

“Life is Everlasting, You Can be Certain of It...”: In Honor of Nikolai Tomilov’s 75th Birthday

Many things are tied with Nikolai Tomilov, Professor, Doctor of History, and Director of the Omsk Division of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography (the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences), the Head of the Department of Ethnology, Anthropology, Archaeology, and Museum Studies at Omsk State University, who celebrated his 75th birthday on September 14, 2016.

Nikolai Tomilov was born on September 14, 1941 in Yeniseysk in Krasnoyarsk Territory. Yeniseysk is one of the oldest towns in Siberia; it was founded in 1619 by a Cossack unit as a military fortress (*ostrog*) on the left bank of the Yenisei River, 12 versts from its tributary, the Kem River. For over one and a half centuries Yeniseysk was the main gateway to Eastern Siberia, the town from the tales of the “Arabian Nights”: incredible stories and legends were told about the famous Yeniseysk. Yeniseysk was also known as a town of skilled craftsmen and political exiles.

It is worth noting that political exiles also taught in School No. 43, which N.A. Tomilov graduated. This school was distinguished by a very high level of teaching; it was neither provincial, nor backward. In this regard, we would like to cite the words of the writer Vladimir Korolenko, “Who knows what would have happened if the Russian government did not have a commendable habit to populate the farthest frontiers by the European-educated people?” Years spent in Yeniseysk—a town with a rich history—were bound to affect the formation of celebrant’s personality.

It was the natural desire of Nikolai Tomilov to receive his higher education in Tomsk, the Siberian Athens, the cultural capital of Siberia. In 1967, he graduated from the Department of History and Philology of Tomsk State University, but his academic career had begun much earlier. Already in 1961, as a part of the Tomsk University ethnographic expedition headed by the outstanding scholar Galina Pelikh, he made his first trip to the Selkups and Khanty people of the Tomsk Region.

Life was such that Nikolai Tomilov had to be a factory worker, a school teacher of history (he even had a teaching experience in German), and a military construction worker. However, all these activities could not get him off the main track of becoming an ethnographer, determined already in his younger years.

Over the years of work in the Fundamental Research Laboratory of History, Archaeology, and Ethnography of



Siberia at Tomsk State University (as a Junior Researcher and later as a Senior Researcher) and preparation of his doctoral dissertation, entitled “Contemporary ethnic, cultural, and everyday processes among the Siberian Tatars”, which was successfully defended in 1973 at the Institute of Ethnography of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, Nikolai Tomilov had acquired a vast experience that became the basis for the development of his unique talent of a scholar and academic organizer.

In 1974, a new institution of higher education—Omsk State University, now bearing the name of Fyodor Dostoyevsky—was opened in Omsk. Almost 50 professors, who came there mainly from the universities of Omsk, Irkutsk, Novosibirsk, and Tomsk, faced a major task of establishing academic education in the region. In the same year, the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Omsk State University was

established. Nikolai Tomilov, at that time still an Assistant Professor at the Department of History of the USSR, saw the future in the development of academic humanities in Omsk.

In 1983, Nikolai Tomilov defended his post-doctoral dissertation, “Ethnic History of the Turkic-speaking population of the West Siberian Plain in the late 16th–early 20th century”. Two years later, he established the Department of Ethnography, Historiography, and Source Studies of the History of the USSR (since 1994, the Department of Ethnography and Museum Studies, now the Department of Ethnology, Anthropology, Archaeology, and Museum Studies) at Omsk State University. Opening of a specialized department at a provincial university (incidentally, at that time, a department of ethnography was only in five universities of the Soviet Union) became a testimony to the successful development of ethnography in Omsk.

Nikolai Tomilov is one of the founders of the Omsk Division of the United Institute of History, Philology, and Philosophy of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (since 2006, the Omsk Division of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Siberian Branch of the RAS) in 1991, and its permanent Director. Two years later, in 1993, the Siberian Division of the Russian Institute for Cultural Research of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation (now, the Siberian Division of the D.S. Likhachev Russian Scientific Research Institute for Cultural and Natural Heritage) was established thanks to the efforts of Nikolai Tomilov.

The contribution of Nikolai Tomilov in the transformation of Omsk is obvious: in less than a decade, the academic and educational outlook of the city has changed beyond recognition. Nikolai Tomilov successfully combines active organizational work and scholarly activities. His has extensive range of scholarly interests, including general ethnology, historiography of Russian ethnology (ethnography), ethnography of the peoples of the North Asia and Central Asia, ethno-archaeology, ethnic ecology, anthropology, Russian history, cultural studies, museum studies, regional history, and religious studies. Even half of that list would be quite sufficient for the work of an entire research group.

Undoubtedly, one of the main achievements of Nikolai Tomilov is the creation of a team of anthropologists (ethnologists), ethno-archaeologists, culture experts, and museologists in Omsk, who are capable of competently solving fundamental and applied research tasks. Notably, this scholarly team is not a formal union, but a community of like-minded people, carefully fostered by Nikolai

Tomilov. It became a real scientific entity thanks to the personal qualities of Nikolai Tomilov, such as openness, friendliness, reliability, capacity to see the prospects and reveal them to his students and colleagues. The students of Nikolai Tomilov skillfully combine the research traditions that they received from him, and their own original developments. Many of them attended the lectures of Nikolai Tomilov or wrote their final theses and doctoral dissertations under his supervision: over 40 scholars successfully defended their doctoral dissertations. Nikolai Tomilov was a consultant of three post-doctoral dissertations.

For many years, Nikolai Tomilov has been the Chief Editor of the journal, “Cultural Studies in Siberia” (published since 1999), as well as series of collections of scholarly articles, “Culture of the Peoples of Russia” (since 1995) and “Ethnographic and Archaeological Complexes: Problems of Culture and Society” (since 1996). He is the organizer and leader of numerous ethnographic and complex historical and ethnographic expeditions.

Nikolai Tomilov’s active life position, his interpersonal skills, and industriousness are embodied in the constant public work: he is the Chairman of the Presidium of the Omsk Division of the Russian (Soviet) Cultural Fund, a member of the specialized scientific councils on awarding academic degrees, a member of a number of presidiums of Russian and Regional non-governmental organizations, the Chairman and a member of many scientific councils of universities, research institutions, and museums, of the Scientific Council of the Museums of Siberia of the Russian Ministry of Culture.

One gets the feeling that Nikolai Tomilov lives in some special dimension. We cannot but admire how much he managed to accomplish in his creative life.

Nikolai Tomilov is the author of dozens of books and many hundreds of scientific articles published both in Russia and internationally.

Scientific and organizational achievements of Professor Nikolai Tomilov have been distinguished by numerous awards, including the Order of Friendship and the Order of Honor.

Students and colleagues of Nikolai Tomilov greatly value his contribution to the development of science and education, and wish him good health and realization of his creative ideas.

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