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CZARIST-ERA EDUCATION SYSTEM AS SOCIAL DEVICE TO FORM RUSSIAN CIVIC CONSCIOUSNESS

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Abstract

Education system is a traditional and one of the most efficient institutional devices that smooths value and symbolic demarcation of representative of different peoples and cultures. It provides spread of national language as the language of inter-cultural and inter-ethnic interaction. One of acknowledged tasks of education is transmission of a thorough system of values as a prerequisite for social solidarity in the society. The education system is aimed at provision of non-violent acceptance of values and practices sanctioned by the society. A logical and natural consequence of this is a gradual nationalization of educational space and its state control. The paper provides some evidential illustrations of pre-1917 pedagogical and education activities in the Russian Turkestan region and in North Caucasus. Educational policy was seen as one of the principal tools for this task. The main goal of spreading education, its cultural-educational objective was to facilitate bringing Central Asian and Caucasian peoples closer to the Russian people. Organization of a network of educational institutions, dissemination of literacy and the Russian language had become a method of integrating different ethnicities into cultural and legal space of the Russian Empire. Turning to the Tsarist era principles of drawing together and integrating different ethnicities, education in the Russian civic consciousness in Central Asia and North Caucasus, we may use the past experience that is still valid today. Research into pre-1917 educational policy may facilitate overcoming simplified and stereotypical concepts common in studies of this problem.

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1. Introduction

The epigraph to this part of the article is a quote from A. Toynbee emphasizing uniqueness of the Russian civilization: “Your country consists of such a multitude of peoples speaking so many different languages that it serves as a model of the world as a whole” (Kuleshov, 1991, p. 126).

The 19th century was a time of active geopolitical changes, continuation in empire building in the West and the East. Absorption of a part of Central Asia and North Caucasus into Russia in the second half of the 19th century was of strategic importance and was largely determined by their geopolitical location, neighboring Persia and the Ottoman Empire. Before being absorbed into Russia, these two territories were not parts of a single political space. Internal wars and disunity led to instability of trade and economic relations and caused unrest at the Russian southern borders.

Inclusion of Turkestan and North Caucasus into Russia further complicated the Empire's internal politics and made it more regionally differentiated. The main cause of this was linguistic, ethnic and cultural diversity of newly-absorbed peoples having religions different from Christianity of the main part of the country. Let us remind that an empire is by definition a heterogeneous formation, a “compound polity” (Tilly, 2009). The newly-annexed territories were multi-faceted, they were populated by different ethnicities and tribes. Through the centuries being subjected to influence of other cultures, they successfully kept their own cultural uniqueness, language and customs. Domination of Islam did not prevent popularity of autochthonous beliefs. In this situation, different segments of the country needed to be connected not only by military and fiscal control, but also by a common civic consciousness and a unifying social identity (Burke & Stets, 2000).

2. Problem Statement

Polyethnicity and multi-religiousness of the state required a certain balance and deliberateness in interactions between the center and the periphery. On the one hand, the policy of the Russian Empire was aimed at drawing peoples together, strengthening integrity and formation of Russian civic consciousness, on the other hand, interests of various ethnicities were sometimes in contradiction with the interests of the center.

3. Research Questions

The subject of the research is development of the education system in the Russian Turkestan and North Caucasus after their absorption into the Russian Empire.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the article is to analyze Tsarist-era educational and cultural policy as a method of formation of the Russian civic consciousness among the peoples of Central Asia and North Caucasus.

5. Research Methods

Methodologically, this research is founded on the socio-cultural approach. The main method is historical analysis. Predominant source base is works of pre-1917 authors.

6. Findings

Let us consider some fact-based illustrations of pedagogical and educational work in Turkestan and North Caucasus region in the pre-1917 period.

By the second half of the 19th century, within the territory of former khanate and emirate there was already a “well-organized system of public education”, “represented almost exclusively by Islamic school” (Burke, 2000, p. 78), where education was largely religious. The education there was based upon studies of Arabic, Persian and Turkish languages, Qur’an, theology, sharia, as well as classical Arabic and Persian poetry and literature. Writing and reading were predominantly in Arabic.

Presence of a formed education system is no mere chance (Solodova, 2018). Among prerequisite to its appearance and expansion through Turkestan one may name:

1. The cultural resource of the territory. For the background, let us note that the territory of Central Asia has a long and globally-important history. Long before the Arabic conquest of 7th-8th centuries, there were the culture of ancient Sogdiana, Ancient Khorezmian and Parthian cultures.

Another aspect is related to the fact that as a result of their active conquests, “Arabs of the first era of Islam had the means that were beyond the possibilities of the ruling classes even during the Roman Empire. They owned treasures of three parts of the world, riches of Byzantine, Persian and Visigothic cultures. There was nothing to create anew, it was sufficient to just perceive this ancient culture, support it and develop it in its own free way”. For example, after conquering Constantinople, Mehmed the Second, “paid special attention to establishing primary schools; during his time, a school could be found in almost any village” (Gauri, 1893, p. 98).

However, by the 19th century, Arabic Muslim culture was in decline, and the education system followed. An idea formed that “education is absolutely superfluous for girls. People were saying: ‘Teach girls to spin and knit, but leave aside reading and writing’”. All this is despite that “in European Turkey, Egypt, Persia, Central Asia any somehow important village has a school”. The issue was that “a teacher in such school is usually a true embodiment of ignorance. Besides Qur’an, or even some extracts from it, he usually knows only a couple of prayers. For the most part, pupils learn sloppy Arabic reading, memorize daily prayers and a couple of incomprehensible suras from Qur’an in the equally incomprehensible Arabic. Only few achieve any skill in writing” (Gauri, 1893, p. 22).

2. Need to study Qur’an. From the times of Arabic conquests that brought new culture and new religious world view to incorporation into Russia a millennium passed. Through this time, Islam ingrained in the consciousness and daily life of local peoples. A need to study Qur’an gave a momentum for spread of literacy and development of education. It led to appearance of primary religious schools – maktabas (meqtebs). The next stage was appearance of the secondary and tertiary stage of Islamic education – madrasa, a school training mosque personnel, Muslim preachers, lawyers, sharia judges. Just like maktab,

a madrasa is usually located near a mosque and associated with it. The content of the curriculum was dominated by religious law component.

3. Education as a religious imperative. Education has always been taking an important place in the Islamic culture: “Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees” (The Qur’an, 58:11). During the rule of Ulugh Beg (1409-1449), madrasas were built in Bukhara and Samarkand following his orders. The doors of the madrasa in Bukhara had an inscription: “Aspiration for knowledge is a responsibility of every Muslim man and woman” (Bendrikov, 1960, p. 18).

4. Missionary activities of representatives of other religions, prevention of further confessional divide. Another factor that influenced the development of religious education and madrasas in Central Asia related to the fact that, according to Bendrikov (1960) “here Islam encountered energetic propaganda of Buddhism, Manichean Christianity and other religions; here, several bitterly fighting sects were formed within Islam” (p. 35).

At the same time, despite initially favorable prerequisites, level of literacy in Turkestan was low, which was, however, true for many other regions of the country as well.

After incorporating Central Asia into Russia, the Russian administration kept the previous traditional system of religious education. In parallel, a school system was created in Turkestan that was based on traditions and experience of Russian school. Basing on the situation in the region, the first general-governor of Turkestan, K.P. Kaufman, who remained in history as the first organizer of Turkestan, ordered to form a special commission to study the question of public education and further development of “legislation”. The foundation of the project was proposed as “a strict principle of non-intervention into spiritual and educational part of institutions already existing among the aboriginal peoples”. Setting aside the religious question, it was proposed to organize educational facilities for joint learning of local children and Russian children from settler families (Burke, 2000).

According to the Census of 1897, literacy in Turkestan was 5.3%. It is logical that cultural communication between the peoples of Central Asia and Russia “was progressive for them... Russian primary and secondary schools were enormously more progressive than Medieval Muslim schools. Through Russia, advanced people of Turkestan, Bukhara and Khiva got possibility to connect with the great achievements of Russian and global culture” (Bendrikov, 1960, p. 29).

To facilitate drawing together locals and Russians, inspector of public schools of Turkestan, V.P. Nalivkin compiled first Sart-Russian and Russian-Sart dictionaries and study guides for Uzbeks learning Russian and Russians learning Uzbek (Bendrikov, 1960).

A local newspaper *Turkestanskije Vedomosti* (Turkestan Gazette) was published. By 1867, Tashkent Public Library had been founded. By 1882, it included 10,445 volumes covering all branches of science, literature and art. A significant portion was dedicated to Russian and foreign literature “considering Central Asia and especially the countries that had become parts of the Russian Turkestan” (Burke, 2000, p. 30).

Somewhat similar situation was in North Caucasus region (Kidirniiazov, 2016). Before the region was incorporated into Russia, local peoples had not secular educational facilities. Teaching was limited to mosque-associated mektebs.

An important step in integration of North Caucasus peoples was opening of the first school “for Ossetian, Ingush and other highland people's children” in Mozdok in 1764. By its purpose, this educational

facility was aimed at serving interests of the state: transforming children from privileged classes of the local peoples into persons committed to Russia, active agents of the Russian policy in the region. Thus, the school admitted children of senior representatives and local land owners. Through the years the school existed (1765–1793), the number of children educated there varied from 9 to 46 (Larina, 1957).

The principal task was to “instill commitment” to the Russian way of life, spiritual and material culture of the country as a whole. Joint education of local children with Russians was intended to facilitate achieving these goals (Dzagov, 2006). In order to turn local population to the Russian language and Russian culture, a parish school was opened in Stavropol in 1804, and a district school in 1811. Educational institutions were also opened in Georgievsk (1818), Mozdok and Kizlyar (1820) (Koshev, 1991).

A significant role in the cultural life of local peoples and in training of secular intelligentsia coming from local peoples was played by the Stavropol Boys’ Gymnasium. First pupils were enrolled in the facility in 1849, and from that year representatives of all the ethnicities of the region were educated there. Their numbers were quite significant, e.g., in 1857, Stavropol Gymnasium had 65 representatives of the local peoples. Among the school subjects there were history, statistics, geography, Russian, French, Nogai, Arabic, etc. (Zulpukarova, 2003). In January 1866, Committee for Caucasus approved proposal of Caucasus’ governor general to transform the Stavropol Gymnasium into a classical gymnasium with teaching of Greek and Latin. Besides, a non-classical secondary school for locals was established under the gymnasium, where Latin was also taught. After graduating from this school, its graduates from peoples of North Caucasus were eligible to continue their studies in various tertiary schools of the country.

A certain general principle in structuring the relations between Russians and newly-annexed peoples may be found in a quote from a well-known orientalist Ostroumov (1914):

Native Russian people, under the guidance of Providence, connected its historical life with Muslim indigenous dwellers and lives a common state life with them. For the purpose of culture, the indigenous dwellers shall aspire to come closer to the Russian people, and a direct route to that is through education by means of the national language. In their own turn, Islamic studies are mandatory for Russians, so that they know about the natural needs of the multi-million part of the population of Russia and know how to meet those needs. (p. 56)

7. Conclusion

The analyzed historical materials allow talking about Tsarist government's consistent aspiration to create conditions for formation of Russian civic consciousness. Educational policy was seen as one of the principal tools for this task. The main goal of education was cultural-educational, its objective was to facilitate bringing Central Asian and Caucasian peoples closer to the Russian people. Organization of a network of educational institutions, dissemination of literacy and the Russian language had become a method of integrating different ethnicities into cultural and legal space of the Russian Empire.

We believe that in the modern Russian situation, the education system shall also play a role of intermediary between representatives of various cultures and religions. Historically rooted relation between education on the one side, and spiritual and religious sphere on the other, may be directed towards socio-cultural integration and development of a common civic solidarity.

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