

GEORGIAN ETHNO-CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE CULTURAL-HISTORICAL MEMORY OF GEORGIANS IN TURKEY

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Abstract: For centuries, southwestern Georgia was the target of Ottoman attacks. As a result of the conquest of the historical homeland of the autochthonous population, part of the Georgians ended up within the Turkish Republic. The unified cultural space split in two and the traditional fundamental values fell into a different socio-cultural field. The empire carried out the inclusion of ethnic Georgians in the Ottoman Empire through the transformation of national identity and the Muslimization of the local population. In addition to official state policy, various factors have influenced the traditional existence of ethnic Georgians living compactly within Turkey for centuries. But, despite a deliberate religious policy aimed at converting the local population to Islam in various ways, local residents were able to develop strategies for loyalty to their own culture and adaptation to the dominant culture, living in a foreign environment for a long time.

For ethnic Georgians who remained in Turkey as a result of historical processes, the traditions of their ancestors, which they preserved until recently, have become a means of emotional and spiritual connection with their historical homeland, a kind of way to preserve their identity. Tradition turned out to be the value that allowed them to separate from the "others" in a foreign environment and thus preserve their identity.

The cultural memory of ethnic Georgians living compactly in Turkey has preserved a number of rites, duties and holidays characteristic of Georgian ethnic culture: some have been greatly transformed, in a fragmentary form; some have been combined with local traditions; some have lost their function; some have survived in a more full and original form than in their historical homeland, in Georgia. The paper deals with some issues of cultural memory through the prism of one holiday, "Fadiko//Fatiko". This holiday in Georgia (Adzharia) is presented in the form of a humorous dance and it is very difficult to restore its original form, but in the life of ethnic Georgians in Turkey it has been preserved in a more complete, original form and retains many aspects of Georgian religious thinking. The study of this holiday makes it possible to identify the mechanisms and factors that allowed ethnic Georgians living in Turkey to preserve the archaic elements of this ritual in the memories of many generations.

The study of "Fadiko//Fatiko" shows that the Georgians from Turkey not only created a kind of cultural microcosm, preserving their traditions, which allows them to feel part of their native people, bearers of its traditional values, establish an emotional connection with their homeland, but also that many archaic elements of spiritual culture have been preserved in an even more perfect form than in their historical homeland, which makes it possible to trace the processes of transformation of the cultural and historical memory of Georgians and reconstruct the ancient layers of the spiritual culture of the Georgian people.

Keywords: ethno-culture, cultural-historical memory, Georgians in Turkey, traditions.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted over several years in the villages of ethnic Georgians living in Turkey. As a result of the field research conducted here, a large amount of empirical material has been collected. While recording events, along with their subjective-quantitative description, we also focused on an objective-qualitative description. We used observational and interviewing methods to collect information during the

fieldwork. The interviews were focused both on individual topics and specific questions, and were also unstructured, which helped us to create a common understanding of the research question. The work was carried out both with a semi-formalized - pre-specified questionnaire and with free interviews. Narratives have helped us in a deep study of the issue. In parallel with obtaining information, field materials were processed and analyzed. Also, comparative analysis and historical-comparative methods were used. The scientific literature on a given topic was studied, which helped us to make a study and the corresponding conclusions.

INTRODUCTION

In the 70s of the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire, along with other Georgian territories, conquered Adjara. As a result of the conquest of the historical residence of the autochthonous population, part of the Georgians found themselves within the borders of Turkey. Adjara was liberated only as a result of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878 and was returned to the motherland along with other regions of Southwestern Georgia. The situation became even worse in 1921, when after the establishment of the Soviet government in Georgia some parts of Adjara again were included within the borders of the Turkish state. The border not only territorially separated the villages, families, and relatives, but also divided the single cultural space and traditional fundamental values were placed in a different socio-cultural field. On the one hand, there was the tsarist regime, and then the Soviet totalitarianism, and on the other hand, the Ottoman Empire, which incorporated ethnic Georgians within its borders through the transformation of national consciousness and the conversion of the local population to Islam. Naturally, the historical and cultural memory of Georgians changed. Ethno-cultural heritage in a different situation changed and adapted to the new reality, the fundamental values received from ancestors were integrated with other ethno-cultures, cultural characteristics were exchanged, different experiences were shared, and the transformation of lifestyle took place, but despite these influences and transformations, they preserved their national identity.¹ The elements of ethno culture became a means of self-preservation for individuals and groups caught in a foreign environment: traditions, rituals, holidays, folklore, family and public relations, traditional values, everything that forms the ethnic identity of a person and that has been preserved by the historical memory of ethnic Georgians living in Turkey. However, only after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the locked borders were opened, Georgian scientists were allowed to work with ethnic Georgians living in Turkey and evaluate the changes that ethnic identity has undergone. It was found that despite the influence of the official state policy and various factors on the traditional existence of the ethnic Georgians living compactly within Turkey for centuries, which aimed to convert the local population to Islam in various ways, the local people were able to develop strategies of loyalty to their own culture and adapting to the dominant culture while living in a foreign environment for a long time.

BASIC RESEARCH

As a result of historical processes, the ethnic Georgians who remained in the territory of Turkey kept the traditions of their ancestors until recently as a means of emotional and spiritual connection with the historical homeland, a kind of self-preservation and identity preservation. Tradition turned out to be the value that allowed them to separate themselves from "others" in a foreign environment and thus preserve their identity. Their sense of identity is based more on elements of culture – values, symbols, myths and traditions, often codified in customs and rituals. Georgians living in Turkey have preserved almost all household and family traditions, folk agrarian calendar and related traditional holidays and rituals. By preserving traditions, ethnic Georgians living in Turkey manage to associate themselves with the traditional national culture. Their cultural-historical memory preserves the fundamental values received from their ancestors.²

Naturally, some of the traditions that have been in a different cultural field for a long time have been greatly transformed, their original essence and meaning have been forgotten, but when studying the existence of Georgians living compactly in Turkey, one interesting trend was also revealed: they kept some of the customs in an almost unchanged, archaic form. Moreover, in the native, Georgian environment, some rituals underwent transformation more than in the foreign environment. We tried to analyse this interesting event

¹ Marr 2015; <https://www.chvnebur.net/ka/turqetsi-mcxovrebi-qartvelebis-asimilacia-situaciis-kvleva-makale,39.html>

² Lomtadze 2012, 186-187; Malakmadze 2017, 184-207.

of cultural memory through the prism of one ritual – "Fadiko". This ritual has been preserved in the ethnographic existence of the Georgians of Georgia and Turkey, but in different doses. In Adjara, "Fadiko" has survived in such a fragmented, pale form that it is difficult to clarify its original essence and function. "Fadiko" as a holiday in Adjara is completely forgotten today. Oral histories preserved the memory of the fact that "Fadiko" was performed in the form of a humorous dance at weddings and in the Shuamtoba festival, which was a religious-cult celebration held for economic prosperity, fertility, abundance, childbearing and reproduction. It was a theatrical spectacle, a kind of play with the participation of six men and one woman, who played the role of the bride – Fadiko, her two grooms and accompanying friends. Different versions of the performance of "Fadiko" are known in Adjara, but its meaning is the same everywhere. This is a staging of a grotesque marriage, the main figure of which is a man dressed in women's clothes - a Fadiko/Fatiko. Fadiko's two grooms compete to capture her. The whole plot is built on this rivalry.³ Several moments preserved in "Fadiko" (imitation of the relationship between the sexes and the staging of a legal marriage; the participants quarrel-fighting; the falling asleep or waking up of Fadiko's groom) show similarities with the ancient berikaoba-keenoba ritual dedicated to the revival of the forces of nature spread in other regions of Georgia, but the ritual in Adjara has changed its image so much that it is difficult to see the similarity in it. Berikaoba-Keenoba is a Georgian improvised folk theatre, a spring carnival, a multi-element holiday with a merry, costumed, masked people's procession through the village accompanied by the bride, staging of marriage and groom's death-resurrection, door-to-door visits and collection of grocery, joint meals and erotic rituals. The holiday dates back to ancient times. It originated as a custom dedicated to the deity of fertility, but after Christianization, it acquired a secular character and remained in the ethnographic existence of Georgia as one of the colourful elements of traditional culture, a folk theatrical holiday, which is still performed in different parts of Georgia⁴, but in Adjara, which for three centuries was cut off from the motherland, this holiday changed its image a lot and survived only in the form of the humorous dance "Fadiko". At the same time, Fadiko a ritual, in which many elements of berikaoba-keenoba are perfectly presented, was preserved by Georgians living in Turkey and is still performed today during various holidays.

Fadiko//Fatiko is the most important part of the New Year customs of ethnic Georgians living in Türkiye. This ritual is organized here on the old New Year's Eve. Young people participating in the ritual will wrap up themselves in old clothes or wear their clothes backwards. The leather of various animals, mainly sheep and goats, are put on top and animal masks are made, and fur hats are put on their heads. Four or five young people are decorated like clowns, and their faces are painted with charcoal. This is the retinue of the main participant of the ritual - Fadiko//Fatiko. Fadiko, who portrays the bride, is a young man who is dressed as a bride. They also choose a groom. They will also select four guards with crooks that will protect Fadiko and ruthlessly attack anyone who tries to take away the bride. In this way, the decorated procession, accompanied by drummers and shawm player, starts the procession from the farthest house in the village.

Carnival participants go door to door and collect gifts. In front of each house, they perform Horon - a traditional dance, making erotic movements to ensure fertility. If the bride misses her reward, she pricks the owner of the house with a needle...After the arrival of the village, they will gather in one place and begin staging the marriage and the fight for the possession of the bride, killing and reviving the groom. Women prepare dishes from the collected products and everyone eats them together, accompanied by common dance-games and fun. They stay together entertaining until midnight.⁵

As we can see, the ethnic Georgians living in a foreign environment better preserved the elements of the "Fadiko" ritual intended for the revival of the forces of nature and ensuring fertility, than in Adjara. These elements played the role of supporting ethnographic material in determining the content and function of the ritual and allowed us to reconstruct this archaic holiday in its original form.

Thus, the example of "Fadiko" showed that in the existence of ethnic Georgians living in Turkey, there are many elements of culture, old nuances, which are completely forgotten or faintly preserved in their native environment. Research in this direction allows us to study the issues of the genesis of some elements of traditional existence and culture, to restore their archaic forms, and to follow the process of their transformation.

³ Lomtadze 2013, 121-127.

⁴ Rukhadze 1999.

⁵ Malakmadze 2008.

It is the variant preserved among the Georgians of Turkey that allowed us to restore the archetype of "Fadiko" preserved as a type of dance in Adjara, which reflects the pagan beliefs and ideas of the Georgian people. Thus, it was revealed that many features of the traditional Georgian mentality are well preserved in the life of Georgians in Turkey. The population here, despite the socio-political and ideological aggression shown by the invaders, preserved many components of ancient Georgian traditions. These archaic traditions provide an excellent way to look into the historical depth and retrospect the traditions, because they reflect well the archetypes of the religious thought of Georgians in general and clearly show the organic connection of the customs of the Georgian population of Turkey with the ancient patches of the general Georgian spiritual culture.

CONCLUSION

And yet, what could have caused such preservation and abundance of archaic elements in the existence of ethnic Georgians living in Türkiye? Christianity was preached and spread in Georgia since the first century, and it became the state religion in the fourth century AD. But Christianity was met here by quite strong and established pre-Christian or pagan beliefs. Historical paganism preceded the introduction of Christianity and continued to exist through inertia. This process continued for centuries. In the 16th century, when part of Georgia was conquered by the Ottoman Empire, the population here, like that of whole of Georgia, were followers of Christianity. The process of conversion to Islam, which has been going on for centuries, converted the local population to Islam and expelled everything Christian from their existence. In the conditions of the prohibition of Christian rituals, pre-Christian customs came to the fore. At that time, the powerful layer of paganism preserved in the cultural-historical memory of the local people "came to life" and archaic elements were activated in their existence, as one of the ways of preserving the Georgian mentality. Through them, to a certain extent, cultural identity is preserved. That is why there are many preserved Georgian traditions, archaic elements of spiritual culture in the lives of Georgians living compactly in the territory of Türkiye. Moreover, many aspects of customs have been preserved here, which have already been forgotten in Georgia or have been preserved in a highly transformed form. We think that the preservation of archaic elements in their presence should be caused not only by the fact that Islam persecuted everything Christian, and considered archaic traditions less dangerous for Islamic ideology, but also by the fact that in the ethnography and folklore of Turkey itself, alongside the Islamic elements, ancient cult services and religious-mythological beliefs and traces of representations are fixed. These cults and mythical creatures show a semantic similarity with the Georgian mythological world, which scientists explain by the fact that Turkish mythology and customs were more influenced by Greek and archaic beliefs and ideas of the peoples or tribes who met the Seljuk Turks in Asia Minor or with whom the Ottomans had historical relations. As a result of ethnic mixing and cultural contacts with these peoples, the Turkish tribes absorbed almost all the elements of the ancient farming culture of these peoples. This produced many similar moments in beliefs and customs. It is possible that due to the existence of such related beliefs and customs, Islam fought less with the old, archaic and was satisfied with giving them only a Muslim colour. Maybe that's why ethnic Georgians living in Turkey don't keep Christian holidays incompatible with Islam. Instead, many archaic forms of the traditional holiday have survived, while often the oldest versions of the ritual have been preserved.

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