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Ethnicity and ethnicities**Part II****Abstract**

Scientific paradigm changes are frequently accompanied by the reconsideration of central terms and ideas. This article demonstrates how this process is currently underway in Russian anthropological studies [narodovedenie] as part of a broader move away from ethnography to theoretical ethnology. The article also shows lines of succession and divergence between various paradigms currently dominant in Russian anthropology, including primordialism and constructivism, and presents the author's vision of a definition of "ethnicity", instruments needed to study ethnicities, the nature of "ethnicity", the underlying axioms on which ethnicities are conceptualized. An initial attempt has been made in the article to outline the central positions that would provide for a principally new ethnological paradigm by way of a new definition of the phenomenon of ethnicity.

Keywords: scientific paradigms, definitions of ethnicity, anthropology, primordialism, constructivism

Аннотация

Смена парадигмы в науке сопровождается ревизией основных терминов и понятий. В статье показано, как этот процесс происходит в *российских антропологических исследованиях*, маркируя переход от этнографии описаний

к теоретической этнологии. Показаны преемственность и различия между различными парадигмами, доминирующими в настоящее время в Российской этнологии, в том числе примордиализмом и конструктивизмом, а также авторами статьи выдвинута новая версия понимания этноса, инструментов его изучения, его природы, корневого постулата (аксиомы) этничности. Сделана попытка очертить основные контуры принципиально иной парадигмы этнологии через новое определение феномена этничности (этноса).

Ключевые слова: научные парадигмы, определения этноса, этничность, этнология, примордиализм, конструктивизм

Ethnicity's Underlying Principle and Central Property

Defining the central property of all ethnicities means determining not those characteristics according to which ethnicities diverge (particular territory, language, social structure, or culture), but rather the qualitative aspect that holds true for all ethnicities in their varied typology and classification.

This central property of ethnic belonging is a belief in historical and determinable (*etalonnoe*) kinship.¹ At the same time, it is largely unimportant whether or not a particular individual considers this property to be important for his own ethnicity, or is even aware of its existence: this property gives rise to all ethnicities, stimulates their development, and serves as a fundamental criterion for determining the sustainability of one or another ethnicity. Belief in kinship includes not only respect and veneration for the shared bond, but also an idealization of the kinship's inner strength, painted in the light of group members' emotions and overwhelming feelings. The most important property, however, comes to be not the actual fact of kinship and its immediate (genetic, ancestral) influence on a group's makeup, but instead a blend of the objective and the irrational. On the one hand, there is the sacrament of the birth of one similar to oneself and the belief in the sanctity of kinship; on the other hand, there the instinctive need to hold together with those similar to oneself, a belief that

¹ In both Western and Russian academic literature the term "ethnic core" (*etnicheskoe yadro*) is used in a sense similar to that of the "paradigmatic standard" (*etalonnost'*), that has been understood here as serving as the base for a nation's formation.

ties both those bound by physical kinship and those not.² As long as the belief in all group members' shared kinship holds, an ethnicity grows and develops. When this belief begins to crumble, however, often as the result of outside influences, an ethnicity's internal development slows, and the ethnicity may begin to dissolve in a new ethnic environment. Or the ethnic group, even at the cost of harming its own economic and social standing, may resist assimilating and attempt to isolate itself.

There are no groups of people that exist "outside" of one or another ethnicity, are beyond the influence of ethnicities, or are not encompassed, directly or indirectly, by involvement and membership in ethnic groups. At times, to be fair, ethnicity's negative influence can be clearer than its positive connotations: the more mixed an individual's ethnic background may be, the less sure he or she will feel in an ethnic homogenous environment. As a result of such individuals' reactions to ethnic groups – hardly a rejection of the group's existence or influence – the preference arises to live in large urban areas with a more international makeup and anonymous mode of existence.³

Even in major cities and urban environments, however, we can see the clear influence of ethnic stratification across city neighborhoods. Although individuals in urban environments live in what has been termed a moving "mosaic" of peoples and cultures, ethnically defined social networks.

The central principle of ethnicity is that members of one ethnic or kin-bound group are in some way closer to one another in terms of their outward characteristics than to members of any other neighboring group. From here, in fact, grows the consistent sense of kinship as an inherent marker of closeness – or its lack – within human relations. The majority of people hold kinship to be a given – something in which they believe and "feel" on a subconscious level, separate from concrete facts or proven knowledge. This is why we consider a belief in the defining category of kin-

² It is no accident that the overwhelming part of world literature and folklore – and in part, the "classics" of world literature – is based on the development of plots connected with feelings of kinship. In the academic world, however, matters stand a bit differently.

³ In such international urban environments, in fact, work the majority of professional anthropologists; their works are reflective in one manner or another of their international (interethnic) home, and in their publications there is almost always present a hidden doubt about the real existence of an ethnically pure environment.

ship, rather than physical kinship itself, to be the central particularizing property that dictates membership in an ethnicity, and as a consequence, in an ethnic group.

Although something of an unusual claim in our age of imaginations, this idea is less revolutionary than it may initially seem. Max Weber noted that ethnicities are frequently connected in individuals' minds with a vague sense of shared background or heritage. While members of ethnicities are thus bound by their shared belief in the foundational strength of shared heritage, Weber argued, the actual basis for their belief in a "national" shared identity may be quite varied (Weber, 1985, p. 242; Anderson, 2001, p. 8). Other academics have argued that ethnic shared heritage is based not on a belief in the sacrament of kinship, but rather in common physical characteristics, rituals, and the memory of colonization and migration events (Weber 1965; 1968). The American sociologist William Connor, following Weber, has proposed the idea of a nation as a "group of people who believe that they connected through kinship – in fact, the largest possible group that shares this belief." (quoted in Mjynihan 1993). George DeVoss has also written of the influence of the subjective and belief on the development of ethnicities, calling ethnic belonging the "highest form of social loyalty that is connected with kinship and a belief in shared heritage." (Romanucci-Ross, DeVoss., 1995, p. 350). Although other Western academics have been known to accept the role of belief in the development of ethnicities, they have tended to deny it particular importance, considering political speculation on the part of the ruling elite the most important factor in the process of ethnic development. This latter approach to ethnic development and formation can be found in the works of many leading theoreticians of the 20th century, including those (amongst many others) of Carlton Hayes and John Plamenatz; it remains on view in more modern works, such as in the articles of Miroslav Hroch (Hayes, 1966; Plamenatz, 1976; Hroch, 1993). In the former USSR, the famous and theoretically influential V.A. Tishkov (Russian Academy of Sciences) agrees that ethnicity is based on belief in shared "blood," although he avoids developing this line of thinking and denies the legitimacy of kinship as real base for ethnic heritage (Tishkov, 2003, pp. 61, 116).

Can a belief in the standardizing importance of kinship be understood as identical to the "shared heritage" principle that is commonly employed

in descriptive ethnography? It is our belief that it cannot. Our ancestors perfectly understood that ethnicities were made up of kin and non-kin – that not all members of any one group had one and the same heritage, even as all remained members of the same ethnic group. The concept of “shared heritage” rejects the possibility of non-kin within an ethnic group, while our proposed central property for ethnic belonging – a belief in the importance of kinship – allows for the coexistence of kin and non-kin within a single ethnic unit (as the anti-thesis to kin’s thesis, non-kin may in fact be a centrally necessary element of any ethnicity).

Clans and Ethnicities⁴

While we focus our attention here not on kinship relations themselves, but instead on a belief in their hierarchical relations, we hold that the kinship hierarchies are determined genetically, that is, exist in an objective sense on the level of the subconscious and instinct. The origin of this determinant can be understood in the following manner. Kinship itself is a direct result of sexual contact and the birth of children – immediate relatives, who in terms of kinship are closer to one another and their parents than the latter are to one another. It seems obvious – and certainly demands no outside proof – that sexual relations serve as the basis for a kinship group’s formation, and come to serve as a starting point for the natural chain of ethnic development. Far more important, however, are the psychological and socializing aspects of sexual relations; as a rule, in any one pair it is sexual acts that confirm relative leadership and subordinate roles. Sexual relations – and the particular sexual roles fulfilled in these relations – provide a basis not only for familial structures, but also attach the concept of subordination to intrafamilial relationships. This general subordination later becomes part of a system of social norms and comes to be expressed through the authority of elders over those younger than themselves, hie-

⁴ At the present moment, the word “clan” is frequently used as a sociological concept, but it nonetheless was originally from ethnography, and in its earlier form was meant to reference a kinship group – that is, a group of relatives bound together by a group elder. (See: amongst other sources, Kadyrov, 2010a).

rarchies of age-based subordination, and other similar structures that are frequently found in various ethnic groups.

It is worth noting that in modern society “clan-like” structures and “client-patron” relationships, which are frequently found in such structures, are frequently enough formed without reference to the idea of procreation – that is, without the connecting link provided by children. Sexual relationships are altogether more commonly formed out of wedlock by those who calculate to receive support or protection from her (rarely: his) partner. Such acts were taken to indicate – beyond their implication in the development of structures of subordination or the birth of children – the symbolic joining of sexual partners, not unlike oaths, the sharing of blood, or the institute of wet nursing.

In the past, moreover, high rates of maternal and child mortality and short life expectancies limited population growth. The possibilities for increasing a group’s population through natural growth were in fact far lower than those available through the inclusion of neighboring outsiders into the group. Yet this very inclusion dictated that later generations would be further and further away from the formative base of the group, even as they came to view it as the central aspect of their group or even national identity. Folklore tends to also support such ideas about shared heritage.

By definition the idealization of kinship relationships presumes the inclusion of both real and fictitious kinship, insofar as the former serves as an important base on which to epitomize the former; fictitious kinship relationships are included into an ethnicity’s hierarchical structure at its very earliest stages of development and formation. In a marriage, for example, which provides the basis for a new kinship group, two individuals of differing backgrounds are combined, bringing with them their own particular clan, social, territorial, and ethnic characteristics. In a sense, not only the bride, but her whole kinship group participates in the process of interethnic mixing. It is clear that clans (on one level) and ethnicities (on a higher level) are not “clean-blooded” amalgamations, but rather quite mixed ones. Of course, this was just as equally understood by people in ancient times. Ethnic relationships themselves are in fact the relationships that are built within an ethnicity between relatively more and relatively less mixed members of this ethnicity, evidence of which we can also find in the existence of specialized terminology for such relationships amongst many

of the world's ethnicities.⁵ Ethnic units form from smaller clans, notwithstanding that both forms of groupings remain what we would consider "interethnic." To be fair, the major differences to be seen so far between these different types of groups have been overwhelmingly quantitative.

Clans are the fundamental basis of any ethnicity, and their core is made up of families joined by an ideology of widely and hierarchically binding kinship. All people belong to one or another clan. If it is said that someone doesn't belong to a clan, then this can only indicate that this individual is not a clan "member," but rather a clan "client": rather than a member of the first order, bound by real kinship, this individual is bound only by fictitious kinship. In this case, the individual would have been a member, or descendent of members, of a different clan, which has become weakened, degraded, or is otherwise being assumed by the clan to which the individual is currently bound by bonds of fictitious kinship.

We can thus conclude that the fundamental framework of humanity's self-understanding is deeply linked to and based in part on the expansion outward and identification of familial ties with a clan, of a clan with an ethnicity, or even of an ethnicity with a society or state. This is the process the same process we have seen on a smaller scale in familial groups, whereby social or kinship links are built upon and combined into the ethnic.⁶ One particularly clear example of this phenomenon can also be seen in our use of the word "family" in relation to large groups of people, as well as the use of the word "clan" to describe groups built around patron-client relations. It is from this hierarchical structure, moreover, that we can most likely see the basis for our multilevel sense of self-identification, which stretches from the level of the individual through that of a clan, local community, or nation-state.

Feelings of brotherhood, shared heritage, or simply shared experience and history bring members of one or another ethnic group together and give them cause to recall their shared kinship. With kinship, then, comes

⁵ The development of this sort of ethnographic glossary has only recently been undertaken, but there is a solid empirical base for its continuation. (See: Kadyrov, 2009; 2010b; 2012).

⁶ Referring to unfamiliar people as if to relatives (son, brother, uncle, father) is common in many languages and cultures and helps to structure the links between unacquainted people and establish more trustful relationships.

the obligation to observe the traditions of their ancestors and continue the group's shared existence. Until the very recent past, we had also been able to observe government's consideration for the especial relationships to be found within ethnic groups, which had the right to collectively and independently punish the misdeeds of group members – that is, outside of state institutions. As a result, the members of ethnic groups carried with themselves a strong sense of collective responsibility for the deeds and sins of their relatives.

The idealization of kinship is the central tradition held by all ethnic units. It is its foundation, and is connected with basic instincts of building a home, being a parent, and taking care of children – the very same dignified goals that society takes as basic norms. This tradition is the consistent and sharply defined feature that differentiates an ethnic group from any and all other social units, whether they be linguistic, anthropological, territorial, economic, or otherwise.

Clearly, feelings of kinship and their consequent structure of kinship relations represent a cultural phenomenon, and one based in part on rules and restrictions (taboos). In earlier times taboos were the subject of strictly defined rituals, the fulfillment of which freed people from their less refined instincts and gave witness to their belonging to “cultured,” “moral,” and “civilized” groups. These rituals emphasized group belonging, provided members with a sense of fulfillment, and helped to formalize the meaning of group membership.

Nations and Ethnicities

Ethnicities and nations should not be placed in contradiction to one another. Nations are ethnicities formed together by governments: although “governmentalized nations” may be artificial constructs, they cannot help but develop in the same way as ethnicities, insofar as they are made up of various ethnicities. When Smith, for example, lists the particularities that define nations, it is hard not to think that all of the aspects he describes as characteristic of nations could just as easily be applied to ethnicities. It has also become common in the academic literature to posit that the central difference between smaller ethnic groups and their larger equivalents (inc-

cluding nations) is that small groups retain real familial ties, whereas in the larger groups such ties as “entirely fictitious.” (Khazanov, 1973, pp. 7–8). In relation to nations, S.M. Shirokogorov also considered the criterion of blood (familial) ties to be outside of the field of serious study (Shirokogorov, 2011, pp. 16–17). At the same time, however, matters are somewhat different. The point here does not have to do with the relative percentage of familial relations in a group, but rather with the fact in all cases an ethnicity functions by allowing for the idea of artificial familial ties while at the same time giving absolute priority to real familial connections, which remain the epitome. This principle is central to the development of ethnic relations, and to our understanding of these links. As Abashin once wrote, “Familial and ancestral communities,” that is to say ethnicities, “include all of those groups for which internal relations between members are based on a sense of familial closeness. A hierarchy of familial and ancestral communities can laid out; placement in the hierarchy depends on the level of connection retained in the group.” (Shirokogorov, 2011, p. 7).

Insofar as nations are political (statist) amalgamations of ethnicities, they retain in themselves the same sort of relative framework for relations and non-relations such as exists amongst ethnicities. Moreover, familial ties expand in nations as the result of inter-ethnic marriages, which demonstrate not the neutralization of ethnicity as a whole, but rather the assimilation of one ethnicity into another.

Nations, of course, are simply ethnicities that have come to command a powerful instrument of consolidation – statehood. At the same time, however, statehood itself can at times become secondary in the face of archaic authoritarian institutes employed on a local level by informal “ethnic” authority figures (Solovyeva, n.d., p. 8; Tsvetkov, 2012). One of the central forms taken by informal authoritarian political institutions amongst Central Asian ethnicities has been demonstrated by A.T. Bekmuratova. In her research, she has shown that the peoples of the region have long been familiar with the concept of “building” an ethnicity on the basis of reference to an ideal of kinship (Bekmuratova, 1967, p. 9).

Ethnic development occurs in such a way as to contradict a state’s plans: ethnic consolidation into a nation tends to arise spontaneously, and as a reaction to threats of assimilation from the state’s titular nation. This includes effects that are in point of fact quite opposite to the desires of the state

“constructors” – the growth of ethnic self-awareness, consolidation (the solidarity of “us”), and the counter-consolidation against outside groups (the particular of “us” against “them”), which are all directed towards the protection and self-sufficiency of ethnic nations (Lebedeva, 1997, p. 20). Moreover, this framework is particularly apt for colonial societies, for example, for the period before the Soviet republics were left to find their own paths in 1991. After the fall of the USSR – that is, after the outside influence and threat has been lowered – there is a quite different tendency at work. Here one sees the internal division of ethnic nations into the ethnicities, ethnic and regional groups, and communities from which they had been formed. If construction is directed at the “formation of ethnicities” and their sorting into various combinations that are convenient for those doing the constructing, then it would seem that ethnic development meant nothing else but the heightening of kinship’s importance as the underlying foundation for ethnic ties.

It is worth noting that the divisions discussed here are at best conventional, insofar as ethnicities are not homogenous units, but rather complicated constructs, in which there are large, medium and small ethnic groups (or smaller ethnicities), or other ethnic and territorial groupings, any of which may claim rights “junior” or “senior” (“original” or “foreign,” et cetera) elements of the ethnicity in question. While from the outside there may seem some division, the overall structure remains that of an ethnic nation with a standard hierarchy of relations based on the frame of “kin-not kin” (and including rights designated for the “senior,” “junior,” “close,” “distant,” “early,” “late,” “local,” and other members of this kinship relationship). This hierarchical ethnic structure is unified by all members’ belief that the principle of kinship is the order that sustains life’s proper functioning and structure.

The political project noted above, in which Soviet politicians and academics attempted to create ethnic nations, would hardly have been successful without the support of those peoples who desired their own ethnic statehood.

The Soviet state removed the ethnic from the national, and argued against traditional beliefs in the power of kinship – the USSR was, after all, officially in favor of all-encompassing atheism. The state argued that nations must be socialist and Soviet, and that they will eventually go ex-

tinct as they are folded into a new post-national society. Only in the late Soviet period (under Andropov) did the Soviet authorities accept that the national (ethnic) was far more alive than had been previously argued – and that overcoming the ethnic had proven more difficult than building a classless society. Turkmen, for example, had throughout the Soviet period continued to fill their sense of “the nation” with an ethnic content – much as had other titular Soviet nations. It is also representative of the broader Soviet sphere that representatives of each smaller Turkmen group continue to consider themselves Turkmen while at the same time retaining the sense that they – and their subgroup – are ethnically “purer” than all other Turkmen. Of course, some of the Turkmen sub-groups are closer in heritage to “non-Turkmen” or “conventional Turkmen,” but all of these groups refer to themselves as “Turkmen,” insofar as this title increases their status and capacity to compete for resources, which can only be acquired as part of the broader system of Turkmen values (for more detail, see: Kadyrov, 2004). This reflects the internal ethnic mechanism by which kinship and other groups are consolidated through their struggle to draw even in status with the paradigm.

On a general societal level, most people would agree that an ethnicity (or a nation) was a large family.⁷ In other words, “not all men are brothers,” but rather only those who are part of a particular nation or ethnicity. At the same time, we talk about familial relationships, and if somewhat broader, about relationships of “kin-not kin” as part of the broader social hierarchy. In this sense, kin bonds act as one of the central psychological factors driving societal development as a whole.

It is impossible to live outside of an ethnicity, and the choice of one or another ethnicity is hardly within the complete control of any one individual (politician, academic), no matter the level of desire applied. Ethnicity is a structure that demands more than just the will of an individual, but rather the will of the collective as well, through which the individu-

⁷ At the same time, there is no guarantee that people will be able to define for themselves what exactly makes up a community or a society. The latter, in particular, is an “analytic construct”: it is a rational idea, and one far less emotionally compelling than an ethnicity. The academic concept of society, however, should remain attached to the ethnic, insofar as the mechanisms of change in society are supervenient on changes in ethnic structures, and not the other way around.

al is attempting to preserve himself. Non-ethnic (kinless) people are, as a rule, not to be found. Part of humanity is divisible into ethnicities, and within them, into concrete ethnic societies and kinship groups; another part of humanity relates to those various transitional social and cultural groups that are currently in the stage of forming as an ethnicity or shifting towards a different ethnicity, through acculturation, assimilation, marginalization, or integration. Moreover, it is not as a result of their denying ethnicity in relation to themselves or as a whole that many people are unable to point to their own ethnicity – instead, this occurs when people are simply unsure of how to refer to themselves, existing as they may in a transition or mixed ethnic state.

The idea of the ethnic's neutralization, as well as the concept of urban groups with "nonexistent ethnic colorings," (Naumova, 1991, pp. 12, 14), in our view, has come about as the result of ethnographers' focus on the external aspects of ethnicity, as well as the equalization of "ethnic" with "traditional." The latter, however, is modernizing: diets change, as do ways of life, rituals of eating, types of housing, clothing, and so on. It is worth noting, moreover, that national (ethnic) intelligentsias are generally the leaders of such modernization movements, while at the same time remaining the initiators and central actors in the campaign to preserve the particularities of the ethnic and its distinctive character. This duality can be judged as hypocrisy and politically motivated, but in reality the discussion is not about holding on to old forms of existence, but rather simply protecting an ethnicity from assimilation. Ethnicities can be overcome by assimilation, but of course this assimilation is never complete: the final result is simply one ethnicity's taking a subordinate place within another ethnicity.

Modern Turkmen bear little real resemblance to the Turkmen of the middle ages, whose culture was based on a philosophy of tribal unity (for example, *Tekechilik*) – and later, on a philosophy of national unity (*Turkmenchilik*) – that incorporated elements of the rituals, traditions, and customary laws of their ancient ancestors. In the modern world, Turkmen may not speak Turkmen; they may live in places where Turkmen have never lived before; they may marry representatives of other ethnicities; they may dress, eat, and live differently than other Turkmen. Yet they may all the same consider themselves part of the Turkmen ethnicity. In other words, the Turkmen ethnicity is represented by a externally divergent but histori-

cally unified groups that are bound together by their shared heritage and their acceptance of the kinship relations amongst all Turkmens, whether in the past or today.

Very rarely is anyone able to successfully shift his or her own ethnicity – more commonly this is a personal drama that can last for years. On a larger scale, the fall, extinguishing, degradation, or loss of an ethnic group is frequently accompanied by a loss of satisfaction on the part of its members, as well as their heightened intolerance for other ethnic groups, increased levels of stress, frustration, vulnerability, and marginalization. It is worth noting that such negative tendencies are especially heightened amongst collectivist societies, which is a category that could apply to both Russia and most of its neighbors (Lebedeva, 1997, p. 17).

The broader movement to deny the importance of kinship relationships developed in postindustrial societies during the postmodernist epoch of the 20th century, incorporating elements of the mid-century “hippie” movement and others. The basis of the postmodernist value system held at its core a rejection of traditionalism while retaining the importance of group belonging, and was oriented on social links built not upon heritage (as something forced from the outside), but rather on the basis of shared values and the development of a group of like-minded associates. These groups were formed in accordance with shared interests, values, and feelings of love and friendship. The Soviet Union’s “Sixtiers” (*shestidesyatniki* – the social group that came to age in the 1960s and identified with the social and political liberalization then occurring in the USSR) were also in many ways similar to the postmodernists in their search for a particular and unique model of behavior, although in the USSR the focus was more on individualism and the individual’s place in the world. Yet as time demonstrated, such links proved weaker than shared heritage: there are circumstances in which friends and like-minded associates cannot or will not help. When absolute, blind, non-compensatory, and even self-sacrificial help is needed, then kinship relationships demonstrate their advantage over other forms of relations. As a result, the value of kinship relations has grown in dialectical contrast to the postmodernist movement. Today, being part of a clan – and especially an influential clan – is considered both desirable and prestigious by the urban elite.

Paradigm of ethnicity (Consciousness)

Subjectivity is always limited by objective conditions, and therefore, to a large extent, it is always of secondary importance. The construction of nations runs into traditions, that is, the collective will to preserve ethnic distinctiveness. Therefore the emergence of ethnic nations (Uzbeks, Turkmen, Kyrgyz etc.) cannot be reduced to a “particular projection of political will or academic knowledge” (Abashin, 2008, p. 3). These projections would never have been developed if they had not taken into account the presupposition and preparedness of related ethnic groups to political consolidation. This consolidation could therefore have emerged in one or another way without the imagination of foreign constructivists.

A traditional ethnic community is a community of customs and limitations, and not of changes dependent on someone else’s imagination. The most dreaded punishment for the violation of established customs was not execution, but rather exile from the collective (ethnic ostracism), and the consequent «rootlessness» was equated to a slow and torturous death.

What is pivotal in determining the ethnicity is not its material beginnings, but the belief in the magic of kinship, which also possesses a necessary (for any faith in general) element of eternal sustainability. Here the irrational is combined with the rational, insofar as kinship is a process of maintained cohesiveness, that is of the collective’s self-preservation. In the definition of ethnicity the ideas of “imagination of kinship” or “understandings of kinship” have by mistake and misunderstanding taken the place of the “belief in kinship.” Wording nuances in this case have a principal importance.

Part of any ethnic group is comprised of locals, another, from incomers, while yet another – from captives, tributaries, etc. We can also add to these another important group of relatives – the adopted and those unrelated children who shared a wet nurse. What is important is not that they actually represent real relatives for the receiving side, but that the receiving side considers them as such. And, insofar as the members of a nation consider themselves to be part of a “large family,” it is quite possible to this nation an ethnicity or ethnic nation, whether or not the members are actual relatives or non-relatives.

The mythic concept that an “ethnicity is a family” is universal for all of the nations of the world. This sort of mythologizing is not an act of mere imagination, however – it is a belief, an idealization, and the worship of the unknown, sacred, and incomprehensible. At the same time it is something that people are dependent upon, to which they are accustomed, and which they find useful. Neither knowing nor seeing God, people still belief in him. In their imagination, he may be Buda, Christ, or Muhammad, but he is always Almighty.⁸

Belief in kinship is functional, and acts as a system-defining factor. This is not the fanatic belief in a community comprised only of relatives, but rather an understanding that kinship and its various degrees serve as the paradigmatic core of ethnic subordination. It is not important how many relatives and non-relatives there are in a community; what is important is the dialectic of “kinship–non-kinship” as the mechanism that launches ethnic relations into practice.

In our opinion, there are at least three circumstances that have played a role in guaranteeing that the idealization of kinship has not been established amongst scholars as a definition of ethnicity:

- The erroneous claim that the growth of an ethnic group is associated with reduced kinship links.
- Scholars’ “materialism” leads them to place emphasis on the search for materially existing and well-rooted characteristic, which can be subject to immediate study, analysis, and cause and effect enquiries, which cannot be related to such a slippery and irrational notion as belief, which requires getting into areas of feelings and emotions.
- The erroneous equalization of different phenomenon: community defined by heritage and self-consciousness and the belief in kinship.

Why does kinship call for belief? Because it includes an elemental of the sacred.⁹ Because of the laws of genetics, children almost always resem-

⁸ The majority of world’s major religions actively employ the terminology of kinship. According to the New Testament, “Blood is the Soul;” according to the Vedic scripture, humanity is “The family of God” (in Sanskrit – “*Achyuta gotra*”). The concept of “God the father and God the son,” “the sacred family,” and “Holy Mother” are part of the standard dogma of all Christian religions.

⁹ At all times in human history family relations have been held sacred by religion. In traditional societies marriage has been and remains on the most important life rituals.

ble their parents and their close ancestors, whom are remembered by their parents and other relatives. Children and parents are also strikingly similar in terms of their self-awareness and psychology – at times even more than physically.

We can also clarify the role of consciousness and feelings in the definition of ethnicity. If a foreign child will be placed in a new community, it will be possible to develop in him feeling of kinship with this community. But the deciding matter will not be what the child thinks, but instead what the child's non-ethnic relatives will feel about him. Until the end of the child's life he will be considered adopted – somehow partly foreign. This is not even to speak about adults facing such a situation. They may be integrated (accepted) into a foreign ethnic community, but still will occupy a certain niche in that community. They cannot completely disappear into the foreign environment (as a rule this happens over two-three generations).

Next question: if this is a belief or an ideology, than on what cult or rituals is it supported? The answer to this question w given long ago and has been supported by numerous studies on the cult of ancestors – perhaps the most widespread of cults amongst humankind, which today has also been preserved on the everyday level (Stasevich, 2012). It is enough to recall that the cult to ancestors is accompanied by the cult of the woman-mother, the cult of fertility, and the cult of high birth rates. The totemic symbols of faith were connected with people's self-associations as members of clans and ethnic groups (a consolidation of unified clans) that were growing and expanding much as any other aspect of the natural world.

The belief in the sacrality of kinship becomes at the same time the spiritual base for the construction of an ethnicity's hierarchical structure on the basis of leadership and subordination relations. Thus, it fulfills not a mythical, but, quite the opposite, pragmatic function. The ethnic hierarchy and its relationships can be changed only by breaking the ethnic structure, whether culturally or through marital or other assimilation. The relational hierarchy cannot be changed through the simple rewriting of myths

In Christianity, moreover, marriage is one of the Mysteries that binds humans to higher powers.

and legends about an ethnicity's origin or their depiction in a principally new redaction.

The development of ethnic self-consciousness goes occurs in a similar manner to the development of the religious – both can be linked to the maturation of person's personality. More frequently than not the necessity of believing in God makes itself most apparent in adult years, not unlike the surety of one's belonging to a particular ethnic nation and group, or the desire to have children and thus continue one's kin and family name.

During social crises ethnic solidarities, as a rule, will trump religious divisions. Sometimes head of states utilize the belief in ethnicity in order to divert the attention of their constituencies away from religious fundamentalism and its political consequences (as, for instance, in Turkmenistan).

Belief is always connected with sacrifice and the readiness to sacrifice oneself for kin, relatives, the motherland, or the native land has been maintained from ancestral times up today. The highest form of human feeling is not "love," but the relationship that is expressed by the phrase "he/she is my kin." It is also worth noting that the love of young people for each other grows not into a marriage of friendship, but into feelings of kinship, which are enhanced by bearing and raising common children.

All communities defined through characteristic (territorial, anthropologic, linguistic, etc.) lack a mechanism for their internal association. There is such a mechanism in an ethnic group—it is implied by the paradigm of kinship. No matter what language a person speaks, where he is located, or how he looks, he as a rule will seek his roots. This is key, in our opinion, to understanding the nature, specificity, and eternity of ethnicity.

As the ethno-psychologist N.M. Lebedeva has rightly noted, "positive group identification (that is, a person's striving to live in a collective and identify with it) is an axiom of human existence and a necessity for membership in various human groups, amongst them the ethnic and cultural groups that are the most ancient, sustainable and important." (Lebedeva, 1997, p. 29). Lebedeva adds that the strongest form of protection for an individual caught in interethnic relations or moving between areas of ethnic belonging would be the existence of kinship relationship between an ethnic minority and a dominant group (Lebedeva, 1997, p. 38). In the long run, of course, prolonged cohabitation would led to and cause blood and

kin relations to develop between the two groups – further extending the same paradigm of kinship and ethnicity we have been describing here.

Ethnicities and the ethnic. In place of a conclusion

A person's ethnic belonging is there from the beginning. In a general sense, ethnicity is the most fundamental of archetypes for social organization. An individual is a person insofar as he or she is a social creature, and the first proto-societies were and have been kinship groups. In historical perspective ethnicities have been the underlying social form given to human relationships and the natural basis for further socialization.

An ethnicity is a group of people who are bound together through their shared idealization of kinship and the creation within the field of kinship of a paradigmatic group defined in terms of its primogeniture, structured alignment with the ancient aspects of the group, and its numerical or status-based domination of other groups. Kinship relations should in no way be mistaken for the links of relatives or shared heritage. The principle of ethnic relations is based on the dialectic of “kin–not kin” – or, in other words, the paradigm of kinship. The relative level of non-kinship amongst lower tier groups within the ethnicity fulfills the role of a margin from which raise kinship to a paradigm. This paradigm is just a model, yet also one that can change historically and ethnographically. Each and every ethnicity has its own paradigm and relational hierarchy, as well as its own paradigmatic group (paradigmatic core), which creates its own series of cultural models. The change of an ethnicity's paradigm is an important aspect of the ethnicity's evolution, and part of the broader round-about process of its development, including the appearance of new groups within its auspices, and accompanied by the results of fragmentation and assimilation occurring outside of the core.

The ethnic is not lost as the result of changes occurring during a shift from one ethnicity to another. When a person loses his or her connection with one ethnicity, he or she either voluntarily or involuntarily moves to another, and has no choice but to submit to the latter's culture (or is left to exist in a transitory, often marginalized, state).

The central thesis of ethnicity is that the members of one ethnic group, who are bound to each other through ties of kinship, will be closer to one another in terms of all describable characteristics than to members of any other group. It is from here that the consistent sense of kinship as the paradigm of human relations arises. If cultural dictates may at some point start not to accord with the parameters dictated by a particular ethnic paradigm, this is a sign that this ethnicity may be in the process of transforming or evolving.

Ethnic development – processes of integration, consolidation, assimilation, and marginalization – can also be understood as the complicated interweaving of vertical (internal) relations and horizontal (external, interethnic) links. In its internal relations, the “hidden” meaning of ethnic development can be found in the competition amongst groups for dominance and the role as the paradigm, whereas in external links ethnic development takes the form of constructive interaction and coordination on the edges of the community. It is on the periphery where unique ethno-linguistic groups develop (such as the German speaking Italians or Czechs), as well as ethno-political, ethno-economic (Sarts, amongst others), ethno-social (Kazakhs, towards the beginning of their history), and other combinatorial groupings. It is a mistake, however, to represent the peripheral area of interethnic interaction as part and parcel of the ethnic core. The line that both divides and unites these two spheres of activity is the overall recognition amongst all group members of a single ethnic paradigm.

People are by their nature inclined to believe in something; they accept, for the most part, beliefs that help them to live. These sorts of beliefs tend to survive for centuries. The belief in the ideal (paradigm) of kinship is one such belief, and it is this usefulness, as the rational aspect of belief, that makes ethnicity a proper aspect for scientific study. The term “imagination” (or “imaginariness”), on which the supporters of “constructivism” base their work, has by mistake and confusion taken the proper place of the word “belief” in the definition of ethnicities. The belief in kinship relations is, ultimately, the defining factor underlying the paradigm of ethnicity described here.

The concepts of “constructing ethnicities” and “imaginary ethnicities” seem like the fading echo of ethnography’s colonial and postcolonial history. These concepts assume the possibility of interfering in people’s ethnic

lives and manipulating their beliefs in accordance with the needs of colonial powers. The further concept – “imaginary” or “imagined” ethnicities – which has been recently added, is inherently aimed at undermining local cultures and emphasizing their primitiveness: they point to a desire to lie to oneself and to others, a desire to believe in that which supposedly does not exist. As this work has endeavored to show, matters – and history – present something of a different picture.

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