
© BORIS A. SEREDOVSKIY, VALERY I. BULATOV

geoboris@mail.ru

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APPROACHES TO HISTORIC-GEOGRAPHIC ZONING OF THE NORTH OF WESTERN SIBERIA

SUMMARY. The article considers the issue of regional historic–geographic analysis of the northern territory of Western Siberia. The analysis of existing zoning schemes is used to define and justify the need for a new zoning grid at the meso- and microlevels, based on the regional historic–geographic characteristics. The article includes a review of geographic zoning methods that can underlie the development of historic–geographic zoning of the North of Western Siberia. Special attention is given to the criteria of zoning and the hierarchy of historic and geographic areas. The authors use landscape, ethnocultural, territorial and geographic features (basin approach, the political–administrative division approach) to identify historic–geographic taxa at the provincial and district levels. The article offers a version of the regional scheme of the historic–geographic zoning of the North of Western Siberia at the mesolevel, complete with the composition and a brief description of established historic–geographic areas.

KEY WORDS. Historic–geographic zoning, methodology of zoning, hierarchy of areas, historic–geographic areas and regions, historic–geographic zoning of the North of Western Siberia.

The integrated geographic analysis of the regional development should be based on the retrospective description of the territory, i.e. it should have a historic orientation, among others. In our view this approach allows for the most comprehensive and consistent synthesis and territorial integration of the ideas about natural, social and economic processes in the specific regions, about current stage and trends in the development of the regional systems (ethnic, economic, social, and demographic, etc.).

As a rule the regional historic–geographic analysis shows that behind the administrative division there are historic zones that retain their characteristics acquired as a result of the unique and long-lasting processes. Though they are not reflected at modern maps, they are taken into consideration as an objective feature that exists together and “beyond” the administrative division [1].

At the same time historic–geographic zoning for a number of Russian regions is reported to be non-existent or incomplete [2], [3]. It is especially true for the vast “underdeveloped” territories such as the northern and eastern regions of Russia, in particular, the North of Western Siberia.

In domestic historic geography research Siberia has not been a subject-matter of detailed analysis, if ever, it was viewed in the general context of research on Russia as a whole. It is understandable that this territory is usually treated as a whole with no attention to its internal structures (the north of Tobolsk District, the north of the Ob area, Tyumen District, etc.)

Some principles that underlie today's theory of historic-geographic zoning have been accounted for in administrative decision to set up territorial division (ethnic principle of setting up taxation provinces or national areas in 1930). At the same time multiple "redrafts" of the administrative division made it possible to take decisions about splitting or joining territories that are inconsistent with their historic development (Shuryshkary District — the habitation area of the northern Khanty group — was transferred from Khanty-Mansi Area to Yamal-Nenets National Area; the territory in the Demyanka River basin — the southern group of the Khanty — was included into Uvat District of Tyumen Region, and other).

There are attempts to create a historic and cultural map of the territory within sciences related to historic geography (archaeology, ethnography) [4], [5], [6].

The quality of the historic-geographic zoning for the North of Western Siberia cannot be considered satisfactory; it is still dependent on the administrative division even in cases that are disconnected with any government functions.

T.M. Pozdnyakova [7] offered a historic-geographic zoning scheme of the Asian part of Russia which describes the whole of the North of Western Siberia (represented only by the administrative units of Khanty-Mansi and Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Areas) as a single historic-geographic zone (called *the Ob Zone*) which is integrated into the Northern historic-geographic region spreading over the lower and middle parts of the Ob, Yenisey and Lena basins.

S.V. Rasskazov offers to distinguish three parts of Western Siberia territory—southwest, northwest, and southeast [3].

Presently, most detailed typology of the historic-geographic zoning is offered by L.B. Vampilova [8], [9], [10]. It has a hierarchy of historic-geographic zones based on the differences in the taxonomy of natural, cultural and economic zoning. She also suggests a variant of macro-level historic-geographic zoning of Russia which includes the description of the constituent historic-geographic regions and zones.

According to L.B. Vampilova (Figure 1) Western Siberia historic-geographic region coincides with the northern and central parts of Western Siberia economic area; it spreads to include Kurgan Region, which belongs to the Urals economic area, too. This region includes two historic-geographic zones (HGZ): the one in the north is the Lower and Middle Ob — the tundra, the tundra forest and the taiga zones inhabited by the Urals family peoples (Yamal-Nenets and Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Areas); the one in the south is the Upper Ob taiga, wooded steppe and steppe historic-geographic zone with the prevailing Russian population (Kurgan, Tyumen, Omsk, Novosibirsk and most of Tomsk Regions). At the same time this scheme is incomplete, which the author's opinion, too [10].

We tried to develop a mesolevel historic-geographic zoning scheme of the North of Western Siberia based on certain historic geography approaches to use some identifying features and define the hierarchy of the regions.

To determine the units of the taxonomy for historic-geographic zoning we referred to V.S. Zhekulin [11] and V.V. Ryumina [12], who pointed out that the levels of the zoning hierarchy should correlate with the well-tried natural zoning, i.e. it makes sense to use such units as historic-geographic region, zone, province, district and area.

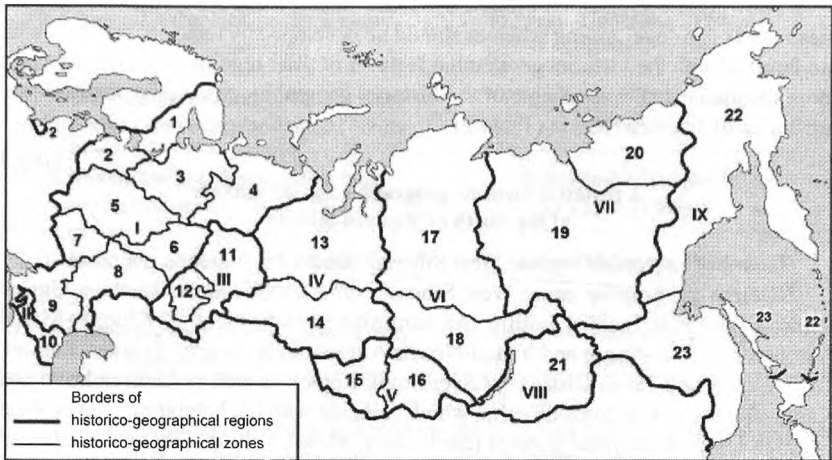


Figure 1. Historic-geographic regions and zones of Russia
(based on L. B. Vampilova) [10]

IV. Western Siberia Region: 13 — Lower and Middle Ob Region

But some objects of historic-geographic analysis do not correspond to the natural taxa of a certain level. If this is the case we relied on the double or even triple naming of the taxa of the historic-geographic zoning, offered by L.B. Vampilova (Table 1) (the brackets have the corresponding taxon in the cultural or socio-economic geography): historic-geographic zone (or historic-cultural zone, macroregion) [2], [8].

Table 1

The hierarchy of the historic-geographic zones
(correlated with the analogous taxa in the cultural or socio-economic geography)
(based on L. B. Vampilova) [8]

The zoning level	Taxon in the historic-geographic zoning (based on L.B. Vampilova) [10]	Its analogue in the historic-cultural zoning (based on A.G. Manakov) [2]	Its analogue in the socio-economic zoning (based on L.V. Smirnyagin) [13]
Macrolevel	Region	Culture	
	Zone	Zone	Macroregion
Mesolevel	Subzone	Subzone. Territory	Mesoregion
	Province	Province	Macroregion
Microlevel	Area	Land	Mesoregion
	Subarea	Locality	Microregion
	Geographic range	Geographic range	Geographic range

Following the suggestion offered by A.G. Manakov and A.A. Andreev that the meso- and microlevel zoning schemes should be developed by local geographers who are familiar with the historic–geographic features of their regions, we have offered a more detailed mesolevel scheme of the historic–geographic zoning for the northern territories of Western Siberia (Table 2).

Table 2

**A tentative historic–geographic zoning scheme
of the North of Western Siberia**

Historic–geographic region: West Siberian tundra-taiga-steppe plain.

Historic–geographic zone: West Siberian tundra-wooded tundra-taiga Ugric–Samoyedic. It is located within the administrative borders of Khanty–Mansi Autonomous Area–Yugra and Yamal–Nenets Autonomous Area of Tyumen Region; Tabory, Gary and Tavda Districts of Sverdlovsk Region as well as Aleksandrovo and Kargasok Districts of Tomsk Region which coincide with the habitation area of West Siberian Ugric–Samoyedic peoples (the Khanty, Mansi, Selkup, Sibetian tundra and forest Nenets).

Historic-geographic subzones:

I. Lower Ob tundra-wooded tundra-northern taiga, mostly Samoyedic–Ugric.

II. Middle Ob floodplain-swampland-taiga, mostly Ugric–Samoyedic.

Historic–geographic provinces and areas:

Historic–geographic provinces	Historic–geographic areas
1. <i>Yamal–Ghyda–Lower Taz</i> tundra-wooded tundra Samoyedic	1) Yamal 2) Ghyda 3) Nadym–Purovsky 4) Lower Taz
2. <i>Tazovsky</i> northern taiga, mostly Samoyedic	1) Middle Taz (Mangazeia) 2) Upper Taz (Tolka) 3) Tymsk-Karakon (Inbak)
3. <i>Lower Ob–Urals</i> floodplain-terraced и foothill taiga ethniccontact	1) Ust–Ob (Obdorsk) 2) Lower double Ob (Voikar–Kunovat) 3) Shuryshkary–Cis–Urals (Zyryanskoye)
4. <i>Northern Sosva–Urals</i> upland middle- and northern taiga, mixed ethnic	1) Lower Sosva (Berezovsky) 2) Lyapina–Vogulka 3) Saranpaul (Zyryansky) 4) Malaya Sosva
5. <i>Kondinskoye–Tavda</i> lowland middle- and south taiga, mixed ethnic	1) Big Konda (Nakhrachi) 2) Upper Konda (Shaim) 3) Lower Konda–Cis–Irtysh 4) Pelym–Tavda
6. <i>Lower Ob–Belogorsk</i> upland and floodland-terraced mixed ethnic Ugric–Samoyedic	1) Kodinsk 2) Belogorsk 3) Kazym
7. <i>Ob–Irtysh</i> intrazone floodland-terraced, mostly old resident Russian	1) Cis–Irtysh (Samarovo) 2) Surgut 3) Nizhnevertovsk

8. <i>Siberia–Uval</i> upland northern taiga mostly Samoyedic	1) Pyaku–Upper Pur 2) Numto 3) Aivaseda–Purovsky
9. <i>Middle Ob Right Bank</i> northern- and middle taiga lake-swampland mixed ethnic	1) Pim–Lyamin 2) Tromyegan 3) Agan
10. <i>Middle Ob Left Bank</i> middle taiga swampland-forest mixed ethnic	1) Balyk–Nefteyugansk 2) Yugan 3) Salym
11. <i>Vakh</i> floodland-swampland-middle taiga, mostly Khanty	1) Laryak (Lower Vakh) 2) Upper Vakh
12. <i>Narym–Vasyugan</i> swampland-southern taiga mixed ethnic	1) Aleksandrovskoye 2) Vasyugansk 3) Narym

The taxonomy tabled above is based on the idea that the integrity and internal unity of any historic–geographic zone at any level is determined by common natural environment (adherence to one natural geographic zone), population (ethnic and religious group, type of habitation), type of economy (specific use of natural resources, common features of the traditional industries). It is important to take into account a set of factors: landscape, paleogeographical, ethnocultural, archaeological, administrative, and economic features. But it is hardly possible to make sure that all zones at any level are equally representative as regards these specific features. Therefore, defining the historic–geographic zones and outlining their borders, we used the method of “floating features” offered by L.V. Smirnyagin [13]: first the essential features of the zone get defined, then the distinguishing features are established; they are compared with those of the neighbouring districts, and then their borders are being identified.

Along the method of floating features we used the traditional zoning methods of *superposition* and *main feature*: defining historic–geographic zones by superposition of the natural borders of the territories with the borders of the historical and modern administrative units, and with the habitation areas of ethnic, religious and dialectal groups, ethnographic, cultural and economic areas, etc. At that we relied on the schemes of landscape zoning offered by N.N. Moskvina and V.V. Kozin [14], [15]; landscape-ecological zoning of Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area-Yugra which regards the river basins characteristics of the territory by B.N. Bulatova [14], [16]; the ethnographic habitation area of the Khanty by E.P. Martynova [15]; ethno-lingual, cultural and historic as well as ecological and economic areas of the North of Western Siberia by A.V. Golovneva [4]; dialect areas and territorial and ethnographic groups by Z.P. Sokolova [6].

Having applied the method of the main feature which aims at defining historic–geographic units on the basis of a single (or two or three) main characteristics, we identified the historic–geographic provinces using mostly landscape, ethnocultural and territorial and geographic (basin approach, administrative division) features (Table 3).

Brief description of the historic–geographic provinces of the North of Western Siberia

Historic–geographic provinces	Territory and borders [14]	Landscape regions (LR) and provinces (LP) based on [14], [15], [16]	Ethnocultural features [4], [5], [6]
1. <i>Yamal–Ghyda–Nizhnetazovsky</i> tundra-wooded tundra mostly Samoyedic	The Yamal, Ghydansky and Tazovsky peninsulas, the banks of the Ob and Taz estuaries, the lower reach of the Taz, Pur and Nadym rivers within the borders of the Yamal, Tazovsky, Nadym and the northern part of the Purovsky administrative districts of Yamal–Nenets Autonomous Area	Yamal–Ghyda tundra and Ural–Yenisey wooded tundra LR (Yamal, Ghyda and Tazovsky tundra and Nadym–Pur, Urals–Ob and Lower Taz wooded tundra LP)	The ethnic structure is dominated by the Samoyedic population, namely ethnographic groups of Siberian tundra Nenets with some localities inhabited by migrant Russian population
2. <i>Tazovsky</i> northern taiga, mostly Samoyedic	The basins of the middle and lower Taz river within the borders of Krasnoselkupsky administrative district of Yamal–Nenets Autonomous Area	Located within the Nizhnetazovsk, Middle Taz and Taz–Chernoozersk northern taiga LP of the northern taiga LR	The prevailing population is Samoyedic, including ethnographic groups of the Taz Selkups and the Siberian forest Nenets
3. <i>Lower Ob–Cis–Urals</i> floodplain-terraced and foothill taiga mixed ethnic	Includes submeridional part of the Lower Ob valley (from the border of Khanty–Mansi Autonomous Area and Yamal–Nenets Autonomous Area to the Ob estuary), the basins of the Voikar, Synya, Poluy rivers and the foothill of the Polar Urals within the Cis-Urals and the Shuryshkary districts of Yamal–Nenets Autonomous Area	Located within the Lower Ob submeridional LP of the Ob-Irtysh intrazone floodplain-terraced LR; and spreads to the Sosva–Voikar and Poluy northern taiga LP of the Urals–Ob floodplain-terraced as well as the Polar Urals LR	The mixed ethnic territory with the ethnographic areas of the Shuryshkary, Synya, Kunotovat, Voikar and Cis-Urals Khanty, the tundra Nenets, Komi–Zyryans and some areas of migrant and old resident Russian population

4. <i>Northern Sosva–Cis–Urals</i> upland middle and northern taiga mixed ethnic	Spreads to the basins of the Northern Sosva and its tributaries: the Lyapina, Malaya Sosva and Vogulka within the Beryozovsky, Sovietsky and western part of the Oktyabrsky administrative districts of Khanty–Mansi Autonomous Area	Located within the Northern and Subpolar Urals LR and spreads to the Konda–Sosva Ob region (the Lyapin–Vogulka northern taiga, the northern Sosva and Malaya Sosva middle taiga LP)	The mixed ethnic territory with the areas of the Cis–Urals and Berezovo Khanty, the Lyapina–Sosva Mansi group, the Komi–Zyryans and some centres of migrant and old resident Russian population
5. <i>Kondinskoye–Tavda</i> lowland middle- and south taiga, mixed ethnic	The Konda, Tavda and Pelym river basins within Konda District of Khanty–Mansi Autonomous Area and the eastern part of the Tavda, Taboriy and Gary districts of Sverdlovsk Region	Located within the Tavda–Konda slope valley and Konda–Sosva Ob region (Konda middle taiga and Kuminsky south taiga LP)	It is a mixed ethnic territory with the prevailing migrant and old resident Russian population and some habitation areas of the southern Cis–Irtysh Khanty group and the southern Konda–Tavda Mansi group
6. <i>Lower Ob–Cis–Urals</i> floodplain-terraced and foothill taiga, mixed ethnic, mostly Ugric–Samoyedic	It is a part of the Lower Ob valley (from the Irtysh estuary to the borders of the Khanty–Mansi Autonomous Area and Yamal–Nenets Autonomous Area), the Kazym River basin and the Belogorsk upland within the Oktyabrsky, Beloyarka and Khanty–Mansiysk Districts of Khanty–Mansi Autonomous Area	Located within the Ob–Irtysh intrazone floodplain-terraced LR and Middle Ob Right Bank territory (the Kazym north and middle taiga, and the Belogorsk ridged valley middle taiga LP)	It is included into the Middle Ob (Kodinsk) and Lower Ob ethnographic areas of the northern Khanty group; the upper reach of the Kazym River is inhabited by the forest Nenets (the Pyak), the Ob valley is dominated by the old resident Russian population
7. <i>Ob–Irtysh</i> intrazone floodland-terraced, mostly old resident Russian	Eastwest elongated part of the Middle Ob valley (from the Vakh River to the Irtysh estuary) within the borders of Surgut, Nizhnevartovsk and the southern part of Khanty–Mansiysk District of Khanty–Mansi Autonomous Area	Located in the eastwest Middle Ob and Lower Irtysh LP of the Ob–Irtysh intrazonal floodplain-terraced LR; and within the Right Bank LP of the Middle Ob	The territory is dominated by the migrant and old resident Russian population with some centres of the different Khanty groups

<p>8. <i>Siberia–Uval</i> upland northern taiga mostly Samoyedic</p>	<p>Covers the Sibirskiye Uvaly upland and the adjoining territories of the Nenets and Pur–Taz uplands situated in the southern part of Pur and Nadym districts of Yamal–Nenets Autonomous Area</p>	<p>Located in the flat upland forest and swamp territories of the Nadym, Pur and Kazym rivers interflue (the landscape province of Sibirskiye Uvaly)</p>	<p>The ethnic make-up is dominated by the Samoyedic population, namely ethnographic and territorial groups of the Siberian forest Nenets</p>
<p>9. <i>Middle Ob Right Bank</i> northern- and middle taiga lake-swampland mixed ethnic</p>	<p>Covers the Middle Ob Right Bank territory, including the basins of the Pim, Lyamin, Agan and Tromyegan rivers within the northern part of Surgut and Nizhneartovsk districts of Khanty–Mansi Autonomous Area</p>	<p>Located within the borders of the Middle Ob Right Bank (the Lyamin, Pim, Agan and Tromyegan woodlands and the flat upland forest and swamp territories of the Sibirskiye Uvaly interflue)</p>	<p>This mixed ethnic territory has habitation areas of the Pim, Agan and Tromyegan Khanty and the Siberian forest Nenets</p>
<p>10. <i>Middle Ob Right Bank</i> northern- and middle taiga lake-swampland mixed ethnic</p>	<p>The Left bank of the Middle Ob, including the basins of the Ugan, Balyk, Salym rivers within Nefteyugansk and the southern part of Surgut districts of Khanty–Mansi Autonomous Area</p>	<p>Located at the territory of the Middle Ob Left Bank (the Balyk swamp- and woodland, the Salym wood- and swampland and the Ugan lake, swamp and woodland LP)</p>	<p>Mixed ethnic territory with prevailing migrant Russian population and some ethnographic areas of the Balyk, Salym and Ugan Khanty</p>
<p>11. <i>Vakh</i> floodland-swampland-middle taiga, mostly Khanty</p>	<p>Includes the territory of the Vakh River basin within the borders of Nizhneartovsk district of Khanty–Mansi Autonomous Area</p>	<p>Located within the Vakh Left Bank lake- swamp- and woodlands, the Vakh Left Bank forest drained land and the Sabun–Tromyegan forest drained upland LR</p>	<p>The ethnic make-up is dominated by the native population, i.e. ethnographic and territorial group of the Vakh Khanty with some areas of the old resident Russian population</p>
<p>12. <i>Narym–Vasyugan</i> swampland-southern taiga mixed ethnic</p>	<p>Includes the eastwest elongated part of the Middle Ob (from Khanty–Mansi Autonomous Area–Tomsk Region border to the Ket estuary) and the basins of the Tym and Vasyugan rivers within Aleksandrovo and Kargasok Districts of Tomsk Region</p>	<p>Is part of the Ket–Vakh middle taiga valley and Vasyugan middle taiga lake- and swamp lowland LR</p>	<p>Mixed ethnic make-up is represented by the habitation areas of the eastern Khanty group (the Aleksandrovscoe and the Vasyugan Khanty), of the southern (Narym) Selkup group and of the old resident Russian population</p>

We agree that the scheme offered is a draft which will undoubtedly undergo corrections both typological and substantial.

The next stage in this research is a more detailed historic–geographic zoning which will define areas and geographic ranges and will require another set of main features such as palaeogeographic, archaeological, economic, etc., along with the aforementioned ones.

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