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The Evolution of Ethnic Tradition Transfer among Belorussian Peasant Settlers in Siberia and Russia's Far East from 1850 to the Present

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Трансформации коммуникативных механизмов трансляции этнических традиций у потомков белорусских крестьян-переселенцев Сибири и Дальнего Востока (вторая половина XIX – начало XXI в.)

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Abstract: This article examines how the transfer of ethnic traditions among Belorussian peasant settlers in Asian Russia to their descendants has evolved since 1850. Based on field data collected from different generations of Belorussian settlers born during the 20th century, the study indicates that the mechanism of this transfer went through three very distinct phases. From the second half of the 19th century until the 1920's, the children of Belorussian settlers adopted the ethnic identity and traditions of their parents, much like their forefathers back home. During the Soviet era, i.e., from the early 1920's until the late 1980's, the state sought to replace Belorussian customs and conventions among the settlers' children with its own homogenous, socialist modernity. After the USSR's collapse in 1991, the growing influence of mass media and more contemporary socio-cultural processes began to influence how ethnic traditions were transferred to the young. All three periods left their imprint on the outlook of the descendants of Belorussian settlers today. This is largely the result of the fact that practical knowledge and skills change more rapidly than deeper values and beliefs.

Keywords: Belorussians, peasant immigrations, ethnic traditions transfer, historical memory, ethnocultural identity, traditions, modern, postmodern

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Аннотация: Статья посвящена изучению трансформации коммуникативных механизмов трансляции этнических традиций у потомков белорусских крестьян-переселенцев второй половины XIX – начала XX века, проживающих на территории Сибири и Дальнего Востока. Основной эмпирической базы исследования послужили полевые материалы, собранные автором у разных поколений переселенцев, рожденных в период с 1910-х по 1990-е гг. Их представители пережили три «культурные эпохи», на протяжении которых существенным образом менялись принципы трансляции этнических традиций. Для первого периода (вторая половина XIX – 1920-е гг.) в сре-

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де белорусских крестьян-переселенцев было типичным функционирование традиционных моделей межпоколенной передачи этнокультурной идентичности и этнических традиций. Для второго периода, пришедшегося на годы советской власти (1920–1980 гг.), стала характерной попытка заменить на уровне государственной политики межпоколенные пути трансляции этнических традиций на массовые формы инкультурации, внедряемые в процессе модернизации жизненного уклада. Для следующей эпохи, начавшейся в 1990-е гг., характерно нарастание роли средств массовой коммуникации в трансляции этнических традиций, которая сопровождается рядом социокультурных процессов, характерных для общества постмодерна. На сегодняшний день все три описанных периода в той или иной степени накладывают свой отпечаток на особенности культуры и мировоззрения потомков белорусских переселенцев. Эта ситуация во многом связана с общими принципами асинхронности трансформаций разных элементов культуры, в соответствии с которыми устаревание практических знаний и навыков происходит значительно быстрее, чем смена важнейших ценностных ориентации и верований.

Ключевые слова: белорусы, крестьянские переселения, трансляция этнических традиций, историческая память, этнокультурная идентичность, традиции, модерн, постмодерн

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Introduction

The last century has seen unprecedented changes in the ways ethnic traditions have been transferred from one generation to the next. Studying these processes has not only become an important focus of ethnology, but it has also strongly influenced the development of cultural studies in Russia as an independent academic discipline. In the 1970s, thanks to the work of E.S. Markarian, much research was carried on in the interplay between cultural studies and ethnology.¹ As result, today no one doubts that the integration of the methodologies of these two academic disciplines opens up new possibilities for studying ethnicity in the context of global sociocultural processes. On the one hand, it provides cultural studies with a reliable empirical base that can help avoid speculative interpretations of individual sociocultural processes in their historical retrospective. On the other hand, it also allows for ethnographic studies of local traditions to go beyond mere description, thereby deepening our understanding of their characteristics.

Russian cultural studies have become more sophisticated, and now take into account the interaction of tradition and innovation in a culture's evolution. Relevant developments include E.S. Markarian's "traditionology," A.S. Akhiezer's sociocultural interpretation of history, and A.Ia. Flier's theory of culture's historical dynamics, among other. Over the past decades, the attention of Russian ethnologists has most often been focused on the problems of preserving and reproducing the ethnic traditions of national minorities and small indigenous peoples. However, the transfer of historical memory and traditions of Russia's East Slavic population remains understudied. This is especially true for Eastern Slavic settlers of Siberia and the Far East. Among those ethnographers who have looked at this question are V.A. Lipinskaia, M.M. Gromyko, F.F. Bolonev, E.F. Fursova, A.Iu. Manichean, O.N. Shelena, M.A. Zhigunova, T.K. Shcheglova, Iu.V. Argudiaeva, and L.E. Fetisova.

¹ E.S. Makarian, "Kul'turnaia traditsiia i zadacha differentsiastii ee obshikh i local'nykh proiavlennii," in *Metodologicheskie problemy etnicheskikh issledovaniia etnicheskikh kul'tur* (Yerevan: [S.n.], 1978), 84–90; E.S. Makarian, "Uzlovye problem teorii kulturnoi traditsii," *Kul'tura i obrazovanie*, no. 2 (1981): 78–96; S.V. Lur'e, "Traditionology E.S. Makarian: difference from foreign theories of tradition," *Culture and Education*, no. 4 (2015): 5–12.

Since 2009, we have been studying the ethnocultural evolution of Belorussian peasant immigrants east of the Ural Mountains. During the agrarian migrations of the late Imperial era, the traditional cultures of Russian and Belorussian peasants were very similar. Nevertheless, there were some differences in the way Belorussian immigrants introduced specific elements of their material and spiritual culture into Asian Russia. This allowed us to identify individual markers to trace the patterns of how immigrants preserved or transformed their ethnic traditions in their new environment. The field studies we conducted in 12 regions of Siberia and the Far East included interviewing interviews and recording oral stories from descendants of immigrants born between the 1910s and the 1990s. This chronological coverage permitted us to trace how the transfer of the ethnic traditions among three to four generations of immigrants has changed.

The collected materials are unique, since over a little more than a century, the generations of immigrants went through three different phases – the late Imperial, Soviet and post-Soviet eras – during which the characteristics of their cultural transfers changed significantly. Moreover, in addition to historical developments on the national level, the growing pressure of global sociocultural and technological trends increasingly diminished the influence of ethnic traditions on younger generations. These broader phenomena intersect to some degree with the periodization of Russian cultural studies and ethnology and coincide with the main cycles of Russian history formulated by A.S. Akhiezer.² The differences between these three periods can be likened to the classical, non-classical and post-non-classical types of cultures that A.Ia. Flier proposed.³ Meanwhile, O.V. Kirichenko distinguishes between the traditional, the modern and “postmodern” (contemporary) phases in the Russian historical memory.⁴

Historical memory is one of factors that shapes ethnocultural identity. As one scholar argues, it is

the most important component of self-identification not only of an individual, but also of a social group and of society as a whole. This is because the way historical memory categorizes the past strongly influences the way social groups are constituted and integrated in the present.⁵

In short, transformations in the mechanism of historical memory transfer from one generation to the next shape the ethnocultural identity of the group being studied.

Traditional Mechanisms of Ethnic Cultural Transfer

Belorussians are generally believed to trace their origins to various East Slavic tribes, such as the Dregovich, Radimich, and Krivich, who began to consolidate during the Kievan Rus at the turn of the second millennium.⁶ Many of features of their culture developed under the rule of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, from its rise in the 13th century until its incorporation into a commonwealth along with Poland according to the Union of Lublin in 1569.⁷ From then on through their absorption into the Russian Empire toward the end of the 18th century by Empress Catherine the Great, Belorussia’s upper classes largely adopted Poland’s culture and Catholic faith while much of the peasantry maintained its Orthodox, East Slavic identity. Thus, the peasants called their religion and cul-

² A.S. Aliezer, *Rossia: Kritika istoricheskogo opyta* (Moscow: FO SSSR Publ., 1991).

³ A.Ia. Flier, “Classical, non-classical and post-non-classical culture: Experience of a new typologization (beginning),” *The Culture of Culture Journal*, no. 3 (2017): 2.

⁴ O.V. Kirichenko, “The historical memory of the Russian people: from tradition to modern and post-modern,” *Voyager: World and Man*, no. 8 (2017): 148–160.

⁵ *Istoriia i pamiat’* (Moscow: Krug Publ., 2006), 23–24.

⁶ E.F. Karskii, *Belorusy. Vedenie i izuchenie iazyka i narody slovesnosti* (Warsaw: Tipografiya Varshavskogo uchebnogo okruga Publ., 1903), 80.

⁷ O.A. Gantskaia, R.A. Grigor’eva, “Istoriko-etnograficheskii ocherk traditsionnoi kul’tury,” in *Materialy k serii Narody i kul’tury* (Moscow: IEA RAN Publ., 1992), 7.

ture Russian, in contrast to their Polonised, Catholic lords.⁸ Indeed, the ethnonym “Belorussian” only became current at the turn of the 20th century.⁹ Even then peasants rarely identified themselves as such. At the time the latter were asked about their identity, they did not know how to respond and often called themselves “tuteishimi,” or local people.¹⁰

Spurred by land shortage, at the turn of the 20th century many Belorussian peasants left their villages for the open lands beyond the Urals. Once in Asian Russia, Orthodox immigrants from Belorussia were generally considered to be Russian, while Catholics tended to see themselves as Poles. Meanwhile, the peasant immigrants identified themselves more by their region of origin, such as Mogilev, Vitebsk, or Grodno, rather than their ethnicity. When pressed, they called their homeland “Rasia.”¹¹

The first generation of newcomers initially tried to adhere to the culture of the region they had left, keeping their original language and folklore, calendar and household rituals, form of dwelling, food and clothing. Once in Siberia, however, Belorussian immigrants had to adapt to their new environment. At this stage, there were two main channels for transferring ethnic traditions to their children. One of them was within an individual family or clan, much according to the notion of the post-figurative culture formulated by the American anthropologist Margaret Mead. As she explained,

without written or other means of recording the past, people were forced to include every change in their consciousness, to store it in the memory and in the established behavior of each generation of adults.¹²

The other channel of communication was with the indigenous population, whose diversity shaped the features of the immigrants’ interethnic cooperation. For example, when Belorussians from different regions developed a new settlement, they typically merged into a single ethno-cultural community with Russian and Ukrainian newcomers. At the same time, living next to Buriats, Evenks, Udegei and other indigenous peoples, their culture often evolved autonomously as a result of economic interactions with the latter. Meanwhile, in mixed marriages, the mother’s culture had a stronger influence on intergenerational cultural transfer. Here, women usually preserved the traditions of cooking and clothing of their ancestors, whereas men preserved the features of architecture, crafts, etc. from their native places.

The interactions between Belorussian immigrants and the more established Russians in Siberia are particularly interesting. Since the immigrants identified themselves more closely with their region rather than nation of origin, regional rather than ethnic socio-cultural differences with local old-timers dominated. In studying the “armored boys” (*pantsirnie boiary*) from Vitebsk province, who had moved to Western Siberia as a result of the Count Peter Kiselev’s agrarian reforms during the latter decades of Emperor Nicholas I’s reign, M.M. Gromyko noted that when two peasant communities with different origins were forced to coexist with each other, friction resulted.¹³ Both disputes involving clashing traditions for developing the land as well as cultural differences often led to conflict.

At the end of the 19th century N.E. Karonin-Petropavlovskii described the process of adaptation of Belorussian immigrants:

⁸ S.M. Tokt, “Dinamika etnicheskoi samoidentifikatsii naseleniia Belorusi v XIX – nachale XX vv., <http://ethnography.omskreg.ru/page.php?id=983> (accessed: 10.11.2019).

⁹ K.V. Chistov, *Etnografiia vostochnykh slavian. Ocherki traditsionnoi kul'tury* (Moscow: Nauka Publ., 1987), 18.

¹⁰ A.E. Bogdanovich, *Perezhitkii drevnego mirosozertianii u belorusov” etnogr. Ocherk* (Moscow: Slava Publ., 2009), 15.

¹¹ R.Yu. Fedorov, “Transformations of ethnic identity in descendants of Belarusian peasants-migrants in Siberia and the Far East,” *Tomsk State University Journal*, no. 423 (2017): 187–195.

¹² M. Mid, *Kul'tura i mir detstva* (Moscow: Nauka Publ., 1988), 322.

¹³ M.M. Gromyko, *Mir russkoi derevni* (Moscow: Molodaya gvardiya Publ., 1991), 159.

For a long time a new community did not merge with an older Siberian village, except for agricultural methods and forms of land ownership, which the newcomers quickly adopted. Until the last day, they kept the customs and practices from Russia inviolable. Being experienced workers, old men carried their bast shoes to the grave, and only the young gradually, under the pressure of those around them, obeyed the new order.¹⁴

This example illustrates how the second generation of immigrants, in accordance with Margaret Mead's post-figurative model of ethnic tradition transfer, began to shape the features of their culture. Mead observed that, for the younger generation, the cultural influence of their elders diminished while those of their contemporaries in the host society grew.¹⁵ Nevertheless, as education became increasingly accessible to immigrant children in the early 20th century, the family continued to dominate their enculturation with regard to worldview, ethnic traditions and practical skills. Furthermore, as in any traditional society, the historical memory of the immigrants relied mainly on their oral-mythological folklore. Therefore, according to E.S. Markarian's schema, the traditional ways that sociocultural traditions were transferred generally continued to prevail.¹⁶

The Soviet Period

In the 1920s, as part of its effort to consolidate its rule, the new Soviet state began attempting to regulate the ethnic and cultural identity of its citizens. The 1926 All-Union Population Census divided the USSR's East Slavic population into Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians. According to the census form,

To determine the Ukrainian, Great Russian and Belorussian populations in areas where members of these three ethnic groups all identify their nationality as Russian, those who state they are Russian must specify whether they are Ukrainian, Great Russian (Russian), or Belorussian.¹⁷

According to the census results, 320,320 and 41,124 Belorussians lived in Siberia and the Far Eastern Region, respectively.¹⁸

Along with its effort to promote national self-awareness among the three East Slavic peoples, the government paradoxically suppressed their religious traditions – an important element of their ethnicity. However, such utopic efforts to shape the cultural consciousness of new generations met with serious resistance in the countryside. For one, elements of traditional spirituality, which the new regime repressed, could survive because of their deep roots in traditional folklore. Thus, when officials closed churches, popular Orthodox traditions among the immigrants only grew stronger. In the absence of village priests, the laity celebrated the sacraments of baptism, funerals, among others, at home. At the same time, ritual celebrations fused traditional and Soviet elements. For example, on the calendars of many Belorussian immigrants in Western Siberia, the Orthodox Feast of the Autumn Grandfathers was renamed “October” or “November” Grandfathers as the population incorporated the Soviet holiday of November 7, which marked the Bolshevik takeover of the Russian government.¹⁹

Another factor that impeded the destruction of the ethnic traditions of Belorussian immigrants in the Soviet period was the fact that until the 1960s traditional livelihoods

¹⁴ S. Karonin, “По Иртышу и Tobolu (fragment),” in *Ishim i literatura. Vek XIX. Ocherki po literaturnoi kraevedeniia i teksty-rariteti* (Ishim: Ishim Pedagogical Institute Publ., 2004), 262.

¹⁵ Mid, *Kul'tura*, 342.

¹⁶ Makarian, “Kul'turnaia traditsiia,” 89.

¹⁷ “Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleeniia 1926 g.,” Poyasnitel'nye zamechaniia i instruktsionnye ukazaniya, accessed November 10, 2019, <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2006/0267/arkiv04.php>.

¹⁸ “Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleeniia 1926 g.,” accessed November 10, 2019, http://demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus_nac_26.php.

¹⁹ T.N. Zolotova, “Memorial's traditions among Siberian Belarusians,” *Traditional Culture*, no. 2 (2014): 24.

still dominated rural life. Unlike large Soviet cities, whose lifestyle began to be shaped by socialist innovations, the introduction of collective farming in the villages only affected socio-economic interactions with the state without altering the main foundations of traditional peasant life.

Between the 1960s and 1980s, the increasing accessibility of consumer goods, as well as more spatial and social mobility among rural residents, began to help displace the cultural traditions of the descendants of Belorussian immigrants. Another important contributor to this process was the growing availability of institutional and mass channels of enculturation, including secondary and higher education, cultural institutions, books, magazines, radio and television. As a result, the authority of traditional knowledge and practical skills that had until then been transferred from generation to generation began to diminish. In a time of rapid scientific and technological progress, youth began to see the experience of their ancestors as outdated and inadequate. This led to the growing importance of Margaret Mead's notion of prefigurative culture, according to which young people become the main carriers of relevant sociocultural experience.²⁰ The late Soviet period accordingly witnessed a rapid decline in the traditional cultural identity of the descendants of the Belorussian.

According to M.A. Zhigunova, by the middle of the 20th century the distinctive features of local, social, confessional and other factors that shaped the ethno-cultural self-consciousness of Siberia's East Slavic population of Siberia had been almost lost.²¹ While older generations carried on their various ethnic traditions during the post-World War II years, the survival of these elements became less and less certain. Against this backdrop of a fading ethnicity, there was a growing shift towards a "supra-ethnic mass culture."²² At the same time, some of the innovations of Soviet modernity during the pre-war decades, which had initially been seen as anti-traditions, now also began to acquire the features of conventional life as they replaced the traditional culture of the original Belorussian immigrants. As E.S. Markarian noted, "any innovation, if it is accepted by many people in a particular group ... turns into a tradition."²³

The Post-Soviet Period

With the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the Soviet way of village life based on collective farming began to collapse. Indeed, the liquidation of collective and state farms deprived many villages of their economic rationale. Farmers went back to their individual plots of land, and some even reverted to semi-natural forms of economic relations. Meanwhile, the precipitous outflow of able-bodied villagers in search of better jobs in the cities led to considerable demographic upheaval in the countryside, which for many descendants of Belorussian immigrants resulted in an almost complete collapse of intergenerational transfer of their ethnic traditions.

Nevertheless, the turn of the 21st centuries witnessed a strong revival of interest in the pre-Soviet way of life. As society lost its faith in progress, an important attribute of modernity, as well as in Soviet ideology, the culture and traditions of their forefathers became more appealing.²⁴ One could even speak of an "ethno-Renaissance" in contempo-

²⁰ M. Mead, *Culture and Commitment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970).

²¹ M.A. Zhigunova, "The East Slavic population in Siberia: ethnocultural history and identity," *Tomsk Journal of Linguistics and Anthropology*, no. 3 (9) (2015): 136–145.

²² Makarian, "Kul'turnaia traditsiia," 90.

²³ Makarian, "Uzlovnye problem teorii kulturnoi traditsii," 80.

²⁴ Aliezer, *Rossiia*, vol. 1.

rary Russia. E.F. Fursova noted that the predictions of the disappearance of cultural differences as a result of globalization were no longer valid.²⁵

Scholars believe that the choice of whether to abandon or preserve the ethnicity of their ancestors largely depends on the third generation of immigrants.²⁶ According to L.A. Abolina, with regard to Belorussians living in Siberia,

whereas the second generation of immigrants was still the bearer of traditions, sadly, the third generation will most likely be the last that understands and remembers them, while the fourth can only read about them.²⁷

Due to the high degree of similarity between the Belorussian and Russian cultures, mixed marriages, and urbanization, most of the descendants of Belorussian immigrants dissolved into a new ethno-cultural milieu and now tended to see themselves as Russian. However, among individuals interested in the traditions of their family, village or ancestral region, there was a nostalgic revival of their ethnic traditions.

The post-Soviet ethno-Renaissance simultaneously developed both at the individual and institutional level. The former involved reviving traditions by mobilizing local historical memory. Meanwhile, such restoration of ethnic traditions received support in the form of national autonomic status and by community groups. Despite the fact that the most active participants tended to be the city dwellers who came from Belorussia in the Soviet or post-Soviet period, it was the ethnic traditions of the descendants of earlier Belorussian peasant immigrants that aroused their interest. To revive them, the former set up cultural heritage museums, folklore groups, and organized the holidays and ceremonies of the past – with varying degrees of accuracy.

As in the popular culture of the current, postmodern era more generally, most of these efforts were aestheticized and playful reconstructions of their external features deprived of their original value-semantic context. At the same time, A.Ia. Flier predicted that

the fate of folklore (folk) culture will be determined by the process of reducing its social bearer – peasantry and, possibly, in some regions – its actual disappearance as a particular social layer.²⁸

The author added that

today this culture is increasingly imitated theatrically according to the recorded samples, and ‘stiffens’ in fixed forms. Not characteristic of genuine folk culture by definition, it turns into a ‘colorful, folkloric simulations.’ But, it is obvious that the social order for such imitations will to some extent be preserved in certain social strata, especially in those which are ideologically oriented toward ethno-traditional values.²⁹

Some see a greater danger in today’s playful imitation of traditions than a denial of modernity.³⁰ Nevertheless, postmodern interpretations of traditions can motivate individuals better to understand their cultural heritage. V.V. Mironov notes that

²⁵ E.F. Fursova, I.Iu. Aksenova, “Traditions and innovations in the modern festive culture: to the formulation of problems on the example of Siberia,” *Bulletin of Novosibir State University. Series: History, Philology* 12, no. 3 (2013): 292–298.

²⁶ A.Iu. Manicheva, “Diaspory i problema ‘tret’ego pokoleniia pereselentsev’ v Sibirii,” in *Etnosotsial’nye protsessy v Sibirii* (Novosibirsk: TSERIS Publ., 2006), 67–71.

²⁷ L.A. Abolina, “Krestianskoe miroponimanie i mirooshchushchenie v zhizni i fol’lore belorusskikh poselentsev (na primere sem’i Abolinykh),” in *Belorusy v Sibiri* (Tomsk: Tomsk State Pedagogical University Publ., 2019), 267.

²⁸ A.Ia. Flier, “Kakoi budet kul’tura XXI veka: analiticheskii prognoz,” in *Problemy kul’tury v XXI veke* (Moscow: MISI Publ., 2018), 10–11.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ V.V. Sluzhivtsev, “Traditsionnoe iskusstvo v sovremennoi kul’ture,” in *Iskusstvo v sovremennoi mire: materialy pervoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii (7 dekabria 2004 g.)*. (Khanty-Mansiisk: Department of Culture and Art of the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug Publ., 2005), 80.

the popularity of postmodernism lies in the fact that it was at the junction of tectonic shifts taking place in human culture, which paradoxically, can become the bridge that will connect us with the traditional, classical culture.³¹

Regardless, institutional measures artificially to support the traditions of the past that have survived as well as explaining their significance to the public are often the only way to preserve them in the current day. For example, the efforts of ethnographers and members of ethnic organizations in the Tyumen region village of Osinokova, keep alive the ceremony of the veneration and transfer of the “Candle” icon, which was brought to Siberia by immigrants from the Mogilev province.³² Directed by Volia Galanova, the Irkutsk choral ensemble “Kryvichy” collects folk songs from the descendants of Belorussian immigrants, paying great attention to reproducing them in their original form. And in the villages of Turgenevka and Cherchet near Lake Baikal, folk museums were established to display various traditional household implements of Belorussian immigrants.

Some public initiatives have helped to revive cultural ties between Belorussian immigrants and the homeland of their ancestors. In 2017, thanks to the “Viartanne” project of the genealogist E. L. Novikova and the Belorussian ethnographer O. A. Lobachevskaia, descendants of immigrants from Rogin in the Gomel region, living in Ermaki in the Tyumen region visited the homeland of their ancestors who had left 120 years before, and twinned their villages.

However, in general, scholars like T. A. Goncharova found that both individual and institutional efforts to revive past traditions only had a limited effect among the descendants of Belorussian immigrants.³³ On the one hand, more oriented towards the globalizing cultural outlook of modern society, the younger generation has little interest in the matter. Meanwhile, for representatives of older generations, artificial revivals often seem unnatural and false.³⁴

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Internet became increasingly influential in transferring the ethnic traditions and identity of Belorussian peasant immigrants to their descendants. In recent decades, the phenomenon of cyber ethnicity has begun to attract the ever-increasing attention of ethnologists, anthropologists and scholars of culture. As they see it,

to compensate for the lack of real territorial proximity and communication through their broader network, it is the communities, primarily diasporas and ethnic minorities, that show the greatest cyber activity.³⁵

Thus, “the Internet replaces one of the foundations of ethnicity, ‘the unity of the territory’.”³⁶

A number of Belorussian communities in Siberia and the Far East currently have their own groups in social networks ranging from a few dozen to thousands of registered members. Russia’s leading social network, “Vkontakte,” hosts the “Belorussians of Irkutsk” and “Belorussians of Krasnoyarsk,” among other. Studying Internet posts about the cultural autonomy of Belorussians in the Tomsk region, G.V. Grosheva noted that

³¹ V.V. Mironov, “Modern communicative space as a factor in the transformation of culture and philosophy,” *Moscow State University Journal. Philosophy*, no. 4 (2006): 48.

³² O.A. Lobachevskaia, R.Yu. Fedorov, “‘Svecha’ v Sibiri: Etnograficheskii i kul’turno-antropologicheskii aspekty bytovaniia obriada u belorusskikh pereselentsev,” *Vestnik arkeologii, antropologii i etnografii*, no. 1 (2020): 72–82.

³³ T.A. Goncharova, “Ethnic renaissance and ethnic identity of Slavic ethnodisperse groups in Siberia,” *Tomsk Journal of Linguistics and Anthropology*, no. 3 (2016): 55.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

³⁵ A.V. Golovnev, S.Yu. Belorussova, T.S. Kisser, “Web-ethnography and cyber-ethnicity,” *Ural Historical Journal*, no. 1 (2018): 100.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

the folk culture and history of Belorussians act as key symbols of their ethno-consolidation. Moreover, in the virtual narrative, there is almost no representation of the linguistic or confessional facets of the ethno-cultural identity, which is typical of Poles and representatives of several other national diasporas living in the region.³⁷

With the widespread use of the Internet, information about various aspects of the traditional culture of Belorussians, such as folk holidays, recipes of national dishes, recordings of folklore, photographs of folk dress, became widely available to the descendants of the immigrants. When reconstructing certain manifestations of their traditional folklore, representatives of Belorussian communities often begin by looking at “samples from the Internet,” which by their regional characteristics and chronology may not necessarily coincide with the distinctive aspects of the traditional culture of their regions of origins. This leads to the peculiar phenomenon of “rooting out traditions”, which involved updating them by the samples from the virtual environment in the wrong place and time.

Conclusion

From the traditional to postmodern, all three periods have influenced the culture and worldview of the descendants of the Belorussian immigrants in Asian Russia. This situation is largely due to the general principles of the asynchrony cultural transformation. As scholars note,

both the updating and obsolescence of modern scientific and technical knowledge and skills occur much more rapidly than changes in the most important value orientations, beliefs, etc. Consequently, the degree of intergenerational dissimilarities in these areas will be different.³⁸

To one degree or another, the situation today is reflected not only among the descendants of the Belorussian immigrants we considered in this article, but also for most other peoples of Russia. Therefore, it seems appropriate to use the methodological approaches at the intersection of cultural studies and ethnology for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of ethnic tradition transfer within the global socio-cultural transformations taking place in society.

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³⁷ G.V. Grosheva, “Slavic diasporas in the Internet space of the city of Tomsk: the experience of preserving and broadcasting ethnocultural identity,” *Tomsk Journal of Linguistics and Anthropology*, no. 3 (2015): 35.

³⁸ Mid, *Kul’tura*, 423.

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