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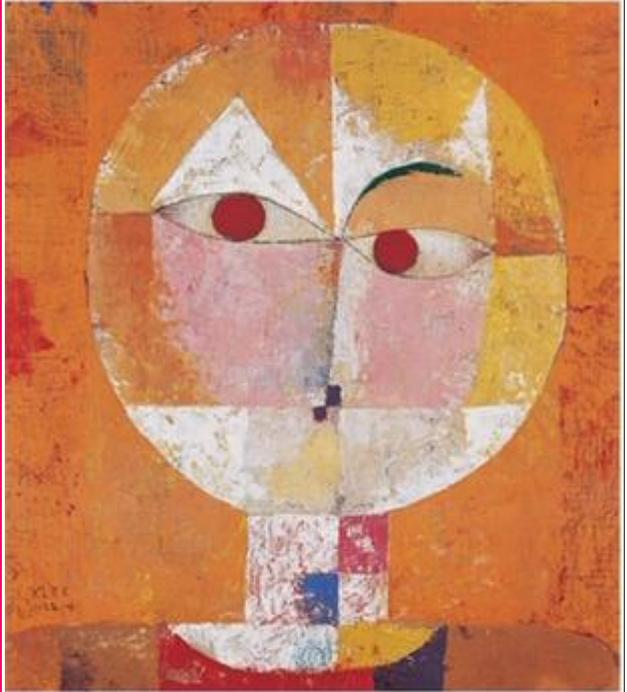
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Social adaptation of Kazakh nomads in the period of forced collectivization

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Abstract

The objective of the study is to identify and make a system analysis of adaptation practices of Kazakh nomads during forced collectivization. The methodological framework of the study is Ralph Dahrendorf's conflict theory that provides insight into the social stratification theory and social order. The present theme-focused research study shows that, in the context of forced collectivization, the authorities channeled their efforts, both at the central and regional levels, into eliminating social patrimonial communicative indicators. In conclusion, Analysis of forced collectivization methods that led to malfunctions in the political and economic systems influenced the content of Kazakh population's behavioral motives.

Keywords: Kazakhstan, Forced collectivization, Adaptation, Nomads.

Adaptación social de los nómadas kazajos en el período de colectivización forzada

Resumen

El objetivo del estudio es identificar y hacer un análisis del sistema de las prácticas de adaptación de los nómadas kazajos durante la colectivización forzada. El marco metodológico del estudio es la teoría de conflictos de Ralph Dahrendorf que proporciona información sobre la teoría de la estratificación social y el orden social. El presente estudio de investigación centrado en el tema muestra que, en el contexto de la colectivización forzada, las autoridades canalizaron sus esfuerzos, tanto a nivel central como regional, para eliminar los indicadores comunicativos patrimoniales sociales. En conclusión, el análisis de los métodos de colectivización forzada que condujeron al mal funcionamiento de los sistemas políticos y económicos influyó en el contenido de los motivos de comportamiento de la población kazaja.

Palabras clave: Kazajistán, colectivización forzada, adaptación, nómadas.

1. INTRODUCTION

Joseph Stalin put into practice the idea of building a new socialist state that dated back to 1917; specifically, a socialist society was introduced to a country where the political framework turned out to be primary and the economic basis secondary. Stalin's point about the exacerbated class struggle, which resulted in continuing violence against anti-Soviet elements, played a major role in determining methods and mechanisms for dealing with issues relating to socialist construction. In Kazakhstan, focus on the exacerbation of the class struggle took place under the slogan of forced collectivization and Sovietization, or the Small October Policy.

Kazakhstan's socialist modernization brought about a dramatic transformation of the traditional lifestyle of Kazakh nomads. Destruction of the habitual format of everyday life activities of auls as part of economic modernization, the annihilation of tribal social communications and hierarchical relationships produced new variants of adaptive behavior among Kazakh nomads. The strategy of survival demanded tactics of explicit and implicit struggle as well as short- and long-term behavioral responses (ZHALEH ET AL, 2018).

The objective of the study is to identify and make a system analysis of adaptation practices of Kazakh nomads in the period of forced collectivization. The authors suggest that the implementation of the forced collectivization policy determined the strategy of survival influencing behavioral responses regardless of people's attitudes towards the authorities.

What makes this topic relevant is the multilayered nature of historical events under investigation. The first layer is related to the establishment of Soviet society as a revolutionary and political model focused on building a socialist state. The second layer deals with the accomplishment of global tasks related to the creation of a socialist economic foundation in terms of industrialization and collectivization. The third layer has to do with repressive action undertaken against the Kazakh population and its tragic consequences and, finally, the fourth layer is the strategy of survival, forms of social adaptation and of behavioral response to the situation.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study took into consideration available topic-related academic publications. The methodological framework of the study is Ralph Dahrendorf's conflict theory that provides insight into the social stratification theory and social order (DAHRENDORF, 2002). To protect its interests, socialism constructed in one specific country expelled former members of the old regime, i.e. anti-Soviet elements, from Soviet society, thus creating a conflict situation. Of the four aspects of Dahrendorf's social conflict model, the following ideas are the most appropriate for the present study: Any society constantly undergoes change, every society always has dissident elements that lead to conflicts; and Every society is based on coercion inflicted on some members of society by others (DAHRENDORF, 2002).

From the perspective of interdisciplinary methods for analyzing social confrontation, the authors adopted the following sociological notions: rivalry, adaptation, evasion, compromise and cooperation. The theoretical concepts of contemporary historical studies allowed authors to make sense of documentary artifacts, i.e. archive materials and historical sources, in terms of their interaction with sociocultural structures that affected their content. The study is based on general research methods (analysis, synthesis, deduction, induction and statistical method), specialized historical methods as well as interdisciplinary research methods. In total, all of the above methods made it possible to conduct a close study of the research topic, to gain

a deep insight into its processes and to reveal the peculiarities of Kazakh nomads' strategy of survival.

3. RESULTS

Repressive policies in relation to auls (villages) resulted from difficulties with food supplies in the country because the Soviet economic mechanism did not meet even the basic needs of the population for bread. The second half of the 1920s saw a drastic decline in food supplies coming from the countryside. The economic situation in the countryside clearly pointed to the complete disruption of markets, and an acute shortage of bread allowed the government to announce that kulak households had committed acts of sabotage in the countryside.

Active construction of kolkhozes accompanied intense industrialization in rural regions. The aim of the mass kolkhoz movement was to destroy individualistic peasant thinking, to annihilate the so-called bearers of bourgeois ideology, to eradicate categories such as kulaks and individuals' farmers and to set up a new, socialist village. This was the only attitude permissible in relation to peasants. Repressive policies were determined by the need to create an industrially developed country that would be independent of any external influences, whereas the prevalence of the individualistically driven agricultural sector would prevent the State from making full use of income sources through the process of industrialization.

Bais, i.e. rich landowners and elders, used to play a traditionally important economic role in Kazakh auls. This category of has-beens enjoyed well-deserved authority among Kazakh nomads, since they were rich, educated, involved in charity work and they were also known as patrons of arts. From the very start, the Soviet regime had sought to destroy traditional nomad communications and to limit bais' influence within the tribal system. Various prejudicial measures were adopted against them at the legislative level, including the loss of voting rights, eviction and exile.

In adaptation nomad practices, an attempt was made to avoid conflict escalation: nomads resorted to an ostentatious and massive exodus to neighboring countries, including China, which is one of the most popular Kazakh forms of behavior and protest reflecting the nomad mentality. Free-spirited nomads had not yet realized that they would no longer be able to merely hide in the steppe. Soviet repressive machinery crushed, destroyed and scattered human lives. Many nomads never came back, staying in foreign lands, at best.

A part of refugees failed to endure the burden of hardships and was killed by border patrol units that would welcome gangs of outlaws with machineguns when people were trying to cross the border. Special reports from the Plenipotentiary Representative Office of the Joint State Political Directorate of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR (PP OGPU) said the following in 1930: No severe measures undertaken by border patrols produced any positive results in terms of reducing refugee flows. Measures undertaken have been most

merciless: over 1,000 people intending to enter the Chinese territory were killed throughout the year along the border with Iliyski District. Not only men, but also women and children were killed.

Information about exactly who migrated in the 1930s, available in OGPU materials, has remained highly classified in the Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. These archive sources are unlikely to be completely objective because, in the 1930s, departments of the Political Directorate would often make up cases to fit in the party line. OGPU reports often provided information about decampments being organized and accompanied by gangs of armed Kazakhs and about migrations taking place under cover of local and foreign armed gangs and, partially, backed manifestly by the Chinese authorities.

The disappearance of people did not go unnoticed and the authorities called for an explanation as to why Kazakhs were massively fleeing their auls. Officials quickly found the answer to this: “First migrations involved mostly bais and kulaks who would forcibly seize cattle and leave the (Steppe) Region” (MENDIKULOVA, 2006:92). In social terms, migrants included not only bais but also middle- and low-class members, as confirmed by statistical data recorded by PP OGPU. As an example, as many as ten kolkhoz families (one middle-class family and nine low-class ones) migrated to China through the Maykatchagay outpost on the night of 11 July 1930.

Fragments of oral history extracted from archive materials and

personal files reveal the following slogans used by bais as migration propaganda tools: Life has become impossibly difficult. The Soviets have started to plunder all of us, the bais. We should cross the border into China; We regret a lot having been uninformed about Soviet campaigns such as grain procurements and confiscations, i.e. robbing people of their possessions, otherwise we would have sold our cattle and gone to China; The Soviets wants to definitely ruin the population. Grain procurements, self-taxation, credits and other campaigns make life unbearable. Migration abroad is the only escape from the Soviets. Sometimes, bais directly accused the Soviet regime: The Soviet rule and communists hiding behind their plans ruined us by taking our bread and cattle. Soon it will be your turn, the poor. We would better leave the kolkhoz and migrate to China. Violence and dissatisfaction with the authorities are the economic and political rationales for Kazakh migration. The reason for ...my migration to China is that I could not take it any longer and remain in the USSR because I do not like actions being taken by the Party and the Soviet regime, and I was planning to live in China and to practice agriculture as before. The collective decision was as follows: So we decided to migrate to China with other citizens of the Akchaulinski Aul Council because life is unbearable here, for the Soviets ruined people and keep putting forward plans that we cannot implement. So it is better to migrate to China and to transport our cattle there (SCHREGLMANN, S., & ÖZTÜRK, 2018).

What follows are some examples of protest against economic innovations: They will confiscate everything, so do not rejoice at your

social position – poor or rich, middle class or bais, it does not matter. Flee abroad, it is the only solution, sell your cattle and sign out of kolkhozes. It is better to flee abroad and to live a calm life there far from oppression and seed funds.

The authors regard migration aimed at escaping from famine as a strategy of survival and an attempt to avoid famine and save their lives. “This famine was one of the deadliest in the USSR, leading to the death of approximately one-third of the Kazakh population and to migration of several hundreds of thousands of survivors...” (OHAYON, 2013A: 11). According to Verkhoturov, famine proved to be a cultural trauma: “This trauma left a severe trace on the Kazakh people, their worldview and culture” (VERKHOTUROV, 2018: 9).

Nomads were leaving along the same routes Kazakhs had used in 1916 when fleeing from punitive expeditions organized by the tsarist government. The closest area where they could hide themselves were Tarbagatay, Altay and Kashgar Districts of Xinjiang Region. In 1931-1932, a considerable number of households migrated to Western China and Afghanistan from several districts of Almaty, South Kazakhstan and East Kazakhstan Regions (some 83,000 households migrated abroad).

Why were nomads fleeing? Archives contain horrific and disturbing accounts of famine: ...she took lunch leftovers to the dump and met there ten Kazakhs who grabbed them and started eating them right in front of her.... The anthropological dimension of victims of

hunger defies analysis, as distinct from demographic indicators. Family records contain information about those who survived during those terrible years and who witnessed State-provoked deaths. Social, economic and cultural upheavals resulting from Sovietization and due to the vulnerability of traditional Kazakh society destroyed it and severed the links between generations (OHAYON, 2013A). The only official publication containing memories about the great famine is a book by M. SHAYAKHMETOV (2008).

According to Ohayon, famine resulted from a political project focused on radical transformation (OHAYON, 2013a), known among Kazakh historians as Goloshchyokin's genocide (ABYLKHOZHINN, 1997). Some believe that famine started in Kazakhstan before Ukraine and was mostly provoked by grain requisitions and widespread cattle plague, which had a major impact on Kazakh nomads have given that meat made up a large portion of their diets (PIANCIOLA, 2018).

As Zhandabekova state, refugees were destined to starve to death in China too:

In 1932-1933, I was seven-year-old and I saw crowds of hungry people on the streets of the town of Tacheng in Xinjiang. I remember them as a one-colored, gray mass of living corpses: gray rags, ash-gray disheveled hair, gray transparent skin that clung to their faces and arms and fiery, roving eyes sunken to the very back of their necks. Those were Kazakh refugees... They stood there as a dense, waving crowd of

thousands. People did not shout, did not speak or ask anything – they just opened their hands... (ZHANDABEKOVA, 1998: 2).

Permanent daily violence made Kazakh nomads elaborate on the strategy of compliance and non-compliance (GÁBOR, 2014), of loyalty and disloyalty or, in sociological terms, adaptation. Newly established kolkhozes had been influenced by tribal relations, since reports by PP OGPU were full of information about the penetration of the bai elite and elders into kolkhozes and their influence on the population. Reliance on social networks, including tribal relations, was typical of that time. The nomad elite enjoyed considerable prestige among people in auls, and its representatives could be elected to aul councils and district administration, i.e. the lowest ranks of Soviet government structure.

Official authorities did not understand nomadic ways of life, yet they were perfectly aware of the role, importance and influence of nomadic leaders, such as bais and tribal elders, qualified as anti-Soviet elements, bandit leaders and has-beens in legislative documents. The traditional nature of the nomadic corporation recognized a person's importance only if he had specific qualities: merits, education, life experiences, leadership and communication skills, justice and so on. Drawing upon the imperial experience in combating rebels who had opposed the colonial hideousness of the tsarist regime, the authorities strived to deprive tribal structures of bais' leadership. They adopted repressive measures (mostly exile) in the first half of the 1930s, and

first-category execution lists according to orders by the NKVD marked the Great Terror in the second half of the 1930s.

Forced collectivization became a basis for the cross-group conflict in Kazakh society whose social strata divided in their assessment of the content and outcomes of the socialist modernization process. Tribal values contradicted the ideological identifiers resulting from Bolshevik propaganda: us, not us and others. A cross-group conflict was not an instantaneous response to the situation. There were certain pre-conditions, groupings and interests were being formed, and their divergence led to open conflict (DAHRENDORF, 2002).

Two behavioral strategies, adaptation and competition, resulting from the behavioral response in the nomads occasionally led to tragicomic situations. Two competing groups would have open confrontations with each other during election campaigns for lower Soviet government bodies and would even make denunciations to the authorities. An official from Moscow's Central Committee pointed to the presence of party tribes and intertribal conflicts in Kazakh auls in the following terms: "Needless to say, organizational coherence is non-existing here. Instead, there are all kinds of tribes, groups, sub-groups and so on" (KINDLER, 2017:51).

The socio-economic modernization process aimed to eradicate tribal identification. The Soviets was creating a new, free social order in which old tribal relations seemed a feudal legacy (OHAYON, 2016b). However, Kazakhs were unwilling to part with their tribal

habits, given their disappointment over the Bolshevik's unfulfilled rosy promises and constant pressure on themselves.

Authorized persons who visited auls with a view to explaining laws to the locals noticed that, when discussing people whose property was subject to confiscation, Kazakhs avoided turning in their bais.

Bolsheviks thought tribal relations were widespread among the most backward poor peasants who were so illiterate and uncultured that they had refused to break ties with bais and kept advocating for their exploiters.

It was possible to observe contradicting processes taking place simultaneously. Some poor peasants from auls who were motivated by economic benefits resulting from confiscations under Article 62 and promoted at meetings in auls, actively turned their bais in and supported decreed confiscation. The latter put into practice the idea of equalizing distribution by means of production and fruits of the poor's labor at the expense of well-off households. A different picture could be observed in other auls, namely passivity of the poor and their protection of bais.

Some auls were unanimous in their demands to confiscate their bai's property. The reason for their severe attitude towards the bai was the economic issue relating to common land use when bais occupied their winter camps without permission from the aul.

The rebel movement of the nomads was devoid of political overtones, for the authorities had grouped them in the category of bandits. The absence of political overtones in the selected strategy determines the notion of social banditry or primitive rebels bound to be defeated (HOBSBAWM, 1959).

The minimal demands of aul residents concerned their formers' areas of comfortable existence. The nomads' resistance resulted from the violation of their private space by the authorities, the use of violence against their personal property, the impossibility of obeying an order that seemed absurd to them as well as ongoing stress.

4. CONCLUSION

Concept analysis and comparison of the investigated historical events made it possible to set out a hierarchy of the Kazakhs' behavioral motives in choosing an adaptation strategy regardless of their attitudes to the authorities. The most widespread and peaceful form of protest aimed at avoiding conflict was the strategy of ostentatious departure or migration of the aul.

The forced collectivization policy resulted in a disturbance that caused political and economic malfunctions of the State system, administrative failure and the social dissatisfaction of the population. This factor also affected the content of Kazakh's behavioral motives. Great famine triggered off a strategy of survival by individualizing

adaptation forms of behavior ranging from migrations in panic pursuit of life to cases of cannibalism.

The State's infringement of private property, violation of the comfort zone's boundary line as well as impossible agricultural measures and endless fines imposed on the population provoked protests such as armed revolts. The authorities regarded migrations and revolts as part of a whole. PP OGPU reports recommended firing on peaceful auls located along the national boundary and combatting rebels as ways to struggle against banditry.

Socialist modernization processes along with repressions involved the Kazakh population, thus annihilating nomad mentalities, separating families and creating a new Soviet personality. Everyone was inevitably involved in everyday Soviet practices and, as a result, the society conditionally identified loyalty and disloyalty, in which the criterion for perceptions of governance (us and others) resulted from contradictions between tribal values and the official ideology. The Kazakh's behavioral responses were based on two strategies, adaptation and cooperation, along with rivalry resulting from tribalism.

The collective memory has preserved many historical events that account for contradictory attitudes to the Soviet past: on one hand, great achievements and opportunities that socialist modernization created for Kazakhstan and, on the other hand, family tragedies resulting from the modernization program that led to a cultural trauma and sorrow over the loss of loved ones.

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