schools and courses in England", "Educational institutions for the people in England", "History of banking in the UK and Ireland" [10]. Apart from that there were some tutorials, one being a "Model self-study book of English" with the ways of mastering English pronunciation [11]. One could subscribe to the magazine "Translations of individual novels", whose main task was to translate novels of historical origin [12].

#### V. PREFERENCES OF BRITISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE AMONG MODERN RUSSIANS

Modern Russia remains one of the most reading countries in the world. British and American literature is in demand among buyers of book products, library readers, users of audio and electronic formats. Here is the top list among 15 favorite books of Russians according to marketing research: "Master and Margarita" by M. Bulgakov, "Harry Potter" by J. Rowling, "Robinson Crusoe" by D. Defoe, "Pride and Prejudice" by J. Austin, "Jane Eyre" by S. Bronte [13]. The total circulation of books of fiction and children's literature in 2017 was dominated by British and American writers: S. King, R. Bradbury, D. Brown, H. Webb [14]. English novels of the XVIII-XIX centuries with the features of comic and humorous, critical and social realism became a significant

phenomenon in Russian literature. British modern literature (A. Byatt, D. Lodge, P. Ackroyd, etc.) appeals to the artistic traditions of the Victorian era, with distinctive features of postmodernism: intertextuality, philosophy, fantasy, mystification, satire, sarcasm, parody, to "the process of interaction with the literature of the past, the continuation and use of the traditions of its predecessors" [15].

#### VI. CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the interaction of Russian, British and American cultures in terms of literary preferences indicates the existing interest of Siberians to Great Britain and the USA. The authors have found no difference between Russians and Siberians in literary preferences – the literature mentioned above is popular in all regions of the vast country. The names of Byron, Milton, Shakespeare, Brontë, Dickens are known to everyone from school. In turn, the influence of the great Russian writers-Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Gorky, Tolstoy- is perceived in the works of major foreign writers.

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