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Ethnic Identity of the Mountain Jews and Indicators of Its Reproduction*

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Abstract

This article considers the indicators and mechanisms for the reproduction of the ethnic identity of Mountain Jews. Cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects of their ethnic identity were shown based on the empirical study. It is established that the national (native) language, ethnic traditions, religion, common life in a certain territory, common character and similar behavior, national literature, historical homeland and historical memory are the most important markers for the reproduction of the ethnic identity of Mountain Jews. The national language has a leading position in this hierarchy. The level of possession of among the surveyed Mountain Jews is not at a high level. Self-awareness is the most important parameter of determining the ethnicity of a person for Mountain Jews through which identification with a specific ethnic community takes place. Moreover, the awareness of belonging to one's own people consists in knowing their national (native) language, traditions, customs, ethnocultural specifics, belonging to their ethnic group.

Keywords: Ethnic identity, Mountain Jews, National language, National traditions, Religion, Ethnic group.

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Theoretical and methodological preconditions for the study of ethnic identity

The ethnic factor acquired special significance in Russia with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the Soviet ideological system. The symbols of the ethnocultural community actively revived on the top of sovereignization in the republics of the Russian Federation. New ideologies of ethnic solidarity and ethnopolitical mobilization were created. The everyday ethnic identity of the citizens of the new Russia has become an important element of social identity and the most mobile subjective marker of political and socio and economic changes [7, p. 5].

If we turn to the phenomenon of "identity" that the American social psychologist E. Erikson in his work "Identity: Youth and the Crisis" laid the foundation for its scientific research. In his opinion, identity is a sense of the organic belonging of an individual to his historical epoch and the type of interpersonal interaction that is characteristic of a given epoch. Accordingly, the identity of the personality is as the harmony of its characteristic images, ideas, values and actions with a socio-psychological image prevailing in a given historical period [14]. According to A. Turen's definition, "identity is a conscious self-determination of a social subject" [16, p. 360], therefore, identification is a process of emotional and other self-identification of an individual, a social group with another person, a group or a sample, internalization of occupied social statuses and development of significant social roles [2].

The phenomenon of identity has a structure. Freud proposed to divide it into a group and individual with the motivation. The person by himself and the person in the mass are different phenomenon. The individual identity depends on the "ego" and the group identity depends on a number of factors including the geographical characteristics of the group's living environment, the historical perspectives of the team, material resources and goals, the collective perception of time and the collective life plan.

"Group identity" was considered as the inclusion of the personality in various communities by E. Erikson reinforced by the subjective sense of inner unity with their social environment. At the same time he focused on the close connection of the identity crisis with the crises of social development. The identity crisis usually occurs when (under the influence of an acute social crisis) the disintegration of the ideals and values that underlie the previously dominant political culture forces people to seek new spiritual guidelines to realize their place in a changing society, links with the state and surrounding the social environment [6, p. 37].

The person has to feel a part of "we". The ethnos is not the only group in the sense of belonging to which a person seeks to support in life. We can call parties, church organizations, professional associations, informal youth associations and etc. among such groups. Many people are completely "immersed" in one of these groups. But not always can be implemented the desire for psychological stability with their help. The support is not very stable, because the composition of the groups is constantly updated; the time of their existence is limited in time. A person can be excluded for some offense from the group. All these shortcomings are devoid of ethnic community. This is intergenerational group. It is stable in time. It is characterized by the stability of the composition. Each person has a stable ethnic status and it can not be "excluded" from the ethnos. The ethnos is a reliable support group for the person thanks to these qualities [10]. Identity is seen as a key element of subjective reality, supported by mechanisms of social construction, functioning and transmission of knowledge as a "factory of meanings" by the concept of social construction of reality as expressed by P. Berger and T. Luckmann [3, p. 279].

Thus, ethnic identity is one of the types of the social identity of the individual, along with professional, cultural, local, political, religious, state-civil, etc. It is a psychological category that includes the recognition of one's belonging to a certain national community on the basis of a dichotomy "We-they". The structure of ethnic identity consists of: 1. *a cognitive* component, formed on the basis of awareness of one's own and other ethnic groups and categories; 2. *affective* component, including feelings and assessments associated with belonging to their ethnic group and supported by experience of socialization and familiarity with

traditional culture; 3. *behavioral* component is expressed willingness to act in the name of ethnically colored goals [15, p. 73]. The ethnic parameters and signs are supported for existence of ethnic identity in society comprehended by the individual in the course of socialization.

The analysis of the phenomenon of identity and ethnic identity shows the existence of a variety of approaches and methods of research. There are primordialism, constructivism and instrumentalism as a key among them. The study of the nature of the ethnos and its attributes was conducted within the framework of a purely formational approach on the basis of Marxist-Leninist understanding to the perestroika period in the native science. Therefore "ethnic / national self-consciousness" was understood as the recognition of belonging to an ethnic community on the basis of shared notions of a common territory, language, culture, history and statehood [see: 1]. A significant contribution to the study of the phenomenon of national consciousness and the definition of its structural elements was made by Yu.V. Bromley. He singled out such components as representations of a common language, culture, history and territory, "typical features," which are supplemented by the awareness of the state community, religious and class consciousness, and emotional attitude to ethnic reality [4, p. 176-183]. At present, the scientific synonym "ethnic identity" is used more often in the interdisciplinary sociological and psychological field. It is used as a synonym for the concept of "ethnic self-awareness" in most ethnosociological studies.

The statement of the problem and the empirical part of the study

Researchers note that large-scale emigration of Jewish population from the USSR to Israel, the USA, Germany and some other countries began against the background of the proclaimed glasnost and democratization of Soviet society in the post-Soviet period. Emigration was accompanied by the growth of their ethnic identity. The processes of cultural revival took place at the same time. Various national associations, organizations and institutions (cultural, educational, public, political, educational, religious, charitable, women, youth, veterans, etc.) were active. The Jewish population took an active part in the activities of the latter. The cultural and religious ties of Russian Jews with Israel, the Jewish diaspora and international Jewish organizations are strengthened thanks to which the Russian community quickly integrated into world Jewry. Close communication facilitated the appearance of representation of Israel, American and some other secular and religious Jewish organizations abroad. Thus, these entire three mass phenomenon characterize different aspects of the same process. There is the search for a Jewish identity largely lost by several generations. But there was the parallel process of the opposite direction in the context of Russian Jewry in the 90th which began many years ago. It is assimilation and acculturation under the powerful influence of surrounding peoples. The result was the erosion of Jewish ethnicity and identity [5, p. 52-53].

We have a purpose to show indicators of the reproduction of ethnic identity of Mountain Jews the forms of their self-determination as an independent ethnic entity in this article. As well known, ethno-integrating and ethno-differentiating markers played a key role in the structure of the ethnic border. The indicators of the reproduction of the ethnic identity of Mountain Jews were established by results on the question of ethno-unifying characteristics, the features that allow one ethno-group to be distinguished from another in our empirical study.

Characteristic of the study sample. We held a sociological survey on the study of the ethnic identity of Mountain Jews in Derbent, Makhachkala, Minvody, Nalchik, Pyatigorsk, Yessentuky using the "snowball" method. N-726.

Results of the study

As a special Jewish Group Mountain Jews were formed in the Eastern Caucasus. It was a territory of the modern Republic of Dagestan (within the Russian Federation) and the Republic of Azerbaijan. Their self-name is *jigur / juhur* (jihur / juhur); p.n. *jigurgho / juhurgho* (jihurho / juhurho) or *jiguuru (n) / juguuru (n)*. Ethnologically, Mountain Jews are part of the world of Iranian Jewry. They supported cultural and economic ties before the inclusion of the Eastern Caucasus in Russia at the beginning of the 19th century.

There is an increased interest in the study of the ethnic identity of Mountain Jews in the modern Russian scientific community. The policy of "tatization" against the Mountain Jews in the Soviet Union led to the transformation of their ethnic identity and the deterioration of ethnic well-being. According to M. Chlenov, the historical fate of the Mountain Jews was uneasy and full of dramatic events and upheavals in the 20th century. Their Jewish origin, belonging to the Jewish civilization dangled deadly danger for them in different periods, or turned into a rescue in situations where the physical death was alternative. This small Caucasian Jewish people had to choose between two possibilities for the last hundred years. To get away from Jewry and to disown from "Russian" Ashkenazi who are foreign in culture and language for them or to identify themselves fully with the Jews as a people and Israel as a state. The first way turned into de-Judaization for them that is a departure from the Jewry and joining to their linguistic fellows Tatars-Muslims and Christians. Mountain Jews have experienced the process of so-called tatization, supported by the Soviet government for several decades. This was a process of transformation Jews into Tatars. Another option identified with the Zionist ideology in the Soviet period. It was perceived as hostile in the Soviet Union and led to emigration to Israel. The death of communist ideology and Soviet power with state anti-Semitism led to the choice of the latter option. Mountain Jews did not turn into Tatars. They remained Jews and leave the Caucasus [13, p. 179].

To set reproduction indicators of the ethnic identity of Mountain Jews is important to us in our empirical study. Before proceeding to the presentation of the sociological content, it should be noted that ethnic identity is understood not only as an awareness of one's identity with an ethnic community, but also its assessment, the importance of membership in it, shared ethnic feelings (feelings of dignity, pride, resentment, fear) that are the most important criteria for interethnic comparison. These feelings are based on deep emotional ties of a person with an ethnic community and moral obligations towards it. They are formed in the process of communication of the individual. Ethnic identity is one of the most stable formations and includes self-attribution of self to this ethnos, autostereotypes (characteristics attributed to its people), ideas about culture, language, history, possibly territory, and statehood of its people. Ethnic "image is we" [9, p. 43].

It has already been noted that the socio-psychological tradition identifies cognitive and emotional components in ethnic identity. The cognitive component of ethnic identity is formed on the basis of autostereotypes and heterostereotypes. It also includes ideas about the commonality of language, culture, territory, history and other ethno-unifying and ethnodifferentiating attributes. The emotional-evaluative component of ethnic identity involves a grade of membership in a given ethnic group [11, p. 236].

We asked the question "Which of the signs are brings you closer with mountain Jews?" for establishing ethno-integrating parameters in the study. The obtained empirical information showed that "national language" (Mountain-Jewish / Hebrew-Tatar) (81,2%), "national traditions, customs, rituals" (73,2%), "Religious affiliation" (54,7%); ethno-unifying markers "joint life in a given territory" (41,3%), "common character, similar behavior" (39,0%), "national literature, folk art, fairy tales, folk songs, traditions" (36,2 %), "Historical homeland" (33,3%) and "historical memory" (30,0%) are the most significant ethno-integrated traits for the respondents of the Jews. Ethnic signs "national clothes, dwelling, everyday life" (22,3%) and "traditional economy of my people" (16,2%) were less popular. A statistically insignificant share

pointed the option "nothing unites" (1,4%). These components or structure-forming ethnic identities are simultaneously factors of ethnic self-identification that affect its formation, content and development, because "the core of the character of the people is reproduced from generation to generation due to the continuity of the ethnic culture, manifested in common symbols that are assimilated and internalized by a common language, a common historical past, traditions, and rituals" [8, p. 182].

It is very important to identify trends for self-identification in the mass consciousness when we studying indicators of the reproduction of ethnic identity. This factor is especially important for the mountain Jews. "Tatization" policy was actively pursued against whom at the state level supported by their national intelligence. We asked a "control question" "Who do you consider your people?" to characterize the consequences of the "tatization" policy and its reflection on the ethnic identity of the Mountain Jews. The results of study show that the majority of the respondents are characterized by self-identification with the mountain Jews (55,9%). At the same time, 34,3% of respondents consider Mountain Jews "part of a single Jewish people". A significant smaller share associates itself with "Russian Jews" (12,7%). Only a statistically small proportion of respondents mean themselves as "tat" (3,8%).

A hypothesis was been put forward when studying the ethnic identity of Mountain Jews that the consequence of the "politics of tatization" is the transformation of their ethnic identity. We agree with the opinion of M. Chlenov. He emphasized that some of the Mountain Jews resisted this policy and remained committed to relations with Jewry for characterization the policy of "tatization". Probably a significant proportion of those belonged to this group who were still in Soviet times were leaving for Israel. As for the bulk of Mountain Jews, they were confused and experienced a serious identification crisis. On the one hand, the break with the Jews seemed to them a violation of the centuries-old tradition. On the other hand, they trusted their leaders and the connection with the Caucasus often seemed more important to them than the correlation with the culturally alien and, they thought, the Jewish heritage of the Ashkenazim. Therefore, it was not the merger of the Mountain Jews with the Muslim Tatam, as it was proclaimed in words, but simply the renaming of the Mountain Jews in the Tatas in fact [13, p. 194].

The policy of "tatization" affected the ethnic well-being and status of Mountain Jews negatively. According to the authors that policy contributed to the deformation of their ethnic identity. In this regard, the self-name of the ethnic community is one of the most important parameters along with indicators of the reproduction of ethnic identity (national language, traditions and customs, religion, historical memory, etc.). Historically, Mountain Jews are part of a large ethnic community of Iranian Jewry with a very peculiar ethnogenesis. Their self-name is *dzuhur*, which is translated from Tatsky as "Jew". They are called *ieydey Kavkaz or Kavkazim*, that is, "Caucasian Jews", or simply "Caucasians" in modern Israel [13, p. 176]. The empirical results on the question "What do you think is the name of your people is correct?" show that there is the variant of the answer is "Mountain Jews" (44,6%) in the mass consciousness. The self-name "jjuuro (jugurho; juhurho)" is the second position. Variant of the answer "Jews" (11,3%) is occupied the third ranking place with a large margin. Other suggested self-names or designations of Mountain Jews were not very important and unpopular for the respondents. There are "Caucasian Jews" (3,8%), "Tatas" (2,8%), "Tatsky Jews" (2,1%). Variants of the answer "Jewish taty", "taty-Judaists", "Jews" have zero result.

To establish the attitude of mountain Jews to Ashkenazi and to identify the indicators that unite them is important in the framework of the study of the ethnic identity and ethnic behavior of Mountain Jews. They were asked "What unites you with the Ashkenazi Jews?". 65,0% of respondents said that the "unified religion (Judaism)" is the ethno-unifying marker. Opinion of "the common name (Jews)" is on the second position (52,8%). One third of the respondents emphasize the integrating role of "the common historical past, historical events, historical memory" and common origin. Also, ethno-cultural components (common national traditions, customs and rituals) are an element of the association of mountain Jews with Ashkenazi Jews (27,5%). "General national literature, folk songs, fairy tales, legends" are significant for one seventh of

respondents. 10,8% of respondents indicates the psychological component of ethnic identity "common character, similar behavior". The total historical homeland is important for 26,8% of respondents. The positions of judgments "national clothes, dwelling, everyday life" (7,0%) and "nothing unites us, we are an independent people" (4,9%) are looking "very weak". We can assumed that the installation of the majority of respondents for religion as an integrating marker with Ashkenazi was due to as M. Chlenov notes by the fact that "everyday communication with Ashkenazi did not lack some tension, which was manifested in the appearance of anti-Ashkenazi proverbs in Gorsko -Jewish folklore" [13, p. 183], as well as the fact that Mountain Jews have a certain rejection of the way of life, behavior, even of the garment of the Ashkenazi Jews. "Relations between the two communities were not quite smooth at the everyday level. There were, firstly, immediately noticeable to the eye differences in everyday culture. The Ashkenazi was fairly Europeanized. They were assimilated by the average European-Russian cultural standard. However, Mountain Jews were a traditionally oriental people mainly oriented towards Azerbaijani and Dagestan norms. Different models of identification, different understanding of the essence of Jewishness and its place in the surrounding society and in the world in general "were also affected by representatives of the two communities" [13, p. 182].

We asked the question "Who do you feel yourself, first of all, on the territory of your residence?" The results of our study show the leading ethnic identity and awareness of themselves as "Mountain Jew" (67,4%) in the mass consciousness of the respondents. The self-identification of Mountain Jews with Russians (34,0%) is on the second position with a large margin. Association with the Caucasian peoples is characterized for 23,5% of respondents. We drew attention to the manifestation of "Jewishness" through self-identification not only with the mountain Jews, but with the Jewish people in general (16,2%). 10,8% of the respondents emphasize the importance of the confessional identity. They realize themselves "a representative of their religion" first of all. Women are distinguished here (12,1%) compared to men (9,6%). Thus, the results of our study indicated that Mountain Jews are simultaneously carriers of a dual identity with the domination of ethnic identity. There is a combination of two different types of self-identification. It should also be noted that a very small part of the respondents are aware of themselves as "tatam" (5,9%). This allows us to assert the Mountain Jews retained self-identification from their ethnic community and processes despite the "tatization policy". Assimilation or the same integration did not find its real embodiment fully.

The choice of a representative of the ethnic community and the entire ethnic group is a significant factor in determining identity. We can to identify options for identifying and integrating ethnic communities that depend on the duration of cohabitation, social status, age, educational level and etc. When the respondents answered questions about ethnic self-determination, the importance of the ethnic group, attitudes towards people of other nationalities, and the reasons for interethnic conflicts, the specifics of the formation of ethnic identity are most clearly seen. The question of what it means to be a representative of one's ethnic group is the most important in the framework of this study. It was not as simple as it might seem at first glance for all its obvious simplicity. There is a variety of approaches of representatives of these or those peoples to self-identification, resulting from the level of their culture, life experience, psychological characteristics and etc. The specificity of the process of self-identification presupposes the allocation of ethno-determinants, not only external ones (self-name, language, culture and etc.), but also internal ones that determine the individual's awareness of his ethnicity.

We asked the question "How well do you know the Mountain-Hebrew language?" for the purpose of in-depth study of the place of the national language as a marker of the reproduction of ethnic identity. Empirical evidence showed that Mountain Jews noted judgments "I speak fluently" (38,5%) and "I speak with some difficulties" (39,2%) with an insignificant difference. However, the communicative functions of the national language of Mountain Jews in the family-household, industrial, business and other spheres are not the same. The status of the Russian language, as the language of interethnic communication, has

contributed to a significant reduction in the scope of the use of national languages. This aspect is beyond the scope of the indicated problem. There is no need to dwell on it in detail.

We can observe contradictory tendencies in the mass consciousness of Mountain Jews. One third of respondents designate a good knowledge of the national (mother) language. The national language takes a leading position, firstly, as an ethnic identifier. Secondly, there is an awareness of ethnic identity at the micro level. Answers to the question "What does it mean for you personally to be a Mountain Jew?" showed that. Thus, 72,8% of the respondents self-identification with the mountain Jews express through the need to "know the Mountain-Jewish language". There is the option to "know and observe the national traditions and customs of the Mountain Jews" (70,4%) with a small difference on the second position. There is the importance of "knowledge and observance of religious traditions and customs of Mountain Jews" (57,5%) on the third ranking position. Belonging to their people is expressed through the professing of a single religion (48,4%) and a sense of pride in the success of members of their ethnic community in art, literature and etc. (44,4 %). The feeling of responsibility for the destiny of his people is evidenced by the position of 27,9 %. They have "the desire to protect the national interests of Mountain Jews". The desire for a historical homeland can be traced through the judgment "to feel Israel as a country uniting Jews" (21,6 %). The feeling of involvement in the fate of modern Israel is weakly expressed (8,5 %). The opinions for "having Israel citizenship" (2,6 %) and "living in Israel" (0 %) are very unpopular. A statistically insignificant share marked the judgment "nothing means" (0,7 %). The results of the research show that the position of the respondents does not change radically. It is significantly strengthened the significance of the national (mother) language in the mass consciousness of the surveyed Mountain Jews. Ethnic self-categorization of the Mountain Jews is based on cultural and linguistic characteristics. Many studies show that the national language does not always occupy a leading position among ethno-integrating parameters. But its emotional and psychological value is quite high in the respondents' perceptions. It can be observed with respect to the surveyed Mountain Jews. Mono-national space produces indicators initially. It is indicated belonging to a specific ethnic group compared to a city where many ethnic differences are erased. Identifying oneself with a certain ethnos, the individual perceives and includes in his inner world those values, ideas, beliefs, patterns that are developed and characterized primarily for this community and they are unique and specific [12, p. 42]. We asked the question "What must be taken into account, first of all, when determining the nationality of a person?" The key position is "the person's self-consciousness (to what nationality he relates himself)" (40,1%) for the Mountain Jews. There are position "national language "(18,3%), and "father's nationality" (16,7%) and "behavioral peculiarities, thinking" (2,8%), with a significant gap. We draw attention to the fact that the ethnicity of the Jews is determined by the mother's nationality. There is a sign on the second ranked place (23,5%). It is characterized identification according to more simple criteria for individual consciousness at the level of everyday in particular, by ethnicity of parents. But the results of the research show that these signs are not so demanded by the surveyed Mountain Jews, because the significance of self-consciousness in identification with a certain ethnic community is indicated.

Conclusion

The study of ethnocultural characteristics for the formation of ethnic identity and borders within the social space allows characterizing the reflection of cultural factors, firstly, on integration processes, and secondly, on the maintenance of interethnic harmony and stability. The carried out research allows drawing a conclusion that the situation of "erosion" of ethnicity is not characteristic despite the tragic history for Mountain Jews. Indicators of the reproduction of ethnic identity show themselves fully in their mass consciousness. Deep analysis of the state of their ethnic identity allows us to state that the national (mother) language, national traditions, religious affiliation, common life in a certain territory, common character and similar behavior, national literature, folk art, fairy tales, folk songs, legends, historical

homeland and historical memory are the key markers for the self-identification of the Mountain Jews. At the same time, the realization of association with one's ethnic community is in the possession of the Mountain-Jewish language, knowledge and observance of national and religious traditions and customs of one's people, a single confession, as well as a sense of pride in the success of representatives of their people in the cultural space. Empirical information shows a high degree of awareness by the Mountain Jews of belonging to their ethnic community and the national (mother) language remains important as a component of the reproduction of ethnic identity.

The study of cultural markers that support ethnic boundaries and ethnic identity shows that the indicator "national language" is the key in the formation of ethnic identity and interethnic tolerance. But its infringement inevitably provokes intolerant attitudes in mass consciousness and behavior. Ethnoculture is played an essential role in this process along with the national language, as well as its structural components. There is material and spiritual which together constitute the most important factor of ethnic categorization. Of course, not all elements of culture are capable of performing ethno-differentiating functions in the maintenance of ethno-cultural boundaries. Those can be those who are accepted by significant mass consciousness. Ethno-unifying markers show the differences between different national communities, record the specificity of the ethno-culture of their people, and demonstrate the awareness of group unity.

Ethnic identity of the Mountain Jews is carried out in line with multiethnic identity. Despite the "politics of tatization", which had negative consequences for the Mountain Jews, they did not transform their ethnic identity and they managed to maintain a high level of ethnicity, positive ethnic status, the desire to preserve and maintain the ethnoculture, traditions, customs and identity of their ethnic community.

Footnotes

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