ATLANTIS PRESS

Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, volume 298

2nd International Conference on Education Science and Social Development (ESSD 2019)

Traditional Ethnic and Cultural Markers of Crimean Germans

N.M. Evstafieva*
V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University
Simferopol, Russia

E.V. Likhachev
V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University
Simferopol, Russia

O.N. Obukhova
Vyatka State University
Kirov, Russia

J. V. Berezina
Vyatka State University
Kirov, Russia

A.D. Petrenko
V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University
Simferopol, Russia

I.A. Andrushchenko
V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University
Simferopol, Russia

***Abstract*-The paper presents an overview of the traditional markers of the German ethnic population in Crimea that came to the peninsula in the 1800s, was forced to emigrate in 1941 and has been partially coming back since 1991. The aim is to describe the potentially relevant markers distinguishing the German population from other ethnicities of the Crimea.**

***Methods*: A review of the literary sources available in the scientific library of I. Franko and the library of the Crimean Federal University is conducted.**

***Results*: the traditional ethnic and cultural markers of Crimean Germans include German language, the influence of Protestantism and Catholicism, an authentic lifestyle, progressive housekeeping, densely populated communities settling predominantly in the rural areas near the first colonies; successfully conducted trade, craft and socio-cultural activity in the urban areas. The alteration of the above mentioned markers was strongly influenced by the historical events.**

Keywords-ethnic markers, ethnic minorities of Crimea, Germans of Crimea, German language in Crimea

I. INTRODUCTION

During the past decades, basically after the fall of USSR and the formation of independent states in 1991 the subject of ethnicity has provoked much interest and a proliferation of research. Scholars from a variety of academic backgrounds have described, analyzed, and reassessed the importance of ethnic identity in a forming society. Different ethnic groups of German, Greek, Turkish and other origins established in Crimea before the exile of 1941 were given a right for repatriation and came back, shaping demography of post-soviet Crimea.

The official demographic survey of Crimean Federal district in 2014 showed only 1,8 thousand of people defining their ethnicity as "Germans". However, these numbers do not include those with mixed ethnic origin, which are reported to form the majority of modern German ethnic society in Crimea. From the officially self-declared group of Germans 92 percent indicated that Russian was their native language. Such situation is an evidence and result of official policies and general attitudes towards Germans in the post First and Second World War period.

Nevertheless, the earlier data traced back from the first settlements in the end of XVIII and the beginning of XIX centuries to actual exile in 1941 shows prominent cultural establishment that forms heritage and can become a potential for further self-identification in a way stated by F. Barth: "Ethnic groups often are unified by constructions of their past, by perception of injustice in the past or in the present, and often by hopes of a future reunification" [1].

As long as understanding to which extend the traditional ethnic and cultural markers, are valued in the modern ethnic mentality of Crimean Germans seems incomplete without description of history, territoriality, language, religion and other symbols traditionally used for ethnic self-identification, the current investigation unites the basic facts and descriptions about the past of Crimean Germans found across the ethnographic literature [2].

II. ETHNIC AND CULTURAL MARKERS OF GERMAN SETTLERS IN CRIMEA

A. History

The first Germanic tribes, represented by the Eastern Goths, appeared on the territory of the Crimean Peninsula and Northern Black Sea Cost in the 3rd century as a result of the Migration Period. By the time the Russian Empress Catherine the Great issued "The Manifesto on granting privileges to foreign settlers" in 1763, they had assimilated with local tribes [3], [4]. After the publication of the Manifesto of 13 February 1798, which defined the rights and benefits on migration to the Crimea, the first German colonies were founded. After the departure of a large amount of Tatars to Turkey in 1860-70s, the second stage of Germans' relocation in Crimea started off. They arrived from different parts of Germany, and mainly from the continental part of Tavria Province.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Germans made up a significant part of the polyethnic population of the

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Crimea. In 1897, the first all-Russian population census registered 30,027 Germans in Crimea who were rural residents (5.5% of the total population): In Perekop district their number was 11,718 people (22.8%), in Evpatoria district - 7,558 people (12 %), in Simferopol district - 5812 people (4.1%) and in Feodosia - 4,909 (4.2%). According to the census data, 50% of the population of the Crimean Peninsula was Russophones, 34% were Crimean Tatars, 6% were the German inhabitants, 3% - the Greeks, 1.5% - the Armenians, 1% - the Bulgarians. The main features of the population structure remained unchanged till 1921.Within next forty years the ethnic composition of Crimea had been changing dramatically in response to the following social catastrophes like the First and Second World War, the October revolution, the civil war, repressions, mass deportation: the census in 1979 documented 68.4% Russians, 25.6% Ukrainians, 2% Belarusians, 0.3% Crimean Tatars, 0.06% Germans, 0.08% Greeks, 0.2 % Armenians and 0.06 % Bulgarians [5; 6].

With the beginning of the war in 1941, the Soviet government forced a migration of the Crimean Germans to Central Asia. According to official data, about 50 thousand people were headed to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and several thousand more were sent to the Ural labor army.

In the 1990s, about 9.5 thousand Crimean Germans returned to the peninsula. Many of them soon moved to Germany and Russia, where the economic situation was more stable. And now the return migration has begun. In the interview to the local business newspaper the Head of the Regional German National Cultural Autonomy of the Republic of Crimea Yuri Hempel reported that in the last four years the organization had received about one and a half thousand requests for assistance in resettlement, and 500 of them were from Russian Germans living in Germany. Mr. Hempel also stated that every year from 10 to 12 families come back first of all in a search for psychological comfort [7].

B. Territoriality

The first German settlers from Württemberg, Baden, the Canton of Zurich and Switzerland came to the Peninsula and founded the colonies in Sudak, the village of Otuz (Shchebetovka, Feodosia city Council). Soon natives of Alsace-Lorraine founded The Zurichtal district near Feodosia. The Eigenfeld district was founded in the South-Eastern area of Jankoy. The Neusatz district was founded in Simferopol district. By 1805, the number of colonies was filled with people, who gave a rise to large future settlements. These included Zurichtal (at present Zolotoe Pole in the Kirovsky district), Weilburn – in Feodosia, Friedental, Neusatz, Rosental (Kurortnoe, Krasnogorskoe, Aromatnoe in the Belogorsk district), Kronental (Kolchugino in the Simferopol district), Herzenberg (Pionerskoe in the Feodosia district). In 1811 natives from Bavaria and Württemberg founded the colony of Cronental in the Simferopol district.

Among the Germans of the Crimea there were also a significant number of outstanding scientists and artists, successful entrepreneurs. At the end of the XIX century in the city council of Simferopol there were already about 20% of Germans, many of whom held top leading positions.

During the Soviet period of the 1930s, ethnic German village councils were formed in the village of Oktiabrskoe, which was later reorganized into Telmansky German region. Upon returning to the peninsula after 1941, German families have settled in various urban and rural areas, where it was possible to buy land, a house or a flat. The major cities of Simferopol, Yalta, Feodosiya and Evpatoria are considered to be centers of German culture on the peninsula [8].

C. Language

Unfortunately, it is exactly the language monuments of the Crimean Germans which are represented in the ethnographic literature to a lesser extent and remain insufficiently investigated. Nevertheless, general view of the German language in the ethnic community of the Crimean Germans can be obtained with reconstruction of geographical origin and social structure of the community in different historical periods, taking into account isolation and external interference of the society.

In consideration of previously mentioned information, it is possible to presume that after arrival of colonists such dialects as Schwabian (Württemberg), Frankish (Lorraine), Alsatian (Alsace), Bavarian (Bavaria) and Upper Alemanic (Zurich) appeared in Crimea. Apart from them there were a lot of other variants of German language that were spoken across the Russian Empire: in XVII century about 30% of officers in army were Germans. After departure of a large amount of Tatars to Turkey in 1860-70s, the second stage of Germans' relocation in Crimea started off. They arrived from different parts of Germany, and mainly from the continental part of Tavria Province. The amount of spoken dialects of German was increasing [9].

The presence of the parochial schools [10], compact residency, preservation of the contact with the native land, the general high status of German in the Russian Empire contributed to the relative conservation of the language traditions. Russian was used for interethnic communication.

In 2014 the majority of Crimean Germans indicated that Russian was their native language and also the primary language of communication. German continues to be taught in cultural centers and local schools as L1 and most often as L2. Some families, especially those who have recently arrived, maintain German speaking practice at home [11].

D. Religion

Freedom of religion was particularly desired for the German society of that time, taking into consideration the conflicts and general religious situation in Europe; the majority of settlers were Protestants, although there were also Catholics.

The heterogeneous religious backgrounds of immigrants from different lands of Germany and Switzerland determined multi-confessionalism as the characteristic feature of ethnic German society living in the Russian Empire. A number of confessions, called sects in Orthodox Christianity (Mennonite, Baptism, Adventism, and others) had developed and partially changed on the Russian land from the second half of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century [12].

The charter of the Evangelical Lutheran Church drafted on December 28, 1832 contributed to uniformity of religious practices and gave the Evangelical Lutheran Church an official status [12].

Later the "Decree on Separation of Church from State and School from Church" issued by the Soviet government in 1918, deprived religious organizations of any property rights and the rights of a legal entity. The following religious persecutions and atheistic propaganda had forced various ethnic groups to hide their religious beliefs. The Decree was rescinded in 1990 and the modern period of religious restoration began.

Nowadays German churches on the peninsula serve as centers of cultural and social life for Crimean Germans.

E. Other Symbols: Culture, Traditions, Family, Occupation

Having received a large spectrum of social privileges from government (civil liberties, no recruitment duty, no taxes for 10 years, freedom of worship, right of trade, and building factories with addition of serfs), German society was able to successfully develop its socio-economic potential [8].

The notable features of the labour activities performed by the Crimean Germans, were accuracy, neatness, promptness, obligation, fairness, frugality, rationality. The German settlers were recognised for their high stability, low ethnic and national confrontation. Physical planning and construction was done fundamentally, cost-effectively with the help of local construction materials and with regard of ethnic traditions. Apart from the dwelling and backyard buildings, churches and preaching houses were built and schools were established [13].

At the beginning of the 20th century approximately 80% Germans were middle and wealthy peasant proprietors, 17% were landless peasants, and about 3% were large landowners. There were laborers among the German colonists too. The main population of the Germans in Crimea belonged to the category of relatively wealthy [5].

It also became traditional in German families to exempt the youngest son from field work. He was taught by the lawyers, financiers, doctors, and militaries. Each family trained a specialist beyond the agriculture. The intellectual class with the handworker background appeared in such a way. In the twentieth century Germans were peasants to a lesser extent, but they were architects, militaries, artists. Even German peasants were not illiterate. Using their contacts they imported to Crimea the modern agricultural machinery and steam engines [14].

Since the nineteenth century the dominant form of the German families in Crimea was the family with one or two children. The multi-child households could be found in the rural area. The lifestyle and everyday life of the Crimean Germans clearly reflected their culture and civilization [9]. It was an exceptionally closed ethnic group [5].

In the 20th century, the situation gradually changes and an increasing number of mixed marriages predominantly of Slavic-German origin appear. In mixed marriages, Orthodox and Protestant/Catholic traditions may be maintained. German ethnicity had often been deliberately hidden due to stigma in society.

As noted in the local periodical "Business Crimea", the descendants of colonists who came to Crimea in the 19th century, today do not differ from the rest of the peninsula - they work as doctors, teachers, lawyers and economists, and some even managed to build a military career. On returning to the Crimea, the Germans usually start a small business.

III. CONCLUSION

The traditional ethnic and cultural markers describing Crimean Germans include German language, the influence of Protestantism and Catholicism, an authentic lifestyle, progressive housekeeping, densely populated communities settling predominantly in the rural areas near the first colonies, successfully conducted trade, craft and socio-cultural activity in the urban areas. The alteration of the above mentioned markers was strongly influenced by the historical events such as the Soviet regime, independent Ukraine, the reunion with the Russian Federation. Currently the population of Crimean Germans is much shorter than it was in 1941. Nevertheless, facilitation of ethno-cultural potential is provided by the Crimean social organizations and is supported by the government. Families of ethnic Crimean Germans and Russian Germans continue to return to Crimea.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was financially supported by the RFBR grant 19-012-00015 A "The System of Ethnocultural Markers in the Traditional Cultures of the Minor Peoples of Crimea"

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