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**FORMATION OF IDENTITY IN YOUNG COMMUNITY OF
KALMYK SOCIETY**

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Abstract

The paper deals with the problem of formation of the Kalmykia youth identity which currently determines the civic identity in the region by stimulating various ways of its realization. The questions of the younger generation identity formation can be traced by the analysis of data from quantitative and qualitative sociological survey addressing the formation of the ethnic identity of young Kalmyks. According to the study results, the authors distinguish the levels and types of the identity of ethnic young Kalmyks. The sociological investigation was performed using different open to public statistical data. The paper considers the living region, migration, structure and social dynamics of the considered ethnic group. The subjects of the qualitative study were Kalmyk language, traditions, Buddhism, youth self-management, relation of civic and ethnocultural components of the ethnic young Kalmyks' identity. The purpose of the work is to determine the significance of young Kalmyks in the development of modern Kalmykia, interpretation of the history of the Kalmyks as a constantly active factor of identity establishment of ethnic young Kalmyks; to discover two trends in the Kalmyk language restoration, etc. The main research methods are qualitative (focus groups, survey of experts whose professional life is directly connected with youth) and quantitative sociological studies on the identity formation of young Kalmyks (mass survey using questionnaires with the representatives of Kalmyk youth and ethnic young Kalmyks).

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1. Introduction

The history of Kalmykia as a strong factor for the formation of the identity in ethnic young Kalmyks is determined by its three periods: pre-Soviet (1609-1918), Soviet (1918-1991) and post-Soviet (1991 until now) time. The most significant period in the history of the Kalmyks is post-Soviet time.

Starting from the early 1930s, the Kalmykian ethnoculture suffered radical transformations, often losing their foundation. The Kalmyk nature of the nation was destroyed to Russify it. This continued for several periods that can be conditionally called *pre-exile* (1930s–1943), *exile* (1943–1956), and *post-exile* (1956–1991).

The hardest years were the time of deportation of the Kalmyks to Siberia (1943–1956) which is now recognized as the genocide of the Kalmyks (Maksimov, 2004). All positive intentions in terms of national revival were kept to minimum; the Kalmyks lost their right for the autonomy and for the reproduction of their culture.

The first marks of changes already appeared during perestroika (1985–1991), but the turning moment was after 1991. Then, substantial shift in economics, social sphere and culture occurred. National theaters, museums, clubs, arts colleges, musical and art schools, libraries began working. National writers, poets and screenwriters appeared. Today, Kalmykia is one of the world's centers of chess and sport culture. In schools, national classes were opened. Kalmykia ethnopedagogy was established on the basis of ethnoconcept laid in national epos “Dzhangar”. The community started discussing the problems of reanimation of national language, establishment of national identity, obligation to know the history of their nation, origins and customs. The significance of new sociocultural syntheses in enlightenment and educational work with youth can be hardly overestimated, because they are built not on the existing socioeconomic reality, but on the demand of people to form the identity through national language, Buddhism and traditions.

Currently, the Kalmykia youth are slightly more than a quarter, 26.59% (all statistics are given without consideration of ethnical belonging of the republic residents. We provide open published statistics on Kalmykia youth aged from 14 to 30. In the study we focus on people from 14 to 35 years old consciously including into the category of ethnical young Kalmyks a sociological category of “young adults”); however, with every year the fraction of youth decreases, and according to the prognosis, by 2025 it will amount to 22.35%. This is mainly connected with the demographic crisis of 1990s and increase in the out migration of Republic residents, mainly young ones. According to Namrueva L.V. (Namrueva, 2013), the migration reasons are mainly underemployment, striving to improve the financial situation, living conditions, to achieve career development and to better organize their recreation activities. In most cases, more active, highflying and ambitious young Kalmyks strive to get higher education and find job with good prospects and salary in large Russian cities, mainly in Moscow, Saint Petersburg and nearest cities to the Republic of Kalmykia: Volgograd, Rostov-on-Don, Astrakhan, Stavropol. Over the recent year, the youth older than 25 years old actively go the north of the Russian Federation. Young Kalmyks in the places of their educational and work migration in large Russian cities were systematically studied by quantitative and qualitative sociological methods. This study distinguishes the following levels of their identity: ethnocultural (“I am Kalmyk”, 97%), regional (“I live in Kalmykia”, 96%), Russian (“I am Russian”, 82%) (Namrueva, 2013).

2. Problem Statement

The subjects of the qualitative study were distinguished as follows: Kalmyk language, traditions, Buddhism, youth self-management, relation of civic and ethnocultural components of the ethnic young Kalmyks' identity.

3. Research Questions

The topicality of the subject is conditioned by the fact that ethnic young Kalmyks bear colossal civic, socio-cultural and economic potential for the development of Kalmykia, consolidation of Kalmyks around real trends of Kalmyk society modernization, and preservation of Kalmyk nation. The logic of young Kalmyks' identity establishment forms under the influence of dual character of historically established cultural factors expressed through the positions "I am Kalmyk – I am Russian" and "I am Kalmyk – I am a citizen of the world".

The study is conditioned by the necessity to see accompanying problems and threats that generally bear positive attempts of ethnocultural and civic synthesis, i.e. reinforcement of ethnocultural localism, ethnocentrism and danger of nationalism. This can impede young Kalmyks to integrate into the Russian society and world's culture.

The study presents complex sociological investigation of the identity formation of ethnic young Kalmyks under the conditions of Kalmykia revival at modern stage. The work studied and analyzed the mutually repulsive (or penetrating) trends in the identity formation of ethnic young Kalmyks: ethnocultural, isolating Kalmyks in language and religious specificity of the nation, and panhuman one that leads Kalmyks beyond the boundaries of their national and identifying them with pan-Russian and panhuman values. The study considered the issues of Kalmyk language, traditions, Buddhism, youth self-management, relation of civic and ethnocultural components of the ethnic young Kalmyks' identity.

Noteworthy, the problem of youth identity was covered in works of I.S. Kon (Kon, 1998; Kon, 1965, Kon, 1980; Kon, 1971), V.A. Yadov (Yadov, 1994; Yadov, 2003), A.G.Zdravomyslov (Zdravomyslov, 2005), F.E. Sheregi (Gorshkov & Sheregi, 2010; Sheregi, 2010; Gorshkov, 2008), L.M. Drobizheva (Drobizheva, 2008; Drobizheva, 2009), S.V. Ryzhova (Ryzhova, 2011; Tishkov, 2013), S.N. Ikonnikova (Ikonnikova, 1969), V.T. Lisovskoiy (Lisovskiy & Dmitriev, 1976; Lisovskiy & Dmitriev, 1995), V.I. Chuprov (Chuprov, 1994; Chuprov & Zubok, 2011) and others.

I.S. Kon has studied the establishment of personality of youth in age groups. V.T. Lisovskiy and S.N. Ikonnikova have studied the place and the role of youth in the social structure of the Russian society. V.A. Yadov described in which social groups (including youth) new identities form, to which extent preserve previous ones and what are their structure and dynamics. M.K. Gorshkov and F.E. Sheregi study comprehensively the Russian youth, including different levels of youth identity: Russian, regional, ethnical. All these works somehow consider the problem of youth self-identification.

A lot of youth organisations appeared that became the conductors of such revival processes. A completely new method of identity formation of ethnic young Kalmyks through:

- 1) ability to speak in home language,
- 2) knowledge of the basics of Buddhism, and
- 3) membership in youth organizations.

The realization of constitution rights of the Kalmyks, such as revival of mother language, Buddhism, traditions and creation of youth organizations, has made the young Kalmyks to form their ethnocultural and civic identities simultaneously.

The Kalmyk identity together develops through the restoration of the Kalmyk language, revival of Buddhism, reanimation of ancient traditions, which are good signs. This is the mark of a new level of Kalmyks' freedom and guarantee of further development of the Kalmyk culture. At the same time, this is complex, ambiguous and unclear process in a longer run. Today, they start actively researching these processes in the republic.

4. Purpose of the Study

The study of the identity formation of ethnic young Kalmyks is carried out under conditions of post-Soviet development of Kalmyk society as a part of Russian society. Research goal: To determine the significance of young Kalmyks in the development of modern Kalmykia; interpretation of the history of the Kalmyks as constantly active factor of identity establishment of ethnic young Kalmyks; to discover two trends in the Kalmyk language restoration—*historically Kalmyk* and *modern Kalmyk*—and their impact on the formation of the identity of ethnic young Kalmyks; to reveal two trends in Buddhism revival—*pure* and *vulgar*—and their impact on the formation of the identity of ethnic young Kalmyks; study of the impact of youth organizations on the identity formation of young Kalmyks.

5. Research Methods

The main research methods are qualitative (focus groups, survey of experts whose professional life is directly connected with youth) and quantitative sociological studies on the identity formation of young Kalmyks (mass survey using questionnaires with the representatives of Kalmyk youth and ethnic young Kalmyks). The questions of quantitative sociological study were divided into five main blocks: questions about the Kalmyk language, traditions, Buddhism, self-organization of Kalmykia youth, relation of civic and ethnocultural components in the identity formation of Kalmyk youth.

The quantitative sociological study was performed by mass survey using questionnaires with the representatives of Kalmyk youth and ethnic Kalmyks. In total, 741 questionnaires were collected (young Kalmyks were surveyed aged from 14 to 35). The selection of the respondents was as follows:

- 1) the questionnaires in the Republic of Kalmykia were sent out by the Ministry of Education and Science to schools and higher education institutions of the republic; school and university students were surveyed;
- 2) in 2013-2015 the questionnaires were accepted in electronic form;
- 3) the authors have distinguished the main centers of attraction for young migrating Kalmyks (to large Russian cities) and engaged presidents of Kalmyk communities in distribution of the questionnaires in given survey sites.

The following respondents were surveyed: high school students, university students and working young people in different companies. The quantitative study was performed by selective method; the quote selection of non-random sampling was used. The general assembly are ethnic young Kalmyks, while the

selective assembly are the groups of ethnic young Kalmyks divided into the following quotas: *young Kalmyks in Kalmykia* and *young Kalmyks-migrants, men and women, school students, students, workers*. The collected data allowed covering ethnic young Kalmyks aged from 14 to 35 years representing, according to the experts, the main groups of young Kalmyks.

The subjects of the qualitative study were divided into five main blocks: Kalmyk language, traditions, Buddhism, youth self-management, relation of civic and ethnocultural components of the ethnic young Kalmyks' identity.

The experts were the representatives of the Ministry of Sport, Tourism and Youth Policy, Kalmyk communities in Russian cities beyond Kalmykia, young entrepreneurs, presidents of youth public organizations, specialists in youth policy in the republic's district municipal formations (2 ppl), popular young singers singing in the Kalmyk language, organizers of comedy projects, mass media, Buddhism clergy, sport community, philanthropists, rock musicians, teachers of KalmSU, a teacher of secondary school.

6. Findings

The most typical feature of the dynamics of Kalmykia youth is reduced fraction of youth in the total population. Talking about their language proficiency, young Kalmyks in the majority of cases noted that they "understand Kalmyk speech, but don't speak Kalmyk" (51%). A quarter of youth answered that they think in Russian, but can speak in Kalmyk (24%). Only 5% think and speak in Kalmyk. 15% of respondents do not understand or speak in Kalmyk. The main applications of the mother language are: family (57%), friends (30%), studying (21%), contacts in affinity groups, such as circles, sport clubs, courses (7%), work (6%). Every fifth respondent admitted that there are no such spheres where they could apply the mother language (20%). According to the survey of 2004, only 7% of young Kalmyks spoke and thought in Kalmyk; 19% of respondents thought in Russian and could speak Kalmyk. The proficiency in the mother language of the rest of respondents was even lower, while the majority of 69% used the mother language rarely at home.

As of today, only 7% of all Kalmyks speak Kalmyk, 55% do not know Kalmyk, but are interested in their learning, among them 20-25% actively learn the language (attend courses and clubs to improve spoken Kalmyk language, read Kalmyk literature, write or use phrases from Kalmyk, attend motivating ethnic publics in social networks, use Russian-Kalmyk electronic dictionaries, generate new content in mother language).

Despite the revival of Kalmyk identity is complex and sometimes ambiguous, in Kalmykia all social strata agree that the revival of spoken Kalmyk language and Buddhism are the main factors consolidating the nation. The period of rampant popularity of Buddhism in Kalmykia today is replaced by more stable religious situation when everybody wears Buddhism attributes, attend prayers, take part in ceremonies, organize the building of stupas for every Kalmyk clan, travel for teaching of Dalai Lama XIV.

From the analysis of levels and types of identity of ethnic young Kalmyks, one can conclude the following. The ethnocultural level is the main level for a young Kalmyk. The self-understanding of young Kalmyks as *I am Russian* is somewhat blurred, and as a rule means the self-understanding as a citizen of Russia. The identity of young Kalmyks as Russian citizens manifests in their patriotic values (to be a patriot

of your motherland, be proud of the citizenship of a great country, etc.). Over the recent years, two trends appeared simultaneously: pan-Mongolian (young Kalmyks readily take part in cultural exchange between relative ethnic groups, Kalmyks, Buryats, Mongols and Tuvans) and panhuman (striving to go abroad to live, study and work there, the activity of young Kalmyks in Internet, aim to study foreign languages and world culture). Young Kalmyk has some bound to all levels of identity, and in different situations they use different levels.

7. Conclusions

The study of self-identification of Kalmyk youth allows systematizing the practical work of government and public organizations realizing youth policy. The revealed mechanisms for the formation of sociocultural identified of young Kalmyks allow for:

- 1) increasing the efficiency of the Kalmyk language teaching;
- 2) diversifying the identification of youth groups through different direction in Buddhism;
- 3) determining the attitude of youth to different ways of self-organization.

The application of the sociocultural analysis of human reality and levels of self-identification of modern Kalmyk youth allowed creating the comprehensive approach to this topic. This approach resulted in the determined trends in the identity formation of ethnic young Kalmyks under the conditions of activated revival processes: - in identity formation through the revival of the spoken Kalmyk language—historical Kalmyk language with focus on forgotten ancient Kalmyk language, and Kalmyk language directed towards the application in modern communication; - in identity formation through the revival of Buddhism with introduction into it of pre-Buddhism archaic religions impeding the inclusion of adepts of this direction into the development of modern social processes, and *pure* Buddhism promoting the participation of believers in social development of Kalmykia; - in identity formation through the formation of youth organizations directed towards the preservation of ancient traditions, language, Buddhism, customs in historical (pre-Soviet) ethnocultural forms and directed towards the modernization of customs, language, Buddhism for adequate engagement of young Kalmyks in modern social processes. The results of identity formation of young Kalmyks will affect the future of Kalmyk ethnic group, the Republic of Kalmykia and Kalmyk nation as a whole. The understanding of these processes will promote the formation of the national ideology, building international relations, elaboration of the main directions of republic youth policy.

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