

Kazakh Nomadic Culture of XX Century: The Tragic Losses, Gains and Strategies of Survival

Modernization leads to gap with national cultural tradition as the society should channel through itself the inflow of innovations that promote development of a personality and its growing authority, an increase of diversity in everything, development of a dialogue in opposition to monologue as the forms of thinking and the life of traditional society and etc. Theoreticians of modernization consider this breakup as necessary condition of its success, and change of cultural identity speaks about the completion of modernization process. The breakthrough of modernization transformations usually go through several stages: novation, innovation and stereotype. The most complicated in this process is the process of adaptation of "elusive, invisible and imperceptible" values, relations, symbolic sense and cults. For example, Catherine Poujol the French explorer of Central Asia, underlined in her speech at October 2006 Forum at National University named after L. N. Gumilev that Kazakh culture contains a lot of visible and invisible, and the layer of invisible is much wider than visible layer.

Modernization comes forward in the form of westernization the direct transformation of foreign cultural experience or in the form of overtaking modernization under which the control is carried out over western influence. Another scenario is possible as well when due to cultural globalization so-called demonstrative effect will appear. The society begins to compare demonstrative "showcase" of foreign culture achievements with its own position, as if it opens its eyes on real state of affairs and promotes maturing of modernization spirit among the masses of people. By this, the role of intelligentsia is very significant which exactly contributes to formation of an adequate perception of the people to themselves and to their status among other people in the world. One cannot remember within this context the "Book of Words" by Abai [1]. It is not by chance, western historians recognized that Kazakh intelligentsia in the middle of XIX century such as – Chokan Valikhanov, Abai, and Ibray Altynsarin as first Kazakh modernizers. By this, the Kazakh Muslim modernizations are singled out in a separate group. To this group, M. Seralin is referred, for example [2, p. 251-256].

At the beginning of our analysis the question arises about how to treat nations that live by patriarch way of life; should be they treated as a subject or as an object to their own lifestyle and history? Evidently, these ethnities "embodied in nature" – nomads, collectors, hunters, and fishermen have possibility to preserve their own unique "self" expression in the image of life, the type of thinking where they preserve their subjectivity. It turns out, as soon as they start to submit to alien logic of development they have become an object of manipulation. In our views, this categoricity is not appropriate because the freedom of will is preserved and not only a single person but even some groups (ethnic, social or others) have the right to determine their own destiny, by not repeating the life cycle of their ancestors or any other predecessors. Nevertheless, this possibility was given to all people of the USSR in modern times. Another matter, how true was it that this new choice was voluntary; did people want to comply with this new style of life – temp and rhythm? Here, as we assume, there is a major hidden problem of conflict of values and it is obvious, that it has several levels-from personal level to national level; and in this and in that case the situation can be quite different.

By losing traditional nomadic life style in its purity, the Kazakhs were able to preserve their identity in folklore, genealogy, behavioral rituals of Kazakh culture, in architecture, in household decoration and in the elements of daily and festive cloth, jewelry and etc. Western authors in their attempts to analyze the process of transformation of traditions pay much attention to the presence of the above-mentioned elements of culture in modern life. As usual, it is underlined that these traditions are either being gradually replaced by innovations, or the mutual synthesis is occurring, or something new is being utilized accordingly with traditional habits. By the way, the

liking of nomadic stereotype of behavior is recognized even in domestic historiography, though this opinion prevails much more in foreign historiography.

For example, J. Mozur in its review about Kazakhstan is writing, that the majority of art and literature are dedicated to Kazakh aul where simple shepherds and collective farmers live. The authors themselves came out of this environment, they have nostalgic feelings of rural life of their fathers and grandfathers, and this theme is an obvious in all stories. Therefore, it has become clear why sentimentalism of the writers to traditional lifestyle of Kazakhs can be found in the form of appealing to old times [3, p. 349-350].

It is true that the image of steppe is portrayed in literature and in art in a full length of development and it is served as an answer to the question of national style [4]. The steppe embodies certain symbolic space – this is the tribal land, migration where all timeless events of human life are going on – happiness, joy of meetings, maternity and old age. In 70-80s Ms. R. Ergalieva describing "powerful positive symbol of Kazakh painting – steppe acquires its antipodes – city, city settler, city settlers; city is that person and that environment which destroyed traditional lifestyle of Kazakh people" [5, p.75-76]. This phenomenon is explained by home art specialists as increasing of internal crisis elements associated with "the epoch of stagnation". Mr. A. K. Niyazov through his discussions about perspectives of development of the national painting in modern times goes on "Steppe as a manifestation of traditional heaven has become one of the more in great demand theme in painting via embodiment by new language full of symbols and metaphors...As for landscape preferences is concerned, all priorities here are unchangeable; precisely steppe, limitless Kazakhstan space have become significant topic of Kazakh painters" [6, p. 204]. In sum, one can say that that at the conscious level there had been some advancement but they were not that noticeable than in objective material world. Traditional mentality continued to function in the mode of nomadism, shezhire, Kazakh aul – as it was emphasized by western scholars. We have to agree with this statement as practical and vivid fact [7].

In foreign historiography very often one can find a thesis about the fact that population of oriental republics of the USSR existed in situation of dual state: from one hand, to adapt to requirements of the soviet epoch with its ideological views, rejection of religion and all of the things that were predominant in the first case [8, p. 126]. To join together these two quite opposite views without any losses was very difficult if one can say impossible. By being in constant state of conflict with one's internal world, rejection from the number of priorities in the process of lifestyle, everything in total could no go through smoothly not at the level of destiny of a singular person, no at the level of the nation in the whole. In soviet historical literature as well as in post-soviet historical literature, the analysis of similar issues is almost absent; for small exception of analysis in literature of anthropological mature of recent years. At the same time, as western historiography is full of similar thoughts or in the context of the problem of formation of the national identity, social dynamics or solution of gender issues and other issues.

As for the literature is concerned, which is dedicated to analysis of nation building in post-soviet time, practically all western authors make an emphasis on the fact that especially in the first years the active process of indigenization is occurred; reanimation of all traditional is either partially or in full getting lost in soviet time at the level of household to the level of statehood. Timothy Edmunds underlines in particular that revival of certain nomadic traditions among modern Kazakhs. For example, along with unconditional hospitality, respectful treatment of older people, knowledge of their own roots; the author mentions about increasing number of production and sales of such items of nomadic culture such as yurts, kobyz, dombra, some food items, kumys in particular and etc. [9].

It comes back to someone's mind the thesis of O. Caroe that Kremlin implemented its policy in Soviet Orient through Russian wives of local leaders [10]. During the time of establishment of independent states, inter-ethnic marriages especially of persons in high power have become perceived by potential electorate not quite unequivocal. Out of social prestige and important factor of the soviet period, it has become as wishful burden, the phenomenon that could become an obstacle on the way for career enhancement. In the first case and in the second case to prove or disapprove anything is impossible, as the conflict of values can be revealed here not directly but latent and not vivid.

The research of modern culture is impossible without taking into account the level of modernization of material culture. Though modernization of traditional culture goes along as a rule in parallel with Europization, these phenomena are different and do not fit with the context. Material culture always complies with social and political environment. The modernization is going on in two directions: 1) new forms will be developed which comply with the requirements of modernization; 2) separate elements or whole complex are borrowed from world urban culture. Modernization of the household promotes technical utilization and the use of synthetic materials. In some cases, one can observe mechanical intrusions of traditions of one culture into the other.

For example, ownership of the house built in European style beside other characteristics gradually has become the sign of social prestige of local elite and its dual legitimacy. It is not by chance that many Kazakh Khans started from Abulkhair Khan demanded from Russian authorities the construction of their own residence; and if that demand was not satisfied, the relationship between them became seriously worse and for a long time. The understanding of comfort has been transformed significantly which is different within the conditions of nomadic and settled life.

During soviet time, the unification of everyday life has been ongoing more rapidly. Due to growth of wealth of separate families, the changes in everyday life could be met more often. The growth of successful soviet family is well observed in the movie "Moscow Does Not Believe Tears" in the reference of marriage of one close girl friend: "In the beginning, they buy refrigerators, and then will start saving money to buy TV set". Availability of these objects and availability of wooden furniture, crystal items, carpets etc. under the declaration of social equality, demonstrated the presence not only material but also social inequality and prestige of this or that soviet family.

Changes of material culture, especially, if the comfort wealth was improving in everyday life, the majority of population accepted this as natural and necessary transformation and practically did not contain any internal conflict. The difficulties were of utilitarian nature exclusively and included the process of formation of skills to utilize technical innovation, its repairs etc. Changes of spiritual life as a rule were perceived as tragic and non-corrective. It included many aspects of societal life -language processes, religious situation, social transformations and etc.

Unwillingness to change traditional lifestyle, rejection of nomadic comfort with its physical and spiritual components could be observed everywhere up to complete loss of protective mechanism to support family and separate personalities. Only the loss of this support forced male population primarily to go to cities in order to find jobs and food supply. Withdrawal from customary habits and intention to learn something new could also be the reason for migration.

There were many surprises in the city and the nomads were forced to change not only externally but internally as well; the lifestyle was changed along with behavior, food and fashion. But the connection with aul did not break; the majority of population would return back as first

opportunity arises. Those who remained in the cities became urbanized and Russian speaking with all outgoing consequences. Aspiration for city comfort has become significant motive force and yesterday's nomad would take the decision more often followed by personal benefits.

The problem of correlation and choice between nomadic and urban comfort has not been entirely studied but it is an interesting issue from historical and anthropological viewpoint. The urban conditions have become a natural environment for ideas of national rehabilitation accordingly with the requirements of modernization. It will be interesting to mention some lines from the novel by Mr. M. Auezov "The path of Abai" which relate to adaptation of Abai's sister-in-law in the city. In particular, he writes "Together with in-laws and sister-in-laws from Aul, Dilda put cloth on Magish in kishmek and sharshi and covered her with thick silk scarf. Of course, she wanted Magish to dress up well but it turned out to be backwards. This cloth will not be suitable for the city! Is kimishek appropriate in the society where you introduce your wife?" [11, p.306]. It is not by chance that this novel is viewed as an encyclopedia of the life of Kazakhs as it depicts practically all aspects of Kazakh social life functioning and without saying all ongoing transformations caused by internal and external nature. We share the thesis of Mr. M. Auezov about the "change of all lifestyle of the world view of the nation has become a serious test of national world's perception" [12, p. 31].

Limited industrialization, weak involvement of indigenous population in these processes eventually led to preservation of traditional preferences at work, the concentration of local people in management, trade, services, education and the humanities. Mr. A. M. Khazanov is analyzing the problem of backwardness in Central Asia and in Kazakhstan has mentioned the following: "Modernization in this region was carried out with minimum participation of indigenous people; industrialization, urbanization, demographic revolution, revolution in the sphere of education and labor were not carried out in full capacity here" [13, p.155].

The circle was closed; traditional preferences and lack of skills of industrial labor by nomadic population from one side, limitations of industrialization and low participation of local population in ongoing modernization processes from the other side. These factors only strengthened the mental affection of ordinary Kazakh to the values of nomadic society with unquestioned authority of the elder and with the knowledge of genealogy, with support of family roots, nostalgic excursions into heroic past, and with the love for folklore and etc. To the lesser extend, these sentiments were not typical to the Kazakh bureaucratic or political elite that have achieved high status and position. As the result of the choice of a life strategy, the degree of Russification was different; from full leading to change of national ethnic identity, which in its pure form is extremely rare in acculturation or "hybridization" to the purely superficial, which could well be combined with even anti-Russian sentiments. During research of similar problems we are going beyond the framework of history as a scientific discipline and we intrude into the framework of new scientific trend of historic science in Kazakhstan-an anthropology; it requires additional knowledge, skills and methods to conduct this kind of research. The research of western authors can significantly help to learn this field of science.

The complexity of analysis of this problem is that the traditional culture of Kazakhs has not been studied yet at its full volume though one can find a lot of research of this topic from the first glance. However, all this research is dedicated to analysis of separate segments whether it is lifestyle, music or folklore, traditional mentality, establishment of intellectual culture and etc. Until present there is no textbook of the history of Kazakh culture nor textbook on the history of other people's culture in Kazakhstan though several attempts have been made to develop it. [14]. Therefore, it is difficult to say that there is a domestic general literature which is analyzing mutually intertwined with western, Russian culture into traditional Kazakh culture and issues associated with it including the conflict of values. To tell the truth in soviet times the research on

dynamics of lifestyle of population of the USSR was published including Kazakhs, transformation of their festive and customary culture which has become more soviet type culture and less traditional; but it is doubtful that these books can fill in the gap which we identified earlier [15]. However, we can find interesting material in this research on transformation of lifestyle of Kazakh aul through changes in the sphere of education, health care, the establishment of writing literature traditions and national theatre, development of communications, radio, filmography and television; distribution of new fashion trends, expansion of food products, type of leisure (red yurts, house of culture, sport and dancing and etc); disappearance of many family traditions (polygamy, levirate, kalym, prohibition to conclude marriage between representatives of one root, prohibition of communication between daughter-in-law and father-in-law and etc).

If we try to follow the process of mutual infiltration of Russian culture with Kazakh culture of pre-revolutionary period, it is obvious that these cultures are quite different from each other and they can clearly be differentiated on such category as comparison of the settled life or nomadic life. If we are talking about the soviet period, we can observe a synthesis here of traditional nomadic Kazakh culture with Russian-Soviet culture or to be more precise with modern world urban culture. This problem should be studied by domestic and western historiography. By this, the western authors emphasize that Kazakhstan went through several cultural shocks and successfully synthesized Kazakh, Russian and western cultures; they warn about extra efforts to cultivate nomadic cultural tradition by taking note of that the future of Kazakhstan is connected with the evolution of Kazakh commune towards modern society and completion of modernization by Western example. There are no unanimous opinions in domestic historiography that can be explained by diversity of approaches as to analysis of the historic past of Kazakh people and the role that Russian Empire has played and then the USSR in destiny of people as future perspectives of development of independent Kazakhstan.

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