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The historical memory on modernization of the Kazakh aul in Soviet narratives

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Abstract

The study aims to investigate the historical memory on modernization of the Kazakh aul in Soviet narratives via comparative qualitative research of theoretical concepts of modern historical science. As a result, the new Kazakh national identity largely supplanted Kazakhs' previous identification with a system of pastoral nomadism. In conclusion, the tribal-hierarchical structure did not fit into the Stalinist constitution; the traditional culture of the Kazakh people acquired a new image and a new name for the Soviet-Kazakh ethnos.

Keywords: Historical, Memory, Narratives, Collectivization, Modernization.

La memoria histórica sobre la modernización del aul kazajo en las narrativas soviéticas

Resumen

El estudio tiene como objetivo investigar la memoria histórica sobre la modernización del aul kazajo en las narrativas soviéticas a través de la investigación cualitativa comparativa de los conceptos teóricos de la ciencia histórica moderna. Como resultado, la nueva identidad nacional kazaja suplantó en gran medida la identificación previa de los kazajos con un sistema de nomadismo pastoral. En conclusión, la estructura jerárquica tribal no encajaba en la constitución estalinista; La cultura tradicional del pueblo kazajo adquirió una nueva imagen y un nuevo nombre para el ethnos soviético-kazajo.

Palabras clave: Histórico, Memoria, Narrativas, Colectivización, Modernización.

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of historical memory is accompanied by many key terms that interpret its content. What does historical memory mean for us today? Is it possible to put an equal sign between the concepts of historical memory and historical consciousness? The relevance of this issue is determined by the current situation, when there is so much talk about memory because it no longer exists (NORA, 1999). This is confirmed by the Resolution of the European Parliament on the construction of the historical memory of the European Union of September 19, 2019 No. 2009/2819 (RSP) On the Importance of European Memory for the Future of Europe. The concept of historical memory of the Soviet past has varied memories based on strong points formed by the ideology of power.

The memory has gained political contours, becoming a state tool in creating a book of the social memory about the past, updating the concept of identity politics. The processes of globalization at the turn of the XX-XXI centuries have focused on identification markers, structurally reinforcing national history with a national-state narrative. The authorities selectively operated on the historical past of the people, the so-called Nodes of memory NORA (1999) marking national identity, filling the content of state symbols. According to Wang, the memory under discussion and the associated social discourse can lead to nationalism, as evidenced by the resonant events of the post-Soviet space at the end of the twentieth century.

The collapse of the Soviet Union gave rise to an alternative historical memory of past events, caused manipulations in the formation of public consciousness. The imperative of memory regarding its content has become the object of research interests of many scientists, including SENETTE (2018), who pointed out the relationship between memory and identity; HIDAS (2017), noting the importance of continuity of generational memory: “Tradition is one of the antecedents of the search for historical continuity, i.e. the notion of preserving and passing on the bequeathed” (HIDAS, 2017: 10). KESZEI (2017) stated the strategy for appropriating memory. In analyzing the transformation of historical memory, the above-mentioned authors and a whole body of others point to the process of its politicization, which combines state and national principles.

In the historical and cultural space, there is a whole layer of the narrative of the Soviet era. Peculiar clichés of ideological constructs of Soviet history were written based on positive facts. The Archival revolution opened previously closed party funds, documents on the activities of the OGPU, stored in special state archives, including archival and investigative materials on the repressed. Their content is fragments of oral history, letters to the authorities, and photo documents as visual images of memory. Of particular interest are the letters and fragments of oral history, in view of the diversity and significance value.

These are previously hidden narratives about the true reality of the results of Soviet modernization and political repression. This is what can help:

To dwell in one's inherited past is to take on one's having-become, always open to more than one reading. ... The possibility of meaningful cultivation of the present by recouring on things present from the past (HIDAS, 2019: 14).

The intricate interweaving of micro- and macro-human fates under conditions of large-scale transformations of the Soviet state reveals secret pages, demonstrating tragedy against the background of farce, or the relation of victory against the background of victims.

The structural feature of the family-related clans of the Kazakh aul was the anthropological frame of the historical memory of the Kazakh people. Social strata of the Kazakh aul - representatives of the

wealthy and the poor - were connected by direct or indirect kinship. Of course, it can hardly be said that at the beginning of the 20th century, taking into account socio-economic and demographic collisions, the entire population of the aul were direct descendants of the same kind. But at the same time, it was this peculiarity of the Kazakh aul with the presence of tribal remnants that F.I. Goloshchekin revealed, declaring that October passed by.

The expression implied that the social structure of the Kazakh aul had not changed: the class of wealthy elders – *bais*, continued to dominate in the aul. The tradition of nomadism and Kazakh tribalism has become the object of socio-economic modernization. In the vast steppe space of Kazakhstan, where there was a nomadic civilization of the Kazakhs from time immemorial, under the auspices of F. Goloshchekin the Small October Revolution or the generally called Small October was held. Social-tribal communications and hierarchical relations painted the content of the policy of the Sovietisation of the Kazakh aul with a fanciful ornament.

Given that Historical memory borne in communities of meaning is thus called on to mediate between facts and reconstructions: to create, through rereading, the order of common experiences. Giving up on grand narratives, it strives to look both forwards and backwards in histories that can be narrated, driven by the compulsion for ever-changing re-narration (HIDAS, 2017). The authors of the proposed study, comparing the facts of Soviet narratives, first introduced into the scientific circulation, reconstruct historical memory in order to fill the information gap about the forcible modernization of the Kazakh aul.

The socialist modernization of Kazakhstan led to the cardinal transformation of the traditional way of life of the Kazakh aul. The destruction of the usual format of the daily life of the Kazakh population resulted in the destruction of tribal relations, and respectively, of family memory (ZHIRINDINOVA, 2019). In recent years, there have been many diverse scientific developments involved in the Sovietology of the period of the totalitarian regime. OHAYON (2016) drew attention to the consequences of the Soviet modernization of the Kazakh aul, pointing to the breakdown of generational ties and starvation as a result of its forced character.

The reason for the famine in Kazakhstan, according to PIANCIOLA (2018), was the diet violation of Kazakh nomads caused by requisition of livestock and the change of traditional forms of farming (PIANCIOLA, 2016). The conclusions of CAMERON (2018) and KINDLER (2017) are very closely echoed. The former believed that, despite the formation of a new Kazakh identity, the traditional Kazakh lifestyle was beyond Soviet integration; the latter pointed to the existence of tribalism of the Kazakh aul during the period of Soviet modernization. Letters to the authorities are a special narrative, as the only widely accessible Soviet source that reveals the voice of Stalin's victims (ALEXOPOULOS, 1999).

2. METHODOLOGY

The source base of the article was the materials of the funds: AP RK, DCRH EKR, SAEKR, SA AR, RSASPH, as well as archival and

investigation materials of the SSA DP EKR. Theoretical and methodological foundations for the study of memory were laid by the classics of the research direction HALBWACHS (2007), ASMAN (2004), NORA (1999) and others. Reliance on the theoretical concepts of modern historical science allowed the authors to comprehend documentary artifacts, i.e. Soviet narratives as historical sources in the focus of interaction with sociocultural structures that influenced their content.

3. RESULTS

At the frontier of collectivization, Kazakh society continued to be a social organization, consisting of segments in the form of zhuzes, tightly connected within themselves by tribal relations. The policy of the Small October, sanctioned by Moscow, allowed the authorities of Kazakhstan in 1928 to begin the struggle for power in the aul with the subsequent expulsion of bais. Kazakhstan Regional Committee sent to the administrative expulsion the most prominent, most harmful representatives regardless of their property status. There was a desire to decapitate Kazakh society by destroying traditional hierarchical institutions, namely tribal structures, by expelling informal leaders.

On August 9, 1928, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolshevik proposed that the Kazakhstan Regional Committee, by no later than September 1, 1928, would carry out tacit registration of major cattlemen from the

local population, whose economic power, social and patriarchal-clan ties prevented the sovietisation of the aul. The instruction on realizing the Decree of the CEC and the Council of People's Commissars of the Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic dated August 27, 1928 identified markers of potential victims of confiscation. Based on this selection, it was required to make up lists of farms subject to confiscation and eviction. The eviction lists included large farms of semi-feudal bais, descendants of the sultans, khans, rulers, mullahs, etc.

Why was this category of Kazakh population evicted? Despite the presence of Soviet power, the heads of clans ruled in the aul; even the presence of aul communists did not prevent them from leading the Soviet aul. Everywhere, Soviet narratives kept information that nomadic elite was elected by tribesmen to aul councils and executive committees, i.e. to the grassroots Soviet apparatus of power. Magavia Tokpayev, one of the major bais of the Semipalatinsk district, became the chairman of the executive committee in the first years of the existence of Soviet power, taking advantage of the authority of the clan head, as well as the son of an influential aksakal (elder, respectable man), receiving active support from the aul.

Hiding his bai origin, he joined the Zhana-Tugam collective farm in 1929 and became an aul activist. He took an active part in carrying out the grain procurement campaign, while not fulfilling his personal plan, which outraged the poor and led him out of the collective farm. The OGPU employees scanned and identified the

shadow room of the aul, which affected the results of all election campaigns of the councils and public organizations. Clan leaders interfered with sovietisation; the best way to get rid of them was to confiscate their households and evict their families. Soviet narratives have kept the process of elimination of the clan. In cases when the structures of the nomadic society were unable to cope under the pressure of marginals, consisting of both extra-aul and intra-aul people, family ties turned out to be broken or ineffective.

The path to socialism became a road of catastrophe (KINDLER, 2017), destroying tribal ties, family continuity, generational memory. At first, bais themselves initiated the breakup of families, trying to adapt and, most importantly, survive the threat of eviction and confiscation. The Soviet narrative described the practice of accommodating among the bais who were to be evicted: by the decision of the meeting L. Baizhekin was to be evicted. Even before the meeting, L. Baizhekin began to hide cattle, property, drew up a fictitious divorce. His two wives asked for a divorce from their evicted husband, asking to leave them with the children in the aul. As a result, only the male half of the family was evicted, but women with children and the partial property remained in their places of residence.

Officials did not know what to do with the wives of the bais who wanted to divorce their evicted husbands. The divorce was a completely new phenomenon in the Kazakh aul under the conditions of Sovietisation. The impetus for hiding cattle, property and drawing up fictitious divorces was usually the upcoming personal discussion at

the meeting of the poor. In the direction of the chairman of the Kazakh Central Executive Committee, divorcing wives were not subject to eviction, and were also given a part of the property that remained after confiscation. Thus, the woman kept the family house until her husband returned. In some auls, women were included in the confiscation commission, who at the time of its holding cried with the family of the evicted bai, mourning their fate with traditional poetic recitative.

On the other hand, the documents recorded a diametrically opposite picture in auls, when the poor defended their bais. So, authorized by the District Committees of Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, traveling around the Kazakh auls in order to clarify the decree on the confiscation of the bai farms, officials had lists for eviction and confiscation compiled by the District Committee. They drew attention to the behavior of the Kazakhs who defended their bais, from which the Soviet authorities sought to free them. Speakers at the meetings stated that they did not have major bais and former volost (regional) rulers and judges who had received awards from the tsarist government.

The content of the aul poor's eviction protocols for bais conveyed a tragicomic situation: We will not mind the confiscation decree, let those who have more than 300 cattle be confiscated, we do not have those in our aul ... we do not mind that Saminbayev will be evicted, but the poor people are being deceived all the time; we took the cattle from bais, we were promised to get it, then they returned it back. Can it happen again? ... We approve the decree on evicting bais,

but we will vote separately ... By the majority vote, the aul refused to evict bais. Even individual members of the party and Komsomol aul groups at meetings spoke out in defense of bais, mentioning their harmlessness.

The Bolsheviks, within the framework of the Marxist narrative, explained the union of the poor and the bais as backwardness, illiteracy and lack of a culture of Kazakhs, crushed by poverty. The anti-Soviet activity of bais was manifested in the use of clan oppositions and clan hostility. They tried to influence the grassroots apparatus of the aul to solve their security issues. The November Plenum of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks gave a start to continuous collectivization. Initially, the Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was assigned by the Stalinist leadership to the third group of districts, where collectivization was to be completed by the spring of 1932, with the exception of nomadic and semi-nomadic regions. Goloshchekin adjusted the collectivization plan in Kazakhstan towards its acceleration and completion by autumn 1930.

The nomadic economy of the Kazakhs, their dispersion in combination with the nomadic retrograde and the non-cultured Asian character challenged Stalin's modernization. The transition from a nomadic system to sedentarization not only destroyed traditional economic activity but also led to subsequent tragic events like the famine and evasion of nomads (PIANCIOLA, 2018). Throughout 1930, there was a sweeping of Kazakhstan from the bai element,

accompanied by eviction and repression. Violence and chaos accompanied complete collectivization, due to the collapse of tribal authorities. Documents recorded not an only intergeneric confrontation between auls and clans, but also real battles. The rivalry passed to the level of direct confrontation during the period of election campaigns in the lower organs of the Soviet apparatus. The clan nominated its candidate, who, if elected, performed its tasks. Higher party bodies condemned the reverence of aul communists, shown to the heads of the clans, receiving gratitude for their support (KINDLER, 2017).

The authorities also used the patrimonial confrontation and the contradictions of the nomadic Kazakhs, not disdaining the artificial incitement of intergeneric hatred. The favorite method was the appointment of collective farm chairmen from other places and clans, in an attempt to destroy the clans. The collective farmers, led by their clans, in response, united against the chairman from the outside. Nobody in the aul trusted the representative of another clan. Bais themselves added fuel to the family fire: Soon you will be evicted as our brothers were evicted.

The newly appointed chairmen did not know what was happening in their aul. The authorities provoked the Kazakh population with their actions, uniting several administrative auls, which were not only of different tribal origin but were located at a fairly large distance. As a result of forced socialization, different auls became rivals in one collective farm. Innocent people suffered from tribal enmity; they suddenly became bais in the slander and

denunciation letters. The peculiarity of the slanderous campaign in the Kazakh aul was the clan struggle. During election campaigns on collective farms, the leaders of the clans held secret meetings to prepare incriminating materials against Soviet activists from different clans. The incriminating denunciations made it possible to remove the objectionable candidates, exposing their own supporters.

The target setting of socio-economic modernization was aimed at eradicating identification by tribal characteristics. Soviet power created a newly liberated society; the format of the old clan relations was a relic of feudalism (OHAYON, 2016). It is perfectly true that the new Kazakh national identity largely supplanted Kazakhs' previous identification with a system of pastoral nomadism. The creation of this specifically Soviet Kazakh national identity was, in fact, a goal of Stalin's efforts to transform the steppe. ... Moscow sought to make them into modern Soviet nationalities and integrate them into the collectivist whole. (CAMERON, 2018).

4. CONCLUSION

The social system of the Kazakh aul with its clan relations did not fit into the Bolshevik experiment. Forced collectivization gave rise to a conflict in Kazakh society: tribal values came into conflict with the ideology of power. The Kazakh collective farm had a strong influence on the socio-political processes of the Sovietization of the aul and continuous collectivization. Everywhere there was clan tribal

struggle, led by the former clan heads - bais and volost rulers - biys, veiled under the social confrontation. The adaptation of Kazakh collective farms to the conditions of Soviet modernization occurred as a result of the exploitation of clan-hierarchical ties, the use of clan representatives who found themselves in power.

Direct and indirect family relations, generic communicative indicators, the authority of the generic segment turned out to be stronger for some time than party directives. The traditional Kazakh-nomadic mentality led to clan-hierarchical subordination; however, the imaginary community of nomads absorbed the clan rivalry, which resulted in slander and denunciations. At stake was not only confiscated wealth, the possession of material resources, but also the opportunity to become powerful in the new government. The random choice of confiscation victims by local authorities in the absence of regulated criteria made it possible to settle scores. The molecular structure of Kazakh tribalism was cleared out with the help of its direct participants.

The Kazakh aul survived three waves of repression. The first wave was related to the confiscation of bais in 1928, when rich bais, patrimonial aristocracy, with enormous authority and weight, educated and intelligent, having political and ruling roots from the pre-revolutionary period, directly or indirectly connected with the Alash party and the Alash-Orda government were hit. For the most part, their children received higher education, and even judging by the family content of the Great Terror, they were drawn into the political structure

of the Kazakh autonomy. The second wave dates back to 1930 when the process of collective farm construction led to the secondary expulsion of the remaining bais.

If in the first case and to a greater extent the marker was structural belonging to the category, i.e. an invisible connection with the past, then in the second case, both markers turned out to be important – relation to bai clan and cattle. The first two stages pursued the destruction of the clan principle, the clan-personal reverence. The third wave was the years of the Great Terror of 1937-1938. At this stage, direct descendants of the first and second generation of the clan aristocracy were subjected to repression as part of the kulak and national operations. The tribal-hierarchical structure did not fit into the Stalinist constitution; the traditional culture of the Kazakh people acquired a new image and a new name for the Soviet-Kazakh ethnos. Only the family frame preserved the microhistory of the tragic events.

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