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HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AS A FACTOR OF POLITICAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AT THE SOUTH OF RUSSIA AND NORTHERN CAUCASUS

“Who are we on the Planet? What is the sense of our existence? What are we proud of and what do we consider shameful? What are our heroes?” These are basical problems being solved by regional and ethnic communities in their historical consciousness. Notions of the past have their special topicality in traditional or transition societies.

It is history that represents the most visible and tangible values: embodiment of the world traditional picture.

The past does not simply give behavior patterns to such societies; but presents sacralized and mythologized archetype of mass consciousness, supported due to diverse channels of socialization. Historical consciousness becomes also topical during painful crises, accompanied by loss or split of a “spiritual core” in local civilizations, when inverse perception of the past prevails (either continuous “black hole” or “lost paradise”).

This article goal is to determine the historical consciousness role as a factor of regional identity in the south of Russia. To achieve the goal it is necessary:

- to give definition of regional identity as a theoretical category;

- to reveal ordinary and scientific levels of historical consciousness on the base of empirical materials;

- to explain the reasons of historical myths existence in consciousness. Spatial sample includes the contemporary Southern and Northern Caucasus federal districts. Within it the contradictions and tendencies of regionalism are the most substancially manifested in Russia owing to ethnic and civilizational mosaic. Time frames of this work – since 1987 till present days – cover the whole period of legal pluralism of historical views.

The theoretical basis of our article is an instrumentalist approach, linking consciousness of identity with historical factors of society development. It is supposed that long-term interests are in the basis of consciousness of individual groups and society [1, p. 29].

Identity can be defined as stable consciousness in the basis of which is a sense of belonging to own people commonality. Identity, according to the american psychologist E. Erikson’s views, is the main integrative quality of an individual behaviour. Identity defines adherence to one's own civilization, religion, outlook, historical «picture of the world», type of behaviour. Identity regulates environment, creating stable complex images of “one’s own” and “alien”. Identity is formed not only at individual but also at group and social levels [2, p. 41-42]. The meaning of identity is defined by three important people requirements: in belonging to a community, in positive self-estimation and in security. Identity always combines in itself two complexes of notions: positive and negative. It is explained by its mental operations of differentiation and definition of life phenomena. Dual oppositions “good – evil”, “order – chaos”, “one's own – alien” go back to deep archaic consciousness layers. Therefore, identification is impossible without comparison of intercourse partners that permits to have a sense of direction in thus “regulated” world.

Depending on a type of stratificational system and socio-cultural conditions, identity can be “strict” or “weak”. Social groups and individuals show many kinds of identities in their behaviour: ethnic, sexual, age, religious, political, cultural, territorial etc. Identity kinds are interrelated and often “overlap”, intensifying a sense of originality (ethnic and religious, professional and sexual and others).

In our article the attention is concentrated on regional identity that has acquired special strength and significance under conditions of globalization and the world political space redistribution caused by it. According to P.A. Sorokin, «ties by locality are the strongest among all ties uniting people». The same place of residence engenders aspirations’ and interests’ commonality in people and gives them “common character” [3, p. 210].

A number of civilization features (a type and a level of society religiosity, individualism or corporativism, rate and type of development, gives rise to long-term differences of regional identities symbols. V.A. Achkasov and S.A. Babayev note that in the process of self-identification a person may be oriented by cultural stereotypes to an ideal image of the present, the future or the past [2, p. 45-46]. Aiming at “the gold age” in the past prompts to create identity on the base of ideas of common ethnic or race origin, confession, customs, traditional values.

Short-term factors as weakness of national identity in the post-soviet Russia, space narrowing of daily living cycle of the majority of population, ambitions of regional elits also exert strong influence upon regional identity type. From the point of view of current state of affairs identity may be regarded as “a factor of political legitimation of regional power institutions outside and inside a region”, as it is done by E.Yu. Meleshkina [4, p. 126].

As a result of interaction of long and short-term factors in many subjects of Russian Federation “a pattern of regional development” has been formed: “a historically forming type of regional identity reproduction” (the notion was introduced by G. Lukhterkhandt, S. Ryzhenkov and A. Kuzmin). According to these researchers’ opinion, a pattern becomes peculiar “socio-cultural code” of a region and defines a type of its development [5, p. 13-15].

An important reservation should be made: reality is much richer than explanatory sketches. Plural identity is often encountered (by G. Marks’s definition). An individual may voluntary and sincerely show his adherence to several real or mental communities [6, p. 71-72, 86]. The south of Russia belongs to numerous “contact zones” of civilizations where regional identity is usually “deposited” on ethno-cultural and religious ones. As it is noted by D. Meiburn-Lewis and C.J. Jenkins – independently from each other – politicization of ethnicity takes place in such social conditions. The latter is used as an important motivation of society and serves important means for political goals achievement [7; 8]. In Russian ethnopolitical studies, political psychology and sociology more systematic researches of the theme were undertaken by M.N. Guboglo [9], V.A. Achkasov and S.A. Babayev [2], L.S. Gatagova [10], M.V. Savva [11]. Historical consciousness promotes ethnic identity formation. This task is carried out by means of arbitrary facts selection of the past and their biased interpretation for the sake of the current political aims. It is important to note that historical consciousness becomes mythological in this relation and occurs spontaneously – as a result of mass self-identification of “ordinary people” at the level of everyday notions and purposefully – as a result of self-determination of ethnic movements’ elites and their PR-activity. Ethnopolitical mobilization is a process by means of which an ethnic group (real or mental) uses ethnic values, myths and symbols as the main resource for creation of political or national organization and for construction of common identity. The stages of mastering internal mobilization resources are the following (according to V.A. Achkasov and S.A. Babayev):

- construction and mobilization of a "nationality";

- politization of ethnic heritage;

- ethnic “cleansing” from allegedly alien, other ethnic or common to the world values [2, p. 60-63].

Ordinary mass consciousness comprises a complex of traditional knowledge, ideas, attitudes to reality, values as well as moods and opinions on current political problems. That is, mass consciousness consists of two components: inertial long- and dynamic short-term ones. Mass consciousness has got such “ancestral” features as structural uncertainty, contradiction of reality appreciations, emotionalism, spontaneity and at the same time unprotection in the face of propaganda manipulations. Mythology is the core of mass ordinary consciousness. A myth is perceived at a level of feelings, emotions, subconscious and unconscious desires. As V.S. Polosin supposes, a political myth comprises the following components:

- an archetype – development algorithm repeatedly appearing in social life and imprinted in mentality;

- a sense – empirically created in social traditions;

- a system of image – symbols, “translating” rational history experience into the “language” of myths [12, p. 47].

As a result myths create and support collective identities, in our case – regional and ethnopolitical ones. Thus, myths make easier creation of an attractive “picture of the world”, compensating for possible shame of groups in the face of its deprivation.

V.A. Achkasova singles out three trends in mythologization of mass consciousness [1, p. 75-77]. First, a person loses his/her personal identity, “dissolves” in one’s own group and his/her attitude becomes hostile to the whole environment. It is ethnic and religious indications of a human being that are subjected to such intensification in the easiest and quickest way.

Second, notions about reasons and course of political processes become personalized. Images of excess positive hero-leader and similarly ideal one’s own community are created. They are opposed to the image of enemy – a bearer of absolute evil.

Third, perception of space and time becomes local and cyclic. The present looks like a weak reminder of “the golden age” of the past heroes. The community territory is provided with sacred features, and even is often “constructed” due to arbitrary explained historical factors.

At the other rational level of consciousness mobilization is manifested in conceptions of professional historians, ethnologists and politicians. Many researchers – from the post-soviet space – confirm by their bitter experience E. Hobsbaum’s warning: “none of serious historians… coned be inveterate political nationalist”, because “nationalism demands too much belief in something, which does not obviously exist”. To follow nationalism – “means to have incorrect notion about one’s own past” [13, p. 37-38].

The authors of the monography “National Histories in Soviet and Post-Soviet states” edited by K. Eimermacher and G.A. Bordyugov (1999) revealed certain general regularities of ethnomobilization in the historic science in the post-socialist countries. The historical past is “rewritten” by stereotype, extolling present national states or regions. Re-writing of the past facts takes place at present to construct “great traditions of ancestors” for contemporary ethnic groups (in fact at times “young” ones) [14]. L.S. Gatagova writes about some historians of the Northern Caucasus republics that their “freedom from party censorship has already turned out to be dependence on national elites now” [14, p. 266].

Eimermacher and Bordyugov single out certain trends of such “creation” – “composing more ancient history” of their people, extrolling heroes, raising too high level of development concentrating on conflicts with neighbours of other believes [14, p. 13-14].

O.Y. Bukhovets, the reviewer of the given monograph, points out especially unceremoniously created myths that the Balkars and the Karachais are Shumer “inheritors”, the Adygeis are Shumer and Hittites descendants, the Vainakhs are those of ancient Egyptians and Etruscans, the Ossetians – of Indoaries, the Polovtsians (Kypchaks) were supposedly ancestors… of the Cossacks and even the Germans. The greatest scope for fantastic compositions is provided by the ancient history and however paradoxical it is, by the history of the Soviet period [15, p. 153-154].

What is a regional specific character of ethnopolitical mobilization in the south of Russia in the aspect of historical consciousness? The South of Russia is a region with predomination of corporative and moderate-conservative orientations of political culture. Its identity was brilliantly expressed even in the Soviet period, including Slavic areas with old Cossacks traditions [16, p. 252-330; 17]. Therefore it is impossible to agree with I. Malyakin’s opinion, who supposes: the territories and the areas of Russia had not got their "mythogenetic potential" by the time of the USSR’s split. At best, they had to rely on “extremely scanty luggage of regional mythology of the Soviet period, as a rule, not deeply implanted in mass consciousness and having official character”. In our opinion, the given quatation is close to the truth only as applied to “young” Siberian regions and, at a stretch, to the European Russian Centre [18, p. 110-111]. On the contrary the Don and the Kuban regions, the Northern Caucacus have got a system of regional values and myths, deeply implanted in pre-revolutionary political tradition.

The space of the south of Russia is rather sharply divided into two socio-cultural segments, qualitatively diverse and nevertheless politically common: with predominance of Slavic population (Don, Kuban, Terek, Stavropol Region, Black Sea Coast, Low Volga) and with predominance of autochthonous peoples of the Northern Caucasus (the republics within the Russian Federation). The present territory of Adygei Republic and a number of urban lacunae in the republics (Vladikavkaz, Kaspyisk, Kizlyar cities) are a certain contact zone and border “mixture”.

The following statements play a role of basic stereotypes of historical consciousness for the first areal:

- gravitation of the east slavs from the earliest times towards the Black Sea area, as well as Russian presence there stressed events: Tmutarakhan principality, Khazar crushing defeat, Ivan-the-Terrible marriage to the Kabardian princess and so on);

- confrontation of “wood” and “steppe”, of peasants and nomads;

- distructive influence of Ottoman Empire and of Persia in the Caucasus;

- civilizing and pacifying role of the Russian Empire in the South of the country, a kind of cultural level rising;

- Cossacks’ role as a “shield holder” at the border of light and darkness, Russia and East [19; 20].

## The given arrangement of sense accents is not casual. It consolidates all –Russian identity in mass consciousness that is particularly strongly and “personally” perceived in conditions of frontier and unstable region. The political scientists have long ago comprehended a phenomenon of empire and traditionalism of military suburbs of civilized areals (D.J. Boorstin, D.J. Elazar). When applied to the Russian history, this phenomenon had been deeply studied by M.K. Lyubavski [21], N.M. Yadrintsev [22] and on the current material of the Russia South – by E.V. Morosova [16], O.V. Matveev [17], V.A. Kolosov and A.D. Krindach [23].

Simultaneously and due to empire consciousness, however paradoxically it may sound, stereotypes of historical consciousness of the Russians in the South bear stressed regional character. They are: double identity (“we are together with Russia” instead of “we are Russians”), hostility to Moscow and autonomism, apologia of the Cossacks as a bearer of a sense core of the culture [19; 20].

The stereotypes of historical consciousness in the area of the Northern Caucasus Republics bear more traditionalist and homogeneous character than in the territories and districts of the region. At the deepest level it is explicable by cyclic rhythm of historical time and socio-cultural changes. Consciousness in the republics of this region is relatively more complete and valuable, but not split and pragmatic.

The observed empiric stereotypes of historical memory follow: from the given features of mentality:

- an idea of mythic “Northern Caucasian civilization”, which played a substantial role in the world policy and was ethnically related to the primary Schumer, Babylon, Egypt and others civilizations;

- the model of “the lost Paradise” – a society of pre Russian conquest of the Caucasus “with fire and sword”;

- perception of the Caucasian war of 1817–1864 and Shamil imamat as reference points of national-historic revival;

- accentuating of conflict aspects and manifestations in the contradictory system of relations between Russia and political formations of the region;

- suppression of mosaic and civilized heterogeneity of the Northern Caucasus, constructing the myth of dual opposition “Russia – whole the Caucasus” [24; 25; 26].

It should be stressed that the mentioned tendency is not the only and predominating one, and moreover universal in the historic science and in the sociopolitical journalism of the Republics in the region. Documentary substantiated and tolerant appraisals of historic traditions are given in numerous works by B.M. Dzhimov [27], M.M. Bliev and V.V. Degoyev [28], T.P. Khlynina [29], E.F. Krinko [30], K.O. Kazenin [31], V.F. Patrakova and V.V. Chernous [32]. The question is not of an appraisal of personal views, but of the sense of “a main direction” in historiography development that is encouraged and direct by the regional ruling elites.

In our opinion imperatives of national security and territorial integrity of Russia put an urgent problem in the face of scientific communities and mass media, forming, historical consciousness to considerable extent – to support integration of historic-ethnic notions, to overcome isolation in the sphere of long-term conflict claims [33]. It demands purposeful and coordinated activity to create priority values: peace, interethnic tolerance, mutual respect and recognition of equal dignity of each ethnic group. In particular the need to strengthen the role of professional conflictological expertise of the historical and educational literature, television, radio and the Internet information that forms the historical consciousness. It is qualitatively increase the funding and organizational support for research centers and researchers opposing separatism, ethnic and religious radicalism in the region. This work has to become one of the trends of the ethnic policy of the state and regional governments, state information policy in this macroregion.

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