

THE FORMATION OF SIBERIAN SUB-ETHNIC IDENTITY IN POST-SOVIET RUSSIA

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ABSTRACT

The article substantiates the hypothesis of existence of Siberian sub-ethnic identity on the basis of analysis of Siberian social practices, results of focus-groups, and literary texts. The Siberian sub-ethnic identity is based on ethnic, cultural, religious, political, regional, and territorial identities. The processes of globalization cause a reaction and give rise to new types of ethnic and cultural identities, associated with the territories. Siberian region is of great importance for the economic and political development of post-Soviet Russia. In the future, active formation of Siberian sub-ethnic identity and realization of its inherent cultural values could trigger new economic and political processes, influence new economic relationships between the Federal government of the Russian Federation and Siberian regions.

Keywords: Siberia, Siberian sub-ethnos, a Siberian, Siberian identity, social practice, post-Soviet.

INTRODUCTION

The question of the relationship between traditional values, patterns of behaviour and new social and cultural practices is extremely important today. Globalization with its transnational values objectively provokes serious changes in the ethnic map of the world, first of all endangering indigenous and minority (small-numbered) peoples [1]. Individualism and practices of personal success are in tough competition with ethnic identity, regional identity [2]. We hypothesize that in these conditions value systems of major ethnic groups, which are more tolerant to crisis changes, and, hence, more competitive in the new social systems, may be very useful.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SIBERIAN SUB-ETHNIC IDENTITY

The principal distinctive feature of Siberian region is a large number of ethnic and cultural groups living here. Analysis of values and worldviews of Siberians, establishing basic Siberian social practices, is an endless dialogue of historical facts, biographies, events, ideas, documents, reflections, literary and fictional texts, images, meanings and symbols.

Siberian land had been inhabited long before the Russian appeared here. By the time of the colonization by the Russian state, Siberian region already had certain traditions of statehood. "Pre-Russian" Siberian statehood had a significant impact on the cultural archetypes of this area. Siberia's freedom from slavery is one of the main economic and cultural factors, which shaped the values of the Siberians. Ancient Asian tribes that lived in Siberia drove a large number of people from the territories of their habitation to the metropolis. During a certain period of time the free areas were settled by other ethnic communities.

However, even in this "ethnic mobility", already the second generation of immigrants, according to the researchers, begins to acquire the features of the Siberians. Siberian identity is manifested in Siberian peculiarities of the Russian language: the active, actively creative character of a Siberian is confirmed by the dominance of verbs in their everyday speech, compared to the everyday speech of the inhabitants of the Central regions of the Russian Federation. Today in the everyday speech of Siberians there are still not less than 15 verbs, denoting different modes of speaking, which acknowledges the essential role of transference of experience and information in the social practices of Siberia.

The opinion of the first in the history of Siberia Russian Governor of Yenisei province A.P. Stepanov can serve as an indirect confirmation of the existence of a special variant of the Russian language. He was amazed at how clearly, understandably and without hesitation can a Siberian pass his knowledge to another person. The Governor Stepanov noted impressive intellectual abilities of the residents of Yenisei province and courage people's attitude to each other. The special role of mass communication in Siberia is also evident in the fact that Siberians have always liked gossip and rumors, true and false, characterized by the absence of malice, which were rather a fantasy "for fun of the mind and delight to the heart", than deliberate slander [5].

Whether this social practice remains today can be seen in the results of the focus – groups, conducted in 2014 for the study of value orientations of youths in Siberian regions. When defining the qualities, needed by young people in the XXI century, communication skills were named among the ten most important ones. This could have been attributed to the specifics of the "era of communication", but for the answers of young people being so clearly characteristically image-bearing and even aphoristic: "The character of a person is manifested... in some extreme situations". "My favorite hobby is basketball... giving vent to my emotions with the ball is most important for me". "We should think (care) both about ourselves and about others. Thinking (caring) about others should not infringe on your own interests, as well as thinking about oneself should not overshadow thinking about others". "...You need a dash of boldness in any enterprise. – It is not called cheek, it is rather persistence, while cheek is to stop at nothing, "to walk on the heads" [6].

The word "Siberian" as a sub-ethnic concept has been used since the middle of the eighteenth century. Of course, many settlers fled to Siberia from the economic and political reforms of the Central Russian government in order to preserve their identity – religious, ethnic, social, cultural. However, the ideas of old residents of Siberia were traced back not only to culture, which was their roots, but above all, to Siberian

territorial customs. Many historical facts show the process of assimilation of the concepts and practices of traditional culture and the new cultural Siberian (territorial) environment. The study of the experience of this cultural assimilation in Siberia is very important in the context of contemporary globalization [7]. The representative of a social and intellectual movement “Siberian regionalism (oblastnichestvo)” Georgy Potanin wrote: “In the mind of the Russian inhabitant of Siberia lives an indelible realization that he lives not at the home of the core of the Russian people, who created the Russian state, Russian literature, Russian political life, and he cannot stifle his desire to continue the creative work of the Russian tribe in the new forms, which are appropriate to the new environment” [8] (58-59). In other words, in Siberia, the ethno-psychological stereotypes of human behavior were not constant.

In the history of development of Siberia there were many people, who came from other places. Here came the Cossacks, who were commissioned by the authorities, streltsy, officials, soldiers, workers, people, who were evacuated during the Second World War, young volunteers of urgent constructions and development of virgin soil; in the XIX century peasants, conservatives and other free people fled to Siberia. Finally, exiles, convicts, political prisoners arrived, whose number even in the “exile” era, according to the experts, did not exceed 10-15% of the population of Siberia. However, despite this flow of migrants, cultural and psychological originality of the Siberian man grew even stronger. Non-Russian peoples of Siberia, whose population underwent significant reduction, retained the basic features of their life and culture, while the inhabitants of Siberia of Russian origin formed a kind of the “strengthened national type” – with greater resilience, focused on common sense in survival situations. [9].

Researchers noted the pronounced individualism of Siberians: they emphasized that in their “spirit” Siberians are very close to the pioneers of the North American States. Individualism and antiauthoritarianism of Siberians are noted by sociologists at present as the most characteristic features of Siberians in comparison with the inhabitants of European Russia. The lack of “heroes (role models) of our time” for the young people and at the same time their respect for the people who “made themselves” is the most characteristic phenomenon, illustrating this. According to the researcher of Siberia F. P. Wrangel [10], in Siberia people have always been appreciated first of all for their fortitude. The high status of women was also significant [11]. The researchers of the Yenisei province (Central Siberia, XIX century) were particularly impressed by the fact that the expressions “myzhik and baba” have never been used (in contrast to the Central regions of Russia), except in the abusive sense. The woman used to be addressed as “khozjajka”, “wife”, “mother”, by her first name and patronymic or just by her patronymic. Everyday cultural practices of the Siberian family, honoring old men as the conscience of “obchestvo” (community, society), traditional collective actions have been more effective in bringing up young people than sermons and lectures. Modern young Siberians also prefer the formula of parenting “do as I do” [12]

According to the testimony of Siberian old-timers of the XX century, their ancestors had no authority supervising them; they lived by “obchestvo”. The same desire “to live without excessive interference of authorities and the law” is indicated in the second half of the nineteenth century by a historian of Siberia A.P. Shchapov [13].

The principles of Orthodoxy, as well as authoritarianism, is not explicitly demonstrated by Siberians: it happened so that in their life Siberian trust more in themselves than in

God or the government. Sociological studies of recent years (2010-2016) confirm this conclusion. The most common response of young Krasnoyarsk Siberians from 14 to 20 years old to the question “Who do you rely on?” was “myself”. The percentage of reliance on luck in the responses of the respondents is 60 to 98%.

Siberians at all times have calmly accepted the multicultural and multiethnic context of their existence. Siberians have their own Siberian identity, which is not associated with fanatical observance of “the Russian” ritual in everyday life. This helped Siberians to live and respect their neighbors, who have different ethnic and cultural identities.

Many modern experts rightly believe that the main activity on the Siberian land in the last five centuries has been development (starting with land). As a result of work activities in Siberian regions, it (development) has been fixed for posterity in cultural and historical images; the prototypes of development can be found in the inscriptions of the ancient Paleolithic sites, in military and household items of dozens of ancient Siberian cultures. Development as the main practice is artistically embodied in the construction of Siberian churches, chapels, military fortresses, in the details of the architecture of a Siberian manor and in folklore texts. In the twentieth century, to these images and symbols new ones were added, such as the symbols of the “most powerful in the world” Soviet hydroelectric power stations, “the northernmost cities of the planet”, the triumph of the cosmic and atomic science. All these cultural images, regardless of the era, have their national and historical address; they are unique in Russian culture. It is important that development is not only the result but also a lifestyle, a way of human existence, a major social practice, with such characteristic features as goal setting, planning, and the type of analysis (calculation). Development is the main Siberian social practice [14].

It is this type of activity that has created such value set as “prosperity”, which for many years dominated as a social norm of a Siberian. A Siberian old-timer, who’s been through the works of development (of land), considered rather than poverty, comforts of life the foundation of existence, the equality in prosperity. The character of Siberians differs from the character of the inhabitants of the Central regions of Russia. It was not customary among the Siberians to act without the hope for success: any enterprise of a Siberian was thoroughly calculated, accurately fulfilled, with a guaranteed success. He carefully thought through the ways of action, planning specific results. In the memoirs of the Siberian intellectuals of the XIX – early XX centuries, the authors noted the love of Siberians to “partying”, festivities, but Siberian society did not approve of aimless and constant drinking. The absence of “one’s own business (entrepreneurship)” undermined the moral foundations of a Siberian village in the Soviet period, when the natural mechanism of moral self-regulation was replaced by ideological dictatorship. When the ideological dictatorship in Russia was destroyed (the 80s of XX century) the process of alcoholization of the Siberian rural population, that has lost both the skills of entrepreneurship and related self-regulatory moral practices, began to increase at the progression rate.

CONCLUSIONS

In contrast to the life principles of the Great Russian peasant, the life of the Siberian old-timer had a number of significant features that determined its own Siberian scale of values and traditions. The thesis of the Russian ethnologist Lev Gumilev about the fact that the basis for ethnic diagnosis is just a feeling, based on the pattern of behavior, rather than ethnographic or linguistic differences, is confirmed [15]. This statement of Lev Gumilev is extremely relevant to modern Siberia: it is the values and behavioral patterns, determined by a social practice that, in our opinion, has played a leading role in the formation of the Siberian sub-ethnos.

Thus, in Siberia, the unique value social phenomenon has formed, which has perfectly embodied both the Western and Eastern system of cultural values. The formative factor of the Siberian sub-ethnos is the opposition of “us” and “them, strangers” in its various versions, which maintains a fast adaptation of “strangers” to the specifics of Siberian lifestyle and behavior already in the second generation. This opposition intensifies during migration peaks and abates during the period of ethno-cultural stability.

In the second half of the twentieth century, rich symbolic systems of traditional ethnic and other social mythologies are being impoverished everywhere in industrial and postindustrial society. They are replaced by numerous invariants of “patchwork thinking” and myths of mass culture. However, not everything in traditional meaning and value “matrix” of ethnos and sub-ethnos can be easily destroyed or radically changed. Sociological polls of the population of the Siberian territories in comparison with other regions of Russia show greater psychological stability, the presence of fatalism and the common sense evaluations of the crisis phenomena – the traits that have proved to be quite resilient in the local sub-ethnic consciousness.

In search of the way out of the modern “value impasse”, which is typical for post-Soviet Russia, and to develop a new type of social practices, the cultural values of “enhanced” sub-ethnic type can be relied on. It was typical of all the previous crisis era in the history of Russia. The problem of cultural values is so crucial for all modern states, including Russia, that it is appropriate to continue scientific studies of the Siberian sub-ethnic identity and to conduct a detailed study of Siberian cultural values, which allow surviving severe crisis periods with minimal social and psychological losses.

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