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**TRANSFORMATION OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF
DESCENDANTS OF CHURAPCHA SETTLERS**

Akulina Mestnikova (a)*, Galina Alekseeva (b), Uliana Vinokurova (c), Indilena Sobakina (d)
*Corresponding author

(a) Churapcha State Institute of Physical Culture and Sport, 2a, Sportivnaya St., 678671, Churapcha
linamestnikova@gmail.com, 79142996300

(b) Churapcha State Institute of Physical Culture and Sport, 2a, Sportivnaya St., 678671, Churapcha
g_g_alekseeva@mail.ru, 79142275712

(c) Churapcha State Institute of Physical Culture and Sport, 2a, Sportivnaya St., 678671, Churapcha
uottaah1707@gmail.com, 79246647203

(d) Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University, 58, Belinsky St., 677000, Yakutsk
indilenas@mail.ru, 79841090390

Abstract

The paper presents the results of the study conducted to identify features of the vital strategy of the second or third generation of internally displaced persons to the north in 1942-1945. The study was performed by the research team of the Churapcha State Institute of Physical Culture and Sport that included teachers and students of the department for work with youth, public active leaders of Churapcha immigrants, graduate students of the North-Eastern Federal University, scientists of Kalmyk Research Center. The sociological study was conducted in the territory of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia), Kalmykia and Lithuania. The study was based on Indigenous Methodology, P. Sztompka's Cultural Trauma, J. Assman's Theory of Cultural Memory, M. Halbwachs's Theory of "Social Memory Framework". The study included questionnaire survey, in-depth interviews, media content analysis, historical and comparative analyses. The study focused on social and psychological consequences of involuntary resettlement of the people for their descendants. According to J. Assman's Theory of Cultural Memory, social community and collective identity directly depend on collective memory. Memory connects the past with the present and the future of a social community. Deterioration of collective energy of the people can lead to the loss of distinctive characteristics. It is important to preserve the collective energy of the people in the form of responsible public agreement between past, present and future generations. It is typical of Churapcha people to strengthen their identity after experienced forced resettlement mainly due to the method of grief deconstruction in the form of public compassion.

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Keywords: Resettlement, deportation, generation, collective memory.



1. Introduction

The Day of Remembrance and Grief on the victims of forceful relocation is celebrated in Yakutia on September 19. This day has been celebrated in Yakutia only since 1992 from the 50th anniversary of Churapcha resettlement. The “effect of fifty years” represents a semicentennial period in the life of generations used to “put aside” the tragic past, to consider its experience and to create the convincing narrative widely or even universally approved by contemporaries (Etkind, 2016). Two generations are needed for a grief to become culturally productive. This period was required to attract the public attention to the Churapcha tragedy.

The first generation goes through a **trauma** of death, mass-casualty burial and survival, and the second generation – a **grief** on the lost parents and grandparents. The grief on the past is connected with the caution of the future. For this reason, it is important to address this difficult topic to avoid the first signs of violence and to prevent the state violence or any dominating majority. Open, voluntary, public, humanitarian condemnation of social disaster fosters the communicative memory of the first and second generations provided there is the platform for talk on deportation, forced resettlement so that the awful events are remained in the cultural memory of the next generations making it possible to discuss, condemn, study and educate the younger generation on heartbreaking events of the historical past. Duration, intensity, and activity of transition to cultural memory is defined by the openness of information and repentance of authorities. According to Halbwachs’s (2007) theory, the collective memory needs the reminiscent group, and Diner (1992) came to a conclusion that only ethnic communities, but not other social communities are able to maintain the remembrance (Etkind, 2016).

The study was performed by the research team of the Churapcha State Institute of Physical Culture and Sport that included teachers and students of the department for work with youth, public active leaders of Churapcha immigrants, graduate students of the North-Eastern Federal University, scientists of Kalmyk Research Center. The sociological study was conducted in the territory of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia), Kalmykia and Lithuania.

2. Problem Statement

In 1942-1945, 41 collective farms of the Churapcha ulus were violently moved to the northern regions of Yakutia. The beginning of the Great Patriotic War – 1941 was the period of the strongest droughts in the central regions of Yakutia. If before war the population of the area was 16,964 people, then by 1 January 1943 only 7934 persons remained; the area reached the number of the pre-war population only 46 years later, i.e. only in 1985.

On 6 January 1942 the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and the USSR Council of People’s Commissars issued the decree aimed to increase in fisheries sector in the rivers of Siberia and the Far East. The Council of People’s Commissars of the Yakutsk Autonomous Soviet Socialistic Republic established the department of special immigrants, according to which 5,907 Finns, Latvians, Germans, Ingushs, etc. were moved to the fisheries sector of Yakutia. On 11 August 1942 the Bureau of Regional Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) issued the decree No. 213 on the resettlement of 41 collective farms of Churapcha district to Kobayasky, Zhigansky and Bulunsky

districts of Yakutia. In total, 1,655 households – 4,988 people, including 990 children, were resettled. Tanda-Bakhshytsky, Teleysky, Bakhshytsky, Belolyubsky, Alchagarsky, Mugudaysky, Melzheksinsky district councils were liquidated. According to the fishery trust, 2,890 people, including 2,000 working population, migrated in October 1942. 30 fishing artels were formed of these collective farms. In the years of war fish production increased 3.5 times in the republic, 2 million tons of fish were sent to the front, which was also the contribution of the Churapcha settlers (Turantaeva & Starostina, 2015).

Over 5 years 925 Churapcha people died at war, over 2 years 1,747 Churapcha settlers died in undeclared deportation. Due to persistent petition of the first secretary of the CPSU District Committee I.E. Vinokurov, in 1944 the party leaders decided to return all settlers home. As of 1 January 1947, 1,108 from the total of 4,988 people, 15 from the total number of 41 collective farms and 433 from the total of 1,655 households returned to native places.

Violence and inaccuracy of Churapcha resettlement was officially recognized at the republican level only in 1991. On 4 June 2002 the President of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) V.A. Shtyrov issued the decree No. 269 “On additional measures to compensate the damage caused to the population of Churapcha district from resettlement in 1942-1945”.

The ethno-sociologist Ignatyeva (2016) in her article *Churapcha on NINE HILLS: TOPOGRAPHY and Narratives of Collective Memory* notes that based on the materials of the study “the feeling of resettlement is still typical for local community irrespective of gender and age of its members even if they never changed their place of residence. The attitude of people to violent uprooting can be defined as a form of post-traumatic memory uniting the representatives of all generations” (p. 48).

The distinctive feature of the Soviet grief is its incompleteness in the form of memorial evidence – time, place of death and burial, number of victims, reasons of their destruction and the complete repentance. On 19 September 2012 the monument “Mother and child” was opened in Churapcha village devoted to the 70th anniversary of the Churapcha tragedy and the victims of the forced resettlement. The Churapcha tragedy was getting nearer to its completeness by public forces. Churapcha people are also characterized by their strong identity after their past mainly due to thanking a grief deconstruction method representing public compassion, solidarity and trust to the evidence of survivors.

3. Research Questions

The study focused on social and psychological consequences of involuntary resettlement of the people to far, life-threatening areas of the Soviet Union for their descendants. In the places of forced relocation the victims were suffering from cold, hunger, hard work, separation from native places, isolation from the world and destruction of the vital world, lawlessness, violence, humiliation and neglect.

The narratives on deportations are accumulated in two memories: ascending – history of losses of mass death maintained in the memory of the first generation of community as democide and stories of the deaths of certain people, and descending – the shared burden of future generations regarding the experienced memory of a grief and collective mourning for the victims expressed by the disclosure of the hidden mystery of the past and perpetuation in different distinct and appropriate types. As Etkind (2016) fairly notes, “experience merges with prevention”. The unique role of the past in post-catastrophic public consciousness is evidenced in the models of its interpretation in theories, narratives, images and meanings

created by scientists, politicians, cultural figures and civil society. According to Etkind (2016), modern Russia is characterized by multihistoricism by analogy with multiculturalism in the USA.

Our task is to direct the cultural memory of the generations, which recognized the reality of losses, towards the creation of personal and ethnonational destiny on the basis of vital cultural and spiritual values of the people. It is important to preserve the collective energy of the people in the form of responsible public agreement between past, present and future generations. This is the respect for the dead and responsibility to future generations.

The RSFSR Laws “On Rehabilitation of Repressed People” of 26 April 1991 and “On Recovery of victims of Political Repressions” of 18 October 1991 do not only give the critical evaluation of actions concerning citizens and nations, but also define measures for their rehabilitation. However, not all foreseen measures are realized until now due to various reasons (Bugai, 2010).

The transfer of generational experience through family stories within intergenerational intrafamilial and public communication is poorly studied in sociology.

4. Purpose of the Study

The **scientific purpose of the project** is to identify features of vital strategy of the second or third generation of persons resettled to the north.

Research tasks:

- to identify features of socialization and formation of identity of children from families of persons resettled to the north;
- to study relation of the second or third generation to forced resettlement as to the page of history of the people, population of the ulus/area, family, development of the strategy of resistance to totalitarian regime;
- to identify the influence of historical trauma on psychological health of the third generation;
- to study the influence of historical and live memory of forced resettlement on the vital strategy of the third generation.

5. Research Methods

Research methodology: Indigenous Methodology aimed to enrich the science through thinking, experience, interpretation of deep vision of prospects and interests of indigenous people by their scientists seeking to provide the best understanding and acceptance of indigenous people as subjects of history; Assman’s (2014) Theory of Cultural Memory; Halbwachs’s (2007) Theory of “Social Memory Framework”. The study included questionnaire survey, in-depth interviews, media content analysis, historical and comparative analyses.

The research team conducted the sociological survey of immigrants and descendants of the Churapcha Sakhs and the Kalmyks that suffered forced resettlement to the north (n=563). In total 250 Sakhs and 313 young Kalmyks were interviewed. During a trip to Lithuania the authors conducted interviews with leaders and activists of the Laptev’s Society, visited the Museum of the genocide victims of the Lithuanian people, the Center of genocide and resistance of the residents of Lithuania, the Čiurlionis National Museum

of Art, National museum of life of the Lithuanian people. In the Churapcha ulus we studied the exhibits of the Hатылыnskoy secondary school museum, conducted interviews with the residents of the Bakhsy village, which experienced forced resettlement. The Lithuanian J. Markauskas, the head of the Laptev's Society (Lithuania) A.S. Ptitsyn, the coordinator of relations of the Churapcha immigrants with the Laptev's Society, the initiator of the movement for restoration of justice in relation to immigrants from Churapcha V.V. Pribytkina, the journalist and the author of the *Memory Bells* broadcast, the activist of the Memorial Society, the Ingrian Finnish E.D. Tasku-Ushnitskaya provided the texts of memoirs and reflections especially for this study.

6. Findings

The post-catastrophic memory of the generation beginning its active life experiences a painful process of acquiring the past, developing various grief rituals, culture of despair and hope, political restoration, solidarity with the past, esthetic and art ethnic self-expression and imagination. The limits of this process are not defined yet since there is no consensus yet in the public sphere between authorities and the people regarding the repentance over demotsidy in Soviet period. The understanding of the present as the post-Soviet period still bears the freight of ideology, which allowed committing the acts of violence towards the people of the Soviet space, which later became the Russian State.

Maintaining their intrinsic invariance, the ethnic values are subject to cross-cultural and intra-cultural variability and over time may be formed into new hierarchical structures depending on the change of functional or semantic meaning of these values. The idea of stability of cultural values is especially problematic for the people with bicultural life – nomadic and settling typical for the Kalmyk and Yakut people (Vinokurova, 2017). The values of ethnic communities penetrate the entire structure of their ethnic consciousness. Cruel test by exile, violent eviction of the innocent people without charge or trial from native places revealed the power of the national spirit of deported people, their commitment to unbeatable values.

The sociological science is characterized by the Renaissance of generational approach on the basis of the understanding that “not classes, but generations form modern cultural, intellectual and political thinking” (Edmunds & Turner, 2002, p.22). The key problem of generations is the correlation between control measures over the destiny and measures of social responsibility, i.e. continuity of identity. The definition of the concept of “generations” reflects three different approaches – historical, sociocultural and axiological. In the context of our study the definition by a Polish sociologist Ossovskaya (1963) seems the most relevant: “The generation as community of positions and values created as a result of joint experience of significant historical events during the development of a person's identity” (p. 48). In this definition not the events but their refraction and transfer in consciousness of generations are important.

Within this study 250 immigrants and descendants that suffered from forced resettlement in the years of war were interviewed in Churapcha district in 2018. According to the survey, the majority the Churapcha respondents learned about forced resettlement from parents (59%) and from grandparents (38%). These results are bound to the fact that the settlers themselves and the first generation (children) participated in the survey. 12.4% of respondents for the first time learned about forced resettlement at school or other events devoted to the Second World War; from other relatives, friends, acquaintances – 9.2%; from media

(books, newspapers, radio, TV, the Internet) – 9%. These answers were chosen by the representatives of the second, third generation (grandsons).

Most of descendants of settlers since the early childhood heard stories of the senior generation about life in the north (59%), at the same time some of them specified that they helped them to write memoirs (4.4%), went together to places of forced resettlement (2.4%). A quarter of respondents noted that their family started sharing stories about it after the information on forced resettlement became open (22%), it was not common to discuss this subject in families of 14.4% of respondents (*“My father told only what he remembered, the grandmother never talked about it”, “I was a settler together with my parents”, “my grandfather told a little”, “I learned from my parents”*).

Resettlement and life in the north had an obvious negative impact on the memoirs of settlers, which confirms the distribution of answers to the question: “What do usually your relatives tell you remembering life in the north?”: about the most difficult living conditions in the first years of eviction (68%), about death of close relatives on the way (43%), about physical activity, which was unusual for inhabitants of Churapcha (24%), about the position of immigrants deprived of civil rights (14.4%). At the same time, the settlers told about kindness, responsiveness of the local population (13%), about the nature of the north (12.4%).

The question “What helped Churapcha people to overcome the years of resettlement?” was one of the most important in the survey. According to descendants of settlers, these were such values and qualities as fortitude, resilience of people – 29.4%, belief that by all means they will come back home – 26%, diligence, inexhaustible optimism – 14.5%, mutual aid, mutual support – 13.1%, good health, physical training – 6.6%, strong united family – 6.3%, traditional outlook – 2%.

The main sources of new information on forced relocation for modern Churapcha youth are the republican television (28.3%), republican and regional newspapers (21.8%), materials of the museum of Churapcha settlers (16.3%), information on websites (7.3%). Scientific development of forced deportation takes place at different levels starting from collecting memoirs of immigrants and their descendants, school conferences, special courses to scientific articles and sections in monographs, but this subject did not yet become the subject of separate historical and sociological scientific study. Not too many young people know scientific literature on resettlement – only 6.1% of respondents get information on forced resettlement of Churapcha people to the north from scientific collections and monographs.

Thus, we can note that the collective memory remains one of the main sources of historical data for the representatives of Yakut ethnos, and more modern ways of obtaining information remain unclaimed. Most of respondents does not use scientific sources when obtaining new information on forced resettlement, which reduces the level of reliable knowledge on the tragedy outside a family and constrains the transition of a trauma of a grief and loss into the narratives of collective creative memory.

7. Conclusion

In the former Soviet Union the historical policy was formed under the influence of relief from Soviet ideologemes – there was an opportunity to develop the earlier “closed” topics. The description of the history was perceived as a factor of ethnic identity, as means of justification of sovereignty, while independence – as a supreme value acquired not during the collapse of the USSR, but in the course of long-term fight

(Kumpan, 2017). The appeal to the past as to the symbolic resource became an integral part of the policy of the former Soviet Union states building their national identity (Kiridon, 2017).

At present, there are various discursive practices, approaches of modern cultural history, study of collective trauma, which allow seeing the complexity and ambiguity of experience, shifting a focus from total to private making history more humane within particular space-temporal and national-cultural coordinates. We found significant changes in continuity of transferring social experience from parents to children. The social environment is changing more quickly than the senior generation can transfer its social experience to the new generation. Therefore, we lose the real link of times. Without continuity the ethnos stops being the subject of public process and may disappear from the historical arena. Complete and partial loss of historical experience of ethnic culture leads to amnesia that makes further existence of ethnos quite problematic.

Each person is the descendant of ancestors and the ancestor of descendants. The problem of generations in the context of the culture of loss center around the answers to the following questions: past, i.e. senior generation is a burden, but not the experience, not lessons, not support? The future, i.e. the youth represent challenges, i.e. confrontation, but not continuity, hope, continuation? Inter-generational relations are not continuum, but discretization? The answer to these questions requires modern languages of relevant social description to explain the features of intergenerational relations of the people, which suffered from violence, grief, dispatch from native places, difficulties of recognition, restoration of personal and national identity, management of the people's destiny, and to be engaged into national construction and achievement of equality and partnership in the modern world.

For young people to know and remember the history of their family and the people, it is necessary to use such educational forms as the engagement of young people into interviews with the representatives of the senior generation so that they can later write the chronicle of those terrible years, and memorial events for the victims of deportation. Due to real-life communication young people gain knowledge, which is emotionally experienced and which will not disappear completely.

Undoubtedly, in the national consciousness and historical memory of the repressed people there were changes, which shall be understood to preserve the ethnos having post-traumatic syndrome of losses. The vision through the generation seems methodologically significant to understand and assess the well-being of the people, which suffered from forced resettlement. The price of development through a post-traumatic syndrome can be defined by the quality of the younger generation.

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