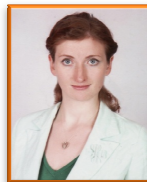


THE FORMATION OF ETHNIC IDENTITY OF THE DOMINANT GROUPS OF CRIMEA: THE POLITICAL AND CULTURAL ASPECT

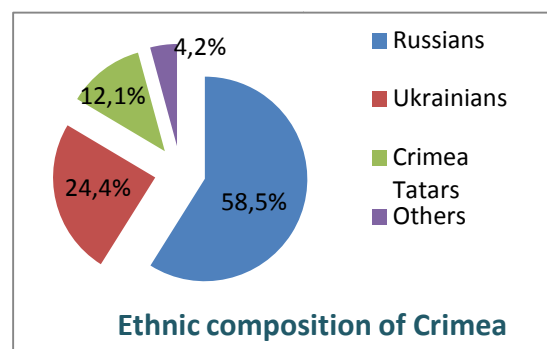


Abstract of the Thesis for PhD degree in political science. Speciality - Ethnopolitics and Ethnic Studies, Taurida National V.I. Vernadsky University, Simferopol, Ukraine, 2011.

The thesis is devoted to studying the formation of the ethnic identity of the dominant groups of Crimea (Russians, Ukrainians, and Crimean Tatars) under the influence of various political actors and institutions in the cultural sphere.

Three main approaches of understanding ethnicity and ethnic identity, such as primordialism, instrumentalism, and constructivism, are examined. The theoretical framework of the thesis adopts a constructivist approach to ethnicity (F. Barth, A. D. Smith, B. Anderson, V. Tishkov). For constructivists, ethnicity has roots not 'in the heart' or 'in the blood', but rather 'in the mind' of individuals, which are members of ethnic groups – 'imagined communities'. In fact, ethnicity is understood as a socially constructed phenomenon.

Analysis of the Soviet ethnos theory and Soviet nationality policy provides an opportunity to understand the basis of ethnic processes in the post-Soviet space and the current ethnic situation in Crimea. Ethnic situation in the Soviet Union was built on the contradiction. Official doctrine had primordial essence due to ethnic belonging was considered as natural (primordial) characteristic of a person. It was institutionalized by introducing the category of *natsionalnost'* that had to be determined according to the ethnic origin of parents and recorded in the 'fifth column' of the Soviet passport without opportunity to change it during the life. However, the Soviet nationality policy had a constructivist base. Using censuses, internal passport system, replacement, deportation and Russification, Soviet regime created the hierarchy of nations, and predetermined the interethnic relations and conflicts that have taken place in the Post-Soviet area. As a result of this policy, three different ethnic identities were shaped in Crimea: the Russians of Crimea, the Ukrainians of Crimea, and the Crimean Tatars. These identities have unique features that distinguish Russians in Crimea from Russians in Russia; Ukrainians in the peninsula from Ukrainians in the continental part of Ukraine; and Crimean Tatars from Volga Tatars.



Based on the analysis of various historiographies, the historical myths that underlie ethnic identity and territorial claims of Russians, Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars in Crimea are defined. Politics of memory and, as well as contradictions between certain political actors on incorporating historical myths in the 'political landscape' of Crimea in the form of monuments, place names, the system of holidays and celebrations, and the official status of these groups at the national and regional levels are studied.

Historical myths of Russians, Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars in Crimea can be considered as mutually exclusive. Referring to the correspondent historiography and the historical myths, each of the dominant groups in Crimea claims their rights on the territory of peninsula. Their politics of memory aims to establish a connection of each community with the peninsula. Crimean Tatars cultivate the myth of ethnogenesis on the territory of Crimea, while Russians and Ukrainians - the myth of their antiquity appearance on the peninsula.



Khan's Palace in Bakhchysarai

It is an example of Crimean Tatar historical memory in Crimean political landscape.

It favors the development 'ethnogenesis' myth of Crimean Tatars within the territory of Crimea.

(Photo by Yuliya Biletska)

The myth of ethnogenesis of the Crimean Tatar within the territory of Crimean peninsula underlines their demands for the official status of the 'indigenous people' of Crimea and, consequently, their claims for the Crimean territory as their only homeland. The time of Crimean Khanate was seen as the so-called 'golden age' in the Crimean Tatar politics of memory, as they have managed to develop unique society and culture. Russian conquest and annexation of Crimea is evaluated as dramatic event in the Crimean Tatar history, because their statehood and traditional social and economic structure were destroyed and supplanted

by Russian lifestyle. Soviet times are seen as the most difficult period in the Crimean Tatar history. Crimean Tatar's deportation committed by Soviet government is considered as a crime against whole Crimean Tatar nation that caused casualties and discrimination in cultural, educational, economic and political spheres. Contemporary Crimean Tatar politics of memory aims, on the one hand, to disprove the myths of the Soviet historiography about Crimean Tatars as 'traitors' of Motherland during World War II and, on the another hand, to develop the myth of negative consequences of Soviet nationality policy. Deportation and exile had played an important role in shaping Crimean Tatar national identity. Awareness of the deportation of the whole nation as common trouble had led to awareness of unity of nation. Common idea of returning to homeland became a central element of shaping national identity. Starting with the year 1989 and especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Crimean Tatars have begun to return to Crimea. This process



Monument to the famous Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko in Simferopol

It is one of the few examples of Ukrainian historical memory in the Crimean political landscape.

(Photo by Anatolij Moskvichev)

of repatriation has a special symbolic meaning such as the restoration of justice for whole repressed nation. Having analyzed the historical myths of the Crimean Tatars, one can conclude that the central element of the Crimean Tatars ethnic identity is based on three concepts: 'concept of land' (idea of the Homeland), 'concept of crime' (referring to the deportation and forced migrations), and 'concept of victim' (repatriation and land claims). Thus, it was the Soviet regime that promoted shaping Crimean Tatar national identity with strong sense of Crimea as their only homeland.



Dolgorukov obelisk in Simferopol
It is an example of Russian historical memory that aims to cultivate myth of imperial past of Crimea.
(Photo by Anatoliy Moskvichev)

Ukrainian claims on Crimea are based on the so-called Ukrainophile historiography. Ukrainian historians refer to times of 'Kievan Rus' and *Zaporozhian Sich* (as old Ukrainian states) and argue that Ukrainians appeared in Crimea before Russians. They do not claim Ukrainians as indigenous people in the peninsula, but rather refer to the legal transfer of Crimean *oblast'* from the jurisdiction of the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR (1954), and also to geographical belongingness of the peninsula to Ukraine.

Russian territorial claims to Crimea also refer to the times of 'Kievan Rus'. In Russian historical myths, Slavic population appeared in Crimea before Turkic one. Annexation of Crimea is considered as a reestablishing of the rights of the Russian people to its own land. Russia is shown as rescuer of Crimean Tatars that were nomadic and uncivilized population. By inclusion of Crimea to Russia, the last one brought civilization and promoted the development and prosperity of Crimea. Negative stereotypes about Crimean Tatars such as they are

illiterate and retrograde people had appeared. Especially this message was cultivated in the Soviet history and it had serious effects on the ethnic identification of Soviet generation of Russians and Ukrainians. Legality of the transfer of Crimean *oblast'* from the jurisdiction of the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR is denying in the historical memory of Russians. The implementation of the Russian politics of memory to preserve Russian culture and language is considered as not a struggle of national minorities for their rights, but rather as efforts to secure historically shaped international environment in the region.

Political landscape of Crimea can be characterized by transitional period. Preserving a lot of Soviet symbols, it includes the embodiments of Russian, Crimean Tatar and official Ukrainian historical myths. There is a kind of 'battle for the past' in Crimea between the Slavic and the Crimean Tatar communities, Russians and Ukrainians, Russians and Communists, when history estimated by certain way becomes a valuable symbolic resource that has mobilizing potential and can be considered as an ideological tool.



**Monument to the deported nations
'Renaissance' in Simferopol**
It is another example of Crimean Tatar historical memory in Crimean political landscape that can be considered as an embodiment of the concept of 'crime'.
(Photo: wikimapia.org)

In political landscape, Russian ethnic community is presented by the symbols that epitomize imperial period of the Crimean history. The imperial symbols in the political landscape of Crimea are intended to cultivate the myths of 'Russian' past of Crimea. Crimean Tatar historical memory in the political landscape of Crimea is mainly represented by the memorials that are reflection of the 'crime' and the 'victim' concepts, such as memorials dedicated to the tragic event of the deportation. There are also symbols in political landscape that reflect the Crimean Tatar past of Crimea and can be considered as part of explained above concept of the 'land' and indigenous roots of the Crimean Tatars in Crimea. A relatively new trend in the Crimean Tatar politics of memory is symbols that deny the myth created by the Soviet Union about the Crimean Tatars, as Nazi collaborators and traitors of Fatherland. Due to most of the Ukrainians in Crimea lost their culture and language in the process of Russification under the Soviet Union, it is more correct to focus on the official policy of the Ukrainian authority in this area. Anyway, Ukrainian historical memory is poorly presented in the memorial space of Crimea.



Veteran holds the portrait of Stalin during the celebrations of the Victory day on 9th of May (2010)

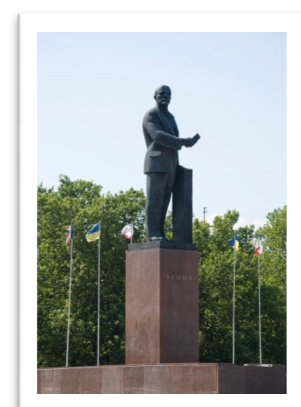
It is an example of Soviet ethnic identity among the Crimean residents.
(Photo by Yuliya Biletska)

The peculiarity of Crimean identity situation is also determined by high level of Soviet identity among Crimean population (17,4% of the ethnic Russians, 26,6% the ethnic Ukrainians identify themselves with the Soviet culture. Strong position of the Soviet politics of memory is clearly reflected in political landscape of Crimea. Soviet symbols are mostly presented by the monumental complexes dedicated to the Great Patriotic War and monuments to Lenin. The political force that cultivates Soviet historical memory is the Communist Party of Crimea. Another component of the communist politics of memory is dedicated to the denials of historical

myths of the Ukrainians that concern, for example soldiers of nationalist movement OUN-UPA or Famine 1932-33.

Official statuses of the ethnic groups have symbolic meaning for their holders and also provide certain political and economic guarantees. There is mismatch of the self-identified and official statuses of each of three ethnic groups in Crimea. Accordingly, it makes difficult to satisfy the claims

of the group that correspond to its imagined or desired status in the society. Ukrainians identify themselves as a titular nation, but in the reality of Crimea they are minority or even 'minority within a minority'. Officially, ethnic Russians are minority in Ukraine. However, constituting more than half of the peninsula's population and having the strongest position in authority of Crimea, ethnic Russians identify themselves as a 'national majority'. The Crimean Tatars are considered as a 'minority' (in both numerical and sociological senses), but they are totally against this status emphasizing that it diminishes their real positions in Crimea. They identify themselves as 'Indigenous people' of Crimea stressing that the Crimean Tatars have historically developed as a national group on the territory of Crimea, and, unlike other minorities in Ukraine and in Crimea, they do not have a homeland or a kin state



Monument to Lenin in the main square of Simferopol
(Photo by Anatoliy Moskvichev)

outside of Crimea. Another demand concerns legitimation of the status of 'Deported nation' in the Ukrainian law system.

Analysis of political influence on the process of ethnic identity through language and religion is done. The characteristics of these areas and the politicization of ethnolinguistic and ethnoreligious factors by certain political forces for gaining electoral capital are determined.



Steles of memory of victims of the OUN-UPA
It was erected by Communist Party of Ukraine. It is considered as struggle against Ukrainian politics of memory.

Linguistic situation on the peninsula, language legislation in Ukraine and its regional peculiarities, state influence on the language factor of ethnic identity of Crimean residents through education and Mass media are examined. Russian can be considered as language of interethnic communication. It is defined as mother tongue by all ethnic Russians and most of Ukrainians in Crimea. For both Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars, language of their communities generally has only symbolic meaning, without practicing it in the everyday life. Status of state language is guaranteed only to Ukrainian. However, the rights of Russian and Crimean Tatar languages are provided at the regional level. Currently, Russian community has better situation with language rights compare to the other ethnic groups (majority of the educational institutions and the media operates in Russian).

Language conflict in Ukraine originates neither in the policy of discrimination of Russian, nor in the gaps in language law. Language conflict in Ukraine is a conflict of identity. 'Language issue' is widely used by different political actors to gain support among electorate. Therefore, to adjust language situation no legal or organizational means is enough. It will be 'removed' from political discourse, only when political forces reduce its use as an instrument of political influence on ethnic identity to gain symbolic capital.

Religion is serves to be an additional component of ethnic identity, which could also increase the level of social distance between the ethnic (and/or religious) groups in Crimea. Marking of political landscape of Crimea by certain religious symbols helps to show the connection of the correspondent ethnic (and religious) community with the territory of Crimea, and to justify their territorial claims. It means that historical myths about ethnogenesis (in the case of Crimean Tatars) or earlier appearance in the region (in case Russians or Ukrainians) are accomplished by the myths of the historical roots of Islam and Orthodoxy in Crimea.



dissident Perto Grygorenko in Simferopol erected by Crimean Tatar activists
It is also an example of cultivation of the myth about Crimean Tatars as "only true Ukrainians in Crimea".
(Photo by Anatolij Moskvichev)

Geopolitical symbolism of Crimea and its influence on the formation of ethnic identity are studied. The symbolic role of Russia and Turkey for each of the ethnic communities in the process of ethnic identification is pointed out. International actors are part of their historical memory, actors of wars and conquests. They are included in the 'friend-or-foe' identification system.

Official Russian policy towards Crimea and ethnic Russians can be described as a reserved and cautious one. However, semi-formal and informal channels of influence on the situation in Crimea are widely used. Political forces oriented to ethnic Russians in the peninsula always develop foreign factor in their activity, focusing on Russia as social and cultural center. Pro-Russian political discourse in Crimea is based on the myths about peninsula as a part of the 'Russian world' that is threatened by Turkey, who aims to 'return' once lost territory. This myth has a negative effect on the development of ethnic relations in Crimea, because it provokes the appearance of the image of the 'others' in relation to Crimean Tatars who culturally close to the Turkish people.

Official Turkish policy towards Crimea can also be described as a moderate one. Turkish diplomats and various Turkish scientists have always expressed very careful opinions concerning Ukraine, Crimea and Crimean Tatars. Moreover, they have constantly emphasized that Turkey has no interest in the disintegration of Ukraine and it has no hidden agenda in Crimea. Turkish activity in Crimea is mostly presented by diaspora organizations of 'Crimean Turks' and the Turkish International Cooperation Agency (TIKA) that mainly focused on cultural cooperation and aid to Crimean Tatars. Another channel of influence is grants for education in Turkey. Crimean Tatar students in Turkey have retained their ethnic identity without changing it in favor of 'Crimean Turks'. However, the 'Myth of homeland' that was formed in exile has tendency to lose its salience under the better economic conditions.

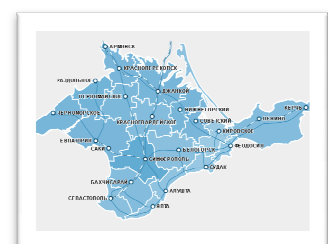
To conclude, using means of culture, political elite promote shaping territorial, economic, social and political claims of correspondent group. Historical memory and historical myths influence on ethnic feelings and ethnic identity. Politics of memory helps to maintain symbolical space of political landscape in concordance to historical myths that underlie certain demands of ethnic groups. Having symbolic meaning, religion and language play role of additional factor in the process of ethnic identification, what makes them a valuable recourse for political elite. Foreign impact in Crimea should be evaluated in the general framework of Post-Soviet geopolitical ambiguity of Ukraine, rather than direct interference of neighbor countries in the activity of one or another ethnic community of the region. In other words, different geopolitical orientations of ethnic elite also join in the identification system of ethnic groups.



Monument to Catherine II in Sevastopol
It is another example of Russian myth of the imperial past of Crimea
(Photo: www.virtual.crimea.ua)



Украина и Крым
<http://i-fakt.ru/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/krym.gif>



Автономная Республика Крым
http://minek-crimea.gov.ua/area_info.php