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Socio-geographic aspects of conservation of ethnocultural identity and traditional forms of natural use in Setomaa

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Аннотация

The systems of traditional intercommunal interaction, the peculiarities of settlement and the features of the ethno-territorial economic specialization of Setos that have developed over the centuries allow highlighting the most significant factors that are important for the preservation of their cultural identity. Currently, the territorial specificity of ethnocultural unity was strongly influenced by three factors: firstly, this is the division of the traditional territory of residence of the ethnic group by state borders, and the difficulties of cross-border interaction have significantly increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, and secondly, these are trends in demographic processes — depopulation and migration outflow from rural areas, thirdly, determined by changes in the economic and technological structure of the craft traditions of the ethnos to the needs of the tourism sector. The purpose of the study is to identify, systemize and substantiate modern forms of transmission from generation to generation of the traditions of Seto trades and crafts in conditions of territorial and partly social disunity of the ethnic group. The methods of socio-economic and cultural interaction within and outside the traditional territory of settlement of this ethnic group were also studied. It is important to identify the elements of the traditional culture of Seto that have retained their relevance in the modern way of life, and along with them — meaningfully new types of economic activity of local and network Seto ethnocultural communities.

Ключевые слова: Russian-Estonian border, Seto, traditional culture, trades and crafts, ethno-economic systems

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¹ **Introduction.** Socio-political changes over the past hundred years have significantly changed both the social structure and the technological order, have led to changes in the demographic processes and in the structure of Seto settlement, as well as the forms of maintenance and reproduction of the ethnocultural component of the ethnic society. In the changing economic order over the decades of the second half of the twentieth century, traditional crafts gradually receded into the past and the connection between generations in the transfer of traditional technologies and methods of economic activity was weakened. The traditional communal and tribal land use was replaced by collective forms of agriculture, and then the introduction of intensive technologies and a radical enlargement of production volumes as part of the development of regional agro-industrial complexes. In parallel with these trends, there was an outflow of migrants to cities, weakening and breaking of family and clan ties, aging of the population and depopulation of remote farms and villages in the territory of Setomaa — both in the south-east of Estonia and in the Pechora district of the Pskov region.

² Among the stable and strong positive trends, one can note the burst of national self-awareness of the Setos in the late XX — early XXI centuries, when the national self-identification and the revival of community at the communicative and socio-political levels again began to attract the attention of both young representatives of the indigenous ethnic groups themselves, who also live outside of Setomaa and the public. Digital communication technologies played a significant role in this rise of ethnocultural consciousness and the acquisition of new forms of interaction as well as interaction in the Internet communities and social networks, SMM-promotion of the phenomenon of cultural “otherness” and the search for ethnic ancestral roots. In parallel the collection and systematization, as well as the dissemination of traditional technologies, trades and crafts through Internet resources, moreover, both on a commercial basis, including project and grant, and as a meaningful ethnocultural component of the network communication of social groups and communities.

³ Modern socio-economic and political transformations contributed to the thinning of cultural interaction, the erosion of the established forms of interactions of the Seto ethnic group, the settlement area of which is currently fragmented and rapidly decreasing. At the beginning of the XXI century, after almost two decades of gradual liberalization of the cross-border regime and some support from governments of Estonia and Russia for ethnocultural contacts, the interaction of ethno-territorial communities, separated by the border Russian and Estonian Setos, again turned out to be complicated

due to the introduction of restrictions on movement associated with the pandemic of COVID-19.

⁴ Assessment of the possibilities of preserving ethnic identity and forms of communication of the divided small ethnic group Seto in the modern socio-economic structure of society is a debatable topic from both demographic and humanitarian-cultural points of view.

⁵ **Purpose of the study** — systematization and substantiation of new forms of ethnic self-identification and transmission from generation-to-generation traditions of Seto trades and crafts as well as methods of social, economic and of the settlement of this ethnic group. It is important to identify what has remained and is being reconstructed from the traditional Seto culture, and what is meaningfully new filling of local and network ethnocultural communities.

⁶ It took: 1) track the changes that have occurred in the socio-economic and technological spheres (in the part where it concerns the assessment of the conformity of local traditions of the past and the present, the authenticity of handicrafts); 2) explore modern forms and methods of transmission of traditions of Seto culture, its preservation, reproduction and development; 3) to determine the possibilities of preserving the ethnos and its material and spiritual culture in conditions of territorial disunity.

⁷ **State of knowledge of the problem.** Due to the fact that the traditional settlement area of the Seto is old-developed and located in close proximity to state border of Estonia and Russia, features of their settlement, way of life and cultural traditions within Setomaa have been studied in sufficient detail, and expeditions were carried out almost on a regular basis throughout the XX century, as well as in recent decades. So, for example, information on the population and the area of settlement of the Seto was collected and presented in the reports of expeditions more than a century ago, in the works of the first researchers of Setomaa, such as M. Mirotvortsev [8], Ju. Trusman [16; 17], Ja. Gurt [2], V. Buck [21]. But it is rather difficult to construct an estimate of the dynamics of the population and to link the data of several studies, since the number of Setos varied depending on the clarity of the clarity of the ethnic self-identification of the local population in different historical periods.

⁸ The historical fate of Seto ethnos is associated with large-scale political events of the XX century — the First and Second World wars, the acquisition and loss of independence by Estonia, the creation and disintegration of the Soviet Union and later the political formation of the post-Soviet space. The territory turned out to be politically divided and to systemize the data of the first half of the XX century, one has to turn to the data of the Soviet censuses (in Soviet statistics Setos were not singled out separately, but were counted among the “Estonians”, therefore, estimates of their number are very conditional).

⁹ From 1920 to 1944 years the Seto area of residence was completely part of Estonia, where the county Petserimaa was formed with its center in Pechory (in Estonian — Petseri). A review of Setomaa’s research during this period is given special attention in modern collective monographs of Estonian scientists — Setomaa 1 [26] and Setomaa 2 [30]. During the Soviet period, when Setomaa was already divided between Estonia

and Russia, special mention should be made of the researchers of traditional Seto culture — E. V. Richter [11–13] and P. S. Hagu [18; 19].

¹⁰ Setos living in Russia were first identified in the results of the 2002 all-Russian population census, but in the materials of this census they were considered as a special group of the Estonian population. A new surge of interest in the study of the traditional culture of Seto was associated with their inclusion in 2010 in the list of small peoples of Russia, after which a number of works on this topic appeared ([1; 3; 5; 9; 15] etc.).

¹¹ Regular surveys on the territory of Setomaa and survey of the local population of ethnic self-identification peculiarities in different age groups were carried out during expeditions organized by Pskov regional branch of the Russian geographical society in 1999, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2016 years ([6; 7; 10] etc.). These studies made it possible to trace the demographic processes taking place in the Russian part of Setomaa in the post-Soviet period, as well as to carry out a demographic forecast in Setomaa for the first half of the XXI century [14].

¹² It is also worth noting a number of studies by Estonian scientists carried out in the Estonian part of the Setomaa in the post-Soviet period, for example, the monograph by L. Reissar [29], works of K. Eichenbaum [22], A. Kiristaja [25], A. Annist [20] etc.

¹³ **Research results. *The influence of socio-political factors on the ethno-cultural unity and ethnic identity of the Seto population of the Estonian-Russian borderland and the entire territory of Setomaa.*** Most likely, significant changes in the way of life and the intensity of interaction with the Estonian and Russian environment and, consequently, in the demographic migration behavior and ethnic self-determination of Setos began before the outbreak of the First World war. Among the leading factors contributing to the decrease in the number of Setos in the territory of their traditional settlement, one can point out migration to remote provinces of the Russian Empire after the Stolypin reform and departure to work in cities with subsequent establishment there for permanent residence. The subsequent events of World war I had an even more negative impact on the demographic situation in all regions affected by the hostilities, including on the territory of Setomaa.

¹⁴ In the Estonian period of the history of Setomaa, Setos and Estonians were separately recorded in the census. During the 1922 census, 15 thousand Setos were identified in Petserimaa county, which accounted for 25,5 % of the population. In accordance with the 1934 census the number of Setos in the county decreased to 13,3 thousand people, and their share decreased to 22 %.

¹⁵ During the Second World war these territories were occupied by German troops and immediately after it, having become part of the Soviet Union, Seto communities faced the need for collective management and underwent very significant socio-economic changes. This provoked a new wave of outflow of Seto youth who preferred to receive secondary and higher education in Estonian educational institutions on Estonian. Moreover, this trend remained stable until the collapse of the USSR [4].

¹⁶ A new increase in the migration outflow of Setos from the Pechora district of the Pskov region to Estonia began in the last decade of the XX century and continued at the beginning of XXI century, which is associated with the collapse of agricultural

enterprises, a general economic crisis and the desire of young people to find work and stable income in the EU countries or Russian cities. Only by 2005 did this flow noticeably slow down, and the decrease in the number of Setos in the traditional settlement area began to correspond to the natural decline to a greater extent [28].

¹⁷ During this period, the territory of Seto settlement in the Pechora region narrowed broke up into several areas. The Seto settlements located at the small distance from the border with Estonia were somewhat more stable in number, but in the post-Soviet period, due to the establishment of the state border with corresponding regime of the border zone in the adjacent territories, Seto settlements began to quickly disappear.

¹⁸ ***Transformation of the economic activity of the Seto and new forms of maintenance, reproduction and transfer of traditional trades and crafts.*** With all the old development and antiquity of the settlement of Setomaa, it was from the second half of the last century to the present that the local settlements, types of activities and related characteristics of the degree and direction of landscape transformation have undergone significant changes.

¹⁹ Until the 1960s of the XX century almost all Setos were peasants. The primary factor in the formation of local features of economic specialization within the territory of the Setomaa was natural landscape differences. Since the territory of Setomaa is characterized by a rather diverse relief, based on the specifics of the combination of landscape forms, it can be divided into four clearly different natural landscape areas: Haanja Upland (more precisely, its eastern ridge-hilly part), flatter elevated territories in the vicinity of Stariy Izborsk and in South-Eastern Estonia, ancient valleys — Vyru-Pechory and Izborsk and, finally, coastal lowlands stretching along the south-western and the southern coast of Lake Pskov. Each of these landscape areas within Setomaa had its own traditional economic specifics, primarily due to the combination of natural conditions and resources. [23].

²⁰ The relief of the hilly ridges east of the Haanja Upland is highly rugged compared to other parts of Setomaa, which, on the one hand, limits the area of farmlands and in some places erosively dangerous, and, on the other hand, due to the presence of Devonian sandstones, convenient for mining, the territory has become a source of the glass industry. It should be noted that with the extraction of local types of raw materials the features of specialization are transformed, but still are very based on the traditional local specifics. So, for example, the modern pottery production in Piusa — using now imported raw materials — has survived to this day.

²¹ The elevated plains of the eastern part of Setomaa are almost completely transformed by agricultural activity, as the land here is fertile, and traditionally in the activity of Pechory, Izborsk, Panokovich and Obinitsi people were engaged in the cultivation of flax, cereals, and later potatoes and other crops. Dairy farming is also widespread. In neighbouring with Setos Russian settlements the types of dominant economic activities were the same. For example, in the large rural settlement of Lavry, located near settlements with a significant share of Setos — Sigovo, Panikovich and Zalesye — flax growing, dairy farming and potato growing — were also the main agricultural activities. The state farm “Lidva” was one of the leading in the region in breeding zoned varieties of highly productive potatoes.

²² The low, partially flooded and in places swampy shores of the Lake Pskov are underdeveloped for a large extent, but on the uplifted parts of the coast there are culturally significant for Seto — Viarska and Saatse. Fishing developed here, atypical for the rest of Setomaa. When comparing the traditional historical types of trades and crafts of this area with specifics of its modern economic development, it can be noted that by now, previously atypical for Setomaa, activities are developing here: production of eco-cosmetics using local raw materials, soap making (even the “Setomaa” brand of soap is produced), souvenir glass casting and other. The settlement Viarska turned out to be conveniently located both for the development of the tourist industry here and for the accompanying development of local industries: due to the presence of mineral springs and balneological resort here, one can count on a steady influx of tourists, therefore, there are a seto cultural center, a farm-museum, a café with traditional Seto cuisine, workshops, exhibitions of woven, knitted and embroidered products of Seto craftswomen, etc, are held here.

²³ ***Modern socio-cultural processes, preservation of ethnic identity and forms of reproduction of traditional culture on the territories of traditional Seto residence and outside of them.*** Maintaining one’s own ethnic identity is one of the key problems of Seto society, which is impossible without preserving the traditional forms of communicative and household interaction of territorially divided Seto communities. The growing gap between a highly urbanized society of global interaction with the expanding importance of digital technologies and the traditional way of life and ensuring its transmission on linguistic, semantic and conceptional forms leads to a break in the connection between generations and the loss of Setos young people in-depth knowledge of ethnic traditions and a native language.

²⁴ It should be noted, that in an effort to overcome this negative factor ethnic communities are very active, including the informational and legislative spheres [24].

²⁵ The first official organization Setu Selts was registered in 1987 in Pechory. Then Setu Selts was transformed into the Seto Congress and Union of Setomaa parishes. The Seto Congress, formed in 1993, is the legislative body of the Seto people, according to its constitution. Its work is aimed at identifying, discussing problems and making decisions regarding the culture, economic and political development of Setomaa. In 2017, an administrative reform was carried out in Estonia, the result of which was the unification of the scattered parishes into a single parish — Setomaa. The parish union was renamed the Setomaa Union.

²⁶ Along with this, on the territory of Setomaa, the local cultural community implemented the idea of modeling statehood through the creation of the cultural project “Kingdom Setomaa”, which does not have a legal status, but attracts tourists and integrates the Estonian and Russian parts of the ethnos. The idea of establishing the Seto Kingdom emerged from the Norwegian Forest Finnish Republic during a broad public debate in 1993. The creation of the Kingdom was initiated by an urgent need to bring all the Setos together in order to preserve the national unity. The proclamation of the Kingdom Setomaa took place on 20th August, 1994 in the Estonian village of Obinitsi. Since then, every year a Seto folk holiday has been held — the Day of the Seto Kingdom. In 2003, the national flag was adopted, and in 2011 — the emblem of the Seto people.

²⁷ For Setos, the area of traditional settlement of which is divided by the state border, the situation is further complicated by the difficulties of communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, communications in the Internet communities and social networks began to play the most important role, consolidating a territorially divided ethnic community, primarily of middle and young ages.

²⁸ **Conclusions.** The formation of the methods and techniques of management characteristic for the indigenous ethnic groups of the taiga and sub taiga natural zones of European Russia took place in the conditions of long settled residence and the preservation of the agrarian way of life for a long period of time. In the context of the growing socio-economic transformations of the XX century and the introduction of new agricultural technologies and approaches to management, changes are taking place in the demographic behavior of the Seto population. There is a migration outflow of predominantly young population to the cities, deformation of the sex and age structure in the traditional areas of settlement, depopulation of settlement, and as a result — the loss of some traditional forms and types of economic activity.

²⁹ The result of the study allows us to substantiate, along with demographic processes, the importance of socio-communicative and economic factors in the historical and modern changes in the Seto population. By analyzing their impact, it is possible to address targeted adjustments to the measures taken by the Seto this cultural community to preserve the economic and craft traditions and cultural heritage of the ethnic group.

³⁰ A positive trend is the revival of a number of traditional crafts in the context of public support (including grants), the spread of Internet communication channels and the development of tourist specialization in the region, what contributes to the preservation and transfer of the main approaches to traditional management to future generations. But the actualization of local production traditions, trades and crafts should not only develop, but also preserve the authenticity inherent in its traditional origins.

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Abstract

The systems of traditional intercommunal interaction, the peculiarities of settlement and the features of the ethno-territorial economic specialization of Setos that have developed over the centuries allow highlighting the most significant factors that are important for the preservation of their cultural identity. Currently, the territorial specificity of ethnocultural unity was strongly influenced by three factors: firstly, this is the division of the traditional territory of residence of the ethnic group by state borders, and the difficulties of cross-border interaction have significantly increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, and secondly, these are trends in demographic processes — depopulation and migration outflow from rural areas, thirdly, determined by changes in the economic and technological structure of the craft traditions of the ethnos to the needs of the tourism sector. The purpose of the study is to identify, systemize and substantiate modern forms of transmission from generation to generation of the traditions of Seto trades and crafts in conditions of territorial and partly social disunity of the ethnic group. The methods of socio-economic and cultural interaction within and outside the traditional territory of settlement of this ethnic group were also studied. It is important to identify the elements of the traditional culture of Seto that have retained their relevance in the modern way of life, and along with them — meaningfully new types of economic activity of local and network Seto ethnocultural communities.

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