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ETHNIC ASPECTS OF RURAL SETTLEMENTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF TATARSTAN

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Abstract

The relevance of the study arises from a significant number of challenges in terms of the Russian countryside development caused by insufficient attention to the state of mentality and spirituality of rural residents as the most resistant to environmental factors representatives of traditional folk culture and by the underutilized opportunities of internal development resources, especially, ethnic reproduction and cultural potential. Taking into account the diversity of the regional differences in a significant area of the Russian Federation, it seems appropriate to identify and compare some regional models. Using the example of the Republic of Tatarstan, the authors analyze the ethnic aspects of the rural settlements, their occurrence and dynamics as the main condition for the development of historical and cultural (ethno-cultural) landscapes. The ethno-cultural component, in its turn, is considered as a factor in the sustainable development of rural settlements and requires thoughtful attention to it to provide the optimal use of its resources. This problem statement and its solution are absent in regulatory documents and are not sufficiently represented in the literature. To conduct the research, we used the data taken from the official statistics, specialized reference books, and field materials obtained by the authors during some ethnographic expeditions in the Republic of Tatarstan in 2015–2019. The obtained results allow determining the trends of a number of ethno-demographic processes in the Republic of Tatarstan and moving to a higher level enabling to run a study on the ethno-cultural landscapes of the rural settlements and construct their initial models.

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Keywords: Tatarstan, rural settlement, ethno-demography, ethno-cultural landscape.



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1. Introduction

Modern social development contains the elements of both evolutionary (quantitative) and revolutionary (qualitative) transformations. For centuries, the established social division of labor and lifestyle along the lines of the city – village today is filled with new content, which requires both theoretical reflection and practical transformations. Having passed through some social and economic experiments of the Soviet time and the first decades of the post-Soviet era, the Russian village has come to the state of numerous losses and to the need for a radical restructuring of its entire structure. At the same time, one must not forget about the need to preserve, restore and use the potential of the historical and cultural landscape of rural territories – a unique national heritage and an equally important resource for moving into the future.

2. Problem Statement

In the Russian Federation, the ethnic factor in all its diversity – ethno-cultural, ethno-demographic, ethno-confessional, etc. – was and remains the axis of the national development. Of particular importance is the Russian village, in which the main components of ethnicity were generated and relayed. To a certain extent, these functions are still preserved, although they are transforming, giving the village a unique significance of the ethnic source. As historical practice shows, this resource worked under almost any external influences. Therefore, a multidimensional study of the ethno-cultural factor, the ways of its activation in order to the sustainable development of rural territories is an important scientific problem.

3. Research Questions

The main subject of the research is the ethnic characteristics of the cultural landscape of rural settlements, which are understood as a complex of ethnically marked historical, socio-cultural, architectural-spatial and other parameters and the possibility to use them optimally. In scientific literature, various positions are expressed addressing the processes of how the ethno-cultural landscapes were formed and developed. In Russian studies, the ethnic factor is emphasized (Korostelev, 2004; Stolyarova et al., 2016) and special attention is paid to ethno-mixed environments/territories (Danilko, 2010; Popov, 2010; Yagafova, 2010). Foreign researchers take the global cultural space as a basis (Appadurai, 1998) and develop strategies aimed at preserving the cultural heritage as a whole (Botezat, 2016; Gražulevičiūtė-Vilenishke & Zaleskienė, 2017), its use for tourism and other economically rational purposes (Barkauskas et al., 2015; Karvelite-Balberene & Mlinkauskiene, 2014).

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research is to determine the ethnic characteristics of the rural settlements of the Republic of Tatarstan as the basis of the ethno-cultural landscape.

5. Research Methods

The research methodology was denoted by the statement of purpose and sources. The ethnic component of the rural settlements was developed on the basis of the methodological principles of anthropology, ethnology, and demography. The demographic indicators were developed with the methods of statistical analysis. To identify and further analyze the factors having the influence on ethno-cultural landscape we applied the methodology of SWOT analysis: a paired study of the external conditions and internal potential of the rural settlements with a prospect to run some project-based research in the future.

6. Findings

Tatarstan is the region where the ethnic borders of several ethnic groups crossed. In the north-west and north of the Republic of Tatarstan, the ethnic territory of the Tatars is superimposed on the areas of Mari and Udmurts; all along the western border – the intersection of the areas of the Tatars and Chuvash; along the eastern border – the intersection of the territories of the Tatars and Bashkirs. Besides, constant long-term migrations led to the formation of dispersed groups of Volga peoples far from the borders of their own national territories. So there appeared “clusters” of Mari settlements in the east and Udmurts’ in the southeast of the Republic of Tatarstan, and the Chuvash and Mordovian spread widely throughout Zakamye. The Slavic colonization of the region spanned the whole millennium (up to the XIX century) and led to the formation of hundreds of villages.

In a modern and new era, the main features of a multi-ethnic rural environment have been formed, which are developing in modern conditions. The geographical determinants of the territory of Tatarstan are the Volga and Kama rivers, which created the natural zonal borders within the Republic and determined some ethnic characteristics of the settlement. In particular, the Russian population of the region historically gravitated precisely to the river-by territories. Multiple historical collisions formed such a feature of the region as settlements with an ethnically mixed composition.

The stories of many rural villages in Tatarstan have preserved legends about the resettlement of immigrant neighbors and the formation of foreign ethnic “ends”. Historical sources testify to the tradition of forming the complex rural communities that united villages with different ethnic groups, making the Middle Volga region different from other regions of Russia (Busygin, 2013). As a result, before the 1917 revolution, the Kazan province was considered the most multi-ethnic in the Russian Empire. In Soviet time, when the pace of urbanization and migration increased significantly, this feature of the territory intensified. This is evidenced by the census of the second half of the XX – beginning of the XXI centuries.

First of all, we note that the rural population of Tatarstan has a tendency to decrease (RosStat, 2013). If in 1970, the share of the rural population of Tatarstan was 48.5 % of the total population, in 2010 – 24.6 %. The number of rural residents of the Republic, according to the 2010 census, decreased, compared to the 1970 census, from 1.517.283 people to 932.827 people, or by 38.5 %. The causes of this situation are known: the outflow of the population, especially of young and middle-aged people, into cities; general aging of the rural population; fertility reduction; increased mortality (Zeleneeva et al., 2013). The exception was the period between the censuses of 1989 and 2002, when the pace of population

decline slowed down. This period saw the collapse of the Soviet Union, a change in the pace of migration and the composition of migrants. In particular, Tatarstan turned out to be an attractive region for migrants due to a number of factors, and the overall balance of migration, including to the countryside in the 1990s and 2000s, was invariably positive.

Tatars dominate in the rural population of the Republic of Tatarstan, and the Tatar population is declining (from 366 thousand people in 1970 to 262.7 thousand people in 2010, or almost 30 %), and the proportion is increasing (from 67.3 % in 1970 to 71 % in 2010). The Tatar population prevails (over 50 %) both in terms of number and share in 33 regions of the Republic, and in the remaining 10 regions, it takes second place. The maximum indices of the share of the Tatar population are 98.6–96 %; the minimum figure is 24.9 %.

The second ethnic group in terms of size and share in the rural population of the Republic of Tatarstan is Russians. Between the censuses of 1970 and 2010, the number of rural Russian residents of the Republic of Tatarstan was halved (by 49.8 %); their share in the population is gradually decreasing – from 26 % (one quarter) in 1970 to 21.2 % (one fifth) in 2010. In 6 regions of the Republic, the Russian population takes the first place in terms of proportion and number, in 27 regions – the second place after the Tatars, and in 10 regions – the third place, and the Chuvash (6 regions), Mari (1 region), the Udmurt (2 regions). The maximum share of the Russian rural population is 65.8 %, the minimum is 0.7 %.

The Chuvash, Udmurt, Mari and Mordovian stand out from other ethnic groups in the population of the Republic of Tatarstan. Their number in the composition of the rural population also decreases over time, as does the proportion of representatives of the ethnic majority – the Tatars and Russians. In this process, the Udmurt and Mari living in the Republic are comparable with the Tatars – their reduction by 2010, compared to 1970, amounted to 29.5 and 31.8 %, respectively, and the Chuvash are comparable with the Russians, whose number decreased by 47.7 % over the same period. The largest population reduction was recorded among the Mordovian, the number of which from 1970 to 2010 decreased by 65 %.

In each region of the Republic of Tatarstan, there live people of other nationalities, the number of which does not exceed several dozen people, and the share in the population is less than 0.5 %. However, their number remained stable in the Soviet time, decreased slightly in the 1990s, and increased in the post-Soviet period (by three times by 2010 compared to 1970), which once again confirms the reputation of Tatarstan as a region favorable and attractive to external migrants.

Thus, in the course of a long historical development on the territory of the Republic of Tatarstan, a multi-ethnic population and a stable network of settlements or rural settlements were formed, corresponding to the structure of this population. Many Tatar villages have survived in the regions of the Republic of Tatarstan, dating back to the time of the Kazan Khanate (XIV–XV centuries), as well as Chuvash, Udmurt, Mari and Mordovian villages, known from the sources of the XVI–XVII centuries. The places of Russian first settlers of the XVI–XVIII centuries are also known in the region. Ancient ethnic roots and strong traditions of interethnic coexistence left a characteristic imprint on the rural settlements of the region, which continue to develop.

The 2010 census recorded 3,068 rural settlements in the territory of the Republic of Tatarstan, including 49 objects (villages) without a population (RosStat, 2013). Information obtained from the

various sources (Human Settlements; e-Portal) allows us to determine the ethnic composition of the rural villages in the Republic of Tatarstan as follows: the number of Tatar settlements – 1678, or 55.6 %; Russian – 593, or 19.6 %; Chuvash – 181, or 6 %; Udmurt – 51, or 1.7 %; Mari – 25, or 0.8 %; Mordovian – 23, or 0.8 %; ethnically mixed – 468, or 15.5 %.

Among mixed settlements dominate in which Tatars and Russians live together – 289, or 61.8 % of the total number of ethnically mixed villages. In their composition Russian-Tatar (with a predominance of the Russian population) villages, there are 198, or 68.5 % of all mixed villages, and Tatar-Russian (with a predominance of the Tatar population) – 90, or 31.5 %. In the remaining settlements, there are various options with the participation of the Russians, Tatars, Maris, Udmurts, Chuvashes and representatives of other ethnic groups.

Various processes take place in the development of the environment of the rural settlements. Settlements arise, are enlarged or reduced; they change their administrative status, merge and fragment, etc. Sometimes rural settlements may disappear at all. The situation is aggravated when the reduction in the number of settlements becomes massive, which is now observed in most Russian regions. Tatarstan is no exception: here in the XX – beginning of the XXI centuries, according to our estimates, 1171 rural settlements disappeared, or one out of four.

The majority of the disappeared villages are the points where the Russians lived – 760, or 64.9 % of the total number of those who disappeared, and the Tatars – 230, or 19.6 %. If we turn to relative indicators, they make up 13.7 % for villages with the Tatar population (in other words, every seventh to eighth disappeared from the Tatar villages), and for settlements with the Russian population an order of magnitude more – 128 % (i.e., for every 4 existing villages there are 5 disappeared ones).

There are several reasons for which the disappearance happened and happens. The most prosperous should be considered the fate of those villages that "disappeared" by moving from the category of "rural settlements" to the category of "urban settlements" and were absorbed by nearby cities. So, for example, from 1934 to 2004, 36 former rural settlements were included in the borders of the capital of Tatarstan, Kazan. This state of affairs can be considered natural.

They lost their names but territorially they merged with their closest neighbors. Forcedly, the settlements that fell into the sanitary zones ceased to exist. On the territory of the Republic of Tatarstan, these were settlements that were flooded during the construction of reservoirs on the Volga and Kama – Kuibyshevsky (1957–1959) and Nizhnekamsk (the early 1970s), as well as those that fell into the industrial construction zone of large cities (Naberezhnye Chelny, Nizhnekamsk, Elabuga).

A significant number of rural settlements died as a result of negative socio-political actions of the 1930s-1960s – forced collectivization and the campaign to combat the so-called "uneconomic settlements/villages". In Tatarstan, during the 1930s and 1960s there were recorded the maximum indicators for the number of disappeared settlements – 427 and 333, or 36.5 % and 28.4 %, respectively – accounted for almost two-thirds of the total number of villages that disappeared.

The data referenced and their analysis cannot be exhausted. The list of disappeared settlements in Tatarstan does not include the period of the beginning of the XX century, as well as the earlier times. It will be updated further. The 2010 census recorded in the Republic of Tatarstan 252 rural villages with fewer than 10 inhabitants (RosStat, 2013) – “dying” settlements, as they are called. This situation requires

the activation of all resources to optimize processes in rural settlements or localities, including the contribution of specialists working in various fields of knowledge.

This finds the support in governmental authorities and is reflected in a number of federal documents, where the main emphasis falls on the social, demographic and technological spheres.

It seems to us that the ethno-cultural potential of the environment of the rural settlements must also be taken into account. The analysis of various sources indicates that in the settlements of Tatarstan this potential is quite high. First of all, its content includes a rich historical past. All existing settlements of the Republic of Tatarstan are associated with certain macro- and microhistorical events that took place at various stages of the ethnic history of the people. These events entered the historical memory of peoples, found material and spiritual reflection in various forms of culture, which, in turn, influenced the identification of local ethnic groups and was reflected in local and regional self-consciousness.

Significant ethno-cultural potential of the settlements of the Republic of Tatarstan is determined by the iconic objects with a high historical and cultural value that these settlements have. These are archaeological sites, necropolises, “holy places” (springs, glades, trees and other objects of veneration and worship), the remains of fortifications of defensive lines; architectural monuments (religious churches and religious objects, belfries, chapels, graves of famous people, epigraphic monuments, merchants' houses, landowners' estates, socially significant buildings, trade and residential facilities), local history museums, places associated with birth and life of famous people, etc. All these objects are inextricably linked with a specific settlement environment, with local folklore and ritualism and are a necessary component of the notion of “small homeland” known to everyone.

Finally, the dimension of the ethno-cultural potential of the settlement environment is determined by the ability to use unique combinations of existing natural and cultural objects in ethnic and ecological tourism – areas that in Russia and in Tatarstan, in particular, are only gaining strength and require support. Given the importance of the stated objectives, we implement a phased-type project related to the study of the ethno-cultural potential of the rural settlements as a factor of their sustainable development. At the first stage of the research activities, cataloging and systematization of the rural settlements was carried out, a diagram of the parameters of the ethno-cultural development of the rural territories was designed and it is being completed that allows to present, as the significant result, the preliminary models of ethno-cultural landscapes of the rural settlements of Tatarstan.

7. Conclusion

The analysis of the ethnic characteristics of the rural settlements of the Republic of Tatarstan allows us to draw the following conclusions. The ethnic composition of the rural population of the Republic of Tatarstan and the features of its settlement are the result of complex historical past and dynamic modern processes. Long demographic changes led to the formation of a multicomponent population structure with dominant Finnish-speaking, Turkic-speaking and Slavic-speaking groups, which formed both the areas of mono-ethnic settlements and ethnically mixed settlements, to which every sixth to seventh settlement belongs to the Republic.

Active processes of migration and urbanization are changing the composition of the rural population: their number is decreasing, the age and sex composition of the inhabitants are changing,

which leads to a transformation of the functions of the rural settlement itself. One of the signs of changes – the disappearance of rural settlements – a process that has gained significant momentum over the past century and led to the elimination of every fourth settlement in Tatarstan. Statistically, the Russian settlements prevail in this picture, but all ethnic groups of the Republic are covered by it.

At the same time, the rural settlement continues its life activity and ethno-cultural continuity remains one of its important components. The ethno-cultural landscape of rural settlements that have developed over the centuries is both a characteristic of the lifestyle of rural residents and an important factor in further sustainable development. The analysis addressing the content of the ethno-cultural landscape of the rural settlements of the Republic of Tatarstan revealed the richness and diversity of its structural elements and allowed to construct the models, the competent use of which can act as a factor in the sustainable development of a rural settlement.

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