

NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY  
HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

*As a manuscript*

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IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL FACTORS IN REGIONAL  
DISCUSSIONS ON THE FAR EASTERN PORTO-FRANCO, 1847–1909

Dissertation summary  
for the purpose of obtaining  
academic degree Doctor of Philosophy in History

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Saint-Petersburg

2021

## **Relevance of the research topic**

In modern historiography, the Far Eastern free trade (Porto Franco) system is said to play an important role in the context of the socio-economic history of the Russian Far East. It is considered a major factor in the economic development of the region, as well as one of the prerequisites of its social diversity, including those expressed in a substantial foreign presence in the economic sphere. For the same reasons, the discussion about Porto Franco was an important aspect of regional public life. An important part of central authorities' policies and local management practices consisted of assessing the effects of free trade in the region, as well as regulating it.

Porto Franco as a measure of economic and customs regulation is well studied, as is the influence of its transformations on the course of discussions about it. At the same time, historiography has also noted the fact that the Porto Franco was more than an economic phenomenon of regional life. The discussions about Porto Franco problematized the border between "friends" and "aliens" as well as it transformed the images of the region and its place in the empire and the world. For the local inhabitants and regional administration, Porto Franco had deeper meanings and was not just an economic phenomenon. Instead, the porto franco system was seen through a prism of a variety of social and political questions.

Understanding Porto Franco as a complex phenomenon is important when analyzing discussions about it. Variations in the description of space (for example, as a colony or as an inseparable part of the empire) and population (by using categories of subjecthood, estate system, ethnicity nationality, race etc.) made it possible to formulate different narratives about Porto Franco, about its benefits and its detriments. The presence of different logics and categories of description (the configurations of which can be regarded as "political languages"<sup>1</sup>) explain how, under conditions of rigid

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<sup>1</sup> Or «ideologized discourses». More about the concept of "political languages": Ilya Gerasimov, Sergey Glebov, Jan Kusber, Marina Mogilner, and Alexander Semyonov, "New Imperial History And The Challenges Of Empire", in *Empire Speaks Out: Languages of Rationalization and Self-Description in the Russian Empire*, edited by Ilya Gerasimov, Jan Kusber, and Alexander Semyonov (Leiden: Brill, 2009): 3–32.

political centralization in the empire, the actors whom Frederick Cooper and Jane Burbank have termed the "imperial intermediaries"<sup>2</sup> acquired ideological and political significance as various representatives of local administration, economic and intellectual elites participated in the production of the discourse on Porto Franco.

### Literature review

Porto Franco as an economic phenomenon is well studied. Outstanding works are devoted to the functioning of Porto Franco as an element of customs policy in the Far East of the Russian Empire. The key transformations of the customs regime, legislative and administrative decisions, economic effects are analyzed<sup>3</sup>. The discursive phenomenon of porto franco has also been examined by scholars, though in a narrow scope:<sup>4</sup> as an economic phenomenon in which social and cultural significance was largely neglected<sup>5</sup>. Thus, there is great potential to fill this gap by analyzing the Porto Franco system as an element of the "political languages of rationalization of the empire<sup>6</sup>." In an imperial context, to solve this problem, historical literature suggests using a combination of focus on territorial and non-territorial logics<sup>7</sup>. That is, it is necessary to raise the question of how the perception of both space and imperial society changed in the discourse surrounding Porto Franco.

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<sup>2</sup> Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 13–15.

<sup>3</sup> Natalia Beliaeva, *Ot porto-franko k tamozhne: ocherk regional'noi istorii rossiiskogo protektsionizma*, (Vladivostok: Dal'nauka, 2003); Natalia Troitskaia, "Toska o porto-franko", *Rossii i ATR*, no. 4 (1995): 48–53.

<sup>4</sup> Natalia Beliaeva, "Diskussii o sud'be priamurskogo porto-franko (1901-1905 gg.)", *Gumanitarnye issledovaniia v Vostochnoi Sibiri i na Dal'nem Vostoke*, no. 1 (2009): 5–10; Idem, "Porto-franko v ust'iakh sibirskikh rek v kontse XIX – nachale KhKh stoletii", *Gumanitarnye issledovaniia v Vostochnoi Sibiri i na Dal'nem Vostoke*, no. 1 (2012): 5–9; Idem, "Mery k ograzhdeniiu interesov Vladivostoka: obsuzhdenie v mezhvedomstvennoi komissii. 1903 god", *Klio*, no. 1 (2019): 54–59; Aleksei Nikolaev, *Protivorechiia po voprosam tamozhennoi politiki v torgovykh krugakh Priamurskogo kraia v kontse XIX – nachale KhX v. : monografiia*, (Vladivostok: Rossiiskaia tamozhennaia akademiia, Vladivostokskii filial, 2009); Ol'ga Iakovleva, *Voprosy sotsial'no-ekonomicheskogo razvitiia Dal'nego Vostoka Rossii v deiatel'nosti III Gosudarstvennoi Dumy (1907–1912 gg.) : dis. ... kand. ist. nauk*, (Khabarovsk, 1997); Idem, "Vopros o zakrytii porto-franko na Dal'nem Vostoke v zakonodatel'noi deiatel'nosti Gosudarstvennoi Dumy v nachale XX veka", *Vestnik Novgorodskogo gos. un-ta im. Iaroslava Mudrogo*, no. 39 (2006): 72–74.

<sup>5</sup> Though it is necessary to say that Natalia Beliaeva already stressed that Porto Franco was much more than economic phenomenon: Natalia Beliaeva, "Diskussii o sud'be priamurskogo porto-franko (1901–1905 gg.)", 5.

<sup>6</sup>I. Gerasimov, S. Glebov, A. Kaplunovski, M. Mogilner and A. Semyonov, "Ot redaktsii: Politika Iazyka i Politika Smyslov", *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (2005): 11–15.

<sup>7</sup> A. Semyonov, "Empire as a Moving Target", *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (2008): 377–92.

The so-called "spatial turn" resulted in a new understanding of space as a social-historical construct<sup>8</sup>. In the Russian imperial context, the polity's attention to the territory is considered as one of the most important factors in the transformation of an archaic empire into a modern nation-state. There are studies on the relationship between descriptions of Russian space and the population, the role of territorial imaginaries in the process of the empire's "nationalization,"<sup>9</sup> as well as the role of the resettlement as a distinct practice of imperial management<sup>10</sup>. Outstanding works have been written that clearly demonstrate how not only the "interests" but also different models of representation of the "territorial-spatial order", that converged and sometimes clashed in imperial economic and managerial discussions<sup>11</sup>.

Works devoted to the mental geography of the Russian Far East are relatively few in number, but they have laid a powerful foundation for the present study. In relation to the middle of the XIX century, the public and state interest to the region has been analyzed by scholars like Mark Bassin in the context of the emerging opposition to the conservative policy of Nicholas I<sup>12</sup>. The Far East has also figured in studies concerning the ideology of the imperial elites and Siberian regionalism<sup>13</sup>. Importantly, these studies do not draw a sharp distinction between the Russian Far East and Siberia,

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<sup>8</sup> Important studies that employed new approaches to "space" in relation to studies of the Russian Empire are: N. Baron, "New Spatial Histories of Twentieth Century Russia and the Soviet Union: Surveying the Landscape", *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Neue Folge, Vol. 55, no 3 (2007): 374–400; Idem. "New Spatial Histories of 20th-Century Russia and the Soviet Union: Exploring the Terrain", *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol. 9, no. 2 (2008): 433-447; *Russian Empire: Space, People, Power, 1700–1930*, edited by J. Burbank, M. Von Hagen, and A. V. Remnev (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007); *Space, Place, and Power in Modern Russia: Essays in the New Spatial History*, edited by M. Bassin, C. Ely, and M. Stockdale (DeKalb: Illinois University Press, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> Notion of the "nationalization" of the Russian Empire is used to describe the process of the "empire's transformation into nation," or, the process of gradual inclusion of nationalistic ideas into the discourses and practices of Russian monarchy and Russian elites: D. Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals from the Sixteenth Century to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 281.

<sup>10</sup> W. Sunderland "Imperial Space: Territorial Thought and Practice in the Eighteenth Century", in *Russian Empire: Space, People, Power, 1700–1930*, edited by J. Burbank, M. Von Hagen, and A. V. Remnev (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 33–66; A. Morrison, "Russian settler colonialism", in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism*, edited by E. Cavanagh and L. Veracini (New York: Routledge, 2017), 313–326.

<sup>11</sup> As it is shown on the example of railroad construction: F. B. Shenk, *Poezd v sovremennost': mobil'nost' i sotsial'noe prostranstvo Rossii v vek zheleznikh dorog: monografiia* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2016).

<sup>12</sup> M. Bassin, *Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840–1865* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>13</sup> *Sibir' v sostave Rossiiskoi imperii* edited by L. M. Dameshek and A. V. Remnev (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2007).

considering the two as a single entity. The genesis of the image of the Far East and its integration into the “hierarchy of politically referential imperial issues” has been studied separately<sup>14</sup>. Finally, the role of the discourses of nationalism and regionalism as factors in the formation of the Far East as an imperial and post-imperial region also has been analyzed<sup>15</sup>. In all this historiography Porto Franco appears as an important aspect of the mental geography of the Russian Far East.

The topic of the perception of imperial society is being actively investigated within the framework of citizenship-subjecthood studies<sup>16</sup>. These studies largely started from questioning the possibility of separating belonging to polity (subjecthood) from the rights of political participation (citizenship)<sup>17</sup>. In case of the history of the Russian Empire, researchers have several competing interpretations of the characteristics and dynamics of citizenship-subjecthood. Some scholars focus on the alleged transformation from group-based imperial subjecthood to individualized citizenship as a result of the introduction of nationalist ideas into imperial politics<sup>18</sup>. Another group’s approach involves an emphasis on the divergence between the universalizing discourses of the imperial elites and the actual practices of imperial governance<sup>19</sup>. Yet a third approach concentrates on the geographical factor and

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<sup>14</sup> A. V. Remnev, *Rossiiia Dal'nego Vostoka: imperskaia geografiia vlasti XIX — nachala XX vekov* (Omsk: Izd-vo Omsk. gos. un-ta, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> Ivan V. Sablin, *Dal'nevostochnaia respublika: ot idei do likvidatsii* (Moscow: NLO, 2020).

<sup>16</sup> It is important to bear in mind that within the framework of modern historiography of citizenship-subjecthood, researcher do not study only the legal belonging of an individual to polity. With this approach, a huge range of practices of inclusion and exclusion of the population is studied in order to capture the whole range of relations between the individual and the polity.

<sup>17</sup> Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).; I. Gerasimov, S. Glebov, A. Kaplunovski, M. Mogilner and A. Semyonov, “Ot redaktsii: Grazhdanin poddannyi: problema soprichastnosti gosudarstvu v imperii i natsii”, *Ab Imperio*, no. 4 (2006): 11–16; R. Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992); Idem, “Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism”, in *National Self-Determination and Secession*, edited by Margaret Moore (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 233–265; B. Gammerl, *Subjects, Citizens, and Others: Administering Ethnic Heterogeneity in the British and Habsburg Empires, 1867–1918*, translated by Jennifer Walcoff Neuheiser (New York: Berghahn, 2018).

<sup>18</sup> E. Lor, *Rossiiskoe grazhdanstvo: ot Imperii k Sovetskomu Soiuzu : monografiia* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2017); Idem, *Russkii natsionalizm i Rossiiskaia imperiia* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> J. Burbank, “An Imperial Rights Regime: Law and Citizenship in the Russian Empire”, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol. 7, no. 3 (2006): 397–431; T. Borisova and J. Burbank “Russia’s Legal Trajectories”, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol 19, no. 3 (2018): 469–508.

comparison of the Russian experience with modern colonial empires<sup>20</sup>. Finally, citizenship-subjecthood can be analyzed as a spectrum of ideas and practices that have been a subject of constant transfers due to the global circulation of ideas<sup>21</sup>. The latter approach, when applied to the Russian Far East, tends to reveal the role of the contexts of a nationalizing empire, resettlement colonialism, and racial discourses<sup>22</sup>. It is also the approach which I prefer in conducting the present study.

Substantial groundwork has already been laid in citizenship-subjecthood studies in the Russian Far East. The presence of foreign nationals in the cities of the Far East was deeply scrutinized<sup>23</sup>. The role of foreigners in the context of urban self-government in the region has been examined<sup>24</sup>. Some exists on activities of certain segments of the population, for example, the activities of German entrepreneurs<sup>25</sup> and, in particular, the Chinese population of the region<sup>26</sup>. The role of foreign capital in the development of the Far East has been investigated in some detail<sup>27</sup>. In most of these studies, one way or another, the question of the Far Eastern Porto Franco was raised as an important context. There are also some methodologically similar works on the

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<sup>20</sup> A. Morrison “Metropole, Colony, and Imperial Citizenship in the Russian Empire”, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol 13, no. 2 (2012): 327–64.

<sup>21</sup> S. Glebov, “Between Foreigners and Subjects: Imperial Subjecthood, Governance, and the Chinese in the Russian Far East, 1860s–1880s”, *Ab Imperio*, no. 1 (2017): 86–130.

<sup>22</sup> S. Glebov, “Exceptional Subjects: Koreans, Settler Colonialism, and Imperial Subjecthood in the Russian Far East, 1860s–1917”, *Nationalities Papers*, 2020, 1–17; There is a lot of debate about the place of racial discourse in the Russian Empire, see: M. Mogilner, *Homo Imperii: istoriia fizicheskoi antropologii v Rossii, (XIX–nachalo XX vv.)* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2008); It should be noted that when this study speaks of racial rhetoric, it does not mean that all the actors who used it were racist in the modern sense. More importantly, in the context of the late XIX – early XX century the category of race was perceived by such contemporaries as objective and important, and this perception generated certain social effects.

<sup>23</sup> T.Z. Pozniak, *Inostrannye poddannye v gorodakh Dal'nego Vostoka Rossii (vtoraia polovina XIX – nachalo XX v.* (Vladivostok: Dal'nauka, 2004).

<sup>24</sup> O. I. Sergeev, S. I. Lazareva, and G. Ia. Trigub, *Mestnoe samoupravlenie na Dal'nem Vostoke Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX – nachale XX v.: Ocherki istorii* (Vladivostok: Dal'nauka, 2002).

<sup>25</sup> E. G. Molchanova, *Nemetskie predprinimateli na rossiiskom Dal'nem Vostoke vo vtoroi polovine XIX – nachale XX vv: dissertatsiia ... kandidata istoricheskikh nauk: 07.00.02* (Vladivostok, 2016).

<sup>26</sup> E.I. Nesterova, *Russkaia administratsiia i kitaiskie migranty na Iuge Dal'nego Vostoka Rossii: (vtoraia polovina XIX – nachalo XX vv.)* (Vladivostok: Izdatel'stvo Dal'nevostochnogo Universiteta, 2004); A. I. Petrov ““Russkii kitaets' Nikolai Ivanovich Tifontai””, *Rossii i ATR*, no. 2 (2005): 141–151.

<sup>27</sup> A. V. Alepko, *Inostranni kapital na Dal'nem Vostoke Rossii i ego vliianie na razvitie kraia, 1860–1917 gg. : dis. ... kand. ist. nauk : 07.00.02* (Khabarovsk, 1998); There are also important works that study this issue on the imperial scale: A. J. Rieber, *Merchants and Entrepreneurs in Imperial Russia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); T. C. Owen, *Russian Corporate Capitalism From Peter the Great to Perestroika* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

analysis of nationalist rhetoric, as well as works using the concept of the regional community, which are related to this research as they give a regional comparative perspective<sup>28</sup>.

There are studies that look at the role of the Far Eastern Porto Franco in the context of international relations in the region<sup>29</sup>. There are also works that bring important context to the research of Porto Franco by looking at the role of ideology in the practices of “informal imperialism” of the Russian Empire in China<sup>30</sup>.

In sum, the Far Eastern Porto Franco is primarily studied as an economic phenomenon, even in cases when discussions about it are analyzed. At the same time, in studies devoted to the history of the region, the Porto Franco appears as an important element in the representation of the socio-political space of the empire. That is, the role of Porto Franco as a non-economic phenomenon is presupposed. Finally, the presented historiography of the representation of the imperial space, as well as the discourses and practices of citizenship-subjecthood, convincingly demonstrates the potential of a study of the problem of the influence of ideological and political factors on the discourses and practices of the Far Eastern Porto Franco. This work has not previously been done.

### **Methodology**

The methodological toolkit of this study consists of discourse analysis, supplemented by rhetorical analysis and analysis of citizenship-subjecthood practices. Discourse is viewed as a structure of fixed meanings that represent subjective reality. It is assumed that historical figures depend on the structures of discourse and use them

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<sup>28</sup> In some studies of the revolution in the northern part of the Russian Empire such approach helped deconstructing the image of White movement as elitist movement only: L. G. Novikova, *Provintsial'naiia 'kontrevoliutsiia': Beloe dvizhenie i Grazhdanskaia voina na russkom Severe, 1917–1920* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2011); Also see: “From the Editors: Forms and Practices of Envisaging a Postimperial Order: Hybridity as a New Subjectivity”, *Ab Imperio*, no. 4 (2016): 19-28; I. Gerasimov, S. Glebov, A. Kaplunovski, M. Mogilner and A. Semyonov, “Ot redaktsii: Rossiiskoe Obshchestvo: Struktury i Kul'tury”, *Ab Imperio*, no. 3 (2002): 9–12.

<sup>29</sup> I. V. Lukoianov, *'Ne otstat' ot derzhav...': Rossiia na Dal'nem Vostoke v kontse XIX - nachale XX vv* (SPb: Nestor-Istoriia, 2008).

<sup>30</sup> D. Skhimmel'pennink van der Oie, *Navstrechu voskhodiashchemu solntsu: kak imperskoe mifotvorchestvo privelo Rossiiu k voine s Iaponiei* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2009).

to produce meaningful utterances. At the same time, they are able to challenge the structure of the particular discourse and thereby produce new semantic content<sup>31</sup>. All communication is "situational", that is, it is conditioned by the context. Rhetorical analysis helps to determine how particular text or dialogue is oriented towards social action<sup>32</sup>.

The study uses the framework of global, comparative, and new imperial histories. It implies special attention to cross-border relations, the use of a comparative perspective, the search for causality at the global level, a critical attitude to the analytical language of historiography, and also the rejection of the search for rigidly defined structures in favor of the study of local practices and discourses<sup>33</sup>.

**The object** of the research is the corpus of sources, which includes administrative documents (reports, explanatory notes, correspondence, minutes of meetings, telegrams), expert documents (notably - materials of the so-called "Khabarovsk Congresses"), and various group and individual petitions, as well as newspaper and journal materials, devoted to the existence and functioning of the Porto Franco system in the Far East of the Russian Empire in the second half of the 19th - early 20th centuries. In a broad sense, the object of the research is the sources covering the positions of regional figures in the discourse on the Far Eastern Porto Franco.

**The subject** of the research is ideological and political ideas in the positions of Far Eastern activists on the issue of Porto Franco.

**The purpose of the study** is to ascertain why and how, in the regional discussions on the issue of the Far Eastern Porto Franco, different political and

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<sup>31</sup> M. V. Iorgensen and L. D. Fillips, *Diskurs-analiz. Teoriia i metod* (Khar'kov: Gumanitarnii tsentr, 2004), 17–52.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 191–192.

<sup>33</sup> S. Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Jurgen Kocka, "Comparison and Beyond", *History and Theory*, Vol. 42, no. 1 (2003): 39–44; *Empire Speaks Out: Languages of Rationalization and Self-Description in the Russian Empire*, edited by Ilya Gerasimov, Jan Kusber, and Alexander Semyonov (Leiden: Brill, 2009); In frames of the New Imperial History there exist good studies on the languages of rationalization of the imperial space, semantics of the historical concepts as well as the analysis of social history of the imperial diversity: I. Gerasimov, *Plebeian Modernity: Social Practices, Illegality, and the Urban Poor in Russia, 1906-1916* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2018).

ideological visions of the region and its population, and their place in the Russian Empire, collided, morphed, and ultimately informed one another.

Achieving the research goal rests on the completion of the following intermediary **aims**:

1) the determination of the role of ideological and political factors at the key stages of the existence of the Far Eastern Porto Franco system: in its formation, the first abolition, restoration, and final abolition;

2) an analysis of the role of the Far Eastern Porto Franco as a factor in the formation of a regional community, the specifics of regional administration, and the production of local expert knowledge, and thereby understand the logic of participation or non-participation of certain categories of the local population in discussions about Porto Franco, as well as their positions in these discussions;

3) the identification the key discourses that influenced the ideological schemes of regional activists in discussions about Porto Franco;

4) an analysis the dynamics of the images of the imperial space and society in the discussions about Porto Franco;

5) a rhetorical analysis of the key articulations in discussions about Porto Franco and to determine the logic of instrumentalization of discourses by discussants.

### **The novelty of the research**

The Far Eastern Porto Franco has never before been studied precisely as a non-economic phenomenon, and such formulation of the problem is completely original. The question about the role of ideological and political factors in discussions about the Far Eastern Porto Franco has never before been in the focus of a separate historical study.

The solution to the problem is also completely original - for the first time in historiography, the Far Eastern Porto Franco is analyzed as an element of political languages or, in other words, competing ways of describing socio-political reality. The toolkit of discourse analysis and rhetorical analysis has not previously been used as the

primary method of research when studying Far Eastern Porto Franco, which also demonstrates the methodological novelty of the research.

Finally, a number of new sources are introduced to the field. Primarily there are extensive materials from the regional and metropolitan press. There are several works devoted to public discussions about Porto Franco, but this study refers to a number of new newspapers, and for a number of previously analyzed newspapers, it offers a wider selection of materials, many of which were identified using optical character recognition and frontal search by key categories. Archival collections that are used in the given research are well-known to researchers in the field. However, the focus of the study influenced the distinct approach to some documents. In particular, draft versions of documents and the history of revisions are studied with special attention. Thus, some of the documents from archival collections are also introduced for the first time.

### **Theoretical and practical significance of the research**

This study is positioned at the junction of global, comparative, and new imperial history. The focus on the Far Eastern Porto Franco from two perspectives - the ideas about the political space and the practices of citizenship-subjecthood - allows formulating a broader understanding of the phenomenon of the Porto Franco not just as an economic, but also as a socio-political phenomenon, to rethink the place of discussions on the Porto Franco in the social the political transformation of the Russian Empire, to fit the adoption of administrative decisions about Porto Franco in the colliding contexts of the nationalizing empire, transforming citizenship-subjecthood, the resettlement colonialism in the Russian Far East and the expansion project to Manchuria. This study shows the influence of the perceptions of historical figures about the key categories of the socio-political structure of the empire on the discussions and practices of the Far Eastern Porto Franco. This helps to clarify the logic of decision-making, to see the connections between the discussions about Porto Franco and the transformation of ideas and practices of the imperial management.

The results of the study can be used in the preparation of courses on the history of citizenship and subjecthood in a global context, as well as in the writing of teaching materials on this topic.

**The source base of the study** includes administrative documents (reports, explanatory notes, correspondence, minutes of meetings, telegrams), expert documents (notably - materials of the so-called "Khabarovsk congresses"), and various collective and individual petitions, as well as newspaper and journal materials, devoted to the existence and functioning of the Porto Franco system in the Far East of the Russian Empire in the second half of the 19th - early 20th centuries.

The completion of the research required work in two archives - the Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA) and the Russian State Historical Archive of the Far East (RGIA DV). Particular attention was paid to drafts of documents and the history of revisions, through the analysis of which it was possible to reconstruct the process of selecting rhetorical arguments. The reconstruction of intertextual borrowings also was in the scope of the study.

RGIA. F. 23 ("Ministry of Trade and Industry") contains extensive correspondence of the Ministry of Trade and Industry (including correspondence with representatives of the administration of the East Siberia and Priamur General-Governorship), telegrams, and petitions of interested parties (city councils, exchange committees, representatives of firms, associations), materials of public discussions (works by S. D. Merkulov, P. T. Timofeev, V. A. Panov, etc.), journals of the Council of Ministers, copies of reports and minutes of meetings of the financial commission of the State Duma of the Russian Empire and numerous accompanying materials for these meetings, statistical materials, press reviews, and newspaper clippings.

RGIA. F. 560 ("Office of the Minister of Finance") contains correspondence, expert reports (in particular materials of the Special Commission that was created to discuss trade and customs policy of the Russian Empire in the Far East, which worked

in the spring of 1903). There are also meeting minutes and accompanying materials which are of particular interest.

RGIA. F. 1276. ("Council of Ministers (1905-1917)"), contains copies of the draft of the Special Journal of the Council of Ministers on November 21, 1906, which are of primary interest to this study. They contain corrections by the participants of the meeting. There are also extensive accompanying materials of a statistical nature, and petitions in defense, and against Porto Franco.

RGIA. F. 1278 ("I, II, III, IV State Dumas") contains materials of the State Duma's financial commission, in which meetings Far Eastern deputies regularly took part in when it came to discussions about the issues related to the Far East. Some context regarding the history of the representation of the Russian Far East in the Dumas is given through an appeal to the materials of the Russian State Historical Archive. F. 1327 ("Special documents on the elections to the State Duma and the State Council"), additional materials on the interaction of Far Eastern deputies with the Department of Resettlement were taken from the Russian State Archive of Archive. F. 391 ("Department of Resettlement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs").

RGIA. F. 1337 ("Special Committee for the Affairs of the Far East") contains the materials of the meetings on the issue of Porto Franco, as well as telegrams and correspondence. Of particular interest are clippings from Russian and foreign newspapers devoted to the restoration of free trade in the Far East in connection with the outbreak of the Russian-Japanese war.

RGIA. F. 1622 ("Yu. S. Witte") contains the reports of the finance ministers about their trips to the Russian Far East. For the given research it was especially useful to analyze the nationalistic rhetoric of Witte when describing Harbin, Port Arthur and Dalniy.

Materials from RGIA. F. 40 ("Reports to the Emperor on trade and industry ...") help to reconstruct the decision-making process in the second half of the 1880s - early 1890s, including evaluation of Porto Franco done by the Governor-General of the

Priamur region. Comparing the missives of the Governor-General A.N. Korf to the Ministry of Finance with the rhetoric that he broadcasted at the regional level (for example, at the Khabarovsk Congresses) makes it possible to find discrepancies in the ways of rationalizing the Porto Franco for different audiences, as well as to trace interdiscursive borrowings in the rhetoric of the Governor General from other sources, such as the regional discourse of Siberian regionalism.

The key archive collection of the Russian State Historical Archive of the Far East within the framework of this study was Fond 702 ("Office of the Priamur Governor-General"). A wide list of documents from this collection helps reconstructing the activities, positions and degree of participation of the Priamur governors-general in the discussion and regulation of the Porto Franco system. It is possible to trace the dynamics of the relationship between local authorities and the local society and raise the question of the boundaries between them. The dynamics of information exchange allow for an understanding of the situational power of the Governor General in determining the ultimate fate of the Porto Franco. Several reports of the governors-general are published separately<sup>34</sup>. F. 252 ("Vladivostok Exchange Committee of the Trade Department, Vladivostok") plays auxiliary role when working in the RGIA DV. The materials of this Fond, make it possible to trace changes in the composition of the Exchange Company.

Materials of the Khabarovsk Congresses should be separately highlighted as a historical source<sup>35</sup>. The First, Second, Third, and Fourth Khabarovsk Congresses were meetings of local officials and experts, whose opinion about the region was recognized as useful when discussing plans for the development of the region. Convocation of

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<sup>34</sup> S. M. Dukhovskii, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet Priamurskogo general-gubernatora general-leitenanta Dukhovskogo za 1893, 1894 i 1895 gody* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Yu. N. Erlikh, 1895); Idem, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet Priamurskogo general-gubernatora general-leitenanta Dukhovskogo. 1896–1897 gody* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiya Yu. N. Erlikh, 1898); N.I. Grodekov, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet Priamurskogo general-gubernatora ot infanterii Grodekova... 1898–1900 gody* (Khabarovsk: Tipografiia kantseliarii Priamurskogo general-gubernatora, 1901).

<sup>35</sup> *S"ezd gubernatorov i drugikh predstavitelei v g. Khabarovske* (Khabarovka, 1885); *Vtoroi Khabarovskii s"ezd [gubernatorov i drugikh predstavitelei] 1886 goda*, edited by I. P. Nadarov (Vladivostok, 1886); *Trudy III Khabarovskogo s"ezda* edited by N. A. Kriukov (Khabarovka, 1893); *Trudy IV Khabarovskogo s"ezda, sozvanogo priamurskim general-gubernatorom D.I. Subotichem. 1903 g.* edited by N. V. Sliunin (Khabarovsk, 1903).

Congresses and collective discussion of the region's problems was an important practice in the history of the regional governance. The materials of the Khabarovsk Congresses were published in the regional press and caused heated polemics. Priamur governors-general appealed to them as a source of local expertise. Thus, through the materials of the congresses, the positions of local experts penetrated the discourse about the Porto Franco and gained greater importance, while being retransmitted by the authorities.

Periodicals and separately published essays and works which discuss the issue of Porto Franco are in the focus of the study due to the fact that their analysis allows us to gauge the local, on-the-ground perception of the Porto Franco system and register a clash of different points of view in assessing it. It helps disentangling local contexts and capturing the influence of the general imperial ideological tendencies.

Several newspapers we subjected to digital recognition (if necessary) and comprehensive analysis. These are "Vladivostok" for 1884-1902 (except for 1900 and 1901, as well as single issues for individual years), "Vostochnoye obozreniye" (St. Petersburg, Irkutsk) for 1882-1906, "Sibirskaya Gazeta" (Tomsk) for 1881-1888, "Sibirskaya Zhizn'" (Tomsk) for 1894-1909, "Sibirskiye otgoloski" (Tomsk) for 1907-1909., "Golos Moskvyy" for 1907-1909, "Rech'" (St. Petersburg) for 1906-1907, editorials of "Moskovskiye vedomosti" for 1863-1887. (except for 1868 and 1877), published separately<sup>36</sup>. "Sibirskiye voprosy" (St. Petersburg) for 1905-1909 (fragmentary - until 1912) is of particular importance. Comprehensive analysis made it possible to determine the place of discussions of the Porto Franco in the broader agenda of the designated periodicals, the place of the discourse about Porto Franco in the structure of discourses. Synchronous analysis made it possible to make assumptions about the dynamics of interdiscursive borrowing.

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<sup>36</sup> M. N. Katkov, *Sobranie peredovykh statei Moskovskikh vedomosti. 1866 god* (Moscow: Tipografiia V. V. Chicherina, 1897); *Ibid*, 1867; *Ibid*, 1870; *Ibid*, 1872; *Ibid*, 1873; *Ibid*, 1874; *Ibid*, 1878; *Ibid*, 1879 (Moscow: Tipografiia V. V. Chicherina, 1898); *Ibid*, 1880; *Ibid*, 1881; *Ibid*, 1883; *Ibid*, 1884; *Ibid*, 1885.

Materials of some periodicals were analyzed selectively. These include regional ("Dalnii Vostok", "Dalyokaya Okraina", "Vladivostokskii listok", "Novyi Krai", etc.) and central ("Rus'", "Novoye Vremya", "Sankt-Peterburgskiye Vedomosti", etc.) newspapers, as well as the St. Petersburg journal "Vestnik Evropy", the satirical magazines "Vladivostokskii bes" and "Bryzgi" that existed for a short time in 1906. Some context of the events in Vladivostok during the period of the first Russian revolution is taken on the basis of materials published in the journal "Minuvshiye Gody".

Such authors as A. A. Berezovsky, S. D. Merkulov, P. T. Timofeev, A. V. Dattan, K. K. Kurteev contributed to the vision of the Far Eastern Porto Franco by publishing several essays<sup>37</sup>. Their works presented a detailed and ideologically-loaded argumentation by the authors who claimed to produce expert knowledge about the region. Accordingly, the discussion about Porto Franco unfolded with constant references to these works, and their study, as well as the analysis of contexts relevant for the authors of the works, allow us to reconstruct the logic of some interdiscursive borrowings.

Individual collections of published documents devoted to Porto Franco and custom services are of considerable interest. Some of them were published at the designated historical period, and some at the present stage<sup>38</sup>. Some of the published

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<sup>37</sup> A. A. Berezovskii, *Tamozhennoe oblozhenie i porto-franko v Priamurskom krae* : *Opyt vsestoronnego issledovaniia* (Vladivostok, 1907); S. D. Merkulov, *Porto-franko i kolonizatsiia Priamurskogo kraia russkim naseleniem* : *S pril. dvukh otkrytykh pisem o 'porto-franko' chленu Gos. dumy A. Shilo* (St. Petersburg, 1908); Idem, *Vozmozhnye sud'by russkoi trgovli na Dal'nem Vostoke*: (*Dokl., prochit. v O-ve dlia sodeistviia rus. prom-sti i trgovle 14 apr. 1903 g.*) (St. Petersburg, 1903); P. T. Timofeev, *Porto-franko na Dal'nem Vostoke i rossiiskii kosmopolitizm* (Moscow, 1908); A. V. Dattan, *Istoricheskii ocherk razvitiia priamurskoi trgovli* (Moscow, 1897); K. K. Kurteev, *Porto-franko i Amurskaia oblast'*: *Opyt izuch. vliianiia tamozhennogo oblozheniia* (Khabarovsk, 1907); V. V. Krestovskii, *O polozhenii i nuzhdakh Iuzhno-Ussuriiskogo kraia*: *Zap. shtabs-rotm. Vsevoloda Krestovskogo, (b. sekretaria gl. nach. rus. mor. sil Tikhogo okeana)* (St. Petersburg, 1881); N. M. Iadrinsev, *Sibir', kak koloniia: K iubileiu trekhstotletii: Sovrem. polozhenie Sibiri. Ee nuzhdy i potrebnosti. Ee proshloe i budushchee* (St. Petersburg, 1882); K. A. Skal'kovskii, *Russkaia trgovlia v Tikhom okeane: Ekonom. isled. rus. trgovli i morekhodstva v Primorskoi obl., Vostochnoi Sibiri, Koree, Kitae, Iaponii i Kalifornii* (St. Petersburg, 1883); I. P. Nadarov, *Ocherk sovremennogo sostoianiia Severo-Ussuriiskogo kraia* (Vladivostok, 1884); V. L. Kotvich and L. I. Borodovskii, *Liao-dun i ego porty: Port-Artur i Da-Lian'-Van'* : (*Ist.-geogr. ocherk*) (St. Petersburg, 1898); *Itogi tamozhennogo oblozheniia v Priamurskom krae: Dokl. Vladivostok. birzh. kom. : po st. F.L. Vil'chinskogo* (Vladivostok, 1904).

<sup>38</sup> *Materialy k soveshchaniiam po voprosu o porto-franko* (Vladivostok, 1907); *Porto-franko na Dal'nem Vostoke: sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, edited by N. A. Troitskaia (Vladivostok: RIO Vladivostokskogo filiala RTA, 2000).

correspondence of imperial officials is also used<sup>39</sup>. Finally, the discussion on the Porto Franco in the State Duma and the State Council is analyzed using the published transcripts of the meetings<sup>40</sup>.

**The geographic scope of the study** is partially limited to the territory where the Far Eastern Porto Franco system existed. Geography of the “real” Porto Franco system changed following the development of the imperial space and the dynamics of the political and economic expansion of the empire into adjacent spaces (first of all, Manchuria). The mental image of the Porto Franco was even more flexible and gained situational importance, for example, for the Siberian regionalist discourse. Thus, when dealing with Far Eastern Porto Franco as a discursive phenomenon, it is necessary to move beyond the borders of the territory where Porto Franco functioned. From the point of view of "actual" geography, the focus of the study is most often the southern part of the Primorskaya oblast' and the Amurskaya oblast' (occasionally - Zabaikal'skaya oblast'), and especially the cities of Vladivostok, Nikolaevsk-on-Amur, Harbin, Dalniy, Blagoveshchensk, and Khabarovsk.

**Chronological scope of the study.** The lower chronological bar of this study is 1847, when N.N. Muravyov was appointed as Governor-General of Eastern Siberia. Though the study is focused on ideological and political factors, the date of the administrative appointment is taken as a starting point due to the fact that the appointment of N.N. Muravyov is considered as the beginning of a new stage in the implementation of policy towards Siberia.

1909 is taken as the upper chronological frame. It is the time of the second abolition of the Porto Franco, which happened after a short period of restoration of free trade due to the Russo-Japanese war, 1904-1905. The ideologized and politicized

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<sup>39</sup> I. P. Barsukov, *Graf Nikolai Nikolaevich Murav'ev-Amurskii po ego pis'mam, ofitsial'nym dokumentam, rasskazam sovremennikov i pechatnym istochnikam: (materialy dlia biografii)*, in two volumes (Moscow, 1891); D. I. Subotich, *Zadachi Rossii na Dal'nem Vostoke: Pis'mo gen. D.I. Suboticha k voen. ministru A.N. Kuropatkinu v 1903 g.; Amurskaia doroga i nasha politika na Dal'nem Vostoke* (St.Petersburg, 1908).

<sup>40</sup> *Gosudarstvennaia дума: Stenograficheskie otchety. Sozyv tretii. Sessia II. Ch. 1: Zasedaniia 1–35* (St. Petersburg, 1908); *Gosudarstvennyi soviet: Stenograficheskie otchety. 1907-8 gody: Sessia III. Zasedaniia 1–44 (1 noiabria 1907 g. – 5 iulia 1908 g.)* (St. Petersburg, 1908).

discussions about the Porto Franco undoubtedly took place outside the designated chronological interval as well. However, the second abolition of the Porto Franco is the last key event before the outbreak of the First World War, an event, which radically changed the images of socio-political space of the Russian Empire and the practices of citizenship-subjecthood.

### **Positions submitted for defense**

1. The introduction of Porto Franco on the Amur and the attraction of foreign traders to the region in 1856 was not only a tool for securing a new territory for the Russian Empire, but also an element of a new political course that was promoted in the region by the "progressive" nationalist Governor-General N.N. Muravyov. From the point of view of ideology, this course made Amur an element of global geographic images of the Pacific region as the center of future world development. The liberalization of economic relations and the attraction of foreign trade to the region were designed to ensure the proper place of the Russian Empire in this future, for which it was necessary to implement a new model of colonization on the Amur, devoid of the drawbacks of the Siberian model, and based on comparisons with America.
2. In the Far East of the Russian Empire, foreign entrepreneurs of "European" origin were integrated into the local community both through a formal change of subjecthood and through inclusion in local institutions, as well as in the system of social relations. First, this made it possible to directly participate in discussions, often from the standpoint of experts, whose knowledge was demanded by regional administration in their management and interactions with the imperial center. Secondly, the very fact of this integration and the role of the Porto Franco in this process were interpreted and evaluated in different ways by all the participants in the discussions. These locals played an important role in the polemics surrounding the Far Eastern Porto Franco.

3. There are several discourses that directly influenced the ideological schemes produced by regional activists, in which Porto Franco played significant role and which affected the discourse about Porto Franco itself: these are discourses of nationalism, regionalism, racial discourse, as well as the discourse of colonization. By the time of the first major regional discussions in the mid-1880s, the Far Eastern Porto Franco and foreign trade were extremely negatively described in the discourse of nationalism. In the alternative discourse of Siberian regionalism, foreign trade, on the contrary, was described as an important element of the economic development of the region and a way to reduce its economic exploitation by the political "center". The use of racial discourse, opposing the interests of the "white / Caucasian" and "yellow/Asiatic" races, made it possible to highlight the interests of the local "European" population without distinction between "Russians" and "foreigners". Finally, the discourse of colonization made it possible to talk about the special position of the region and its population in the structure of the empire, to substantiate the need for a special economic policy in the region, and at a later stage to actualize the potential role of the Porto Franco in the implementation of the Stolypin resettlement program.
4. The abolition of Porto Franco in the Amur region and the simultaneous opening of free trade in Manchuria challenged regional models of imagination - the Amur region began to be perceived as a future periphery. Under these conditions, the nationalistic rhetoric about the oppression of the "Russian" Vladivostok and the Priamur region in favor of the "alien" Dalny, Port Arthur and Manchuria made it possible to declare the imperial policy in the region "unfair". The image of Northern Manchuria often played an intermediate role - it was described as a territory that could and should have become "Russian", but only on condition of expansion from the Priamur region. This alternative vision, paradoxically, construed "alien" Manchuria as a "center" whereas "native" Priamur'e became the "periphery".

5. The participants of the discussions on the Far Eastern Porto Franco sought to adapt the nationalist discourse to their own needs. In the context of the nationalization of the Russian Empire, the significance of "Russian interests" was recognized by almost everyone who took part in the discussions. However, situational meaning of these "Russian interests" was determined directly in frames of these discussions. By constructing logical chains, various interests ("state", "colonization", "Chinese trade", "Vladivostok", etc.) formed into competing hierarchies of "Russian" national interests (interests of the "Russian population", "Russian trade" etc.). In addition, nationalist rhetoric was actively used to marginalize competing opinions as not meeting "Russian national interests."
6. In the context of great public expectations from the I and II State Dumas of the Russian Empire, the Far Eastern Porto Franco took center stage in regional and then, intra-imperial public discussions. The Porto Franco issue became an element of political agitation. By the beginning of the work of the III Duma on the issue of Porto Franco, it already was considered as important not only for the population of the region. During the preparatory work in the III Duma, the discussion on Porto Franco was associated with conflicting ideas about the Russian Far East and its population, which appeared in frames of the concurrent discussions about the development of the Far East and politics in the Pacific region. In the final discussions on the Far Eastern Porto Franco in general meetings of the III State Duma it was not the convincing nature of the data what ensured cancellation of the free trade, but the persuasiveness of particular ideas about the Russian Far East. Complexity and controversy of ideas about Porto Franco and its role for the region and the empire in some cases deduced the discussion from the logic of an uncompromising party confrontation, and quite unexpectedly, the abolition of Porto Franco caused resistance not only from left-wing parties, but also from individual right-wing deputies.

### **The research approbation**

Various aspects of the dissertation research, as well as the overall idea of this research work, were regularly discussed in the framework of postgraduate seminars. In addition, individual reports on the research topic were made at events such as intensive courses of the FRRESH research network (March 2019, St. Petersburg), a research seminar on the history of Eastern Europe (May 2019, Bonn, Germany), the international conference "A General History of Free Ports: The Global Impact of European Political Economy" (June 2019, Helsinki, Finland), International Conference "Citizenship under pressure. An institutional narrative about naturalization in changing boundaries (1880-1923)" (February 2020, Rome, Italy), the International Conference "Trade and Empire: Productivity, Economic Exchange, and Differences in Eurasia" (June 2020, Remote Participation via Zoom, Tyumen), the "Trajectories of Change: New Research Projects on Russia and Post-Soviet Countries" seminar (November 2020, remote participation via Zoom, Moscow), international scientific conference "Loyalty, subjecthood, and citizenship: Between empire and nation" (February 2021, remote participation via Zoom (St. Petersburg and Moscow), and others.

Certain preliminary findings of the research are reflected in the articles of the author, which are published in peer-reviewed journals, which are indexed in the international citation databases (Web of Science, Scopus, RSCI) or included in the list of peer-reviewed scientific journals recommended by the Higher Attestation Commission. The reliability of the research and its conclusions was confirmed by the reviewers during the preliminary defense of the thesis.

## STRUCTURE AND OUTLINE OF THE WORK

The dissertation consists of an Introduction, Conclusion, and five Chapters. Each Chapter is further broken up into several Sections.

In the **Introduction**, the relevance of the study is substantiated, the problem is posed, and a historiographic analysis is carried out. Then, the main research question is formulated, the object and subject of the study is indicated, the goal is set and the

tasks are defined. Finally the theoretical framework and methodology of the study are outlined, a description of the corpus of sources is given, and the limitations of the study are formulated, the main terms are clarified.

The **first chapter** is devoted to the role of ideological factors and political visions at the stage of formation of the Porto Franco system. It also addresses the conceptualization of the concept of Porto Franco in the political languages of nationalism and regionalism, as well as the application of rhetoric in the categories of these languages in the first active regional discussions about Porto Franco in the 1880s. It consists of three subsections.

The *first section* demonstrates that Porto Franco was not just an element of economic planning, but part of the political project of the national triumph of the Russian Empire on the Amur after the defeat in the Crimean War of 1853–1856. Porto Franco was an element of such thinking aimed at helping to include Siberia and the entire Russian Empire in the economic development in the Pacific region. An analysis of Muravyov's management practices in relation to Porto Franco demonstrates the inclusion of foreign entrepreneurs in the implementation of the nationalist project on the Amur - their presence in trade guaranteed the colonization of new territories according to the American model imagined through the comparison policy, devoid of the shortcomings of the Siberian experience of colonization and exploitation of Siberia.

The *second section* analyzes how the term Porto Franco was used in 1860–1870s in the "central" nationalist press (based on materials from M.N. Katkov's "Moskovskie vedomosti"). It is shown that in the discourse of the central nationalist press, the concept of Porto Franco gradually acquired the character of a metaphor with a clear political meaning. It is revealed how from the early discussions about railway construction on the western border of the empire, through the traumatic experience of Batum and through the policy of comparison with the British and German experience, the concept of Porto Franco lost its positive connotations as an instrument of ensuring economic progress and social justice, and acquired negative connotations of a source

of foreign threat and separatism. As a result, the accumulated set of ideas about Porto Franco affected the attitude of the nationalist press towards free trade in the Far East of the Russian Empire in the mid-1880s.

The *third section* is devoted to how nationalists' and regionalists' rhetoric clashed in the discussions on the Far Eastern Porto Franco in the 1880s. The important role of alternative regionalist rhetoric is demonstrated, since it persuasively described the political space of the empire through the colony-metropole dichotomy. It is shown how, in this interpretation, foreign trade was described as more preferable and reducing the colonial dependence of Siberia. Using the example of the discussion about Porto Franco in the local press, as well as at the 1st and 2nd Khabarovsk congresses, it is demonstrated that already in the discussion about Porto Franco in the 1880s the rhetoric of nationalism was not the only available language for rationalizing imperial space. The ambivalent position of Governor-General A. N. Korf is separately analyzed. It is shown that, as an "imperial mediator" he situationally used and combined nationalist and regionalist arguments, depending on his intended audience be it local society or the central bureaucracy.

The **second chapter** is devoted to the discussions about Porto Franco in the 1890s, when the first abolition of Porto Franco and the design of the first local custom tariff were worked out. It consists of 3 subsections.

*Section One* demonstrates a high degree of integration of "European" foreigners many of whom became Russian subjects by or at that time. They were integrated in the production of expert knowledge about the region, were recognized by the regional administration as valuable members of the local society, and the over time the perceived "danger" from these "foreigners" relatively diminished when it comes to local sources. The Vladivostok meeting on the development of a tariff for the Priamur region in 1895 is separately placed in the context of the configurations in the local Vladivostok community. It demonstrates how at the meeting the interests of the

Chinese population were linked with the "Russian" interests by means of innovative discursive constructions.

*Section Two* examines how this connection is partially lost when the results of the meeting reached the level of the Governor-General. This is explained through the analysis of the categorization of the local population by Governor-General S. M. Dukhovsky. Dukhovsky's case demonstrates that racial discourse was also an important source of ideological ideas in the discussions on Porto Franco. It is shown that S. M. Dukhovsky, in parallel with the nuanced logic that singled out as a separate category, for example, the Chinese population, also employed dichotomous (in a regional context) notions of the "yellow" and "Caucasian" races. The comprehension of the Porto Franco in racial categories contributed to the normalization of this practice since it met the interests of the population of the "Caucasian race" rather than separating them into Russians and "European foreigners". Separately the case of the expert knowledge production about Porto Franco by a Russian subject of German origin A.V. Dattan is analyzed. It is shown how Dattan also promoted the idea of preserving Porto Franco in the interest of Russians and "European" but using racial rather than national categories.

Section Three summarizes how the images of the socio-political space, reflected in the expert materials of the local activists, and critically examined by the high regional administration, were interpreted during the development of the tariff at the Special meeting under the Ministry of Finance and in the discussion of the abolition of the Far Eastern Porto Franco in the State council, 1899-1900.

The **third chapter** is devoted to the discussions on the chronological period between the first abolition of the free port in 1901 and its restoration at the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905. It is comprised of 4 sections.

The *first Section* examines the reaction of the Siberian and Vladivostok press to the first abolition of the Far Eastern Porto Franco. It demonstrates the relevance of the Siberian regional discourse for the discussion of Porto Franco at that period, as well

as the development of the discursive opposition between the “alien” Manchuria and the “Russian” or “Native” Priamur region as a way to enhance the argument about the necessity to change imperial politics in the East.

The *second Section* demonstrates the transformation of the local community, the formation of a powerful alternative voice on behalf of the local consumer population, which is expressed by the more liberal part of the local press. It is shown that by the turn of the XX century, the voice of the Vladivostok local merchant community in the production of expert knowledge on the issue of Porto Franco became more important due to the development of representative structures, in particular the exchange society.

In the *third Section*, using the example of the exchange committee's petitions and its report to the Minister of Finance, the instrumentalization of nationalistic rhetoric by the local community is shown, as they used it to justify the need to return the government support to the Priamur region, not Manchuria. The restoration of Porto Franco in the region was seen as one of the measures that could help "Russian" Priamur'e and to restore justice in relations between the regions and the imperial center. The case of the "Romanov Commission" demonstrates the difficulties in reconciling "Russian interests" in the Far East and the role of imagination of the space and boundaries of citizenship-subjecthood in this process.

The *fourth Section* interrogates the process of constructing the semantic content of "Russianness" in discussions about the development of the Far East. The difference between the images of the space and the population of the region among the participants of the IV Khabarovsk congress is demonstrated. It is demonstrated that the Congress' participants failed to develop a single narrative about the region and its interests, with the help of which it would be possible to convincingly defend the need for a Far Eastern Porto Franco. The rhetoric of the local community directed at the Far Eastern Viceroy is also analyzed.

The **fourth chapter** of the study covers the chronological period of 1904–1907, and is devoted to the discussion of the Porto Franco in the context of Russian-Japanese war and subsequent revolutionary events of 1905–1907, as well as in the context of the emergence of mass politics in the Russian Empire. It is comprised of five subsections.

The *first Section* is devoted to an imperial official I. N. Protasyev's trip to the Far East, it analyzes the plasticity of the imaginary borders of the region in the discussion about Porto Franco at a time of uncertainty in the conditions of war.

The *second Section* analyzes how nationalist rhetoric has been used in Porto Franco debates to marginalize competing opinions. It argues that, although in the conditions of political instability, the "foreign" commercial elites of Vladivostok and the Priamur Region turned out to be among the most interested in preserving the political power of the imperial center, in the discussions about Porto Franco they were successfully represented as "aliens" to the empire. In the context of a nationalizing empire that had lost the war in the region, the cross-border ties of commercial elites were perceived as a threat. At the same time, the supporters of the "nationalist" view had a categorical apparatus of the language of nationalism developed and adapted to economic discourse.

The *third Section* is devoted to the analysis of the post-war petitions of the Vladivostok Exchange Committee. The failure of the imperial expansion in Manchuria almost immediately influenced the rhetorical argumentation of local activists, for whom Manchuria ceased to be a convenient reference point for opposing the “Russian” Priamur region. It explains a relative decline in nationalist rhetoric among the Far Eastern local defenders of Porto Franco, especially one based on the juxtaposition with Manchuria.

The *fourth Section* mainly deals with the reception of arguments from the discussion about Porto Franco by representatives of central ministries, as well as the efforts of regional activists to take advantage of the context of the Russian Revolution and to switch the place of the discussion back to the region.

In the *fifth Section*, using the example of the efforts of regional activists to coordinate actions with the local administration, it is demonstrated that the active work of the Priamur Governor-General should be viewed not just as a result of his exposure to the influence of "commercial elites", but also as an instrumentalization of new political realities to strengthen the role of local authorities in the governance structure of the empire.

The **fifth chapter** of the study is devoted to the discussion of the Far Eastern Porto Franco in the context of the establishment of the State Duma. The re-abolition of Porto Franco in 1909 also briefly described.

The *first Section* analyzes the context of the great public expectations from the I and II State Dumas of the Russian Empire and how this made the Far Eastern Porto Franco one of the central issues not only of the Siberian regional, but also Russian nationalist agenda.

In the *second Section*, the work of the Far Eastern deputies in the Siberian parliamentary group and the financial commission of the III State Duma is studied, as well as the work of the "Center Group" of the State Council. Discussion on Porto Franco in press and separately published works is considered. It is shown how the unfolding of the Porto Franco debate was influenced by parallel discussions on regional issues such as the construction of the Amur railway.

In the *third Section*, the final part of the discussion is considered, the polarization of political visions presented by the parties in the general sessions of the State Duma is analyzed. The analysis of the press revealed deviations from party discipline on the part of right-wing deputies. The last stage of the discussion of port-free in the Council of State is briefly described.

In the **conclusion**, the general results of the study are summed up, the conclusions about the role of ideological and political factors in regional discussions about the Far Eastern Porto Franco are systematized.

In the Russian Empire in the second half of the 19th - early 20th centuries, the Far East was one of the spaces onto which the imperial intellectuals and activists projected ideological constructions about the imperial space and society. Regional practices of customs regulation, which today are called the system of the Far Eastern or Priamur Porto Franco, became an element of these visions. The appeal to the Far Eastern Porto Franco as an element of the political languages of the empire's rationalization made it possible to see that this happened because Porto Franco port existed not only as an economic, but also as a socio-political phenomenon.

This view allows to rethink the place of discussions about Porto Franco in the process of socio-political transformation of the late Russian Empire. The introduction, transformation and abolition of Porto franco was inscribed in the contexts of a nationalizing empire, transforming discourses and practices of citizenship-subjecthood, and resettlement colonialism in the Russian Far East. In turn, looking at the discussions about Porto Franco in these contexts allows to take a fresh look at what exactly it meant for contemporaries in the region, to better understand the feelings of contemporaries about its abolition.

**Information about the organization** in which the research was carried out and about the scientific supervisor. The dissertation was completed at the Department of History of the St. Petersburg School of Arts and Humanities at the St. Petersburg Branch of the Federal State Autonomous Educational Institution of Higher Education National Research University Higher School of Economics. Academic Supervisor - PhD (History), Professor of the Department of History Alexander Mikhailovich Semyonov.

**The list of published papers on the topic of the dissertation:**

*Publications in journals included in the Higher School of Economics' list of high-level journals, and in journals indexed in the Scopus, Web of Science and RSCI databases:*

1. Aleksandr Turbin, “The Free-Port Regime in the Far East in Languages and Practices of the Modernizing Empire”, *Ab Imperio*, no. 1 (2019): 45–78.

2. Aleksandr Turbin, “The ‘Russian’ Far East?: nationalistic rhetoric in the debates about Porto franco in the Far Eastern territories of the Russian Empire”, *Vestnik Permskogo Universiteta. Istorija*, no. 2 (2020): 45-56.

3. Aleksandr Turbin, “‘Deception Begins with Trade...’: Vladimir Arsen’ev’s Economic Expertise and Challenges of Rationalizing Imperial Diversity in the Taiga”, *Sibirica*, vol. 19, no. 3 (2020): 37–59.

***Other academic publications:***

4. Aleksandr Turbin, “Between welcomed ‘foreigners with the capital’ and dangerous ‘exploiters of the Russians’: Russian subjecthood, inclusion, and exclusion of ‘foreign’ merchants in the Far East of the Russian Empire” In *Citizenship under Pressure: Naturalisation Policies from the Late XIX Century until the Aftermath of the World War I*, 135–49. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2021.