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TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC BEHAVIOUR OF CHECHEN PEOPLE IN MODERN CONDITIONS

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Abstract

The paper is devoted to the analysis of relations between ethnic and socio-economic processes, the influence of ethnocultural specificity on the value component of economic behavior of the Chechens in modern conditions. The empirical qualitative study carried out through the in-depth interview revealed that in the conditions of formation and development of market relations these age-old spiritual values, which form the core of the traditional moral basis of the Chechens, were gradually eroded. As the respondents' answers show, among the spectrum of moral and ethical norms, economic determinism stands out now indicating convergence with, once alien, western values. If in accordance with the traditions of perhaps all North Caucasus peoples the dignity of a man is not connected with his "heavy purse" and with a position occupied, nevertheless, the results of our study show that in modern times "survival and prosperity" can be achieved by "hedge or by stile". At the same time, even the restrictions of the Islamic law are not always an obstacle. Thus, it is concluded that today there is no traditional, unique way of life of the Chechens known even since Soviet times. A unique trajectory is formed, which is characterized by a special ethnocultural socio-economic strategy used to shape the behavior of modern Chechen people, which is caused by modernization and internal factors that give rise to the noted phenomenon.

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1. Introduction

For quite a long time various sciences have been focused of the in-depth study of ethnic communities. It is not only the historical characteristics of the formation and development of nations and nationalities that are identified, but also the general patterns of ethnic groups, and the social, economic, environmental and demographic foundations of their activities. At the same time, it is important to analyze the relations between socio-economic and ethnic processes, to study the peculiarities of economic behavior of different nations and nationalities. In this context, there is some scientific interest in transforming the value orientations of the socio-economic behavior of the Chechens in modern conditions.

2. Problem Statement

There are several fundamentally different viewpoints on this problem in sociological and economic literature.

Marxism, based on the teaching of the basis and superstructure, argues that ethnic processes depend on the degree of development of industrial relations, which are determined by the nature and level of productive forces (Marx, 1959). The famous western explorer Weber (1990) adheres to a different position, directly opposite to Marxism. He believes that ethnos and its existence is largely determined by the ideology, which in this particular case is presented by the protestant ethic. It is this ethic that has a decisive impact on the level of economic development and industrial relations (Weber, 1990). As many modern studies show, the truth lies in the middle (Pavlov, 2006). In particular, this is confirmed by the analysis of the so-called traditional eastern societies, studying which even K. Marx emphasized the special nature of the Asian mode of production, in which Asian traditions and Eastern psychology play a decisive role in influencing the nature and level of industrial relations. Therefore, we agree with the opinion of Pavlov (2006), who believes that it is more appropriate to look not for the root cause in the chain of “productive forces – production relations – ethnos”, but to study the interaction and mutual relations between various components of this chain.

In this regard, the study of the impact of national psychology on economics, and vice versa, is particularly relevant. Thus, already Keynes (2007) noted that the behavior in the sphere of economics is significantly influenced by the peculiarities of national psychology. This statement is specifically applicable to our case, as, indeed, the Chechen Republic, for known reasons having been belatedly for about ten years involved since the beginning of the 21st century in the fundamentally changed economic space of the Russian Federation, not without problems “fits into” the largely formed market structure of the regions of the North Caucasus and the whole country. The complexity of adaptation is not only in the lost time lag, but also, first of all, in the fact that the republic joins the all-Russian and international market after it lost powerful industrial and social-infrastructure potential almost “from scratch” (Ustaev, 2014).

3. Research Questions

The subject of the study is the analysis of relations between socio-economic and ethnic processes.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to define the peculiarities and socio-economic determinants of the value orientations of the Chechen population in the development of economic behavior strategies in modern conditions.

5. Research Methods

The methodology and methods of research include the principles of scientific objectivity and systematicity. The study also utilized the interdisciplinary approach, which led to the need for historical, sociological and political analysis of the problem via general scientific methods of analysis and synthesis, etc. An in-depth interview was used to obtain objective sociological data.

6. Findings

As a result, in order to study the ethnocultural specificity of the value component of socio-economic behavior, there is a need to identify factors of its formation in modern Chechnya. Therefore, we conducted an empirical qualitative study via the in-depth interview. Chechen men and women living now or earlier in the territory of the Chechen Republic (Grozny, Gudermes, Vedeno, Engel-Yurt, V. Gerzel, Tukhchar), aged 20–65 years old (N = 25), (14 women, 11 men) were the respondents of the survey. All interviews were conducted in Russian in the territory of their residence (apartment, private house), less often in public places – parks, cafes.

The main vector within which ethnocultural features of socio-economic behavior are formed is modernization, which has been taking place in the Chechen Republic for a long time and which has fundamentally strengthened in recent decades.

Since the end of the Caucasian War of the 19th century and the accession of Chechnya to the Russian Empire, there has been a slow but steady transformation of Chechen traditional culture in general and socio-economic behavior in particular. This process was particularly intensified in the context of the Soviet reality, which led to a serious loss of values of the Chechen way of life and a significant penetration of the elements of western mass culture into the culture of the Chechens, characterized by economic determinations. According to a number of Chechen researchers, the influence of mass culture on Chechen national environment was increased due to negative consequences of the Stalin deportation of 1944, which resulted in a certain diffusion of traditional Chechen values (Ibragimov, 2006). It was during the expulsion that some established traditions of the Chechens either ceased to be respected or became purely formal. According to Mezhieva (2008), much has been fundamentally transformed – from clothing and lifestyle to housing and socio-economic relations. At the same time, the spiritual and cultural connection between generations was seriously deformed, which at all times was one of the most important ties of the Chechen society. In this regard some young people are convinced that the national way of life, observance of unwritten rules of life, which for centuries have determined the behavior of the Chechens, is no longer of special value, especially in comparison with the achievements of more civilized peoples. Hence, it is quite indicative that the period of deportation gives rise to the mass development of the Russian language by the Chechens, which, of course, could not but be accompanied by the

assimilation of the values of the Russian (wider-pan-European) culture. Our respondents also confirm this: R.: Earlier, Kumyk was the common language for the whole North Caucasus, I mean Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, then gradually it was Russian, they began to teach it in school, children even knew it better than their parents. Russian turned to be more useful in the Soviet times and especially now, everywhere everything is in Russian – in hospitals, in education, in work (man, 55 years old, January, 2018).

The modernization of Chechen society accelerated further in the era of “developed socialism” with all the specific features of this socio-economic strategy (social competitions, five-year plans, collective farms, etc.). At the same time, in most cases Chechen researchers rightly assess this period as the most successful in terms of the development of all branches of national culture, as well as formation and development of Chechen creative and scientific intelligentsia (Mezhieva, 2008). In other words, the rapid modernization of Chechen society did not automatically lead to the degradation and disappearance of the national culture and the economic determinism of all spheres of life, which indicates a clear differentiation between the penetration of mass culture and the process of modernization, which is characterized by the development of new (non-traditional) forms of socio-economic behavior (means of communication, production, technology, etc.) directly related to the formation of other habits, stereotypes, psychological reactions that were not previously typical for this society.

According to sociological studies carried out in Checheno-Ingushetia and Chechnya in 1990, 1992 and 1995, which selectively covered almost all social sectors of the population, during a rather short period of time there has been a significant transformation of the scale of spiritual values of the Chechens directly related to the current situation in the Republic – material values are brought to the forefront.

Thus, while in 1990 on average 63.2 % of respondents from the Chechen population considered spirituality more important than material values – in 1992 only 40.3% of respondents thought so. At this time the Chechen youth are mercantile to a much greater extent than the older generation. Thus, the following results were obtained regarding the spiritual preference over material one: in 1990 – 47.1 % of respondents among young people, and in 1992 – only 14.3 %. Oddly enough, it was the horrors of the “first Chechen” war that made the majority of the Chechens recall once again the enduring importance of spiritual values. According to a survey conducted in 1995, already 71.9 % respondents believed that spiritual in life is more important than material, including 62.8 % of young people who also believed so. Thus, the most dramatic reappraisal of values occurred among young people. If in the early 1990s young people did not attach special importance to spiritual values, the generation that survived the first Chechen war believed in the necessity of spirituality (Mezhieva, 2008).

Almost none of the Chechen authors doubts that in the last 10–15 years not only a number of new features was formed in Chechen national mentality, but also typical features of the Chechen world view underwent a significant change. Thus, the famous Chechen researcher Gadaev (2011) notes that in modern conditions, new socio-economic conditions begin to “ruthlessly close traditional spiritual and moral holy sites: duty, honor, conscience, dignity, loyalty to the word, respect for elders and women, protection of weak and loved ones, mutual aid, self-forgetfulness, modesty, etc... The above spiritual values, which form the core of the traditional moral support of the Chechens, began to erode, and were

replaced with capitalist “holy sites”: greed, hypocrisy, self-interest, material interest, etc. (Gadaev, 2011). Our respondents also say this:

R.: I sat in a cafe in Saratov in the evening with my brother and did not understand where I was. I have lived in the village for 30 years and saw none of this (he was struck by the urban lifestyle). That’s when I decided to change something, I don’t want to live like my ancestors (man, 52, December, 2017).

R.: I did not want to work at the bazaar as my relatives, it was possible to go abroad, but I was afraid – I had to leave my mother, where will I get money from to live there (man, 51 years, December, 2017).

The last respondent is interesting by the fact that being the youngest son in the family he left the elderly mother and went abroad in search of a better life, although according to Chechen traditions he had to stay in the house of his father and mother and take care of them to death. According to him, he did not face a serious blame from his relatives, neighbors, or his mother. Neither a sense of duty, self-esteem, nor adata (customs) – nothing stopped our respondent from fulfilling himself in a different capacity, in a different lifestyle, in a different culture, in a different economic environment. From the point of view of the Chechens, such behavior of the youngest son in the family is unacceptable and assessed negatively, however, in modern conditions it becomes possible and not only as an exception. We are confident that there is a significant influence of globalization, which has led to modernization in the region, on the formation of socio-economic behavior in modern Chechnya, which initially can be considered negative by local residents. Negative changes, in terms of preserving the traditional values of the Chechens, are also mentioned by other researchers. For example, Makuev (2000) writes that today the best human qualities fall into oblivion. There is no longer the ability to compassion the weak, the desire to protect him, etc. Instead, we have the fetishization of materialism, the rejection of the native Chechen criteria of personality assessment, the assertion of mass psychology brought to the level of rodent instincts. According to our respondents, today the following practical experience seems exemplary:

R.: As a refugee I went to Germany to have surgery there for free. One of ours advised so, he lives there. I told them (migration officers) that I have no husband, the house is destroyed, I am alone ..., and they listen and believe everything (laughs), naive. <...> They did everything to me and after the surgery I went back, I didn’t spend a penny (woman, 63 years, February, 2018).

Of course, this is not typical for all residents of Chechnya, especially since within the framework of qualitative research it is not possible for us to carry out the quantitative analysis. For balance, let us give another extract from the interview confirming the existence of a traditional cult of a worthy man among modern Chechen people:

R.: My brother bought a secondhand tablet from people who had a broken car on the road somewhere near Tyumen and needed money. For 10,000, I told him, it’s not too beneficial. He told me he had to help rather than take advantage of their difficult situation (man, 40, January, 2018).

It is important to note that in the Chechen Republic there is an understanding that for successful adaptation in today’s globalizing world the Chechen society is doomed to further social modernization. Since the process of globalization is inseparable from the intensive mutual penetration of different cultures, the question of the fate of the Chechen national culture seems quite urgent.

7. Conclusion

It is obvious that today there is no traditional, unique way of life of the Chechen people known even since Soviet times. A unique trajectory is formed, which is characterized by a special ethnocultural socio-economic strategy used to shape the behavior of modern Chechen people, which is caused by modernization and internal factors that give rise to the noted phenomenon.

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