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**TRADITIONALIST BRACES OF THE IMPERIAL SPACE:
“HISTORICAL RUSSIA” AS A VARIETY OF EURASIAN COLONIALISM**

Abstract. *The purpose of the research is to prove the unscientific nature of the thesis of “historical Russia” within the borders of the Russian Empire as a means of actualizing the colonial nature and traditionalist essence of management policy in the Russian Empire in the second half of the 19th – the beginning of the 20th centuries, a component of which was the introduction of a rural self-government on a pan-imperial scale. The methodology of the research is based on the principles of objectivity, historicism, systematicity, scientificity. The following methods have been used: general scientific (logic, analysis, synthesis, generalization, etc.) and special historical (synchronous, diachronic, structural-functional analysis). The scientific novelty consists in substantiating the colonial nature and traditionalist essence of the pan-imperial innovations in the management of the countryside in 1861 – 1917, the purpose of which was to unify the management of all regions incorporated into the Russian Empire as a result of the conquest of the Eurasian territories by the Romanovs and their*

predecessors – the homelands of the indigenous peoples of the continent. **The Conclusion.** In 1861 – 1917 in the Russian Empire, which in the "long" 19th century increased significantly due to the conquests of the Romanovs and their predecessors on the Eurasian continent, the axis of administrative modernization became the unification of administrative space as a means of spreading a rural self-government on a pan-imperial scale based on the model of a public village management introduced in the European part of the country by the rural reform of 1861 – 1871. As a result of the reformation, the pan-imperial reform of a rural self-government was implemented in 1861 – 1917, which was based on the synthesis of the rural self-governing traditions of the aborigines with the corresponding practices of the *russky mir* (traditional communities of the Great Russian provinces). The migration of peasants from European regions contributed to the administrative invasion of local villages. By manipulating their interests, the policy of Orthodoxy and Russification of native inhabitants was carried out against the background of measures to increase the efficiency of taxation of autochthons, their performance of duties for the benefit of the empire, exploitation of local resources, promotion of the loyal attitude of the population to the authorities as a means of preserving local traditions. Such a pseudo-renewal of a village contradicted the goals of modernization, as it was based on the traditional practice of social self-regulation, the primacy of collectivism with a complete subjugation of the individual to the interests of the community. Therefore, the reform of 1861 – 1917 became an attempt to unite the imperial space into a single whole with the help of traditionalist scraps and a manifestation of colonialist policy in regions with a non-Russian indigenous population. Evidence of the failure of this policy was the powerful anti-imperial demonstrations of the peasants at the beginning of the 20th century, which contributed to the country's disintegration and actualized the issue of traditional identity in its regions. In view of this, the thesis of "historical Russia" within the borders of the Russian Empire, which is currently widespread in journalism and political discourse of the Russian Federation, is inherently anti-scientific, and "historical Russia" is, in fact, a type of Eurasian colonialism.

Key words: Russian Empire, "historical Russia", *russky mir*, rural self-government, colonialism, traditionalism.

ТРАДИЦІОНАЛІСТСЬКІ СКРІПИ ІМПЕРСЬКОГО ПРОСТОРУ: "ІСТОРИЧНА РОСІЯ" ЯК РІЗНОВИД ЄВРАЗІЙСЬКОГО КОЛОНІАЛІЗМУ

Анотація. Метою роботи є доведення антинауковості тези «історичної Росії» в кордонах Російської імперії засобом актуалізації колоніального характеру й традиціоналістської суті управлінської політики в Російській імперії другої половини XIX – початку XX ст., складником чого стало запровадження у панімперському масштабі сільського самоврядування. **Методологію** складають принципи об'єктивності, історизму, системності, науковості, методи загальнонаукові (логіки, аналізу, синтезу, узагальнення тощо) та спеціально-історичні (синхронний, діахронний, структурно-функціонального аналізу). **Наукова новизна** полягає в обгрунтуванні колоніального характеру й традиціоналістської суті панімперських новацій в управлінні селом 1861 – 1917 рр., метою яких було уніфікувати управління всіма регіонами, інкорпорованими до складу Російської імперії внаслідок загарбання Романовими та їх попередниками євразійських територій – батьківщин корінних народів континенту. **Висновки.** Упродовж 1861 – 1917 рр. у Російській імперії, котра в "довгому" XIX ст. суттєво збільшилася за рахунок завоювань Романових та їх попередниками на євразійському континенті, всією управлінською модернізацією стала уніфікація адміністративного простору засобом поширення в панімперському масштабі сільського самоврядування за взірцем громадського управління селом, запровадженого в європейській частині країни сільською реформою 1861 – 1871 рр. Унаслідок реформаторства було реалізовано панімперську реформу сільського самоврядування 1861 – 1917 рр., що базувалася на синтезі сільських самоврядних традицій аборигенів із відповідними практиками руського миру (традиційних громад великоруських губерній). Управлінській інвазії у місцеві села сприяло переселення селян з європейських регіонів. Маніпулюванням їх інтересами провадилася політика оправославлення та русифікації корінних жителів на тлі заходів із піднесення ефективності оподаткування автохтонів, виконання ними повинностей на користь імперії, експлуатації місцевих ресурсів, сприяння лояльному ставленню населення до влади засобом збереження місцевих традицій. Таке псевдооновлення

села суперечило завданням модернізації, оскільки в основі мало традиційні практики соціальної саморегуляції, примат колективізму з повним підкоренням особистості інтересам спільноти. А отже, реформа 1861 – 1917 рр. стала спробою об'єднати в єдине ціле імперський простір за допомогою своєрідних традиціоналістських скріп та виявом колонізаторської політики в регіонах з неруським корінним населенням. Свідченням провалу цієї політики стали потужні антиімперські виступи селян на початку ХХ ст., що спричинили розпад країни й актуалізували в її регіонах питання традиційної самобутності. З огляду на це поширена нині в публіцистиці й політичному дискурсі російської федерації теза “історичної Росії” в кордонах Російської імперії є антинауковою за своєю суттю, а “історична Росія”, по суті, – різновидом євразійського колоніалізму.

Ключові слова: Російська імперія, “історична Росія”, руський мир, сільське самоврядування, колоніалізм, традиціоналізм.

The Problem Statement. During the period of the 2000s, the leadership of the Russian federation lobbied for the idea of “russky mir” (“Russian world”) actively in the context of expanding Russia’s ties with its compatriots in the post-Soviet and far-away countries. In this context, an aggressive strategy for the protection of the Russians living outside the Russian federation was formed actively, and an open military invasion to protect compatriots in other countries was not ruled out, which is recorded in the main documents for ensuring the foreign policy of the Russian federation (Kondratenko, 2017, p. 11). At the same time, in the journalism and political discourse of the aggressor country, the thesis about “historical Russia”, that allegedly includes the homelands of many indigenous peoples of the Eurasian continent, who during the “long” 19th century were part of the Russian Empire, is promoted actively (Otkuda est’ poshla, 2021; Kto y zachem yzobrel, 2022). On February 24, 2022, with the beginning of the Russian federation’s full-scale aggression against Ukraine, the criminal military actions of the bloody Putin regime proved that these narratives became the ideological basis of Russia’s aggressive foreign policy. This fact actualizes the anti-historicity proof of the specified thesis about “historical Russia”. A strong argument for this issue can be the substantiation of a power organization colonial nature in the regions of the Russian Empire, the indigenous population of which was non-Russian. The need for this is exacerbated by the fact that in the “long” 19th century, on the basis of the administrative modernization of rural areas of the Russian Empire self-governing practices of the Russian mir were adopted – traditional communities of the northwestern (Velykorussky) provinces (Verkhovtseva, 2019, p. 126). Although the name of these practices of the 19th century is only consistent with a modern construct of “Russian mir”, debunking in this context the thesis about “historical Russia” within the borders of the Russian Empire will certainly serve as a task of resisting the informational aggression of the Russian federation.

The Review of Publications and Recent Research. At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries many researchers focused on colonial issues within the framework of studying the regions of the Russian Empire in an economic or historical cultural plane, acting as apologists for colonialism of this empire and superficially equating the latter with the development of virgin territories (Kostenko, 1887, p. 146; Hyns, 1910, pp. 140–143; Lohanov, 1909, pp. 75–76; Dranytsyn, 1913, pp. 100, 144–145; Voschynyn, 1914, pp. 14, 17, 77). On the other hand, through the prism of this apology, one can quite clearly see the preoccupation with filling the imperial coffers and the colonialist essence of all measures for the economic development of regions with a non-Russian indigenous population, along with the awareness of the Velykorossiyan’s culture-tragery mission towards them. In the 1920s, following M. Pokrovsky (Khalfyn, 1965, p. 37), historians emphasized the predatory

nature of Russian colonialism, administrative and cultural enslavement of population in the regions, in particular, Turkestan (Haluzo, 1929, p. 118). A further inhibition of the study of Russian colonialism, as N. Nurulla-Khodzhaeva points out, was influenced by the instruction of the Stalinist leadership to exclude "bourgeois colonialist concepts" from scientific studies in 1934 (Nurulla-Khodzhaeva, 2015, p. 57). With the beginning of the "thaw", during the 1950s and 1960s, the Soviet scholars drew attention to the tsarist policy colonial nature in the Asian regions, emphasizing the tax affairs or economic aspects of the issue (Kovaliov, 1955, p. 43; Khal'fyn, 1965, p. 37; Amynov & Babakhodzhaev, 1966, p. 3). In the mid-1980s, postcolonial studies stood out in the field of humanitarian studies with their interdisciplinary nature and the objective of analyzing the relationship among empire / colony, centre / periphery (Sinchenko & Havrylovs'ka, 2014, p. 109). In the mid-90s of the 19th century the methodology of postcolonialism penetrates the historiography of the Russian Empire (Morrison, 2015, p. 69). The researchers from the Russian Federation (Pravylova, 2006; Remnev & Suvorova, 2011; Fursov, 2014; Brezhneva, 2018; Mamaev, 2019; Bobrovnykov, 2020; Abashyn, 2021; Vasylev, 2022) and other countries whose past is connected with being part of this empire (Iskhakov, 1997; Tyllaboev, 2009; Alymdzhanov, 2015; Tokmurzaev, 2015; Solodova, 2019; Verkhovtseva, 2023), actively address issues that are to one degree or another related to the colonial essence of imperial power in the regions whose indigenous population became subjects of the Romanovs as a result of the latter's conquests on the continent. In the studies of Western historians, despite the difference in a detailed analysis, a colonial nature of rule in these parts of the Russian Empire is doubtless, it is emphasized that this colonialism was one of the varieties of the Eurasian continental one, respectively (Khalid, 2010; Morrison, 2015; Morrison, 2021; Hofmeister, 2016; Veracini, & Cavanagh, 2017; Shorkovyts, 2021, p. 94). However, according to O. Morrison, many provisions of the post-colonial theory do not cover the complex realities of the time (Morrison, 2015, p. 78). In this context, the issue of the imperial power organization in peripheral regions, in the "long" 19th century, in particular, rural self-government, which covered 90% of the population of this country, remains poorly studied.

The purpose of the research is the proof of an unscientific nature of the thesis of "historical Russia" within the borders of the Russian Empire as a means of actualizing the colonial nature and traditionalist essence of the management policy of the Russian Empire in the second half of the 19th – the beginning of the 20th centuries, a component of which was the introduction of a rural self-government on a pan-imperial scale.

The Research Results. During the "long" 19th century, being urgently in need of raising taxation and agricultural production efficiency, the leadership of the agrarian Russian Empire focused on a village management, where 9/10 of the population lived. At the same time, only in the first half of the 19th century having increased for 1.5 million sq. m. km at the expense of Georgia, Finland, Bessarabia, Primorie, northeastern Kazakhstan, the specific weight of ethnic-Polish lands, etc., a socio-culturally and ethnically motley country had to organize itself socially and administratively, realizing the urgent tasks of empire building, the most relevant of which was the introduction of effective fiscal administration. Since the 1830s, the formation process of four estates (nobles, clergy, urban and rural commoners) with the same rights and responsibilities had continued. However, it was extremely difficult to spread this process throughout the country – closed traditional worlds ("free communities"), in which illiterate farmers lived, were very difficult to "open" and comprehend in the categories of economics, statistics, tax affairs, etc. Inspired by European ideas of a natural law and idealizing

these communities, in the spirit of modernization measures, imperial reformers (educated bureaucracy) determined the introduction of a rural self-government according to the model that had been tested since the 1770s in various regions based on the traditions of russky mir. At the end of the 18th century officials applied the traditions situationally for the purpose of taxing communities of aborigines and immigrants from Siberia. Later, by the middle of the 19th century, in the central provinces this model underwent some transformations during the unification of villages management of state peasants, foreign colonists and local agrarians of the Black Sea regions and Right Bank Ukraine. The ideological context was Western European agromania, Alexis de Tocqueville's recognition of the immanence of democratic self-governing practices in traditional communities, and L. Stein's calls to build a fair social organization and policy of state socialism by involving in management of territorial structures elected representatives of local societies based on property principles, as well as European projects in the field of modern local self-government, which provided for introduction of bourgeois and democratic principles of social organization, formation of local democracy, involvement of population in the country management on the basis of representation (Verkhovtseva, 2018, pp. 113–116).

In addition, the reform strategy was greatly influenced by the messianic beliefs of the creative class (nobility) in the special purpose of the Romanov empire in the destinies of the peoples of the world: idealizing velykorussky traditional communities (russky mir). In particular, distinguished reformers believed that owing to a rural self-government based on the russky mir, their country would avoid social upheavals and gradually, due to stability, move to a stateless society, implementing advanced projects of a social arrangement of the countries in the world. In the 1860s – 1870s, during the development of reforms, against the background of an extreme aggravation of financial crisis after the defeat of the Russian Empire in the Eastern War of 1853 – 1856, the collective reformist mind, seeking to ensure that the peasants fulfill all duties for the benefit of the state, adopted the collectivist practices of russky mir in collecting taxes, performing duties, organizing rural society, and incorporated a rural self-government into a local government in almost all “European” provinces. The new / old rural self-government was called a public management of a village and, together with the abolition of serfdom in a landowner's village, it was extended to the latter and to villages of state, palace, district, foreign colonists, Cossacks of the Ukrainian Left Bank. Slavophiles, who had a considerable influence on the reform process, emphasized that it corresponded to the latest European “forms” and was a “world-historical sermon”, a “flag” that Russia raised over all “various tribal peoples”, leaving behind Western Europe with its higher culture, “French democracy and socialism”. However, according to the estimates of S. Witte and K. Arsenyev, reformers demonstrated socio-romantic beliefs, relying on the development of cooperative principles, allegedly laid down in velykorussky mir (Verkhovtseva, 2018, pp. 116–133).

A new impetus to the use of these rural innovations for the purpose of administrative modernization of the country was given by the suppression of the anti-imperial uprising in Poland under Russian rule in 1863. In the search of ways to consolidate and overcome the separatist attitudes of local elites, in the context of understanding the project of the “great russky nation”, a “full and unconditional” consistency of the peripheral regions with the regions of the “inner core” was emphasized. A new programme for the settlement of non-russky (suburban) peoples appeared. They should have been “re-educated” in the spirit of “russky nationhood”, turned into a conscious educated force, “equally solving a peasant issue throughout Russia”. This issue, in particular, manifested itself in the artificial creation of a

peasant state where it did not exist (for example, this is how this state was constructed in the Polish provinces), the construction of new self-governing rural communities, and practices hybridization of the russky mir with the corresponding local traditional ones. As a result, in 1864 – 1878, in the European part of the country, villages management was unified according to the model of a public village management, albeit with some local features: the Polish, Tiflis, Ostsee, and communal Ismaili models were introduced. Their differences were primarily determined by social traditions of the regions and uniqueness of a natural environment. For example, the specifics of the Polish and Ostsee provinces were individual land ownership and social relations. These local features led to differences in aspects of peasant land ownership and taxation of rural communities, performance of duties within the framework of a rural self-government (Verkhovtseva, 2018, pp. 142–150; ; Zemskyi & Trygub, 2021; Zemskyi & Trygub, 2022, pp. 41–42).

However, in general, a rural self-government organization, despite its inclusion in a local government, contradicted the European principles of a local self-government significantly. First of all, an individual peasant was “lost” in a peasant community, his interests were subordinated to collective interests of a community. This situation inhibited the development of bourgeois relations, which provided for the economic freedom of an individual producer and protection of his personal rights. Customary practices were legalized in an internal life of communities, irrationalism of which separated a village from the processes of rationalization and abandoned an individual to archaic traditions of an agrarian society, subordinating an individual to a collective will and devaluing entrepreneurship and initiative. According to zemstvos, volost courts established by reformers rather “legitimized lawlessness”, cementing a peasant corporatism, preserving patriarchy and traditionality of a village in general (Verkhovtseva, 2018, pp. 132–134; Svyaschenko & Kornovenko, 2019, p. 37).

At the end of the 1860s, seeking a means of forcing the periphery to pay imperial expenses, a higher establishment began to integrate the Asian countryside into the overall imperial administration. According to the Governor of the Caucasus I. Vorontsov-Dashkov, elected representatives of the people everywhere had to decide everything “in the spirit of the people”, preserving traditional family ties and establishing order, as in a velykorussky village. Until the beginning of the 20th century practically in all of Asian Russia – in Siberia, Central Asian regions, in the Far East, a new management of villages at a lower, rural, level was practically unified according to the patterns of the russky mir, which primarily contributed, in addition to fiscal, military functions, since military affairs became the duty of agrarians in these regions. This innovation and the introduction of a rural self-government in the Asian part of the country based on the template of the “European” village had their influence on the goal of imperial expansion, for which these outskirts were considered as a springboard. For example, the strategic goals of “paving the way” for a further expansion in the direction of India required solving the issues of organizing the main commodity producer – a farmer, who was supposed to supply grain, fodder, and food for these needs and would himself be the physical force for equipping the army. In a similar vein, the necessity of economic development of the regions bordering on China was considered: so that this neighbour would not be tempted by them due to the lack of resources for their cultivation. Instead, officials were unable to introduce more effective taxation of farmers in the Asian regions, in addition to the one based on self-restraint in communities and their collective responsibility for the performance of duties, due to unfamiliar social traditions of the periphery regions (Lohanov, 1909, p. 26; Dranytsyn, 1913, p. 100; Pravylova, 2006, pp. 272–273; Mamaev, 2019, p. 398;

Bobrovnykov, 2020, pp. 137–141; Abashyn, 2021; Mashevskiy, & Kondratenko, 2022, pp. 79–80; Vasylev, 2022, p. 61; Verkhovtseva, 2023, pp. 171–173).

However, the inclusion of local agrarians in the state of rural dwellers with all their status privileges (owning land, participating in poviats and provinces management through their self-governing bodies, etc.) required considerable resources and involvement of many legal and bureaucratic procedures, which lacked. The collective management imposed by the imperial reformers in rural communities, as time showed, led to a significant decrease in the efficiency of agricultural production and a significant decrease in revenues to the imperial treasury (this is exactly what happened, for example, with cotton manufacturing in Turkestan) (Hyns, 1910, pp. 140–143; Fleksor, 1910, pp. 408–410; Brusyna, 1992, p. 70; Alymdzhanov, 2015, pp. 27, 31; Alymdzhanov, 2017, p. 19; Verkhovtseva, 2023, pp. 173–175). In this context, the neglect of issues related to the development of local industry and trade, together with the detailed regulation of the use of irrigation systems, the maintenance of which involved rural communities, testified to the empire's colonial exploitation of the natural and physical resources of the periphery regions, the instrument of which was a rural self-government actually (Voschynyn, 1914, pp. 14, 17; Tyllaboev, 2009, p. 498; Fursov, 2014, p. 68).

The administrative invasion of Asian villages was facilitated by the resettlement of peasants from the “European” regions, due to a small amount of land in which the country's agrarian problem became very acute (Shkapskyj, 1907, p. 19). Since the newcomers already had the experience of a social organization within the framework of “russky mir” rural communities, the placement and organization of the lives of immigrants in new places was facilitated by “vodvorenia” in rural communities of the same russky mir type (over time, they even began to settle immigrants with natives in one community). This process of the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries was called “reproduction of a community on the outskirts” by historians. By manipulating their interests, the policy of Orthodoxy and Russification of the natives was carried out against the background of measures to increase effectiveness of taxation of aborigines, their performance of duties for the benefit of the empire, exploitation of local resources and promotion of a loyal attitude of the population to the authorities as a means of preserving local traditions (Dranytsyn, 1913, pp. 100, 144–145; Remnev & Suvorova, 2011, pp. 153, 215; Solodova, 2019, p. 163; Mieliekiestsev & Temirova, 2022, p. 47).

The settlers needed land, and it could be obtained by redistributing the lands of the autochthons, which, naturally, led to dissatisfaction of the latter. Along with the cultural expansion towards them (Russification, Orthodoxy), against the background of arbitrariness and lawlessness in self-governing rural communities, which was made possible not least by the support of corrupt imperial administrators, the rights of indigenous population in using local resources in general, were suppressed significantly. The government's redistribution of land in favour of settlers was a gross interference in the self-governing activities of communities. This land redistribution led to a large-scale resistance of the indigenous population of the Asian regions. In the 1890s and 1900s, the uprisings intensified. In 1902 – 1907, the peasant revolution broke out in the whole country, the impetus for which was given by aggravation of food problems and the government's measures to redistribute the resources of rural communities in all parts of the country. A village resistance to the state became systematic owing to the territorial-organizing role of a rural self-government, which functioned on a pan-imperial scale. Under the conditions of World War I, peasant uprisings flared up with new force. The most powerful of them occurred in Turkestan, in 1916, and

were of a vivid anti-imperial nature (Voschynyn, 1914, p. 77; Dodonov, 1947, pp. 10, 16–17; Myronov, 1947, p. 61; Mukanbetova, 2016, p. 74; Mamaev, 2019, p. 400; Tatsiyenko, 2019, pp. 56–64; Verkhovtseva, 2018, pp. 196, 200, 330–359; Verkhovtseva, 2023, pp. 174–176).

A significant role in preserving traditionality of the imperial village was played by village courts, which operated, as it was mentioned, on the basis of oral customary law. The titanic work of lawyers studying the judicial traditions of the regions, attempts to codify them, in addition to declarative statements about respect for the “primordial traditions” of peoples, did not yield significant results: until the fatal end of the Russian Empire, a village was outside the law, outside the norms of social justice. The customary principles of the organization of justice cemented the corporatism of the agrarians and, in the aspect of socio-cultural modernization, caused a legal nihilism of the peasants. However, at the same time, preservation of customary and legal traditions of the regions contributed to awareness of a local population of their identity and individuality, and this strengthened centrifugal tendencies within the country (Kozlov, 1882; Tsyriapkyna, 2015, pp. 280–283; Solodova, 2019, p. 163; Verkhovtseva, 2018, pp. 177, 304–329; Abashyn, 2021).

Summing up, it should be emphasized: as a result of the pseudo-renewal of a village in 1861 – 1917, the lives of 90% of inhabitants of the Russian Empire underwent socio-cultural conservation in a traditional environment, which contradicted the goal of modernizing the country, since there were few traditional practices of a social self-regulation, primacy of collectivism with a complete submission of an individual to the interests of a community. Modernization is connected with the values of rationalism and individualism, and transforms particularism into universalism. Instead, rural self-government served empire-building: it united the expanses of this huge country with a kind of traditionalist staples. At the same time, owing to traditional values, each regional component remained unique, and this made the country vulnerable to the point of disintegration due to social upheavals, which was actually proven by the powerful anti-imperialist demonstrations of the agrarians at the beginning of the 20th century. Everything testified to the failure of the administrative unification policy of the country based on traditionalism of a rural self-government. Taking into consideration the fact that the goals of empire formation also included an increase in tax payments to the regions, a policy of neglecting industry and trade development, a systematically declared “civilizing mission” of the russians in the outskirts among a non-russian indigenous population, exploitation of human and natural resources in the regions, their use as a bridgehead for the further expansion of the Russian Empire on the continent, it is worth stating: a pan-imperial village self-government was rather a tool of colonialism on the outskirts than it contributed to the self-defense of local communities united by the will of the imperial governors into village self-governing communities. This self-government testified to artificiality of imperial space constructed by the conquests of the Romanovs and their predecessors. Taking into consideration the above mentioned, the thesis of “historical Russia” within the borders of the Russian Empire, which is currently widespread in journalism and political discourse of the russian federation, is inherently anti-scientific, and “historical Russia” is, in fact, a type of Eurasian colonialism.

The Conclusion. In 1861 – 1917, in the Russian Empire, which in the “long” 19th century increased significantly due to the conquests of the Romanovs on the Eurasian continent, the axis of administrative modernization became the unification of an administrative space as a means of spreading rural self-government on a pan-imperial scale according to the model of a public village management, introduced in the European part of the country by

the reform of 1861 – 1871. As a result of the reformation, the pan-imperial reform of a rural self-government was implemented in 1861 – 1917, which was based on the synthesis of rural self-governing traditions of the aborigines with the corresponding practices of the russky mir (traditional communities of velykorussky provinces). The migration of peasants from European regions contributed to the administrative invasion of local villages. By manipulating their interests, the policy of Orthodoxy and Russification of native inhabitants was carried out against the background of measures to increase the efficiency of taxation of autochthons, their performance of duties for the benefit of the empire, exploitation of local resources, promotion of a loyal attitude of the population to the authorities as a means of preserving local traditions. Such a pseudo-renewal of a village contradicted the goal of modernization, as it was based on the traditional practice of social self-regulation, the primacy of collectivism with a complete subjugation of an individual to the interests of the community. Therefore, the reform of 1861 – 1917 became an attempt to unite the imperial space into a single whole with the help of traditionalist scraps and manifestation of a colonialist policy in the regions with a non-Russian indigenous population. Evidence of this policy failure was the powerful anti-imperial demonstrations of peasants at the beginning of the 20th century, which contributed to the country's disintegration and actualized the issue of a traditional identity in its regions. The thesis of "historical Russia" within the borders of the Russian Empire, which is currently widespread in journalism and political discourse of the Russian federation, is inherently anti-scientific, and "historical Russia" is, in fact, a type of Eurasian colonialism.

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