Archaizations in a Space of Sociocultural Transformation: A Theoretical Aspect

Aleksey P. Sitnikov[1], Dmitry N. Levashov[2], Vladimir I. Mareev[3]

Abstract

The article presents the analysis of social problems caused by the processes of archaization of contemporary Russian society. The relevance of the introduction of the concept of archaization into academic circulation as the socio-philosophical concept is that its terminological usage in the topical area of social philosophy may bring about solving a number of conceptual problems. Archaization is regarded in a space of sociocultural transformation which has been actively developing in Russian society in recent years. The authors suggest using a methodological construct for the assessment of the concept of archaization in the semantic center of which the process of the sociocultural interaction of Russian social actors is analyzed. Methodological construct is a tool of socio-philosophical analysis. Its purpose consists in identifying the essence, levels, and modes of manifestation and development of archaization in contemporary Russian society. The authors substantiate that archaization acts as a process of the sociocultural interaction the authors' methodological construct makes it possible to identify the levels of production (representation) of archaization.

Keywords: Archaization, Cultural layers, Sociocultural transformation, Sociocultural background, Degradation, Myth-making, Philosophical reflexion, Archetypes.

[1] Southern Federal University, Rostov-on-Don, Russia. E-mail: isir-sfedu@yandex.ru
[2] Stroganov Moscow State Academy of Arts and Industry, Moscow, Russia. E-mail: ldn001@yandex.ru
[3] Southern Federal University, Rostov-on-Don, Russia. E-mail: mareev@sfedu.ru

Introduction

The social system of post-Soviet Russia is transformed in complex and contradictory conditions, when traditional components of axiological system, established types of mass consciousness, and prevailing forms of social behavior frequently impede the assimilation of modernization standards and social establishment of modern institutions. According to many thinkers who are carrying out the analysis of Russian history, every modernization comes up against elements of archaism, traditionalism and mythological consciousness in this country. Changes occurring during reforms inevitably come into collision with the established normative culture, frequently engendering conflicts and rejection of innovations, zero tolerance of modernization changes by the sociocultural "soil".

As time goes by, the problem of archaization as return to obsolete cultural layers, elements of social relations and relations of power, social practices in a space of the sociocultural interaction, complicated by contradictory processes of modernization/demodernization, is positioned in the social cognition and requires socio-philosophical interpretation. It is not for nothing that well-known domestic sociologist Z.T. Toshchenko (2011) speaks of a special type of inconsistencies combining the alignment of the incompatible, the combination of the incongruous.

Thematic justification of the socio-philosophical study of archaization in Russian society is determined by the following circumstances. First, it's the low degree of theoretical and methodological elaboration and empirical study of various manifestations, trends, levels and forms of archaization in society. Second, it's the significance of these topics in terms of perception of social practice of social evolution and sociocultural transformation of Russia. Third, it's the urgent need to determine the status of current Russian realities in the socio-philosophical thought in the context of sociocultural changes at the levels of social practices and mass consciousness.

Materials and Methods

The theoretical and methodological framework of this research lies in the theoretical attitudes and ideas presented in the works of researchers dealing with the study of various aspects of manifestation of archaization in society, as well as the general scientific methods of social cognition – analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, abstraction and typification. We have used the principles of the study of social phenomena within the framework of classic and postneoclassic scientific paradigms. In order to identify the sociocultural basis of the content, levels and modes of archaization in contemporary Russian society, the authors rely on theoretical approaches to the conceptualization of the society as the space of sociocultural transformation in the modernization–demodernization coordinates. They include: a) sociocultural approach; b) the concept of "the challenge of modern age"; c) the theory of "demodernization" and "feudalization"; d) the concept of "an individual from the crowd" and mass society.

We regard methodological construct as authors' innovation; we developed it for the study of archaization of society in a space of the Russian sociocultural transformation which is able to adequately reflect the determinants of reproduction, levels and modes of manifestation of archaization. To do this, it is required to elucidate the basic cognitive concepts applied in work, to operationalize them in the context of socio-philosophical reflexion, and to use them in the coordinates of this research. Such concepts as "sociocultural transformation" and "archaization" serve as basic concepts.

Sociocultural transformation in the broad sense of the word is a process of transition of the society from one stage of development to another, followed by the formation of new values and goals of economical and political activities of an individual. The study of sociocultural transformation is based on "transitivity" as a principle of sociocultural development (Bedrik et al., 2016; Vodenko et al., 2018).

Russia is currently experiencing a transitional stage of its development and such "system transitivity" has penetrated various life spheres, being manifested at many levels of culture, thereby initiating a situation

of instability and uncertainty in society. The contemporary Russian society is in the epicenter of "transitivity": it simultaneously contains traditional forms of culture (which are actively developing in large areas), certain synthesizing patterns appear, the informational type of culture is blocked, "bitty" and marginal cultural patterns have achieved a fairly dominant position. This picture is even more complicated by the search for a new social order – the processes of the formation of civil society and its sociocultural institutions are obvious, the state of law is being formed on a democratic foundation (Lubsky et al., 2016).

Another basic concept is "archaization". Semantically, the category "archaization" is associated with such concepts as sociocultural crisis, social anomie, etc. The methodological key to the study of archaization in the context of the chosen research is the perception of such process as a conscious and/or unconscious opposition to "the challenge of modern age". Archaization is embodied in the actualization of meanings, practices, models of understanding and behavior, psychological mechanisms typical for historically preceding eras.

Well-known domestic philosopher A.S. Akhiezer (2001) defines archaization as a form of regress, as a result of actor's acceptance and implementation of social programs which were historically established in earlier cultural layers under simpler conditions, and do not correspond the currently "increasing complexity of the world".

The rootedness of archaism in Russian society is explained by the predominance of the traditional type of morality in it, which is to a greater or lesser degree eroded by moderate utilitarianism. The scale of archaism results from the historical weakness of urban culture in Russia, the prevalence of the communal consciousness among the masses which is responsible for the corresponding forms of economic activity based on the principles of veche government. The process of archaization is aimed at turning archaic programs, decisions and actions into real and practical mass deeds (Akhiezer, 2001).

Social philosopher C.K. Lamazhaa (2010) regards archaization of society in the coordinates of social evolutionary system to which the system-genetic approach can be applied. According to this context, archaization is distinguished by its procedural nature, when the society appeals to the past sociocultural background with a view to restoring old archaic programs in a situation of reforming crisis.

Historical examples seem to indicate that if any social institution is in a grip of lingering crisis, the failing structure is replaced by a more archaic structure, based on the domination and status relations, on the application of force. The "archaic syndrome" is experienced by all societies in the times of crisis (Kovalev et al., 2016).

Results

When we describe the crisis component of social transformations closely associated with the archaization component, we can conclude that the most common characteristics of the sociopolitical order of today's Russia are as follows:

1) Instability and fuzziness of the social structure;

2) Obvious and purely instrumental consolidarity of power as a counter to the disintegrated society;

3) Significant pathologically shaped alienation of political rule from the people which it is part of only in the political and geographical sense nowadays;

4) Low quality of state power from the perspective of its subjectness in the processes of social and economic modernization of Russian society;

5) Complicated vertical social mobility,

6) The absence of not only the social guarantor of democratic transformations – both as a political and economic actor and in the form of broad social strata – but also any pronounced participant of the dialogue with the authorities at the least.

The core of civilizational challenge holds ambivalent contradictory nature of requirements for contemporary societies (Lubsky et al., 2016).

The first is imperative requirements for contemporary societies to meet the achieved standards of development for the sake of preserving stability, maintaining the standard of living and prosperity.

The second is requirements for contemporary societies to retain their unique sociocultural specific character in the process of adaptation to changing living conditions. Civilizational challenges of modern age contain a wide range of important requirements, threats and risks that are being studied in social sciences as macro-historic, transcultural, transnational, faith based and interfaith, spiritual and ideological (Kovalev et al., 2016).

As a result, the forms of social integration, differentiation and stratification, including family, authorities, economy; environmental management and consumption models; innovation, anomies and anomalies of the contemporary society; methods of the sociocultural interaction and social communication of individuals and various communities in the globalized world; basic parameters of life journey of a contemporary individual; daily experience and living standards act as the markers of civilizational dynamics of the contemporary Russian society (Emirbekova et al., 2016).

Social indices guaranteeing the civilizational identity of Russia and its line of historical development are combined in its sociocultural sphere with competing indices of fundamentally new images of reality other values and strategies of adaptation which are granted the status of new regulators of living in the public consciousness.

The combination in the sociocultural coordinates of the space of the "mythological" and "contemporary", "Soviet" and "post-Soviet" influences the change of public opinion, the transformation of its ontological characteristics and features, and introduces difficulties in the constructive process of modernization of our country. The commotion of the spirits of the majority of Russians complicates their participation in building a society with a stable and settled type of development in Russia. The ambiguousness and vague forecastability of most social transformations in Russia can be explained by a one-sided structural approach to their social analysis and the process of their implementation. This approach, based on the postulates of modernism and pragmatism, does not take into account the role of many sociocultural phenomena in the process of social development of which the public consciousness is the most significant one (Khrapov, 2008).

The position of C.K. Lamazhaa (2010), who believes that archaic forms of social relations, institutions, and social practices, as well as their relevant norms and cultural values gain widespread currency in public areas in such cases, is close to this opinion; they start glossing over structural transformations or changing them globally, thus defining the special character of variation as social transformation directly, and modernization process of a particular society. Thus, Lamazhaa believes that archaization is mainly a spontaneous process.

The return to archaism can be associated with the purposeful policy of ruling elites that are interested in the preservation of existing orders, and partial return to archaism is an efficient way of such conservation for them.

It is no wonder that he largely regards the established type of relations of power as the core of archaism. The fact that the state often uses administrative and power methods in the exercise of power to resolve conflict situations or is relying on the official or latent privileges of the state bureaucracy and its allied higher social strata is arguably an important manifestation of the feudal archaism in the system of relations of power. Thus, Lamazhaa (2010) speaks of three levels in the structure of archaization of society in the context of her chosen theoretical and methodological approach.

The first level is associated with the spread of a certain social well-being in society, which is based on the feeling of various losses. The second level is characterized by the formation of a stable assessment of the level of satisfaction of basic needs of an individual as unacceptably insufficient. Within this framework, there appears a desire to actively change the situation through the use of simplest archaic social practices which begin to seem efficient and reliable (Kovalev et al., 2017).

Within the given context, cultural patterns begin to have an increasing influence, as they hold the once-existing practices of self-dependence and providing protection of "friendly" local groups from "outside" local groups. The third level is associated with the directional influence of these archaic senses on social ties and social relations, as well as on the shape and content of activities of social institutions (Lamazhaa, 2010).

The literature draws our attention to the fact that archaization is rather a psychological and social phenomenon, and, to a certain degree, an ideological phenomenon as well. Therefore, our perception of archaization within the meaning of selected theoretical and methodological shining beacons stems from the fact that archaization is a phenomenon of consciousness and behavior; archaization also acts as the "imposed" matrix of sign and symbol social reality, and as a set of social practices and intentions of mass consciousness and social behavior.

We can also emphasize the "archaization of meanings" as a process of "archaic" recoding of cultural meanings, ideals and value systems achieved by the society. In its peak manifestation, the crisis dynamics of the conceptual area of culture leads to the archaization of a complex sociocultural system which comes down to those obsolete manifestations of cultural life which, it should seem, have long outlived their usefulness.

Archaization exposes the primitive cultural layers which is manifested in the substitution of thinking of social groups with their long-established values with simplified consciousness of human communities that unite the lower lumpenized strata of the society; the revival of historically obsolete social types; large-scale expansion of marginal archaism and model types of precivilizational, parasitical behavior. Under conditions of sociocultural crisis and rapid emergence of cultural vacuum, an individual turns into a "civilized barbarian".

The processes of degradation and archaization are embodied in a "mirrorlike" manner in the "logosphere" of national culture in the times of its crisis, when the thesaurus of the declassed "bottom" invades other areas of linguistic culture. As a result, in our understanding, archaization acts as a process of the sociocultural interaction based on the appeal of society and social actors conducting their activities under the conditions of an established type of social relations and relations of power, to the patterns of the past cultural background and reproduction of elements of social and political relations, cultural norms and values, "social artifacts" that existed in time past (during the pre-Soviet and Soviet period), in modern social reality, for the purposes of preservation of the existing social order, retention of power and manipulation of the public conscience.

That said, the concept "archaization" is not an empirical, but an "ideally typical" category, if we follow Max Weber, that is, a peculiar model used for research purposes. The core of this model lies in the concept of archaization as such, which includes three basic parameters: personal (values, motives, orientations); cognitive (knowledge); functional (the experience of manifestation in social reality).

Established sociopolitical conditions contribute to the manifestation of intentions of social primitivization and simplification in public opinion and public moods serving as sources of archaization, which is due to the collapse of established cultural layers and the immersion of consciousness into archaic cultural layers and archetypical theories of mind, whereas social actors represented by the ruling elites deliberately use these intentions in their own interests.

All of the above taken together has an impact on social practices and living strategies, is reflected in the system of values, social behavior and communication. This being said, following C.K. Lamazhaa, we, depending on the actors of implementation, divide archaization into global archaization of society – the absolute majority of the population or its significant part) and archaization at the level of an individual (Kovalev et al., 2018).

When it comes to ontological features of the process of archaization, we are relying on methodologically significant findings of Lamazhaa as well.

First. Archaization of society distinguishes its procedural nature; put it another way, it acts as a process of mutual interaction of culture and social relations, which is embodied in the enrichment of cultural values and meanings under the influence of social changes.

Second. Archaization of society appears as a directional process the content of which is based on the appeal of the society to the past sociocultural background, the return of old archaic programs in crisis conditions.

Third. Archaization of society is characterized by spontaneity.

Finally, *fourth.* Archaization of society is very closely related to the most important type of social changes — social transformation — and is a response to the complexities of changes of nature of society, having effect on the social transformation process as such.

In our opinion, the determinants of production of archaization are as follows: a) challenge of the modern age and increasing complexity of the world; b) sociocultural changes in the process of modernization/demodernization in conditions when the "transition" manifests itself as determination of the present and the future by the past; c) established sociopolitical conditions which contribute to archaization are produced through reception of both the unconscious appeal of an individual from the crowd and conscious appeal of ruling actors to the past cultural background.

These determinants determine the appeal of the society to the past cultural background and the politics of the ruling actors implementing social technologies and the indoctrination mechanism. Social practices which are based on the appeal to the past cultural background and obsolete cultural layers and social relations, act as manifestation of these determinants. Therefore, the elements of archaization are produced through reception of both the unconscious appeal of an individual from the crowd and the conscious appeal of the ruling actors to the past cultural experience.

The authors' theoretical and methodological construct makes it possible to identify the following levels of production (representation) of archaization: official ideological discourse and intellectual mind; social practices; axiological and regulatory level; level of behavior and interpersonal relations.

The modes (methods, types) of representation of archaization should be as follows: a) restoration of the "power-property" system; b) revival of stratification and estate privileges; c) restoration of clan system in politics, revival of the personal dependence system and clientelism in the halls of power, emergence of military-serving bureaucracy, revival of "feeding practices"; d) return to the elements of the planning and distribution system, total bureaucratic regulation; e) social myth-making.

As a result, theoretic construct appears as a tool of socio-philosophical analysis, the purpose of which is to identify the essence, levels and modes of manifestation of archaization in contemporary Russian society.

Discussion

The main problem of the contemporary Russian society lies in the fact that archaic relations are artificially imposed "from above", up to the restoration of the system of estates (the oligarchy and the highest bureaucracy have effectively taken shape as estates that are closed to any ingress) and the appearance of ethnic communities that are poorly integrated into the society. This is caused not only by the position of the authorities, although they expend considerable efforts to immerse Russian society in a deep archaism

(that said, at a rational level the authorities realize that the country cannot survive without sociopolitical modernization) (Frolova et al., 2015).

The revival of traditional relations is also due to the socioeconomic structure of contemporary Russia, which, while remaining a fairly educated country, preserving social and political institutions of the contemporary society, is forced to put up with the return to the semi-feudal system of distribution of social wealth.

The appeal to archaization is combined with the mental attitudes and mass consciousness and is largely based on a system of representations that reproduce the deep archetypical features of the cultural and historical tradition. Archetypical elements of the worldview, in virtue of their stability in a crisis situation, can serve as a basis for organizing relations between the society and the authorities, and when directly involved in political developments, motivate political orientations and behavior of both an individual and significant structures of society.

Manifestation of archaization, when the ruling political elite and certain strata of society appeal to the pre-reform past, uncover those traditional cultural patterns which are familiar and clear to the society in the context of social transformations.

As a result, social reality is increasingly determined by practices of politically dominant class and dominating actors setting the parameters of activities through the action on the society, value systems of people, cultural preferences, political consciousness and political behavior.

The manifestation of archaization is, to a great extent, a reflection of the weak preparedness of transitional society for experiencing new changes inevitably associated with new risks.

As early as in the 1990s, opinion polls showed that the vacuum that had formed in mass consciousness began to fill with traditionalist ideas as a consequence of a radical change in the established system of social relations and value system.

Thus, the visions of freedom as "the possibility of being the architect of one's own fortunes", of democracy as the right to elect a leader for oneself, who receives the full authority to autocratic rule upon his election, which gained fairly widespread currency in the public consciousness at that time, basically ascended to the medieval peasant political culture (Chernous et al., 2015).

Nevertheless, determining factor is the purposeful policy of power elites that are interested in the preservation of existing public orders for the sake of retention of their influential role and regard partial return to archaism as an efficient way of solution of this problem (Khrapov, 2008).

Archaization is most clearly manifested through politics, ideology and culture and is replicated in mass consciousness and social behavior. The archaic element as a set of stable and reproducible properties is manifested in society in purposeful manipulative influence of the wielder of power (political elite, dominant social group, high-profile social actors etc.) exactly on the axiological system, mass consciousness and crowd behavior.

That said, the rationalization of culture and social relations (in which the "uncharming" of the world is actually expressed), typical of modernity, is accompanied by its secondary "enchantment" caused by the process of "spontaneous" individual mythologization unregulated by the culture.

Thus, the relevance of the introduction of the concept of archaization into academic circulation as the socio-philosophical concept is that its terminological usage in the topical area of social philosophy may bring about solving a number of conceptual problems.

First, the introduction of this term into the conceptual construct of philosophical reflexion makes it possible to deepen the socio-philosophical analysis of processes of social evolution in their sociocultural entirety.

Second, the study of the substance of the concept of archaization in the socio-philosophical coordinates makes it possible to treat archaization not only as the concept or conceptual unit, but as a phenomenon of objective sociocultural reality, a real-world phenomenon.

Third, the identification of levels and modes of manifestation of archaization through the characteristics of its formative factors makes it possible to carry out a more correct analysis of social and cultural processes taking place in society, to conceptualize the accumulated empiricism in the general topical space of the theoretical organization of the material associated with the processes of sociocultural transformation.

Conclusion

Thus, we can formulate the following conclusions. In the authors' understanding, archaization acts as a process of the sociocultural interaction based on the appeal of society and social actors conducting their activities under the conditions of an established type of social relations and relations of power, to the patterns of the past cultural background and reproduction of elements of social and political relations, cultural norms and values, "social artifacts" that existed in time past (during the pre-Soviet and Soviet period), in modern social reality, for the purposes of preservation of the existing social order, retention of power and manipulation of the public conscience. The authors' methodological construct makes it possible to identify the following levels of production (representation) of archaization: official ideological discourse and intellectual mind; social practices; axiological and regulatory level; level of behavior and interpersonal relations. The modes (methods, types) of manifestation of archaization should be as follows: a) restoration of the "power-property" system; b) revival of stratification and estate privileges; c) restoration of clan system in politics, revival of the personal dependence system and clientelism in the halls of power, emergence of military-serving bureaucracy, revival of "feeding practices"; d) return to the elements of the planning and distribution system, total bureaucratic regulation; e) social myth-making. As a result, methodological construct is a tool of socio-philosophical analysis the purpose of which consists in identifying the essence, levels and modes of manifestation and development of archaization in contemporary Russian society.

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