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**RUSSIAN-KAZAKHSTAN TRANS-BORDER AREAS  
IN THE NEW GEOPOLITICAL REALITY: PROBLEMS  
AND PERSPECTIVES OF SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT  
(ETHNO-CULTURAL ASPECT)**

**Summary:** Article is devoted to the peculiarities of the transformation of the territorial structure of the region, which has emerged from the deeply to the trans-border as a result of the delimitation of the post-Soviet geospace. Author identifies and describes main historic-geographical region's development periods. The landscape's role and the role of attraction of ethnic groups in the formation of ethno-cultural regional specificity and regional identity are represented in this article. The article is devoted to the peculiarities of the transformation of the territorial structure of the region and reveals some prospects in the development of territorial structure of the region in terms of ethno-cultural complex. Author employed the results of her own field research.

**Keywords:** global development, regional development, trans-border interaction.

**JEL Classification:** F63, Z13.

**1. Problem statement**

Global and regional developments are two sides of the same process. In the era of globalization regional components play an important role in the process of development. Displacement and blurring of borders are global trends at the present time. Trans-border interaction results in the formation of trans-border regions as parts of multilayer system. Ethno-cultural space is one of the most important subsystems of this system.

The Orenburg region is a part of the Orenburg-Kazakhstan transboundary region. The region has become like this as a result of post-Soviet delimitation of frontiers.

Prior to that process the region had been evolving as an uniform provincial domestic region for a long period of time with different cultures interacting under the influence of many factors within an enclosing landscape.

A number of regions, as well as the Orenburg-Kazakhstan, became trans-border ones artificially in the 1990s as a result of a uniform geographical space delimitation after the collapse of the USSR. This phenomenon creates numerous problems and as a consequence leads to further scientific discussions.

The new border areas still retain some uniformity of geographical space and its territorial organization, but at the moment one can witness some intensification of its divergence on the opposite sides of the border line, which can result in transformation. Examples of transborder region formation on the basis of integration and convergence of space on both sides of the functioning border are well-known. There are opposite processes in relations between Russia and neighboring countries.

Far Eastern transborder region can be characterized rather as an exception and incipient trend. Except post-Soviet space, transborder regions, formed as a result of separation, are typical for a number of African and Asian States.

The border exerts a huge impact on the development of economic, social, environmental, ethnic and cultural space. Its role is very important and controversial in the cross-border ethno-cultural development. The development is affected by natural, historical, geographical, socio-political, economic, and demographic factors. Specificity of the Orenburg region development is stipulated by a number of factors. One of the most important ones is its location on the frontier, at the junction of different landscapes and cultures. For the last three centuries the region has been evolving as an uniform area. Finally, it represented itself as a complex historical and geographical, ethnic, ecological, economic and information space.

Our research is concentrated on characteristic aspects of externally influenced transformation of space for the Orenburg-Kazakhstan region in retrospective, in the present and future periods. The space has been formed and developed as a uniform ecological, ethno-cultural and economic area for a long time. Different ethnic groups and cultures coexisted and interacted in the steppe landscape[Gerasimenko, 2005]. There was colonization in the region for a long time. The role of the landscape and the importance of inter-ethnic groups interaction in the formation of ethno-cultural regional specificity and regional identity are

described in this article. The borrowing of cultural elements resulted from mutual contacts. Ethnic groups interact and assimilate in the landscape, that is why ethnic cultures have common features and regional identity.

## **2. Historical and geographical dynamics of the region**

Historical and geographical dynamics of the region, as well as the entire world community, is determined by the nature of migration and colonization accompanied by intercultural interaction and borrowings. Regional forms of nature management were formed. Trade relations developed, but they could not be of considerable importance in the absence of communication in the modern sense of the term. The region was formed and developed as a uniform cultural space in the marginal (contact) area at the crossroads of cultures (nomadic and settled; Islamic and Christian ones), landscapes (forest, forest-steppe, steppe and semi-desert; flood, watershed, plain and low-mountain) and epochs.

The example of the Orenburg-Kazakhstan region shows how their convergence originated and regional ethno-cultural complexes and regional identity were formed. The traditional nomadic cattle breeding was supplemented by settled land use.

Settlers remained on-orbit of their culture, but gained regional and local peculiarities. The culture of the autochthonous ethnic groups also was transformed. Regional dynamic integrity was formed as a result of blending and special forms of coexistence and interaction of different peoples and landscapes. This is a special ethno-cultural conglomerate, forming specific regional culture, regional identity being its main marker.

There were several stages in the development of the region, each of them having their own model of development. Temporal borders of these stages should be considered as periods of transformation (from Latin *transformatio* – conversion, transformation, modification), and evolution (the development of one form from another, more complex and perfect from the simplest – embryonic – form) of the system (according to A.G. Isachenko [2004]).

The fuel and energy system and metallurgical industry were evolved. The territorial structure of the region had developed as a nuclear one. Historical and geographical transborder territories were in the impact zone of Orenburg. One of objectives was being its cultural, political and economic center for a long time. The radius of influence varied periodically, correlated with the strengthening or weakening of the Asian geo-economic and geopolitical vector of Russia.

We have identified and marked out the main historic-geographic periods of the regional development. Each stage of development is characterized by types (or models) of colonization. One differs from another by the nature of migrant interaction (colonists), use of nature and indigenous peoples and by the form of transformation for ethno-cultural space. Some development of new territories and models (colonial, industrial, economic, military and spiritual ones) was described by Levintov [2008]. The identification of these types is very relative, most of these are 'cocktails and centaurs'. For example, the development of new lands can be attributed to both focal and economic, colonial and spiritual models:

I. *Earliest stage* (up to the IX-X century). The historical time frame is limited by Bashkir's first time emergence in this area. They reside in the region at present moment.

Ethnic groups succeeded each other as a result of migration from East to West. Bashkirs have been preserved up to the present time. This territory underwent several waves of settlement, from primitive gatherers, fishermen and hunters, representatives of the ancient pit grave culture (Yamna culture) who found in the steppe all vital necessities, from housing to food. The cultural layer of the settled peoples, who lived here before the arrival of the nomads, preserved in the landscape, in the form of graves, archaeological remains of ancient settlements, as well as in toponymy.

II. *Nomad stage* (IX-X century – 30s of the XVIII century) was characterized by the dominance of nomadic peoples. Nomad model of development is accompanied by complete or partial replacement of settled cultures as a result of absorption, assimilation, destruction, and exile. On the one hand, authentic culture is marginalized and enriches the culture of nomads-interventionists at the same time. Descendants of some of the nomadic peoples live in the region up to the present time (Bashkirs and Kazakhs).

Cossacks began to settle in valleys at the end of the period. This model of development can be considered as a military-political (geopolitical) and simultaneously economic one. The end of the period is connected with the beginning of colonization of the region by settled population. Geographically it is characterized by the change of migration vector (main mass of the colonists come from the West).

III. *Stage of mass colonization* of the region (30s of the XVIII century – beginning of the First World War). This stage had several waves and led to the formation of the foundations of modern ethno-cultural geography of the region. Colonial model of development dominates. Migration flows are represented by settlers, ousted, exiled or inhabiting areas of colonization because

of the purposeful policy of the country. Colonization has both voluntary and involuntary character; it is accompanied by export of culture and reproduction metropolitan lifestyle among autochthonic peoples, leading to the expansion of the metropolitan country. This model is typical of many empires. This period covers focal-economic model of development. It is characterized by the presence of cores or centers which Rodoman [1999] defines as generators of 'radial zone-wave diffusion'. So innovations existing in these cores spread to other nations.

Even a small number of newcomers, with higher technology, can introduce their customs into local population. An example is the economic and ecological culture of German Mennonites who were settled in the region in the late nineteenth century. Their system of agricultural production was relatively highly developed and spread rapidly among those who lived nearby: Bashkirs, Mordvinians, Russians and other ethnic and cultural groups [Gerasimenko, Nuzhdina, 2000].

Ethnic relations were formed on the basis of positive complementarity [Gumilev, 1989], with respect to other nations. They are characterized by neutral ethnic contacts while maintaining originality ('xenia' according to L.N. Gumilev [1989]) or beneficial ones ('symbiosis'). One of complementarity indicators are ethnic marriages being widespread in the region.

*Spiritual* model of development is linked with Messiahship, with a policy of isolationism of separate ethno-cultural groups, or their persecution. It is often religious in nature, but there are some possible options. In rural areas, one can currently meet local ethno-religious community with Russian old believers population, German (Mennonite, Baptist, and others). However, individual elements of the unified European contemporary culture penetrated into these settlements, and later ethno cultural communities were transformed.

- IV. *Soviet stage* (most of the twentieth century) is heterogeneous, it is characterized by strengthening of the interaction between ethnic groups. This stage can be divided into several periods (pre-war, associated with the beginning of industrialization; years of World War II; period of pioneering; development of virgin lands; period of industrialization). Colonial, economic and spiritual models of development dominate. The formation of the common economic, social, cultural space was complete.
- V. *Modern stage*, which started in the late 80s – early 90s of XX century, is characterized by a new wave of migration, leading to changes in the ethno-cultural environment of the region, as well as delimitation. The emergence of the state border has become a major factor in the development of geo-

space, which led to the weakening of traditional ties between Russia and Kazakhstan. Ethno-cultural, ethno-demographic, geopolitical, geo-economic components on both sides of the border have undergone major changes.

The emphasis is placed upon the modern stage of development when the state border has become the main factor. As a result of delimitation a uniform space is broken, and processes of divergence start dominating. Migration also plays an important role at present moment. But migrants are not the main bearers of cultural and economic innovation as it was before.

### **3. The border as a geographical reality**

When the USSR collapsed, it was hard to imagine that a uniform space will disintegrate so quickly. We are not speaking about Baltic republics here, they have their own way. There is a visa regime between Russia and them. Contacts with them were broken quickly. Inhabitants of those states move freely across Europe, and hardly ever visit Russia. But also within those countries, where borders are blurred, the differences are obvious.

The transformation of the Russian-Kazakh border from purely symbolic into the real one greatly influenced the development of neighboring regions and has led to the divergence of the geographical space. The border line has become a serious barrier to the movement of goods and people. The most significant and far-reaching consequences are problems of interaction between the nations.

Ethnic groups living on the opposite sides of the border were separated, traditional ties were broken. The growth of the frontier barrier has led to economic disintegration and the difficulty of cross-border contacts of the population. A new generation of Kazakhs and Russians evolved under these circumstances. They have not been completely separated yet, due to the existence of older and middle generations; however, this process has become irreversible for young people. Final divergence will appear in the near future.

The change in the ethnic composition of the population is another important factor. There was a mass emigration of Germans and Jews from the Orenburg region, and immigration of the Russian-speaking population (Russians, Tatars, Russian-speaking Kazakhs) into Russia from Kazakhstan. Russian-speaking population of the former Soviet republics, as well as Armenians, Uzbeks and others immigrated primarily into the Orenburg region. New ethno-cultural groups for the territory of the Russia are changing the existing system. Diasporas were formed; they settled compactly and formed informal ethnic areas in some places.

In large urban centers, as well as in some rural areas segmentation of economy according to ethnic principle has become a reality. For example, Armenians who arrived in Russia, own their service businesses, Koreans are engaged in agriculture, Tajiks and Uzbeks work in construction. Bringing another culture often creates a stressful situation for the local population and changes cultural landscape and rhythm of life. So, deserted German districts of the Orenburg region are being occupied by Bashkirs and migrants from cities of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, who are poorly adapted to rural conditions. The villages lost their flawless looks and perfect layout. On the contrary, ethno-cultural environment becomes more homogeneous in Kazakhstan.

There is *kazakhization* and *derussianization* of Kazakhstan society after the collapse of the USSR. Currently, the Kazakh population is the largest ethnic group in all administrative districts of the Republic, and Russian became a national minority, along with other ethnic groups. Control over all territories is in the hands of the national elite. The vast majority of managers at all levels are ethnic Kazakhs.

The education system in Kazakhstan and Russia differs more and more. The number of Kazakh-speaking classes is growing, while the number of Russian-speaking classes is reducing in Kazakhstan schools, and in some areas they do not exist anymore.

The reform of Kazakhstan administrative-territorial division has led to changes in the ethnic composition of the population. Kazakhs dominate almost in all territorial units of different levels.

*Migration policy also contributed to kazakhization.* Migration of Kazakhs into the northern districts was encouraged and stimulated by the government, north being traditional areas for Russians. Oralman (repatriate) immigration was stimulated as well. During the years of independence according to various estimates from a million and half to two million people moved. Pronatalist demographic policy primarily concerned Kazakhs.

Not numerous non-Kazakh population partially assimilated, but most of people migrated (mainly for economic reasons) to the Kazakh cities or to Russia. There was a mass emigration of Russian-speaking citizens, including Russian-speaking Kazakhs in the 1990s.

These processes have led to changes in the regional identity of the population. There are some marriages between Kazakhs from Kazakhstan and the Kazakhs from Russia. Kazakhs from Russia have to study Kazakh language and adapt to different socio-cultural environment, which is transformed not as fast as in Russia. According to our observations, Kazakhstan economy has undergone fewer reforms than Russian market.

The border line separates and changes information space as well. It affects linguistic composition of the population. Separated ethnic groups are exposed to language divergence. This fact largely determines the change of identity. Russian Kazakhs are Russian-speaking and do not know Kazakh language despite the fact that they have relatives in Kazakhstan. Currently Kazakh language is native language for Kazakhs from Kazakhstan. Russian-speaking Kazakhs immigrated into Kazakhstan in the 1990s. Russian language has not completely gone out of use yet (mainly because of the older generation). However, knowledge of Russian language is worse in rural areas, situated far from the border. In frontier communities it is necessary to communicate with Russian people. Russian is used in major cities and multicultural industrial centers, but Kazakh children already do not know it.

## **Conclusions**

Previously, the effects of landscape factors were smoothed out by the totalitarian-administrative methods of management. Now they manifest more and more differences. Orography, climate, hydrological regime, landscapes affect the settlement system and ekistics features that determine the choice of the place of settlement, the range of building materials, layout, character of development. However, in Kazakhstan there appeared dispersed settlements, reflecting the ongoing economic changes (the development of farming, distant-pasture cattle). In some ways this is a return to their former way of life.

We see economic divergence. There are different tax systems. This creates difficulties for the creation and registration of foreign and joint companies. There are different prices for the same goods and services. In neighboring countries laws are different. Although previous uniform legal space is broken, there are 100 companies with participation of the Kazakhstan capital in the region.

The territorial structure of the regional geographical space has been transformed. Modern realities call for new ways of development. The proximity of borders and traditional contacts with Kazakhstan should be used. Growth of economic globalization and integration, geopolitical priorities, establishment of the Customs Union of Russia, major international infrastructure projects, geopolitical orientation of external trade of Kazakhstan increase the significance of the cross-border provisions.



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### ROSYJSKO-KAZASKIE TRANSGRANICZNE OBSZARY W NOWEJ GEOPOLITYCZNEJ RZECZYWISTOŚCI: PROBLEMY I PERSPEKTYWY ROZWOJU PRZESTRZENNEGO (ASPEKT ETNOKULTURALNY)

**Streszczenie:** Artykuł został poświęcony osobliwości przekształcania struktury terytorialnej regionu, która wyłoniła się z głębokiej transgraniczności w wyniku rozgraniczenia geopolityki postradzieckiej. Autorka identyfikuje i opisuje główne okresy rozwoju regionu historyczno-geograficznego. W artykule przedstawiono rolę krajobrazu i przyciągania grup etnicznych w kształtowaniu specyfiki regionalno-etnokulturowej oraz tożsamości regionalnej. Uwidacznia on również perspektywy rozwoju terytorialnej struktury regionu pod względem kompleksu etnokulturowego. Autorka wykorzystwała wyniki własnych badań terenowych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** rozwój globalny, rozwój regionalny, interakcja transgraniczna.