

Materials of the Conferences

TENDENCIES OF ETHNO - CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE BELGOROD REGION

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There were different periods in ethnic history of Russia: unhurried course of ethnic processes of antiquity was followed by formation of united national and cultural area, which occurred within the limits of centralized state formations - Kievan Russia, Muscovy, Russian Empire, and the Soviet Union. That happened at the time of feudal division in XIII-XIV centuries, social, political and economic instability in XVI-XVII centuries and at the end of the 20th century. Gradually a national identity has formed, which influenced upon economic, political and cultural institutions of society and the whole complex of traditional Russian culture. Social, economic and cultural characteristics of southern Russian border region, and its position in the system of national links were a matter of primary importance for defining long-term perspectives of the State's development.

Modern national and cultural map of the Belgorod Region has been actively shaping since the period of secondary colonization of the Dnieper-Don interfluvium. It was happening against the backdrop of strengthening struggle for authority in the region between Russia, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Crimean khanate.

However, some investigators trace more old processes which occurred in the area: archeological and anthropological evidences found in the Dnieper, Don, Oskol and Northern Donets valleys gave a possibility to trace direction of ancient migrations, define the character of interaction and even a medley of different groups of population, as well as mark special features of forming economy and everyday life. [1] Within the limits of ancient Russian State the north Slavs, Khazars, Pechenegs, Polovtsians and other nomadic tribes took part in ethnic consolidation and

assimilation. [2] In the history of the Russian Orthodox Church there is a reference to the Belgorod eparchy, which existed since XII century and popularized Christianity among residents. The revival of an underground monastery in Holki is an original confirmation of this fact. Priests consider the monastery to be created in the middle of XIII century, when monks ran away from the Kievo-Pecherskaya lavra because of the Mongolian danger. They chose these cretaceous steeps for their new residence.

Originally the population formed as polyethnic. Many elements appeared in the culture proving that the territorial development was not isolated, but involved in the evolution on European and Eurasian scales. For example, these features could be found in the times of the great migration: many treasures of coins and domestic items have been found, proving that local people were interacting with Germans, whose trade routes ran through southern Russian steppes. A compound three-part horn comb with an ancient runic inscription on top has drawn the scientists' attention. The inscription - female name "Gunta" - was made with a sharp cutting object. Finno-Ugric routes are also present in the names of numerous local rivers, gorges and forests; local dialects maintain some evidences of contacts with ethnic groups of European and Asian origin. [3]

As everybody knows, Tartar invasion interrupted the formation of single Old Russian nationality, but it greatly influenced on the character of ethnic processes in southern Russia: two different ethnic processes entered into conflict. If the Slavs were Europeans, the invaders in their turn belonged to another race - they were Mongolians. The language of the Russian people was one of the languages of the Indo-European family, whereas Tatars spoke languages of Chinese and Tibetan family. Their ways of life were also different: Russians led a sedentary life, they improved agriculture, cattle-breeding, trade and commerce; the others were nomads and herdsmen who satisfied most of their needs by invasions and plunders. During that period migrations were necessary and

violent: Mongolian conquerors forced a considerable part of the Slavs and their neighbors out of the southern Russian steppes to the north and north-west, those who stayed were assimilated. The tartar words appeared then in the toponymy and remained until now: Aydar, Bitjug, Usmani, Hava; today we can notice the influence of this culture in household items, everyday speech; the folklore of the Belgorod Region keeps some legends about burned cities and captivities.

In the period of the second colonization in XVI-XVII centuries the Dnieper-Don interfluvium was actively digested by Russian settlers, but Ukrainians also migrated here. This resulted in a sort of a compromise: Cossacks-Chercassians were allowed to settle on the Russian territory, provided they accept Moscow citizenship and draw duty at the southern Russian borders. Free Russian and Ukrainian settlers appeared at the territory of the Belgorod Region practically at the same time; however Russian people had advantage in the clash of different colonization currents due to the state support. Belarusian colonization of Russian steppes went on at the same time, but it was not of a large scale. Many Ukrainian settlements were established in the upper reaches of the Voksla and the North Donets rivers, in the river basin of Nezhegol and Oskol. The Ukrainian settlements were usually located within Russian colonies in form of "nests" or wide zigzag zones. (The materials of the first General census in 1897 show that in the Belgorod region the Ukrainian population lived in the following districts: Biryuchansky district - 70,7%, Valuysky district - 51,1%, Grayvoronsky district - 60,4%, Novooskolsky district - 51,8%, Korochansky district - 34,5%, Belgorod district - 24,1%).[4]

In XVII century mass migration of peoples mostly came to an end and the ethnic map of the Belgorod Region was finally formed. The General censuses, organized in XVIII-XX centuries, did not record new ethnic groups which appeared in abundance, and the Belgorod District was developing in the framework of the all-Russian development. Using their traditions, experience, working habits Russian people significantly contributed to the formation of agriculture and culture in the colonized region, adopting a great deal from other nationalities

who also took part in the region's development. Cross-cultural interaction between the Slavic nationalities is especially visible in the dwelling organization, traditional cuisine, dialects, musical folklore, holidays and ceremonies.

At the end of the 20th century problems, accumulated in social, political and economic spheres, began to influence upon ethnic relations. Residents of the Belgorod region were among the first in the country who saw and realized their consequences. Immigrants came from Central Asia, Transcaucasia, and later from Ukraine, where the economic situation has been worsening from year to year. Coming in great numbers, they stayed in the region, offering their service in different spheres of manufacture, education and culture. Over the last 10-15 years they greatly influenced on the demographic situation in the region: the correlation of mortality and birth rates has changed towards the birth, also due to immigrants. Life proves that regulation of ethnic processes can only be successful when it's based on knowledge about their general regularities.

Thus, over a period of all ethnic history the population of the Dnieper-Don steppes and forest-steppes has been involved in the ethnic processes on European-Asiatic scale, and the territory of the region has been developing dynamically and as an integral part of the Eurasian world.

References

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