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Cultural Transformation in the Northern Caucasus at the turn of XIX – XX centuries (A case study on Ingush people)

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Civilizational development of ethnic culture is accompanied by quite noticeable processes of transformation and contradictions, that dictate “the following questions: how culture should be developed to combine both universal and local ones; how the principle of the dialogical relations between cultures should be realized in practice and where the border of interaction must pass, beyond which there begins the loss of the original cultural identity; where the division between cultural influence and cultural expansion happens; how to preserve the cultural specificity and to be on modern lines entering the information society; if it is possible to consider the technological progress as cultural progress; whether the latest means of communication has any impact on the quality of consciousness and perception, and if they influence, then how”¹.

Interest in ethnic, territorial phenomenon of culture is widespread among scholars and practitioners. This, in particular, is because of the growth of ethnic consciousness of society. It is stimulated by resistance to unification of lifestyles of different social, especially ethnic subjects in line with the process of universalization of culture and simplification of its phenomenal institutions.

It is necessary to establish a logical sequence of historical events which forge the progress or regressive trends of social life influenced by conscious patterns alternatively conducive to either integration or degradation of the cultural level. Making an empirically reliable generalization based on the primary material for the philosophical understanding of the problem, which will help to form an objective conception in the future, is also essential.

¹ Kostina A.V. Natsional'naya kul'tura – etnicheskaya kul'tura – massovaya kul'tura. P. 3

The Nakho-Caucasian culture originated in the early stages of the formation of the proto-Ingush ethnos and managed to preserve its originality and uniqueness for centuries. The Ingush (*G1algay*) as a socio-historical subject, in certain times had its own interests, the purports and objectives of the social and cultural implementation, and, like any ethnic group depended on the historic changes.

The genesis of cultural norms is essentially a continuation of formogenesis that in the process of integration of forms into the social practice, part of which acquires the status of the new norms and standards of activity, and the interaction in this ethnic group (institutional – with an imperative function, conventional – with a “permissive” character, statistical – with an uncertain type of regulation). Some forms enter with new elements in the current system of identity that perceive these forms of people’s collective, primarily at the level of a social micro-groups like a big family.

As the first micro-group, large family in the Ingush played a major role in shaping of the kin (*teip*), then the society (*shahra*) and the ethnos (*kiam*). The structure of public relations was formed in the same manner, from the family to the society and the state. Each Ingush society, at times, and the whole mountain gorge was a democratic micro-polis that voluntarily entered into a single union (*моx/к*), taking on the very real liabilities, depending on the interests of the entire pole of federation enjoying equal rights. The most important element of interrelations supporting social and political structure of the union was the reciprocity principle of social connection and interaction.

Till the beginning of the 19th century, an institution of the public association of Ingush society such as *Mekhk-Khel*² (Council of the country) played an important role, which made its decisions equally binding for all; including the decision on the assembling of the people's volunteer corps. People's volunteer corpses were called together within a single society in the appointed place, and those who refused to appear were punished. In exceptional cases, the volunteer corpses were created throughout the country.

Mekhk-Khel performed functions of the supreme legislative³, judiciary and the executive⁴ power for the Ingush in the past. Forum used to be assembled from the representatives of various societies under the leadership of Chairman (*bachcha*), at

² Istoriya Checheno-Ingushetii. P. 76

³ Popov I. Ichkerintsy. P. 262-263

⁴ Tsentral’niy gosudarstvenniy arkhiv Respubliki Dagestan. Fond 1406, f. 294, l. 4-8

least, biannually⁵. In *Mekhk-Khel* Ingush elders established procedure⁶ of land ownership and land tenure, and agreed on standards of behavior and penalties for violating them; they made decisions on the questions of war and peace, domestic (establishment of units of measurement, prices of livestock, and so on) and foreign trade⁷, took defensive measures, collected material resources for public need and determined various taxation and duties⁸. Apparently, this saying indicates the power that was possessed by *Mekhk-Khel* in the past: “It was not avenged for activities of the country, but actions against the country were not forgiven”⁹.

The Ingush ethnos, as the real organization of individuals, engaged in certain geographical space in the Central Caucasus and was characterized by biological reproduction. In addition, its basic cultural values were expressed in the external unity of cultural forms, unified semantic fields of communication and interaction, symbolic and semantic contacts of identification focused primarily on the constitutionalization of the ethnic group¹⁰.

The culture of the Ingush, as a whole, encompasses the whole scope of the forms of human activity, acquired knowledge, images of self knowledge and symbolic signs of the world around. It functioned as a structure-forming basis to ensure the integrity of the ethnic group and the ability to cause autonomous, sustainable development and social self-organization in various historical situations. Stone architecture as the reflection of the past conveys the characteristic features of the previous culture to us. Notable artifacts of Ingush material culture are unique tower complexes, terraces, water conduits and other structures on the territory of mountainous Ingushetia. Monuments of material culture indicate a high level of stone architecture. We won't dispute the fact that the towers, mountain roads, unique terraces for growing a variety of cereals, water mills and other systems were created by the ancestors of the Ingush, some to protect the territories from numerous hostile hordes from the north and the south that attacked the Caucasus, others for providing their own population with food, even in the most difficult mountain conditions.

“In the economic activity.... handicraft industry, especially pottery and metalworking played an important role. Burial and household monuments represent large numbers

⁵ Saidov I.M. Obshchestvenniy byt vaynakhov v XIX v. P. 202

⁶ Laudayev U. Chechenskoye plemya. P. 92

⁷ Akty Kavkazskoy Arkheologicheskoy Komissii. Vol. VII. P.917-918; Tsentral'niy gosudarstvenniy voyenno-istoricheskiy arkhiv. Fond 26, c. 152, f. 514, l. 126-127. Raport generala Rtishcheva voyennomu ministru Barklayu de Tolli ot 6 oktyabrya 1811 g. № 1858

⁸ Saidov I.M. Obshchestvenniy byt vaynakhov v XIX v. P. 202

⁹ Kharsiev B.M. Ingushskiye adaty kak fenomen pravovoy kul'tury. P. 71

¹⁰ Albakova F.Y. Sovremenniy problemy natsional'no-etnicheskogo soznaniya na Severnom Kavkaze. P.3

of pottery. here were found several kilns.... Metalworking played a significant role. Weapons, labor tools and adornments were manufactured from the metal. The local craftsmen were familiar with such techniques of the metalworking as casting, forging, embossing, carving, stamping, incrustation and wire drawing”¹¹.

In the early Middle Ages, the Nart epic tradition of the Ingush took its final shapes in the territory forcibly torn away from the Ingush by the neighboring nations.

Material and spiritual culture of the Ingush is a phenomenon of national identity, which belongs to the category of axiological values, the study of which is necessary for the development of both historical and cultural themes, as well as social philosophy as a whole.

From the mid 16th century on, the North Caucasus fell into the orbit of geopolitical aspirations of the Moscow State and since then Russia has made great efforts to join the Caucasian lands to the Russian state.

As the result of a purposeful policy pursued by the tsarist authorities in the Caucasus, and the vigorous activities of the representatives of the Ingush joint societies, in 1770 (March 17, New Style), the Ingush noblemen signed a petition for entry of Ingushetia to the Russian Empire¹².

Mountaineers of the Caucasus were ready to bear patiently the yoke of Russian rule, provided that the immunity of their religion, customs and way of life were insured¹³, i.e., the preservation of spiritual values and cultural traditions, as well as the protection of their moral and material interests by the Russian state. The Ingush population of the Caucasus accepted and understood Russian citizenship exactly so. The understanding of the nature of the Russian-Caucasian mutual relations by the parties that signed this important historical act was different.

In the second half of the 18th century, the Russian Empire was in need of allied relations with the mountaineers of the North Caucasus in order to consolidate its political positions in Transcaucasia (South Caucasus). Firmly established its dominance in Transcaucasia, Russia could no longer back out from the “influence” on other peoples of the Caucasus, the land of which separated it from the new domains. I.Y. Kutsenko notes: “It was necessary for us to maintain the Russian

¹¹ Anchabadze G.Z. Vaynakhi. p.26

¹² AVPRI DID MID. L. 4180

¹³ Natsional'naya politika Rossii. p. 92

domination in the Caucasus - at any cost to provide our only road passing just through these mountains”¹⁴.

Features of cultural development of an ethnos or people are directly related to conditions of its existence. The changed conditions dictate new rules in the interrelations between the ethnic communities and different peoples. Dynamic interaction of ethnic cultures actualizes the necessity for finding of admissible forms of development and modernization in the common space. The search of true forms of interrelations and the common life-supporting interests bring the ethnic groups together. However, the Caucasian policy of the Russian state was unable to find a basis for dialogue between the cultures, which would ensure peace and mutual understanding between the metropolis and the outlying districts.

For the realization of its interests in interrelations with small nations, Russia can adhere to any integration or assimilation policies. Russian Empire adhered to the assimilation policy with regard to the Caucasian peoples. Those who resisted Russification were subjected to severe oppression.

Starting from the first years of Russia’s “possession” over the Caucasus, there began distinctive problems in mutual understanding between Russian authorities and the mountaineers. Being traditionally accustomed to serf management, the Russian power system could not understand and accept the free disposition of the Ingush society, as the Ingush refused to give implicitly their property, fodder and cattle to the needs of the army, as well as to hand over personal weapons, unquestioningly obey orders of the new Russian authorities, “... the people, who carried out the conquest of the North Caucasus and the initial colonization of conquered territories, do not have a clear picture about the motives of their activities and stay here. This fact is very important for understanding the essence of the problem, because Russia has never had any clear doctrine for colonial policy (such as it was in England). It should be emphasized that, in the whole, the national consciousness correlated with the policy of the ruling tops” in this question”¹⁵.

Russia mostly was building its relations with the conquered (or voluntarily joined) nations in a different way, for example, then her contemporaries England or France. Colonialism had its own characteristics, i.e., its individuality in Russia. The European colonialism can be defined as an economic, but the Russian colonialism as a socio-cultural one.

¹⁴ Kutsenko I.Y. Kavkazskaya voyna i problema preymstvennosti politiki na Severnom Kavkaze. p. 55

¹⁵ Lur’ye S.V. Rossiyskaya imperiya kak etnokul’turniy fenomen. p. 57

Essential distinctions had the ultimate aims. European metropolis considered its colonial territories, first of all, as a source for well-being of the residents of their states, as well as one of the ways for intensive development of its economy. In the period of shaping the statehood and formation of the foundations of historical and cultural type Russia did not know the “tight” European borders and, consequently, the geographical isolation of colonized territories.

Ethno-cultural ties of the settlers were not interrupted but expanded, mainly to the east and the south from places of their historical homeland. The obvious truth that with the loss of areas people lose their culture is the case linked with the destiny of the Ingush people. The land, mineral wealth, the graves of the ancestors were taken by occupiers as trophies, and after the generations all these treasures are perceived by invaders as part of their historical heritage. The process of the formation of the Russian super-ethnos that had absorbed many ethnic groups of non-Slavic origin identified the extensive nature of Russian colonialism. The use of the term “extensive” to the phenomenon of colonialism has a certain share of conditionality, however, considering ways to expand the ethnic area of the Russian, as well as the significant ethnic and cultural assimilative tendencies in the process of construction of the super-ethnos is quite acceptable. In other words, if for Europe money is important, then the land, more specifically, the space is essential for Russia¹⁶.

By applying the repressive measures of oppression for nationalities out of favor, such as the destruction of the settlements, the eviction of ethnic groups from the inhabited lands, as well as promoting the class and group division of ethno-sphere by different methods, the tsarist authorities systematically carried out the policy of expansionism in the Caucasus.

“Culture is not the whole scope of historical events themselves (phenomenon, occurrences, products, etc...), but their specific forms”¹⁷.

Axiology of the Caucasus and the metropolis was so different that the process of acculturation, for example, had no reason in relation to the Ingush. The concept of culture, just like the concept of society is many-sided and diverse. Public life - first and foremost, is the intellectual, moral, economic, and religious life. It covers all the features of peoples' life living together¹⁸.

¹⁶ Stone W.F., Schtufiner P.E. The Psychology of Politics. p. 97

¹⁷ Fliyer A.Y. Kul'turogenez. p. 13

¹⁸ Tabliashvili Z.A., Goroziya V.Y. Chelovek: sootnosheniye natsional'nogo i obshechelovecheskogo. p. 243

The whole set of values, beliefs, traditions and customs by which the Ingush society was guided, predominant or dominant culture of this society was totally unacceptable to the colonial power. The dominant culture can be national or ethnic, depending on how complexly this society is organized and how populous this country is.

The Ingush society, which never knew the foreign slavery, was just not ready to recognize the humble domination of autocratic power. Almost everyone at the individual level recognized only the power of God over him and believed that only He who gave life to all living world has given to his people a beautiful land, wise laws, and to every man - a brave heart to protect the sacred world of ethnic values. Impetuous yearning for freedom, subjected only to the sacred belief was characteristic feature of a mountaineer forming his mentality. The complex of axiological distinctive values defined the way of thinking of the ethnic Ingush.

In comparison with other components of culture, values are generally regarded as the more fundamental formations, as “abstract ideals... not associated with a particular object or situation, as a kind of a human idea about the ideal models of behavior and the ideal ultimate aims”¹⁹.

Anthropological patriotism as genetic nature is based on devotion of biological and geographical propinquity to the family, generation, community, ethnos and the native land. It is formed on a subconscious level, under the influence of cultural traditions and is projected in the value, ideological constructions. Native land, customs and traditions, will and freedom for centuries have been the highest value for the Ingush.

In the Caucasus, authorities did not need the consensus; brute force is not able to create value structures.

The current problems of the Caucasian peoples were created by the Russian Empire from the beginning of the 19th century. The ideological nepotism against the Caucasian peoples has demonstrated for two hundred years its inability to a constructive dialogue, but traditionally, every time perceived as a reliable method of governance by a new government it continues to direct a devastating injustice.

In various publications it is written a lot about the progressive influence of the Russian Empire on the culture of the Caucasian peoples, including the culture of the Ingush. One can hardly agree with all the arguments uttered by the supporters of this paradigm. If the policy of humiliation, oppression, expulsion of the Ingush people can be called an evolution, then it is necessary to agree with the thesis of the

¹⁹ Stone W.F., Schtufiner P.E. The Psychology of Politics. p. 63

progressive role of Russian the development of Ingush culture and ethnos. If not, then the truth must be said, in order to continue to avoid the political destructivism, to make it easier to find ways for mutual understanding and to overcome the burning problems.

At the same time through the Russian language, the Ingush gained access to the world literary treasure, to the technical culture. Russian language has become the interethnic language as a means of intercourse for the people living in Russia, and as the main official language for the standard education. Ethnos can change its adaptive strategies, continuously generating new forms of culture for solution of urgent problems.

Political repression and military pressure on the Ingush led to deformations of their ideological and conscious level. The constant struggle for survival has launched a process of crisis of consciousness, therefore, increasingly in the value consciousness began occurring failures facilitating to the substitution of the spiritual values with material one, which had an impact on the priorities of the ethical value system.

Processes of family disorientation, debilitating at the primary level, the foundations of the Ingush family, historically existed on the patriarchal values, acquire a quality of a new phenomenon caused by bicultural ambivalence of consciousness, trying to meet both national spiritual values and the modern way.

“The old system of values is subjected to powerful pressure and destruction, and the interim frames of adaptation do not allow new characters to adapt to the traditional values of sense. The systems of values and traditions that prevailed for centuries are being frustrated. New values differ from the traditional culture so that their culture forming meaning is not always clear”²⁰.

To sum up, it should be stated that the 19th and 20th centuries became for the Ingush a period of political and financial instability, a period of national disaster and shocks.

Violations in the sphere of identification are the indication of the crisis. When the crises become radical, a real mechanism of degradation of culture, division in the ethnic sphere is created; only temporary structures incapable for reproduction, which do not carry any stable ethnic and cultural stereotypes of behavior, appear on the stage. As a consequence, the ideal conditions for permanent conflict are made up, scouring the spiritual and moral bases of the ethnic group, its phenomenal cultural essence. The social system unable to maintain the minimum needs of life sustenance

²⁰ Mironov V.V. Transformatsiya kul'tury v prostranstve global'noy kommunikatsii. p. 104

urges the consciousness on the search of new values that can serve the existential needs.

The new morality promoted by media world and the predominance of information has changed ethics. All that makes a profit without violating state laws, that is, the laws invented by man for his creative activity became a moral. Ethics purposefully estranged from the fundamental moral and religious grounds has lost the sacral base and hence the qualities of high moral -spiritual anguish inherent to the dual world of an individual.

Neglect of vital problems turns out to be a loss of faith in human being, which makes his helplessness and insignificance clear to him before the grand achievements of civilization. “The abundance of goods and information, incentives to meet the elementary requirements lead not to the personalization of an individual as the ideologues of liberalism assert, but to the shatter of social foundations and to the spread of indifference and apathy. There is an actual disintegration of society, destroying the very motivation of productive activities and leaving only the simplest forms of material exchange”²¹.

Ingushetia is experiencing a new round of cultural development, and it is important to preserve valuable traditions rooted into the national culture for further progress of the family and society, and the entire nation.

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²¹ Chigareva V.V. Krizis rossiyskogo obshchestva i rol' tsivilizatsionno-kul'turnoy identichnosti v yego preodolenii. p. 4

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Summary

Cultural Transformation in the Northern Caucasus at the turn of XIX – XX centuries (A case study on Ingush people)

Boris Kharsiev

Ingush Scientific and Research Institute of the Humanities named after C.
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Civilizational development of ethnic culture is accompanied by quite tangible transformation and contradiction processes. It is necessary to establish a logical connection between the historical events bringing the progressive or regressive social phenomena to life. The process of formation of the Russian super-ethnos, which has absorbed a great number of non-Slavic groups, has defined extensive character of the Russian colonialism. Modern problems of the Caucasus people have been ignited since the beginning of the 19th century by the Russian Empire. Today, while Ingushetia experiences a new phase of cultural development, it is important to preserve precious traditions of the nation.

Keywords: Culture. Ethnos. Ethnogenesis. Historical events. Colonial territories. Axiology. Values and traditions. The dominating culture