

ИСТОРИЯ, ПОЛИТИКА И ПРАВО

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SPECIFIC CHANNELS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT: CRITERIA, DEFINITION, FUNCTIONS

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Summary. Consideration of imperial evolution through the system of cultural interactions between the center and the borders of an empire is a new approach, which allows us to see that territorial expansion and cultural borrowings from the merged areas have some correlations and influence one on another, therefore, stably existence of the empire inside its optimal borders depends on regulating of that borrowings intensiveness. Criteria of a specific channel of intercultural communication are found, its definition is formulated, and its functions are discussed in this article to describe the mentioned approach. Specific channels of intercultural communication are the unique phenomena developing around the borders of the empire. Study of them is very useful when we need to reconstruct the history of the state expansion and its collapse. It is possible to assume that this approach fits to study the evolution of any large state of imperial type.

Key words: specific channel of intercultural communication; cultural borrowings; social-cultural processes; territorial expansion; external relations; imperial evolution; Russian Empire; integrative function; regulative function; history of everyday life.

Introduction. Talking on the specific channels of intercultural communication, we must admit first of all that the word «specific» is used here not because of the nature of the environment where communicative situation happens, neither because of its participants nature. When we say «specific», we mean the nature of the situation itself, its own unusual core, and structures built upon it. We mean that this kind of communicative situation seems to be never known before, and we could suspect that it will hardly happen again anymore. But it is clear to see with the very first sight that this communicative situation is a unique characteristic of the historical time and place where it appears. Because of this reason, we have to try to see are there or are there not any common roots, structure elements, and impact aspects of such situations appeared in different environment and with different participants. In case that there is no any common element, we would have to give up with this topic and say these are just certain drops in a sea of historical events, which worth to be mentioned but cannot be viewed as a stones to build some theories upon them. But if common aspects do exist, we would understand, perhaps, how cultural processes can influence back on the political and economical systems they have been born by. Also, it should be mentioned that some ideas on this topic were previously published in Russian, yet were not gathered together and systemized [4; 5; 6; 7]. This article is not just a translation, but a reconsideration and systematization of those ideas, joining them together into a complete conception.

Criteria. Since we talk about inner essence of intercultural communication, studying material culture as a separate thing existing on its own is not the best way. We could study it much better if we understand that culture is first of all an external form of our mentality and – indirectly – of our genotype, and it should not be examined separately of its primary content. Using of this approach allows us to research material evidences of cultural and intercultural processes as a source for study of mental preferences of the whole society or certain personality in a chosen place or time. Thus, material culture is a useful tool, which of course in another case and for another aim could also be an independent subject of study. After taking this notion we must decide, which criteria we have to use to distinguish and describe a specific channel of intercultural communication. To see the criteria, which allows us to talk about the exact specific intercultural communicative channel we should take a look at some examples based upon some social-cultural aspects of the external relations of the Russian Empire. We take the Russian Empire as a good model, but we could suppose that the

same mechanism works for any other large state system, which has imperial patterns in its foundation.

As the *first example* we could take the foreign trade of Russia in 18th-19th centuries, which can be viewed as a set of such specific intercultural communicative channels, because the manifestations and material evidences directly connected to the implementation of the border trade are also related to the various aspects of social and cultural sphere including language and everyday life. Thus, a close relationship between trade with neighboring countries and borrowings from their cultures into the everyday life of merchants appears. The very notable kind of the Russian imperial border trade was the Russian-Chinese tea trade, but there are not so many specialized publications about it [8; 9; 10; 11]. Russian-Chinese tea trade not only led to constructing of the large cultural layer connected to tea drinking traditions in different social and ethnic groups lived – and partially still living – in some Russian, first of all, Siberian regions, but also the «oriental» style appearance in everyday life of merchants was among the consequences of this trade development. This style included actual oriental influences and stylish imitations and was translated into the everyday life of all social groups in Siberia and some other Russian regions. We can clearly see how this process began in the very early 18th century and came to its peak in the second half of the 19th century, and it allows us to find out the main factors ruled the evolution of the Russian-Chinese tea trade. Also, it must be mentioned that material evidences of everyday life – clothes, furniture, household items, and many other objects of arts and crafts – are the main sources for researching the foreign trade as a combination of specific channels of intercultural communication. And what is most important, we could see this whole process as a system, in which all the elements are closely connected one to another, so it is useless to study them separately. We could study the evolution of Russian-Chinese pidgin only in its connection to the features of border trade (and we must note that pidgins – there were several of them at the borders of the Russian Empire – were the very specific product of border trade and colonization processes), which under those circumstances were merged with merchants' everyday life and their high ability to cultural adaptation, and through it those features were translated into the life of other social groups. Although the Russian-Chinese tea trade is the most striking example, there were some more directions of foreign trade such as Russian-Norway trade in Arkhangelsk, activity of the Russian-American Company in Alaska region and others, which could also be considered as specific intercultural communicative channels.

Dynastic relations of Russian monarchs of the same historical period, beginning with the reforms of Peter I who changed Russian traditional approach to dynastic marriages and succession of the throne, could serve as the *second good example*, because they also could be described as a channel of communication existing in very specific conditions. Those relations were followed by many situations of cultural information exchange, translation of one cultural models and accepting the others. There were requirements of changing religion, different for men and women, necessity of studying new language and adaptation to the unfamiliar court traditions, etc. As far as this channel of communication existed at the junction of such different segments of social as like foreign policy and family home life, it opens to us an interaction of the phenomena of micro and macro levels. We could say that dynastic marriages were also a part of the state expansion strategy. For instance, as Vladimir Balyazin wrote, Peter I arranged the marriage between his daughter Anna and Karl-Friedrich of Holstein-Gottorp when he decided to achieve the Swedish crown for Karl as his future son-in-law. Karl and Anna renounced claims to the Russian throne for themselves and their children, but they promised to accept the proposal if Peter I will decide to call one of them to take the throne [1, pp. 47–48]. Thus if the Treaty of Nystad, which forbade Russia to step into the Swedish domestic policy, were not signed, and if Peter I could achieve the crown for Karl, it could be possible for Peter's heirs to become the rulers of both countries. There were some more similar diplomatic nuances of the other marriages of Russian throne heirs in the 18th-19th centuries.

From those examples the following *criteria* of a specific channel of intercultural communication could be distinguished.

– *Social-cultural processes of different levels could interact through this channel, and this interaction is unlikely or impossible in other conditions.*

– *Atypical forms and methods of communication are carried out through this channel.*

– *This channel exists at the junction of dissimilar segments, which have no close connection in other conditions.*

– *This channel is stably under certain circumstances for a certain period of time, which allows us to trace its formation, development, and fading.*

– *There are material evidences of communication, which are inherent only or almost only to this channel and allow us to carry out the attribution.*

If we find out all or almost all of those criteria for a certain channel of intercultural communication, it could be distinguished and examined as a social and cultural phenomenon, which gives us important information about the historical period and people lived in it.

Definition and functions. Looking at the criteria we could try to formulate the *definition* of a specific channel of intercultural communication and then discuss possible functions of that channel in the context of imperial evolution.

– *Specific channel of intercultural communication is a distinguished direction of cultural interaction existing at the junction of dissimilar social segments and including social-cultural processes, crossing of which is unlikely or impossible in other conditions. There are forms and methods of communication and its material evidences, which are characteristic exactly and often only for this channel developing in definite period of time and under certain historical circumstances.*

As for the functions of such channel, they have to be discussed in connection to the basic algorithms of state expansion processes. Integrative and Regulative functions of specific channels of intercultural communication are closely related to historical development of an empire (or any large state of imperial type). As far as specific intercultural communicative channels appear at the earliest steps of imperial evolution and disappear when the empire fades, those channels seem to be an important element of the imperial structure. One of the most important aspects of territorial imperative is, as Kamaludin Gadzhiev wrote about it, that «any civilization or world power state, which has demonstrated its involvement in history, self-sufficiency, and effectiveness, always revealed tendency to territorial expansion...» Such civilization or state «initially appeared in a particular center, for which the rest of the ecumene, inhabited by barbarians, served as an object for expansion and arena for extending the living space. To verify the validity of this thesis it is sufficient to refer the experience of the Chinese, Persians, Arabs, Mongols, Ottomans, Russians, Americans and other nations created great empires through territorial expansion» [3, § 10.4 Territorial Imperative]. Yet, when this tendency reaches some spatial limit, it leads to an inability to deal with ruling the border regions from center, and as a consequence, to the disintegration of an empire.

Specific channels of intercultural communication inevitably appear at the borders of the empire in a process of its expansion and intensive contacts with neighboring countries, and this is an *integrative function* of those channels. As a result of their development, titular population of the border areas of an empire borrows a lot from neighboring culture, which leads to strengthening of mix ethnic elements in a culture of the whole state. Aleksei Demidov wrote: «Institutional structure of state and society always is based upon the culture which dominates inside it. Appearance of separate communities distinctly different in their culture actually means the appearance of «parallel societies», and in perspective «parallel states». Alternative social and, all the more so, political institutions facing official structures inevitably generate conflicts, which in their turn reinforce the isolation of cultural communities they were born by» [2, p. 338]. Although he wrote this in a context of modern migration issues, such processes take place also in expansion periods of an imperial type state.

Hence, poor controllability and separatist tendencies come not only from economic and geopolitical reasons, but also from the fact that border regions be-

gin to live they own way of life and acquire a mentality, which is different and often fundamentally alien to the mentality of imperial center. Poor controllability and separatism of border regions in combination lead to collapse of the empire and to synchronous shutdown of specific intercultural communicative channels. Thus, those channels perform a *regulative function* by limiting imperial tendency to permanent expansion. Integrative function transits into regulative function when the volume of cultural borrowings in border regions exceeds a critical limit. We could talk about functions transitivity because their different aims are achieved in the same way by a constant increase of cultural borrowings. Therefore, among the factors of imperial decentralization, we must take into account the evolution of specific channels of intercultural communication with their integrative and regulative functions as well as the limit of territorial capacity. So, a territorial factor only is not enough; it must be active together with a cultural factor. This moment of critical limit achievement could manifest itself in different ways.

Those specific channels of intercultural communication, which are related to foreign trade of the empire, born in the period of territorial expansion and state monopoly and achieve their critical limit in the period of private merchant trade – as far as it seems like common way of development for important directions of imperial border trade. This happens because private entrepreneur intensively adapts to a new culture, which he has to contact, and therefore, he becomes not so much a translator, but, first of all, a recipient of cultural information in his own everyday life. Thus, the moment of full realization of that defining criterion of specific intercultural communicative channel, which means the interaction between macro and micro level phenomena – in this case between foreign economic activity and private everyday life, at the same time is a moment of cultural borrowings critical limit achievement. We should take into account that, when the channel or the whole system of intercultural communication ceases its activity, some separate elements could persist latently and renew under favorable circumstances. For instance, nowadays something like this happens with intercultural communicative elements of East-Siberian merchant trade – keeping a system-function of private entrepreneurship in Siberian society, important role of Chinese and Mongolian trade diaspora, revival of a pidgin, etc.

For dynastic marriages as a specific channel of intercultural communication the critical moment is different and related not to physical collapse of the empire, but to a change of the ruling dynasty and an increase in the number of foreigners at the court, so the national elite and the top of society begins to live extremely different way of life than other social groups, and it depends in this case not only on different social position, but on fundamentally dissimilar culture, language, and mentality. Royal brides from German houses brought to Russian court people of their own nation, integrated elements of their own traditions into the court lifestyle and administrative system. One day the sequence of marriages arranged by Peter I and his heirs led to the fact that there was no Russian legitimate pretender to the throne, and it has been taken by the branch of the Holstein-Gottorp dynasty ruled to the very end of the Russian Empire. So, we can say that integrative function proved itself in an attempt of Russian monarchs' integration into the European royal system, and regulative function proved itself in a national differentiation of society and in a complete change of the ruling dynasty

Conclusion. Thus, as we could see, quite different historical phenomena can be viewed as specific channels of intercultural communication or systems of them through the clear criteria. Functions of those channels play an important role in the empire development. So, we could conclude that reasonable regulation of cultural borrowings intensiveness before they achieve a critical limit is, perhaps, one of the good ways to keep an imperial type state stably. Study of the specific channels of intercultural communication of certain age and place helps us to reconstruct the imperial state evolution not only with its basic geopolitical patterns, but also with the portraits of its people and the minor details of their everyday life, which have big influence on the major state changes.

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